



Levant Mission School students and teachers, 1923, Istanbul.

Shared by Hyosu Jung. Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Levant Union Mission

SHAWNA VYHMEISTER

Shawna Vyhmeister holds a Ph.D. in education, and is a professor and research director at Middle East University where she works with her husband. Vyhmeister and her husband, Ronald Vyhmeister, have lived and worked in Africa, Asia, South America, and the United States. Their two adult sons and their wives live in the United States. Her hobbies include music, writing, travel, birding, diving, reading, cooking, learning languages, and playing games. Her greatest joy is working for the Lord, especially if it involves young people.

The first record of the Levant Union Mission (LUM) appears in the 1907 *SDA Yearbook*. It was comprised of Greece and Crete, the Turkish Empire, Egypt, Sudan, Persia, and Abyssinia. The headquarters were at 31 First

Khaldive Street, Alexandria, Egypt. The LUM dissolved into separate fields in 1923.

The officers of the LUM consisted of an advisory committee of L. R. Conradi, A. W. George, Z.G. Baharian, Jay J. Nethery, and B. Severin (treasurer). Conradi had previously organized the Adventist Church work in Egypt in 1901. The LUM was under the direct supervision of the General European Conference. There was no union president or superintendent.

The total population of those regions amounted to 60 million people. The Adventist membership was a mere 288 in four churches. The Egyptian Mission had one church of 27 members. The Syrian Mission had one church of 21 members. The Turkish Mission had two churches, the largest of which had a membership of 240. Greece, Persia, and Crete had no Adventist presence.¹

The LUM emerged during a period of few and separate missions in the Middle East region around the turn of the twentieth century. Its predecessor was the Oriental Union Mission (OUM) which included Turkey, Syria, and Egypt. W. H. Wakeham was its director and its headquarters were in Cairo, Egypt.

In 1912 E. E. Frauchiger, from Europe, who had worked in the Turkish Mission for two years, was appointed as the first director of the LUM. The headquarters were moved to Constantinople. When Frauchiger returned to Switzerland in 1919, Henry Erzberger relocated from Syria to replace him as superintendent until 1923 when the LUM dissolved into separate fields under the direct administration of the European Division.

The following were appointed presidents of the respective fields: Otto Staubert (Greece); M. C. Grin (Turkey); Nils Zerne (Egypto-Syrian Mission). This realignment was the direct result of the geopolitical disruptions caused by the First World War (1914-1918). English, Scandinavian, and American workers maintained minimal missionary work during the war.²

Turkey, Syria, Egypt, and Persia (currently Iran) were the four main countries of the LUM that were led by four prominent and exceptional church leaders whose names have since gone down in the annals of Adventist missions history in that region: Babarian the Armenian, Ising the German, Keough the Britisher, and Oster the Swiss American.³

Adventist Church historian, A.W. Spalding, authored a detailed and riveting account of missionaries and members in the LUM countries during the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁴ Those poignant stories are remarkably similar to those of the early Christian church in the book of Acts. They experienced danger and discomfort of all sorts. They were dragged before courts, persecuted, and held in chains. They endured hunger and cold. They traveled on foot, camel back, in trading vessels, and in native river boats.

They were caught up in riots and in wars. They were starved, beaten, abused, and staggered across mountains. Their bodies burned with fever. They were carried upon the backs of others, tossed across the backs of horses, and sold into slavery. Many died. Through it all, they demonstrated and witnessed about God's love. They kept their faith strong. They continued to worship on the Sabbath day. They preached and proclaimed Christ's second

coming.⁵

In 1995 the Education department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists published a textbook on the history of Adventism for secondary schools. One section covers some of the countries of the LUM.⁶ In these stories, the legacy of the self-sacrificing missionaries and members in a region plagued by many wars over the centuries lives on today.

SOURCES

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Spalding, Arthur Whitefield. *Christ's Last Legion: Second Volume of a History of Seventh-day Adventists Covering the Years 1901-1948*. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1949. <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Books/CLL1949.pdf>.

NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1907), 90, 91, accessed <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1907.pdf>.
2. Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Christ's Last Legion: Second Volume of a History of Seventh-day Adventists Covering the Years 1901-1948* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1949), 446, 447, accessed <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Books/CLL1949.pdf>.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 451-468.
6. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Department of Education, *The Story of our Church* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1955), 617-623, accessed <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Books/TSOOC1956.pdf>.

