

Black Sea Conference

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The Black Sea Conference was a Russian church unit that covered the eastern part of Ukraine. It operated from 1919 to sometime after 1930, but after that year, the *Yearbook* did not report on Soviet church units until 1982.

Territory and Statistics

Period: 1919-c. 1930

Territory (1930): The Kherson, Kryvyi Rih, Odessa, Mikolayiv, Pershomaisk, Zinovievsk Okruhas of the Ukrainian SSR, and the Moldavian Autonomous SSR¹

Membership (1930): 668²

Churches (1930): 34³

Origin of Seventh-day Adventist Work in the Territory

The founding churches of the Black Sea Mission were in Bender, Grigoriopol, Ianovsk, N. Michailovka, Odessa, Sergejevskaja, Levkovky, Rachny, Selischtsche, Svedenova, Uladovka, Woroschilovka, and Zerazika.⁴ At least one of these congregations, Grigoriopol, started in the late nineteenth century.⁵ Others were founded during later church units such as the Southern Russian Conference.

Organizational History

As the various Russian fields expanded, it continued to be subdivided. At the Russian Union meeting in Riga, Latvia, in April 1912, the Black Sea Mission was organized by taking the Bessarabia and Kherson Governorates from the South Russian Conference and the Podolia Governorate from the Little Russian Mission.⁶ At its formation, the members of the Mission were nearly 300.⁷ Initial officers were director D. P. Gäde, secretary J. Gorelik, treasurer P. Brandt, B. Schmidt, and J. Albrecht.⁸

At the 1913 European Division Council in Budapest, Hungary, commencing on October 30, administration decided to divide the Russian Union into the East and West Russian Unions.⁹ The changes took effect January 1, 1914. The Black Sea Mission became a part of the West Russian Union.¹⁰

Ukraine became a hotly disputed territory in the wake of World War I and the Russian Revolution. Both the powers to which its territory had primarily belonged, Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire, had been abolished. After a series of wars and short-lived governments, Ukraine arose as a new state and a Soviet republic. During these years of chaos, information about the Adventist church in the area became much more limited. For instance, the Russian and Ukrainian church units were not updated in the *Yearbook* from 1918–21, 1922 only listing their names. What information can be gleaned is that in 1919, the Black Sea Mission became the Black Sea Conference.¹¹ In 1924, the All Ukrainian Union Conference was organized to comprise all the Ukrainian church units, including the Black Sea Conference.¹² The territory of the conference changed over time as borders between countries shifted during these wars. For instance, Ukraine lost Bessarabia, and that territory was moved from the Black Sea Conference to the Moldavian Conference.¹³

Another factor complicating the history of the conference is that during the 1920s, the administrative division of Ukraine was overhauled several times. Consequently, the territory description of the Black Sea Conference changed several times. In 1923 it was given as the Kherson and Mykolaiv Governorates,¹⁴ in 1925 as the Odessa Governorate,¹⁵ and in 1927 the Kherson, Kryvyi Rih, Mykolaiv, Odessa, and Pershomaïsk, Zinovievsk Okruhas, along with the Autonomous Moldavian Republic.¹⁶ During the redrawing of administrative boundaries, the borders of the Conference shifted as well.

The address of the Black Sea Mission was first given in 1915 as a post box in Riga.¹⁷ It was not listed again until 1923, as a post box in Kiev.¹⁸ This changed again in 1927, when the post box was in Odessa.¹⁹

After 1930, the Iron Curtain hid Ukrainian church units from view. They did not appear again in the *Yearbook* until decades later. As the Communist era drew to a close, church units resurfaced. The territory of the former Black Sea Conference was then at first covered by the Odessa and Kherson Districts, organized in 1978 and 1967, respectively.²⁰

Administration

Black Sea Mission Directors: D. P. Gäde, 1913–1915; P. Sviridov, 1916–1921.

Black Sea Conference Presidents: P. Sviridov, 1922–1924; J. A. Janzen, 1925–1926; J. K. Reimer, 1927–c. 1930.

SOURCES

“Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912.” *Zions-Wächter*, May 20, 1912.

“Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. April bis 30. Juni 1912.” *Zions-Wächter*, 306–309.

Conradi, Ludwig R. “New Developments in Eastern Europe.” *ARH*, July 4, 1912.

Conradi, Ludwig R. “European Division Council in Budapest.” *ARH*, December 18, 1913.

NOTES

1. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1930), 272.
2. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1930), 272.
3. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1930), 272.
4. "Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912," *Zions-Wächter*, May 20, 1912, 215.
5. See Jón Hjörleifur Stefánsson, "The Russian Mission," table.
6. Ludwig R. Conradi, "New Developments in Eastern Europe," *ARH*, July 4, 1912, 11–12; "Black Sea Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1913), 111; "South Russian Conference" and "Little Russian Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1912), 116, 117. The Black Sea Mission may have been formed even earlier before its 'official' organization. What points towards this is the fact that it is listed already in the first quarter report of 1912 in *Zions-Wächter*, and the Yearbook of 1913 states that it was "separated from South Russian Conference and Little Russian Mission Jan. 1, 1912." "Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912," *Zions-Wächter*, May 20, 1912, 215; "Black Sea Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1913), 111.
7. The Black Sea Mission was already listed, perhaps in anticipation of its organization, in the first quarter of 1912, even though it was created early in the second quarter. At the end of the first quarter, the members of the territory were 284. At the end of its actual first quarter, members stood at 295. "Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912," *Zions-Wächter*, May 20, 1912, 215; "Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. April bis 30. Juni 1912," *Zions-Wächter*, 308.
8. "Black Sea Mission," *Yearbook* (1913), 111.
9. Ludwig R. Conradi, "European Division Council in Budapest," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, December 18, 1913, 12.
10. "Black Sea Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1914), 112.
11. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1923), 105.
12. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1927), 141.
13. "Moldavian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1920), 141.
14. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1923), 105.

15. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1925), 117.
 16. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1927), 141.
 17. "Black Sea Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1915), 121.
 18. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1923), 105.
 19. "Black Sea Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1927), 141.
 20. "Kherson District" and "Odessa District," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), 336.
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