



Zaoksky Adventist University main building and library.

Photo courtesy of Euro-Asia Division.

Zaoksky Adventist University

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Zaoksky Adventist University (ZAU) is a religious educational institution of higher learning, established by the Euro-Asia Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1988. It is located in Zaoksky, a district center in the Tula region, 100 kilometers south of Moscow. Over the years of its existence, the educational institution has come a long way, allowing limited biblical courses, once taught in the Tula church, to become a modern educational institution of higher learning, one of the largest Protestant religious schools in the former USSR.

Location

The geographical location of the educational institution, remote from large cities and conveniently connected with the outside world through a developed transport system, aptly contributes to the fulfillment of the school's mission. Zaoksky district is a picturesque corner of central Russia that preserved its unique ecological environment. The university is surrounded by memorable places associated with the great people of Russia, such as A. T. Bolotov, a famous Russian agronomist and pomologist; and V. D. Polenov, a Russian artist whose works include biblical scenes. This rich natural and cultural background, combined with the serious academic program and the unique spiritual and moral atmosphere created at Zaoksky Adventist University, contributes remarkably to the implementation of the main tasks of the school: to help young people in establishing saving relations with God, to ensure their holistic and harmonious development, and to train well-educated and highly qualified specialists, including church ministers, who can minister to the Church and the society.

Background Information

The foundation of such an unusual educational institution is associated with the democratic changes in the society that took place in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s. Thanks to those changes, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was able to reach a qualitatively new level of service to the society. For the first time in many decades, the Church was given the opportunity to train clergy. It should be noted that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia throughout its more than century-old history had not managed to create serious educational opportunities due to certain political circumstances. Education was limited to attempts to organize training courses for ministers. For example, in the autumn of 1920 three-month missionary courses for young ministers were organized in the Voronezh governorate. The committee which organized the courses included I. A. Lvov, V. M. Teppone, and A. Eglit. In 1921, a group of 25 students took an intensive course of study in Kiev. In 1925, also in Kiev, three-year courses were opened in which experienced church ministers who were members of union and conference boards were the teachers. In summer, students of these courses worked as colporteurs, traveling to different cities of the Soviet Union.

In 1924 the All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists (ACSDA) decided to open six-month Bible courses. The South Russian Union agreed to accommodate the courses at the union headquarters in the city of Rostov-on-Don. Unfortunately, they did not succeed in obtaining permission for such courses from the authorities, despite almost two-year negotiations. The Church also applied for opening training courses in Moscow, but to no avail. Due to the anti-religious stance taken by the Soviet Union, the authorities were not interested in any denomination developing religious education courses.

In 1927 the General Conference allocated \$10,000 for Russia from the funds of the so-called "Big Week" in the hope of obtaining permission to open a regularly functioning theological education institution. The delegates to

the All-Union Congress of the SDA Church (May 1928) passed the following resolution: "In order to meet this urgent need [for training of church ministers], we must have a Bible Institute. Therefore, we instruct our central office to apply to the appropriate authorities to ask for permission to open such an institute."¹ But this attempt to provide spiritual education for Adventist youth, unfortunately, failed due to the persecution against the Church that was initiated by the communists and because the entire educational system was tightly controlled by the state. For 60 long years, the church had to forego any formal spiritual education.² The legislation on religious cults, adopted in 1929, forbade religious organizations from carrying out educational activities.

History and Development

It was only in 1986, after numerous negotiations with the authorities, that church leaders managed to obtain permission to set up correspondence courses for training Adventist ministers. It was the time when serious political and social reforms known as *Perestroika* were undertaken by Gorbachev's government. The courses were officially opened on the premises of the Tula prayer house. Adventist pastors and church members who had received a higher education in state universities were invited to serve as teachers. Unfortunately, none of them had a formal theological education. This deficiency was compensated for by many years of experience in church ministry and self-education. Among the first teachers of those correspondence courses were R. N. Volkoslavskiy, N. N. Libenko, M. P. Kulakov, E. V. Zaitsev, O. M. Senin, G. Gritsyuk, A. I. Romanov, and others.

A decision was made by the Interrepublican Coordination Council (the central body of the SDA Church in the USSR at that time) that the responsibility for further development of the curriculum and locating a site for a future educational institution was assigned to an energetic and promising leader, the only one who had acquired theological education, Mikhail M. Kulakov.³ Dozens of applications were sent to the relevant authorities with a request to allocate space for building a new educational institution, but every time the authorities rejected the applications. The old atheistic philosophy still worked: "sectarians" should not be in the public eye. For example, the Church was not allowed to open a seminary in Tula, since it was a proletarian city with prominent revolutionary traditions. It was also impossible to locate the construction site near Yasnaya Polyana, a country house estate of Leo Tolstoy, since that place was visited by many tourists, including foreigners.⁴

After a long search and discussion of various options, they finally managed to find the ruins of an old school building in the village of Zaoksky, in Tula region. This broke the ice. On January 27, 1987, Tula regional authorities made a historic decision "On the placement of the correspondence religious education center and the office of the Adventist Church in the village of Zaoksky." Following this decision, the local authorities of Zaoksky village had to transfer the vestiges of the former school at 43-a Rudneva st. to the SDA Church for the construction of a seminary and a spiritual center. The school building, constructed after World War II, had burned down many years before. The fire destroyed almost everything that could burn. Only the ugly skeleton of the building remained, and for many years it was a cover for a garbage dump. When local authorities saw the

potential for a beautiful seminary building, they immediately signed all the necessary documents.

The seminary's main building was designed by a talented architect from Tula who was also a Seventh-day Adventist minister and is now the president of the Christian Association for the Service to Convicts, N. N. Libenko. He was helped by specialists from the Tula Project Institution. The building eventually became one of the "pearls" of the Zaoksky district and also of the entire Tula region.

The entire Church participated in the construction of the first Protestant seminary in Russia. It was truly a "people's construction." More than 1,500 church members from all over the former Soviet Union voluntarily took part in the work during their vacations. Using shovels, crowbars, and picks, they dismantled the old rubble to prepare the half-ruined building for restoration. Those who could not come donated their money. All told, some 1,500,000 Rubles were collected.⁵

The construction work was supervised by outstanding professionals, V. V. Novosad and O. A. Koenig. Local residents, amazed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the first builders, who settled in early March 1987 in a wooden hut right inside the building, brought them warm clothes and food. Despite the fact that the four-story building was being erected without the use of modern construction equipment, even without a pillar crane, not a single accident happened during the construction.

The seminary was dedicated on December 2, 1988. The brief lines of the TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) message announced to the whole world that in the century-long history of the Adventist movement in the USSR, a new era had begun: "An administrative and spiritual center of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been opened today in the village of Zaoksky, Tula Region. It is located in a specially constructed building. There will also be a seminary designed to train the clergy of this Church. A base for publishing activities has also been created."⁶

General Conference President Neil Wilson and representatives of many religious, government and public organizations attended the ceremony of the opening of the theological seminary, which coincided with the commemoration of the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia. All speakers emphasized the significance of the event. A. A. Likhanov, a famous children's writer and chair of the V. I. Lenin Soviet Children's Fund, said during his speech: "On this day, in this hall a most important event is taking place: some other shackles, the shackles of bias and prejudice, fall down from such an important humanistic concept as freedom of conscience...."⁷ The chair of the Council for Religious Affairs of the USSR, K. M. Kharchev, who significantly contributed to the implementation of the project by supporting Adventists and soliciting for them before the Communist party bodies and Soviet authorities, in his speech, in particular, noted that such a building could decorate any street in the center of Moscow.

Under the leadership of the founder and first Rector M. M. Kulakov and Artur A. Stele, the first Academic Dean of the seminary, the school developed rapidly.⁸ In 1989, the first full-time students were admitted to the Department of Theology.⁹ The staff of the seminary was expanding. New teachers, including the ones from

abroad, were invited to Zaoksky, including teachers of hermeneutics and the ancient Greek language, Clinton Wahlen (USA) and M. K. Undriz (Germany); a teacher of Hebrew, I. L. Kleimanis (Latvia); a teacher of systematic theology, Daniil Duda (Slovakia); and others. In 1991 the Correspondence Department headed by A. R. Wagner was opened. Later on, A. R. Wagner was appointed ZTS Vice President and was replaced, as the head of the Correspondence Department, by V. V. Dyman, a ZTS graduate. The Department of Theology of Zaoksky Theological Seminary became a worthy talent pool for the growing Church, called to train competent and qualified ministers for the church organizations of the Euro-Asia Division.

Seminary teachers were actively involved in research work. The *Zaoksky Readings* annual scientific and practical conferences were held at the Department of Theology, attracting the attention of many domestic and foreign scholars and researchers. Teachers were organizing scientific circles in order to introduce the exciting world of theological science to students. The *Sola Scriptura* theological society and the *Summa Summarum* religious and philosophical society were especially popular. The Department of Theology initiated publication of two magazines—*Bogoslovskiy Vestnik (Theological Herald)* and *Pastyr' Dobryy (Good Shepherd)*—that contributed to improving the educational level and qualifications of many church ministers who did not have full-time study opportunities.

In 1989, thanks to the enthusiasm of the American agricultural scientist Dr. Jacob R. Mittleider, a unique training program for vegetable growers was started. The Zaoksky local administration was skeptical about the project at first, not readily allocating land. In tough climatic conditions, in a zone where farming was risky, one could not expect rich harvests of such a great variety of crops as Dr. Mittleider was proposing.

Without waiting for a decision on the allocation of land, it was decided to test the unique method of growing ecologically clean vegetables in a small area of 1,500 square meters. The results of the first agricultural year were absolutely overwhelming. Therefore, the local authorities transferred 26 hectares of land to the seminary for its free use, and soon the formerly abandoned collective farm field became unrecognizable. There were even rows of beds without a single weed and beautiful greenhouses for seedlings and growing cucumbers and tomatoes.¹⁰ A cannery with a freezer and a large vegetable storehouse were built for processing and storing the harvested products.

The unique agronomic method used caused an unprecedented public response. Sightseeing buses started frequently coming to Zaoksky. In just one month, September 1992, more than a thousand people visited the seminary as part of organized excursion groups. In 1993, Russia's Central Television reported about an unusual agricultural method in the popular TV program "Our Garden." "Miracle near Tarusa"—that was the title of one journalist's article. Before long, many newspapers and magazines published articles about the Mittleider method. "How to feed a family from six acres?" "Can a crop be ecologically clean?" "Mittleider and his field of miracles." These and similar titles were the headlines of articles about the unusual agricultural experiment in Zaoksky. The *Izvestiya* newspaper, for example, wrote: "His [Mittleider's] garden looks like a work of art. The

neighboring collective farm field is overgrown with weeds, and here, on the same land, you will not see a single weed.”¹¹

Mittleider's method caught the strong interest of Russian scientists as well. Scientific workshops and conferences were held, and many books by Mittleider were published in Russian and widely distributed. Friendly contacts of the Zaoksky Theological Seminary (ZTS) with the Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, Pushchino Biological Center, and a number of other organizations, institutions, and universities were established. In addition to an international certificate given by ZTS to graduates of the Agriculture Department, the Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy began granting them the certificates of a Multi-skilled Master Vegetable Grower.¹² It should be noted that Dr. Mittleider himself always tried to emphasize that his method was not “the Mittleider method,” as it came to be called, and the knowledge and success were not from man, but from God. Cooperation with earth, based on spirituality and love for the Creator and His creation, is doomed to succeed in any climatic condition. Jacob Mittleider prepared a whole cohort of talented specialists who, having scattered all over the former Soviet Union, were promoting the unique method of growing organic vegetables, making a strong contribution to the revival of agriculture. Among those who continued the work of their teacher in Zaoksky, was V. I. Tkachuk, who became the director of the Agriculture Department in 1990.

In December of 1990, M. M. Kulakov was sent to Andrews University for graduate studies and returned back in January 1992 with an M.A. degree in Systematic Theology. During his studies, Artur A. Stele was the acting rector of the seminary and Daniel Duda was appointed the academic dean. In the winter of 1991, the first graduation of the Bachelor of Theology program took place.¹³ It was a truly touching moment. For the first time in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Russia, church ministers were able to receive a quality theological education.

In the same year, the music department was opened in the Zaoksky Theological Seminary, with a view to educating choir conductors and leaders of musical ministry for local churches. The first dean of the music department was a graduate from the Saratov State Conservatory E. L. Kozlova (Rudoy). In 1996, she was followed by E. I. Godunova, a graduate from the Belarusian State Academy of Music. A great contribution to the organization and development of the music department was made by Professor Marvin Robertson, the dean of the faculty of music at Southern Adventist University (Tennessee, USA). Over the years, talented and dedicated musicians have been working at the ZTS Music Department: L. V. Pavelko, E. V. Bulgakova, T. L. Trubchenko, S. G. Polyakov, Yu. V. Pyl'kina, N. V. Lobanova, and N. V. Lozovskaya. The music department noticeably enriched the spiritual and academic life of the Zaoksky Theological Seminary. Numerous musical groups were created, among which the academic chorus and the orchestra of folk instruments especially stood out. The “Musical Lounge” events organized by the department’s teachers became popular. The evenings of classical music, Christian songs, violin, and cello music were attended by full halls of grateful listeners. A significant event in the life of the music department and the history of the musical life in our Church was the Congress of Professional Musicians held in 2000. This event gave a powerful impetus to the revival and further development of musical ministry in

local churches and raised young people's awareness of the ZTS. Today, the music department has the vocal, conductors, and piano divisions. A Master of Arts in Music program is now available.

In 1991, a branch of the Master of Theology program of Andrews University (U.S.A.) was opened in Zaoksky, which allowed the SDA Church to be the first among the Protestant churches in Russia to start training students with the Master of Arts in Religion program. Leading professors of Andrews University became frequent guests of the Zaoksky Theological Seminary, which, after the opening of the MA program, changed its status in 1993 to an Academy (*Akademiya*).¹⁴ Many ministers and responsible leaders of the SDA Church from all countries of the former Soviet Union were trained with this program. In May 1993, the Zaoksky Theological Academy (ZTA), in cooperation with the international periodical *Dialogue* (USA), started publishing the *Obraz i Podobiye (Image and Likeness)* magazine, aimed at a free dialogue between college and university students.

The development of the educational institution required the expansion of its material and educational facilities. The academy was in dire need of a student dormitory. The problem of housing the young student families was temporarily resolved by purchasing small round houses, the so-called *bochkas*, which were usually used by shift workers in the northern areas. Communication lines, including heating from the boiler room built for the Mittleider greenhouses, were brought to the "barrels" as the students living in the round houses called them.

In 1993 the construction of a new academic building accommodating a dormitory, church, dining room, and classrooms, was completed. The sponsors of this project were Garwin and Marilyn McNeilus. The building work was headed by Peter F. Kulik, a Christian businessman of Russian origin from Australia. A significant contribution to the project implementation was made by I. F. Khiminets and S. E. Chudin, who supervised the construction. On the first floor of the new building's right wing, an elementary school was located, which since 2002 has had state accreditation and provides complete secondary education to everyone willing to study there. Zaoksky Adventist School is currently providing secondary education to more than 170 pupils, keeping abreast with the times and offering specialized education programs to the upper secondary school students in humanitarian-theological and socio-economic areas. The main pedagogical concept of the school runs like this: "Harmonious development of the child's personality through the integration of school, family and church." The principals of the school over the years were as follows: T. M. Klimenko (1993-1996), V. A. Opper (1996-2000), E. Yu. Matveeva (2004-2008), N. V. Kasyanchuk (2000-2004, 2008-2010), R. G. Ershov (2010-2012), A. V. Maryutichev (2012-2014), B. G. Protasevich (2014-2015), A. B. Samokhvalov (2015-2017). Today, the school is headed by ZTS graduate Sergey V. Orishko.

A small dental clinic is located in a new building named after Garwin McNeilus. It was sponsored by John Kershner, a dentist from the United States, who donated to ZTS some dental equipment that he purchased from his personal funds. Kershner made regular visits to Zaoksky to provide dental care to students and staff.

In 1993 the newly established Bible Translation Institute (BTI), headed by the former leader of the SDA Church in the Soviet Union, M. P. Kulakov, started functioning in the building of the Zaoksky Theological Academy. The task

of BTI was to prepare a Russian translation of the Bible that would be linguistically precise, strictly literate, and, at the same time, quite clear to the modern reader. Many experts in ancient languages, linguists, stylistic consultants, and literary editors were involved in the work of translating the Bible. The first result of the institute's work was the publication, in the same year, of Paul's Epistle to the Romans as a separate document. After the death of M. P. Kulakov, his son M. M. Kulakov was appointed as a director of the institute to finish the work.

A highly significant event for the young educational institution took place in 1993—the first students of the full-time Bachelor of Theology program graduated from ZTA.¹⁵ Many graduates of the class of 1993 would later become responsible ministers and leaders of various church ministries both in Russia and abroad. In the autumn of 1994, the first Master of Theology students graduated from the Zaoksky Theological Academy, among which were four teachers of the school itself: R. N. Volkoslavskiy, V. S. Leahu, E. V. Senina, and A. I. Romanov. The graduates received their diplomas from Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.).¹⁶

In 1993, Mikhail M. Kulakov, who had been heading the ZTS from the first days of its existence, left for Oxford (U.K.) to work on his doctoral dissertation, and Artur A. Stele, a graduate from the Friedensau Adventist University (Germany) and Andrews University with an M.A. in Old Testament studies was appointed the Rector of the Zaoksky Theological Academy (ZTA). Stele was actively combining his administrative duties with research and in 1996 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation at Andrews University. Before Artur A. Stele defended his Ph.D. dissertation, his wife, Galina Stele, who worked at the seminary from the very beginning as a teacher in the Practical Theology Department, earned a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Andrews University. She became not only the first person to earn a doctoral degree from the Euro-Asia Division, but the very first woman who ever earned a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Andrews University.

During Stele's lengthy absences related to his studies, the duties of the academy's head were performed by Harry Mayden, education director of the Euro-Asia Division. In 1993, E. V. Zaitsev, who had previously worked as a dean of the department of theology, became the vice president for academic affairs.

A major step towards the development of the educational institution and the provision of educational, methodological, and informational support for the educational process was the construction of a three-story library building in 1994. For a long time, seminary books had been kept in two small rooms on the third floor of the main building. Rare books were stacked in the corners, the shelves were literally sagging under all sorts of publications closely packed. The reading room was tiny, but it was there that life was boiling up, the Holy Scripture was explored, discussions were held on various topics, which sometimes turned into heated debates that captivated everyone present.¹⁷ We must pay tribute to a number of staff members—O. M. Senin, V. S. Leahu, and M. M. Kulakov—who actively participated in the replenishment of the book collection and donated rare theological books in both Russian and English to the library. Today ZAU's library stock has more than 70,000 book titles. There is a special room for storing rare books, of which the oldest dates back to the sixteenth

century. The following people worked as the library directors in Zaoksky Theological Seminary: Heikki Silvet (1989-1994), Clinton Wahlen (1994-1995), Zeleni Teretta (1995-1996), Vasilii Osadchuk (1996-1997), and Juri Drumi (1997-1999). Since 1999 the library has been headed by Irina Zabrodina.

In 1995 the Research Center for the Spiritual and Historical Heritage of the SDA Church was opened in the new library building.¹⁸ The center has rare materials on the history of the Church, an invaluable collection of unpublished letters, sermons, and diaries of Ellen G. White, thousands of microfilm copies of church magazines, newspapers, newsletters of General Conference sessions, books from the personal library of Ellen G. White, and, of course, all of her published writings. There are also unique books that were secretly typed on typewriters or copied by hand by believers during the years of persecution. A number of exhibits illustrate the thorny path traveled by the Church in the Soviet Union.¹⁹ The center holds seminars, conducts active correspondence answering questions related to the history of Adventism and Ellen G. White's writings, and regularly publishes the *Nashe Naslediye* (*Our Heritage Newsletter*).

In 1997 an unprecedented incident took place at the academy. A total of 16 university students were brought to trial for refusing to serve in the army. Due to their religious beliefs, they asked for the possibility to carry out alternative military service, according to the right guaranteed by the constitution of the Russian Federation. This right of the students was sustained by a court decision.²⁰

In 1998, to find a way to accommodate requests from church organizations, some new programs were opened at the Zaoksky Theological Academy such as training executive assistants, accounting clerks, and translators from English (Bachelor of Arts in Religion majoring in English language). Today, many graduates of those programs are working successfully in various church organizations and institutions.

Also in 1998, construction was begun on a multi-purpose complex (MPC) which could be used all year round as a gym for regular physical education classes and various sports, as well as a hall for large events, including graduation ceremonies and major social events. In 2000 this complex designed to accommodate 1,000 people was dedicated.

In 2000, in connection with his election as the president of the Euro-Asia Division, Artur A. Stele left the school, and the vice president for Academic Affairs, E. V. Zaitsev, who had defended his doctoral thesis at Andrews University in 1998, became the rector of the Zaoksky Theological Academy. Meanwhile, the academy responded to the bold evangelistic initiative of the new ESD leadership requesting short-term training of 300 missionaries who were to plant new churches and companies in territories never before reached by the Adventist message. This new "300x300x300 Program" officially started in June 2001, when more than 300 dedicated young people began their studies in Zaoksky to subsequently leave, after three months of intensive study, for places of their future service. All those young missionaries soon became off-campus students of the ZTA Department of Theology.²¹

In order to expand the list of educational services and start implementing educational programs as required by state standards, another educational institution—Zaoksky Christian Institute of Humanities and Economics (ZCIHE)—was established in 2002 on the premises of the Zaoksky Theological Academy.²² E. V. Zaitsev was appointed the ZCIHE rector. In 2003, the ZCIHE was granted a license for educational activities from the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, and the first students were enrolled in the Bachelor's Program in Economics. The assistant vice president for Academic Affairs, T. V. Lebedeva and the dean of the department of economics, S. P. Postnykh, were indispensable helpers in organizing the educational process according to state standards. Because of the appointment of E. V. Zaitsev as the ZCIHE rector, V. I. Tkachuk, who had previously worked as the ZTA vice president for Administrative and Financial Affairs, was elected the ZTA rector.

In connection with the development of the ZCIHE and licensing of new educational programs, the construction of the second academic building began, and two new computer laboratories and a new conference hall (the Blue Hall) were opened. In 2008, the ZCIHE successfully passed the procedure of relicensing and received state accreditation.

Beginning in 2005, the socially significant Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) program has been offered by the Zaoksky Theological Academy. This program was designed to help society recognize the need to change the public health model so that it would be primarily aimed at preventing diseases, including those that threaten Russia as a nation today: alcoholism, drug addiction, and AIDS. The implementation of this educational program was possible thanks to established ties with the School of Public Health of Loma Linda University (California, USA). Experienced instructors from LLU are teaching public health management, health economics, medical sociology and statistics, human ecology, epidemiology, ethical aspects of public health, public health and legislation, public health and nutrition problems, etc. The students are offered fundamental, in-depth specialized training in public health related to ensuring preventive orientation of the healthcare system, development of public health strategies and policies, sanitary and epidemiological welfare of the population, ensuring sound stewardship at different levels of the healthcare system, promotion of healthy lifestyles among the population, and strengthening of people's health.

Another milestone event took place in 2005. At the beginning of the academic year, a new educational building was completed, thus markedly increasing the ZTA educational space. Although the building was initially intended for the needs of the Department of Theology, today students from almost all programs can be taught in cheerful, comfortable, and aesthetically-pleasing lecture halls and classrooms.

In 2007 the Zaoksky Theological Academy, in cooperation with Griggs University (U.S.A.), introduced a new M.A. in Youth Leadership program. This practice-oriented program was designed to equip leaders of youth organizations and movements for more efficient and successful service. In the same year, the Zaoksky Theological Academy, together with Andrews University, introduced the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree program. The first graduation from this program was in 2012.²³

From 2009 to 2013 the Zaoksky Theological Academy was headed by a graduate of Andrews University, a specialist in missiology, Yu. N. Drumi. In 2009 the Master of Ministry program majoring in Church Administration was opened. A serious contribution to the implementation of this program was made by the ZTA vice president for Academic Affairs, L. P. Gunko. In 2011, the ZCIHE, in addition to the BA in Economics program, was granted accreditation for the four new BA programs in Theology, Linguistics, Music Pedagogics, and Management. In the same year, the Faculty of Linguistics and Humanitarian and Social Sciences (headed by M. M. Savina), the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Natural Sciences (headed by S. P. Postnykh), and the Faculty of Music Education (headed by E. L. Rudoy), were set up.

In 2013 the Zaoksky Theological Academy was headed by B. G. Protasevich, an experienced church administrator. In those days the educational policy of the Russian state underwent substantial transformation. They started to reduce the number of private educational institutions which were deemed inefficient and not meeting the national standards for quality education. The ZCIHE was facing serious problems in accrediting new educational programs. Following numerous consultations with the *Rosobrnadzor* (Federal Education and Science Supervision Agency), the Board of Trustees decided to merge two educational institutions, ZTA and ZCIHE, into one—Zaoksky University of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while retaining all the existing educational programs. On February 20, 2017, the Zaoksky Adventist University (ZAU) was founded, with B. G. Protasevich elected as its first rector. In the same year, ZAU was granted licenses for all the ZCIHE educational programs except for economics. In 2018 Zaoksky Adventist University began preparation work for state accreditation of its educational programs, which should be completed in the spring of 2019. The great contribution to the development of ZAU and to the process of licensing and accrediting programs during this uneasy time has been made by ZAU vice president for Academic Affairs, A. A. Petrishchev. Starting in 2019 several new educational programs will be launched, including Pedagogics (primary school teacher and English teacher, 4 years), Graphics Design and Programming Fundamentals (1 year), and International Economics (4 years).

Zaoksky Adventist University Today

At present, Zaoksky Adventist University is a modern provider of higher education that meets all the requirements for the educational process. The university employs experienced teachers who have received excellent training and gained academic degrees in domestic and foreign universities. The ZAU possesses substantial facilities and resources that make it possible to train specialists at the highest level. The university has a fairly high level of computerization of the educational process, providing each student with access to modern information databases in accordance with the areas of their training. This opportunity is realized through Internet/Intranet technologies, components of distance learning systems, and the use of modern software products. The university has several electronic classrooms to form a local area network. Modern multimedia technologies are actively applied in teaching.

Scientific and practical conferences are held regularly, with participation of ZAU teachers and students, as well as guests from other universities. The range of issues that are submitted for discussion at the conferences indicate an active social position of ZAU and include national projects and problems of their implementation; major social problems of our time; family values; the place of religion and the role of the Church in the postmodern era; problems of theological and religious education; problems of legal and spiritual culture of modern Russian society; information revolution and modern information culture, etc.

Zaoksky Adventist University has a developed system of student self-governance. The leaders of the Student Association are annually elected at the general student meeting. The Council of the Student Association has its representatives in the ZAU Committee for Educational Work and is actively involved in the ZAU activities. A newspaper *ProSvet*, published by the Student Association, is very popular among university students.

At present university teachers and tutors are searching for and testing the most effective methods of working with students by using modern technologies, introducing the best models and achievements into teaching practice, and promoting the students' personal potential through the implementation of numerous denominational and socially significant cultural and social programs.

University teachers and employees can be proud of their students, who, being active and utilizing their creative potential in various spheres of Christian ministry, adequately represent their educational institution both in local churches and to the general public. It was due to the work of the students of Zaoksky Theological University that Bible courses were organized, evangelical programs were held, and eventually local churches were planted in eight cities of the Moscow and Tula Regions—Pushchino, Protvino, Chekhov, Podolsk, Serpukhov, Yasnogorsk, Aleksin, and Kremenki. Every year students of the department of theology take part in major evangelistic programs, thus getting acquainted with the methods of public evangelism and gaining the necessary skills.

Thanks to the initiative and dedication of students, the *Blagovestnik* (Evangelist Club) for literature evangelists is actively working at ZAU, enabling students to learn the art of evangelism through distribution of the printed word. During winter and summer holidays, groups of students travel to different cities in Russia and neighboring countries to bring God's saving message to people.

Today, the Zaoksky Adventist University lives a full-fledged academic and spiritual life. The Committee for Educational Work makes this life even brighter and more intense, offering students a wide range of diverse activities such as charity, social, creative, and leisure events. ZAU has a movie club and a number of creative teams. Lectures are delivered on visual arts, music, classics of Russian and foreign literature, ethics, and communication standards.

Various forms and methods of education are used. Civic and patriotic education is carried out through a system of social projects (Christmas Programs for Orphans, Clean Village, and Assistance to the Elderly and Veterans) and festive events. Every year university students participate in celebrations devoted to Day of Village, International Day of Older Persons, International Day of Disabled Persons, and others.

The important social activities of ZAU students and teachers include prevention of chemical addictions and socio-psychological rehabilitation of pedagogically neglected adolescents and young people. Students and teachers have conducted socially significant programs such as “Generation NEXT Chooses,” “Week of Horrors,” “Health Exhibitions.” “New Frontiers or Russian Drive,” “Breathe Freely,” and “New Start.” When implementing these projects, a social partnership is carried out with various organizations of the Tula region, including the regional public organizations such as “Family Without Drugs,” the Education Department of the Tula Region’s Administration, Tula Department on Work with Young People, and Child Protection Services of the Zaoksky District Administration.

University students, together with their teachers, are involved in implementing a large social program among the local population, thus benefitting people’s spiritual and moral development. They have taken the district hospital under patronage. ZAU students and teachers regularly take part in the improvement program for Zaoksky, provide assistance to elderly, lonely, and needy people, and organize charity events for low-income families.

In recent years, the Zaoksky Adventist University has become a traditional venue for major church events, including youth congresses. For many young people coming from neighboring and distant countries, such events become a serious milestone in their personal spiritual growth. Of the numerous sermons, seminars, and workshops, the youth acquire what they especially need for a more fruitful and effective service to the community. A significant public response is evoked by social actions of congress participants aimed at tidying up the streets of Zaoksky village, the territory of the central district hospital, and a memorial complex in honor of the fallen soldiers of the Second World War.²⁴

Teachers, employees, and students of the Zaoksky Adventist University can hardly conceive of their life apart from the Church that fulfilled a dream of establishing this unique educational institution. They collectively strive to fulfill the mission for which the Church exists in the world. This mission is, in particular, to help young people in gaining a living experience of communication with God, in their spiritual and moral development, as well as in training clergy and other specialists for the needs of church organizations. Those who work and study in the university today do not think of themselves apart from the society with which they share a common destiny and whose needs they are trying to alleviate.

Rector Chronology

Zaoksky Theological Seminary (Academy) (1988-2017): Mikhail Mikhailovich Kulakov (1988-1993); Artur Arturovich Stele (1993-2000); Yevgeniy (Eugene) Vladimirovich Zaitsev (2000-2003); Vladimir Ivanovich Tkachuk (2003-2009); Yuriy Nikolayevich Drumi (2009-2013); Boris Gennadievich Protasevich (2013-2017).

Zaoksky Christian Institute of Humanities and Economics (2003-present): Yevgeniy (Eugene) Vladimirovich Zaistev (2003-2011); Zhan Petrovich Taranyuk (2011-2013); Yevgeniy (Eugene) Vladimirovich Zaitsev (2013-2015);

Boris Gennadievich Protasevich (2015-present).

Zaoksky Adventist University (2017-present): Boris Gennadievich Protasevich (2017-present)

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NOTES

1. Eugene V. Zaitsev, *Istoriya Tserkvi Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia v Rossii* (Zaokskiy: Istochnik Zhizni, 2008), 362-363.
2. Nina G. Volkoslavskaya, "Pervyy yubiley," *Slovo Primireniya*, no. 2 (1990): 3-4.
3. Mikhail M. Kulakov obtained his degree in theology at Newbold College, England.
4. Details on which state agencies he had to pester to secure approval for the construction, the first rector of Zaoksky Theological Seminary, Mikhail M. Kulakov, revealed in his book *God's Soviet Miracles* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993).
5. Anton Petrishchev, "Pomni ves' put,' kotorym vyol tebya Gospod'...," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 4 (1998): 4-7.
6. "Sozdan religioznyy tsentr," *Izvestiya Newspaper* (December 2, 1988).
7. "Eto uzhe bolshe ne mechta," *Slovo Primireniya*, no. 2 (1989): 3.
8. Anna Leahu, "Zhizn' seminarii: zadachi i perspektivy," *Slovo Primireniya*, no. 10 (1989): 2-4.
9. Oleg Senin, "Radost' i blagodarenye," *Slovo Primireniya*, no. 33 (1989): 1.
10. Svetlana Volkoslavskaya, "My zhdyom khoroshiy urozhay," *Slovo Primireniya*, no. 15 (1989): 1-2.
11. See: A. Chizhov, and V. Butov, "Metod doktora Mittleidera," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 1 (1998): 52.
12. *Slovo Primireniya*, no. 33 (1989): 3.
13. Viktor Leahu, "Vy - svet miru...," *Slovo Primireniya*, no. 2 (1991): 1.
14. In Russia, "academy" is an institution of higher education.
15. The group of first graduates of the BA in Religion included only 14 persons. However, there were a total of 110 full-time students at the Department of Theology by that time. See: *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 1 (1994): 32-33.
16. O. Alekseev, "Inauguratsiya magistrrov," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 4 (1994): 27-28.
17. Svetlana Skripnikova, "Svet v oknakh," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 4 (1995): 50-51.

18. Clinton Wahlen, "Ot samizdata do lazernykh diskov: v Rossii otkrylsya Tsentr issledovaniya trudov Ellen G. White," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 1 (1996): 36-37.
 19. I. Bolotnikova, "Mir Ellen G. White," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 2 (1999): 17.
 20. V. Merkulova, "Vaznyy pretsedent," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 3 (1997): 14.
 21. Elena Kotova, "My reshili poyti dorogoy very," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, special issue (2003): 4-7.
 22. Valeriy Ivanov, "Vysshee obrazovanie v khristianskoy srede," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 3 (2003): 17-19.
 23. A. Novoselova, "Khristianskoye obrazovanie – budushchee Tserkvi," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 3 (2012): 24-25.
 24. See: V. Demidov, "'Ty dorog Mne': Pod takim devizom v pos. Zaokskiy Tul'skoy oblasti proshel molodezhnyy congress Tserkvi Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnia v SNG," *Adventistskiy Vestnik*, no. 3 (2004): 2-7.

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