

Life and Health Publishing House

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Life and Health is the Seventh-day Adventist publishing house in Romania.

Founding

It was in 1920—the year when the Romanian Conference was given the status of a union—that the decision was made to establish a Bucharest-based joint-stock company named “The Word of the Gospel.” In this way, two acute problems were solved: it was now possible to locally edit and publish Adventist literature, and a way was found by which the Romanian Seventh-day Adventist Church was able to own property, given the fact that it had not yet been recognized as a legal entity.¹

In order to carry out the decision to establish a publishing company with its own printing house, as well as to find a proper office for the Romanian Union, the union committee and the publishing company committee decided to buy from Ana (Aneta) Dörner her house and the related land located in Bucharest at 116 Labirint Street. Subsequently, in 1922, a chapel was also built on this property, which is the present-day Labirint Church. The property was bought in 1921, and the entire complex—composed of the buildings of the publishing company and the printing house, the union office and the chapel—was built between 1921 and 1923.²

History

Frederic Brennwald, a representative from the Adventist publishing house in Hamburg, was commissioned by the publications department of the European Division to go into Romania and other Eastern European countries in order to lay the foundations for the publishing work. He was the one to organize the newly-established publishing company, helped by Norman Nielsen, who was transferred from the same publishing house in Hamburg as the organizer and technical director of the Adventist printing house in Bucharest.³ In 1923 Norman Nielsen died and management of the company was assigned to a delegate of the Romanian Union, Radu Pleșea, who had previously been the cashier.

In 1927, Theodor Dresen was named manager of the company. He came from Hamburg too, as had Norman Nielsen, and he occupied this position until 1936 when he was replaced by Arthur Văcăreanu, who remained in office until 1948 when the company ceased operation. On March 27, 1928, the union received from Hamburg

two modern printing presses, which gave a strong boost to the publishing work in the Romanian Union.

The year 1942 marks both the peak and the beginning of the downfall for the Adventist press in Romania.

Romania had been at war for a year. Beginning in 1938, Adventist magazines appeared with the notice:

“Approved by the Censorship of the Army Corps II, Bucharest.” In 1941, *The Signs of the Times* and *The Friend of the Youth* magazines had merged into a single magazine, which was published without title, having on its cover only an image; the title, bearing the fonts characteristic to the two magazines, appeared on the inner cover: *The Signs of the Times* and *The Friend of the Youth*. In April 1942, the Publications Control Commission sent notice to “The Word of the Gospel” Company, in which it was announced that publishing and distributing the magazines was forbidden. Interventions were made with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, but to no avail. On the contrary, restrictive measures increased. The journal of the company holds records of several amounts of money spent on printing books that, subsequently, were not approved by the censorship. In order to find a way to survive, the publishing house accepted works from *The Official Monitor* and another company was established—“The Literary Speech,” an “institute for graphic arts, publisher and bookstore. Romanian anonymous company.”⁴

However, state pressure and abuse increased, so that at the end of the war, the Administrative Council of “The Word of the Gospel” Company, in its meeting of December 25, 1944, decided to sell the printing machines to “The Literary Speech,” which also took over the staff of the printing house, a total of 16 people. On July 20, 1948, “The Word of the Gospel” Company transferred all its property assets to the Seventh-day Adventist Christian Cult (which, through the Law 407/1946, had been given legal authority) and it was dissolved. As to “The Literary Speech” Company, at the end of the same year (1948), a delegated administrator was imposed on it by ministerial decision, which meant the actual termination of the Adventist Church’s ownership over this company. On January 1, 1951, the printing press was requisitioned, and on September 1, 1951, the society ceased operations and was liquidated.

Until 1990, all publishing activity was stopped; the only publication that appeared was the Romanian *Curierul Adventist* the official magazine of the union. However, it was published under many restrictions, and in 1955 it contained only four pages, two of which containing the Sabbath School lessons.⁵ In 1960, Dumitru Popa was named the new editor-in-chief of *Curierul Adventist*, the official magazine of the Romanian Union, and he would lead its destiny until December 1993.

Beginning in 1977, the pressure lessened to some extent and several books were published in addition to the magazine, *Curierul Adventist*. Thus, in 1977, a volume of written material for pastors and the book *The Son of God and the Son of Man* (under the guidance of Dumitru Popa) were published. In 1979, two courses for the theological seminary were printed: “A Course in Biblical Archaeology” and “A Course in the Old Testament,” the author of which was Pastor Gheorghe Indricău, former professor in the seminary. In 1980, two books of Ellen White were published: *Steps to Christ* and *Christ’s Object Lessons*, followed, in 1982, by other courses for the

seminary and books such as *The Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy*. In addition to these books, several volumes of Bible studies for the Sabbath School were published.

After 1990, the publishing activity began with difficulty, being organized only in 1991, at the initiative of Pastor Lazăr Forrai. He procured a printing press with the help of Norbert Koch, a typographer from Germany, and he installed it in Bucharest, at 45 Romulus Street at first, then at 8 Argeşului Street and, in 1992, at 116 Labirint Street, the former interwar headquarters which had been reinstated. It was also at this time that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania received as gifts from the United States and Germany, several printing machines which were extremely helpful for the activities of the printing house.

In 1992, Dan Dumitru was named manager of the printing house. Then, in February 1993, Valeriu Petrescu was put in charge and Dan Dumitru became chief of production.⁶ During 1993, a number of facilities were added, a hall was built on Valeriu Branişte Street, in order to expand the space necessary for the printing press, and the staff attended training courses.⁷ Valeriu Petrescu remained in office until 2000. The publishing house had difficulty finding its way in the economically unstable context of that period, but it succeeded in developing and publishing books in an impressive number of copies (tens and hundreds of thousands). It was also during this period, in 1999, that *Life+Health (Via??+S?n?tate)* was established, a monthly magazine that is still published today.

In 2001, Paul Csavdari was named as the new manager for the publishing house, and he remained in that position until 2005. This period brought a series of accomplishments: the literature evangelists were reorganized; bookstores were opened in Bucharest, Ploieşti, and Târgovişte in collaboration with the Sola Scriptura Institute; and bookselling campaigns were held at the seaside in the summer of 2002 in collaboration with A.S.E.F. (the Association for Health, Education, and Family). In 2002, a Hungarian-language department was established in Cluj in order to better meet the needs of the Hungarian-speaking Romanian Adventist believers.

Since 2005, the position of manager has been occupied by Iacob Pop. New projects have been developed which have helped the publishing company grow and reach the current development: “Book of the Year” (2006) set an unprecedented record of 1,200,000 copies in 2008; “Open Doors Day” (2008) is a project which is still running, with impressive success; “Bible Day” (2011); the establishment of a new department dedicated to children (2012); and “Little Ones’ Day” (2013), a project which is still running. In 2019 it was decided that the Bible would be the book of the year 2020, and through the Interconfessional Bible Society of Romania, the first run of 220,000 copies was printed.

In 2012, with the support of the Euro-Africa Division, a new building was erected that houses the publishing company and its printing department, in Pantelimon, near Bucharest, on 10,000 square meters of land. The construction (totaling 3,450 square meters) was finished in five months, offering the possibility for the editorial department, the printing machines and the storehouse to be in the same place, thus bringing efficiency to the activities and providing modern working conditions. Currently, “Life and Health” Publisher is the only publishing

company of the Inter-European Division which has its own printing facilities, thus being able to offer its services to the division. At the division's request, it has already printed material in seven languages.

SOURCES

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Petrescu, Valeriu. *Presa adventistă din România 1884-2002*. București: Viața și Sănătate, 2003.

Popa, Dumitru. *Pagini din istoria bisericii adventiste de ziua a șaptea din România 1936-1955*, vol. III. București: Viața și Sănătate, 2008.

NOTES

1. The founding members of the company were: Petre P. Paulini, Ștefan Demetrescu, Eliazar Albulescu, Ilie Stroiescu, Gheorghe Teodorescu, Alexandru Crăciunescu, Alecu Darie, Constantin Florescu, Neculai Jelescu, and Constantin Ouatu. The first Administrative Council was elected for a period of three years and it was composed of Petre P. Paulini (president), Ștefan Demetrescu (vice-president), Constantin Florescu (secretary), Alecu Darie (cashier), and Eliazar Albulescu (member).

The constitutive act was drawn up on June 17, 1920, in the presence of the lawyer Cesar Partheniu. The articles of association contained all the specifications required by the laws in force at the time: the purpose of the company, the social capital, the apparatus, the funds of the company, the administration of the company, the balance sheet, the sharing of the benefits, modifications, liquidations, etc. The actual establishment of the company was put in effect through the sentence no. 500 of October 12, 1920, of the Ilfov Commercial Court, Section I.

2. For more details, see Cristinel Sava, Adrian Neagu (ed), *Editura Viața și Sănătate 25 de ani de activitate*, (Publisher Life and Health 25 Years of Activity), *Viața și Sănătate*, Pantelimon, 2019, 10-15; and Valeriu Petrescu, *Presa adventistă din România 1884-2002* (Adventist Press from Romania 1884-2002), *Viața și Sănătate*, București, 2003.

3. Until the construction work at the complex at 116 Labirint Street was finished, a small printing house was bought on 2 Ocolului Street, and the Adventist publishing house in Hamburg donated printing machines and accessories to the Romanian company to help it begin its activity. In 1923, the new building was ready, and the printing house was moved there. From that moment on, all published materials were printed at 116 Labirint Street.

4. The document was published in *Monitorul Oficial* (The Official Monitor), year CXI, nr 156, from July 8, 1943, part II, from Dumitru Popa, *Pagini din istoria bisericii adventiste de ziua a șaptea din România 1936-1955* (pages from the History of Seventh-day Adventists in Romania, 1936-1955) vol. III, *Viața și Sănătate*, București, 2008, 245-247.

5. The other two contained articles like: "May the Atomic Force Be a Force of Peace," "We Live Historical Days," "The Day of Liberation," "On the Road of Peace," and inevitable articles about "Seasonal Works," "The Third and Fourth Hoeing of Crops," "The Fruit of the Labor," etc.
6. The rules of the procedure and the bylaws of the publishing company were immediately drawn up. These documents stipulated the organization of the company, its departments, and the duties of the Managing Committee, the Executive Committee, the manager, and the chief of production in the printing department. In the March 3, 1993, meeting of the union committee, these documents were approved and the decision was made to establish (Cuvântul Evangheliei) "The Word of the Gospel" Publishing House as a unit of production of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania.
7. A year later, on December 21, 1994, with Valeriu Petrescu as manager, "The Word of the Gospel" Publishing House became a limited liability company and changed its name to "Life and Health" (Viață și Sănătate) Publishing House Ltd., a name that it has kept to the present day.

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