

# Yaruta, Nikolai Arkipovich (1914–1994)

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## DMITRY O. YUNAK

Dmitry O. Yunak graduated in Finance and Economics from a Soviet secular educational institution and completed a six-year course of Theology at an underground SDA Theological Institute (Moldova, USSR). In the Soviet times, he served as a pastor, administrator, and bible/history professor in the underground Theological Institute. In 1990, he was appointed as Treasurer and Publishing Ministries Director for the USSR Division. After the Euro-Asia Division was organized in 1991, Dmitry O. Yunak served as ESD auditor and under treasurer. He was the author of a dozen of SDA history books and scores of other publications. He owns a major SDA history archive.

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Nikolai Arkipovich Yaruta was a pastor, evangelist, and church administrator who facilitated the development and growth of the Adventist church in Moldova.

## Early Years and Ministry

Nikolai A. Yaruta was born in 1914 in the region of Volynia, Ukraine. From early years, he knew his Bible well and had a good understanding of the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. At the age of 13, he was baptized.

From 1935 until the beginning of the Second World War, Yaruta lived and worked as a colporteur in a region that belonged to Poland. Later, during the war years, Yaruta served as a Bible worker for German soldiers, even though it was difficult to be a minister during German occupation, for often Adventists because of Sabbath keeping were mistaken for Jews. Shortly after the war, in 1946, Yaruta was given a credential as a Bible worker from the Soviet All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists. Such a document, however, had no significance with the atheist government of the day. In fact its holder was often treated as a sectarian agitator whose activity was forbidden by law.



Nikolai Yaruta, 1985.

Photo courtesy of D.O. Yunak.

Consequently, the All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists issued another credential to Yaruta, this time as an Adventist elder for the church in the city of Lutsk (Lutsk). But this credential received a hostile reception from the authorized representative of the Council for Religious Cults. It took a year for Yaruta to be officially registered as an elder for the Adventist church in the village of Chekhovschina in Lutsk. Meanwhile, the local finance department levied a tax on his service. This resulted in cancelling of the title “elder”. In view of these difficulties the All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists recommended that Yaruta move to serve as a pastor in Moldova.

## Marriage and Ministry in B Iți

After Yaruta married Maria T. Magdyuk, the couple moved in 1949 together with Maria’s parents, to the city of B Iți in Northern Moldova. The Yarutas had three children: Larisa, Alena and Vyacheslav. B Iți had a small Adventist congregation of about 30 including members from the adjacent village in Hâtrești. Apart from the B Iți church, there were other Adventist congregations and companies in Zarojeni, Sângerai Noi, Nicolaevca, and Prodânești. All these congregations were under the service of Pastor A. F. Parasei whom Yaruta assisted.

Initially, Yaruta got a job as a carpenter. Then he began to do pastoral work privately. In 1953 he was officially elected and registered as an elder of the B Iți congregation. Three years later under Yaruta’s oversight, the B Iți church acquired a new chapel, and Yaruta himself was appointed as a senior pastor for Moldova. Meanwhile, Maria, Yaruta’s wife, worked as a nurse at the city hospital.<sup>1</sup>

## Moldova

In his personal memoirs Yaruta tells how his family came to Chisinau, the capital of Moldova:

In that city there was a small group of Adventists...about 20, from the Logânești village... 40 km away from Chisinau. Every Sabbath, members traveled to the village to attend the worship service. After a year they decided to get together at their homes because they were not allowed to acquire a church building. Soon, trouble began for the believers. The police came several times to stop their meetings, filed violation reports, took photos, threatened, fined and registered the names of the persons present. At that time I held a credential of a senior pastor for Moldova and made visits to other churches. But sometimes I stayed at home to spend the Sabbath time with my family. However, all my efforts to participate, together with the members, in their worship services met with the threats of the Religious Affairs Officer who said: ‘There is neither congregation nor house of prayer at that place. It is an unlawful assembly! If you appear there once more, then you will lose all churches in Moldova.’... [Thus] I was victimized by more of those threats. Combined with the pricking of my conscience, I could not make visits for several years until things changed ... and we were allowed to freely assemble in the house of prayer.<sup>2</sup>

In those hard times it took much effort to serve the Church not only in Chisinau but also in the entire republic of Moldova. In the early 1960s some churches in Moldova were closed. In December 1960, the Soviet authorities dissolved the All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists. As a result, Yaruta lost his official status. While the Adventist churches officially remained autonomous, all the activities of church administrators were considered illegal. Under such circumstances, Yaruta had to take another job to make a living. Nevertheless, he chaired the church in Moldova from 1955 to 1976. In 1976, a new church administration was elected. Under this arrangement, Yaruta was called to serve in city of Gorky (now Nizhny Novgorod) as a local pastor and a chair of the Volgo-Vyatskaya Conference. He served there until 1991.

## Later Years and Contribution

Upon his retirement, Yaruta with his family moved to the city of Tiraspol and then moved to Russia where his elder daughter Larisa and her husband, an Adventist pastor, lived. In Tiraspol, Yaruta served the local church for a number of years, and died in 1994 at the age of 79 and was buried in the last city of his ministry.

As an administrator, Yaruta was noted for his organizational skills. He facilitated the development and growth of the local conference in Moldova. His ministry showed good spiritual leadership by avoiding divisive tendencies during the difficult times and repression by the Moldovan government. He was also known for involving young members of the church in decision-making.

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### SOURCES

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### NOTES

1. V. I. Andrusiak, *Nepobezhdennaya Tserkov' v Bozh'ikh rukakh* (Zaokskiy: Istochnik Zhizni, 2011).

2. N. A. Yaruta. *Vospominaniya o proshlom*, 1991, personal archives of Dmitry Yunak.

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