

# Russian Union Conference

---

JÓN HJÖRLEIFUR STEFÁNSSON

Jón Hjörleifur Stefánsson, M.A.,  
is a Ph.D. candidate, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

---

The Russian Union Conference was a church unit that comprised the Russian Empire from 1908 to 1913, excluding Finland, and Siberia after 1911.

## Territory and Statistics<sup>1</sup>

Period: 1908-1913

Territory: The Russian Empire, excepting Finland and Siberia (the latter since 1911)

Membership: 4,569 (end of 1913)

Churches: about 170 locations (end of 1913)

## Official Organization

Adventist missionary work in Russia commenced in the late 19th century. By 1890 the Russian Mission was established as part of the German Union Conference. As the work grew, the Russian church units proliferated, and by 1907 the work had grown sufficiently for the Russian church units to be separated from the German Union Conference to become the Russian Union Conference.<sup>2</sup>

This called for a reorganization of the church units in Russia. The South Russian Mission was changed to the South Russian Conference at its annual meeting in September.<sup>3</sup> At a meeting in Riga in October 1907, the North Russian Mission was abolished<sup>4</sup> and its territory was organized into the Baltic Conference and the Western Russian Mission.<sup>5</sup> These changes took effect on January 1, 1908.<sup>6</sup> The three Russian fields that were not going through a transition—the Caucasian Conference, the Middle Russian Mission, and the East Russian Mission—came together at a meeting in Riga on October 25, 1907, where the Russian Union was organized, and the three other church units—the Baltic and South Russian Conferences and the West Russian Mission—were incorporated as well.<sup>7</sup> The union started operation on January 1, 1908.<sup>8</sup> It covered the entire Russian Empire except for Finland. The headquarters address was Grindelberg 15a, Hamburg.<sup>9</sup> Membership shortly after the organization in Riga was 2,558.<sup>10</sup> Initial officers were J. T. Böttcher (president), S. Bojanus (secretary), N. Schlatterer (treasurer), and executive committee members H. J. Löbsack, D. Isaak, O. Wildgrube, H. K. Löbsack,

D. P. Gäde, and O. Sprohge.<sup>11</sup>

## Development

During the six years that the Russian Union existed, church units continued to subdivide and reorganize as the work increased. This period coincided with the period of peace between the Russian Revolution in 1905 and its aftermath and the outbreak of World War I.

In 1908 Siberia was removed from the territory of the East Russian Mission and the Siberian Mission was organized. The change went into effect on January 1, 1909.<sup>12</sup>

In 1909, the union address was changed to Kleine Nevastraße 12, Riga.<sup>13</sup>

At the union meeting in Moscow on March 18 to 29, 1909, the Little Russian Mission was organized (by taking territory from Middle Russian Mission and South Russia Conference) and backdating the change to the commencement of the year.<sup>14</sup>

In 1910 two organizational changes were made and took effect in 1911. The territory of Siberia was cut off from the Russian Union when the Siberian Mission was replaced with the Siberian Union Mission and its subfields.<sup>15</sup> The Russian Union District also started operation, comprising Riga "and its suburbs," within the Baltic Conference.<sup>16</sup>

In 1911 two other changes were decided on which went into effect in 1912. The Caucasian Conference was divided into the North Caucasian Conference and the Trans-Caucasian Mission,<sup>17</sup> and the West Russian Mission was divided into the West Russian and the White Sea Missions.<sup>18</sup>

At the union meeting at Riga in April 1912, much of the territory was reorganized by splitting three church units into six. The Baltic Conference became the Baltic and Neva Conferences; the South Russian Conference became the Azov Conference and the Black Sea Mission; and the West Russian Mission was divided into the West Russian and Polish Missions.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the address was changed as well, but the 1913 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* listed it at "Beröa," Böettcher & co., Post Box 982, Riga.<sup>20</sup>

By 1913 it had become untenable to administer the work in the immense Empire as one union. Membership had nearly doubled since the organization of the union. At the European Division Council at Budapest, commencing on October 30, it was decided to divide the Russian Union into the East and West Russian Unions.<sup>21</sup> The changes took effect on January 1, 1914.<sup>22</sup>

## Institutions

The Russian Union relied largely on the assistance of institutions in the German Union. Students would go to Friedensau for studies, and the Hamburg Publishing House published literature in Russian.<sup>23</sup> In 1912 the SDA

*Yearbook* listed a Russian branch of the publishing house, located in Riga.<sup>24</sup>

## Executive Officers Chronology

President: J. T. Böttcher (1908<sup>25</sup>-1913).

Secretaries: Sophie Bojanus (1908-1911); E. Borm (1912-1913).

Treasurers: N. Schlatterer (1908-1909); P. Brandt (1910-1913).

---

### SOURCES

"Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Oktober bis 31. Dezember 1913." *Zions-Wächter*, February 16, 1914.

Bojanus, Sophie. "Sitzung des Unionausschusses in Moskau." *Zions-Wächter*, April 19, 1909.

Böttcher, J. T. "Russia." *ARH*, May 13, 1909.

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

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

Conradi, Ludwig R. "Progress in the European Division." *ARH*, November 10, 1910.

Conradi, Ludwig R. "Reise-Erfahrungen." *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907.

Dail, Guy. "A New Russian Conference." *ARH*, December 5, 1907.

Reiffschneider, K. A. "Kaukasus." *Zions-Wächter*, March 4, 1912.

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1907-1914.

Sprohge, J. "Die erste Versammlung der Baltischen Vereinigung." *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907.

Turowski, H. "Allgemeine Versammlung des Westrussischen Missionsfeldes." *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907.

Turowski, H. "Sitzung des Russische Union." *Zions-Wächter*, December 16, 1907.

"Vierteljahrsbericht der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1909," *Zions-Wächter*, May 3, 1909.

---

### NOTES

1. For territory and period, see the present article, for membership and churches, see "Berichte der Russischen Union vom 1. Oktober bis 31. Dezember 1913," *Zions-Wächter*, February 16, 1914, 85-89.

2. H. Turowski, "Sitzung des Russische Union," *Zions-Wächter*, December 16, 1907, 409.

3. Guy Dail, "A New Russian Conference," *ARH*, December 5, 1907, 14-15.
4. Ludwig R. Conradi, "Reise-Erfahrungen," *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907, 394.
5. Ibid.; J. Sprohge, "Die erste Versammlung der Baltischen Vereinigung," *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907, 400-401; H. Turowski, "Allgemeine Versammlung des Westrussischen Missionsfeldes," *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907, 413.
6. Ludwig R. Conradi, "Reise-Erfahrungen," *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907, 394.
7. Ibid.; H. Turowski, "Sitzung des Russische Union," *Zions-Wächter*, December 16, 1907, 409.
8. H. Turowski, "Sitzung des Russische Union," *Zions-Wächter*, December 16, 1907, 410.
9. For territory and address, see "Russian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1908), 111.
10. H. Turowski, "Sitzung des Russische Union," *Zions-Wächter*, December 16, 1907, 409.
11. "Russian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1908), 111.
12. I did not locate minutes or articles about the occasion when the mission was organized. It first appeared in the first quarter report of 1909 in *Zions-Wächter* and in the 1909 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. In the latter, the church unit has a superscript comment that states that the mission was "cut off from East Russian Mission, January 1, 1909," so it must have been organized sometime in 1908. "Siberian Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1910), 116; "Vierteljahrsbericht der Russischen Union vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1909," *Zions-Wächter*, May 3, 1909, 159.
13. "Russian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1909), 113.
14. Sophie Bojanus, "Sitzung des Unionausschusses in Moskau," *Zions-Wächter*, April 19, 1909, 130-131; J. T. Böttcher, "Russia," *ARH*, May 13, 1909, 19. The *ARH* article about the meeting states that all the territory for the Little Russian Mission was taken from the Middle Russian Mission. The *Yearbook*, however, lists Kharkov governorate not under the Middle Russian Mission but under the South Russian Conference before the formation of the Little Russian Mission. "South Russian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1908), 112-113; (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1909), 115. In 1910 it then states about the Little Russian Mission: "Cut off from Middle Russia, and South Russia." "Little Russian Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1910), 110.
15. Ludwig R. Conradi, "Progress in the European Division," *ARH*, November 10, 1910, 7.
16. "Russian Union District," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1911), 106.

17. Karl A. Reiffschneider, "Kaukasus," *Zions-Wächter*, March 4, 1912, 111; "North Caucasian Conference" and "South Caucasian Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1913), 111-112.
18. "White Sea Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1913), 112.
19. For the division and territory of the fields, see Ludwig R. Conradi, "New Developments in Eastern Europe," *ARH*, July 4, 1912, 11-12.
20. "Russian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1913), 109.
21. Ludwig R. Conradi, "European Division Council in Budapest," *ARH*, December 18, 1913, 12.
22. "East Russian Union Conference" and "West Russian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1914), 111.
23. Russian is listed as one of the languages of study in Friedensau and among the languages of publication in the publishing house during the years that the Russian Union operated.
24. "Russian Branch," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1912), 180.
25. Ludwig R. Conradi, "Reise-Erfahrungen," *Zions-Wächter*, December 2, 1907, 394.

---

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000