

Adventist Periodicals in Russia and the USSR

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The first Adventist magazines reached Russia by the close of the nineteenth century. They were printed in the German language in Germany and Switzerland, secretly transported across the border, and distributed mostly among Russian citizens of German origin who lived at that time in the Volga region, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia.

Given a high demand for the Adventist message among the Russian-speaking population, there emerged a necessity to publish an Adventist magazine in Russian. In 1905 the publication of the *Maslina* ("Olive") Magazine started in Hamburg. The first editorial board included Otto Lupke, a pastor from Eastern Poland; F. K. Itsman, born in Riga, who served in the Friedensau Seminary; S. K. Bojanus, a gifted girl from Nizhny Novgorod who taught Russian in the Friedensau Seminary; and Heinrich J. Löbsack, the first ordained Adventist pastor from Russia.

The *Maslina* Magazine was published from 1905 through 1913. The first two years it appeared eight times a year and from 1907 monthly. In 1913 only five issues plus a special supplemented edition, *Solnechnyy Luch* ("Sunbeam") Magazine, were published.

In 1908 the publication of thematic supplements to the *Maslina* Magazine (8 to 9 issues a year) started. The supplements were mostly dedicated to the review of evangelistic work in Russia and abroad and included letters received from pastors and lay members, accounts of church meetings, travel essays, and experiences with God. Each quarter the three-month statistic and financial reports of the Russian Union for each local conference were published. The supplements also included Sabbath School lessons, missionary news, and other sections. One-third of the eighth or ninth issue of the supplement was given to prayer devotionals, which were read at the same time in all Adventist churches during the last week of December. The extra issues of the *Maslina* Magazine were regularly published for readers barely acquainted with the Bible. The *Maslina* Magazine, with all its supplements and extra issues, was printed in Hamburg by the publishing house of the International Tract

Society.

When the problems emerged with printing the *Maslina* Magazine, Pastors Ivan A. Lvov and Sergey S. Yefimov started publishing a new magazine, *Blagaya Vest* ("The Gospel"), in the city of Petrograd. This magazine appeared from 1913 to 1919. In 1913 five issues of the *Blagaya Vest* Magazine appeared, and then the magazine was published monthly up to 1919, when due to acute paper shortage caused by the Civil War the publishers were able to print only five issues at which point the publication stopped. The *Blagaya Vest* Magazine was so structured that the first (general) section contained sermons on different biblical topics. The second section called "Brothers' Leaflet" included letters from church members, their experiences with God, and various stories from local churches. The third section, "Family and Health," included articles focusing on family relations, disease prevention, and child guidance. The fourth section, "Children's Friend," contained cautionary tales and instructive lessons for children.

From 1913 through 1916, the *Blagaya Vest* Magazine had a monthly supplement called *Vestnik Khristianina* ("Christian's Messenger") that contained Sabbath School lessons, prayer devotionals, sermons, and news about the life of different church communities. Periodically they published special missionary, or so-called "prophetic" issues (for distribution among unbelievers during the collection of harvest offerings), with the circulation of up to 50,000 copies! The *Blagaya Vest* Magazine was initially published in Petrograd and from 1914 in Moscow.

In 1918 the publication of a yearly periodical *Golos Istiny* ("The Voice of Truth"), under the editorship of H. J. Löbsack, started through the *Patmos* Publishing House. This magazine contained a thorough collection of articles classified into the following sections: "History and Science in the Light of the Bible," "The State and the Church," "Our Days and Religion in the Christian Home," "Health, Youth, and Life," and "In the Vineyards of the Lord." However, in 1921 the publication of the *Golos Istiny* was suspended due to paper shortage. The publication was resumed by H. J. Löbsack in Moscow in 1925. In the meantime, H. J. Löbsack started a publication of the German version of the *Golos Istiny* Magazine (*Der Adventbote*) targeted at numerous German congregations in Russia, mostly in the Volga region, Central Asia, and Caucasus.

The *Golos Istiny* publication frequency increased. From 1925 to 1927 the magazine appeared monthly, in 1928 its seven issues were published, and in 1929 the publishers managed to print only the January issue at which point the publication of the magazine was stopped by Soviet authorities.

In 1925 the first editorial board included pastors H. J. Löbsack, P. A. Sviridov and A. G. Galladzhev. P. A. Sviridov was also the publication editor. A little later Pastor I. A. Janzen joined the editorial board and A. M. Demidov took a position as publication editor. In 1929 the last issue of the *Golos Istiny* Magazine edited by Ivan A. Lvov appeared with the circulation of only 1,000 copies.

From 1926 to 1928 Ivan A. Lvov published the *Blagovestnik* ("The Gospeller") Magazine in Kiev. In 1926 four issues were published, in 1927 six issues, and in 1928 four issues. Unlike the *Golos Istiny* Magazine focusing on analytical materials, the *Blagovestnik* contained spiritual and edifying materials for family reading. These two

magazines, published at the same time, complemented each other very well.

Besides periodicals, the Sabbath School lessons, prayer devotionals, missionary news, and numerous essays were published in Kiev in the 1920s.

The Adventist magazines in Russian were published outside the USSR, as well. In Harbin, one of the Russian emigration centers, Feofil F. Babienko founded an Adventist publishing house and started to publish several Adventist magazines including *Semeinyi Drug* ("Family Friend"), *Golos Istiny* ("The Voice of Truth"), *Istochnik Zhizni* ("The Source of Life"), *Drug Detey* ("Children's Friend"), and *Volontyor* ("The Volunteer"), which were delivered through believers to the Russian Far East and then to other regions of the Soviet Union. At a later stage the magazines *Mayak* ("The Lighthouse"), *Svetlye Zovy* ("The Calling of Light"), *Drug Yunosti* ("Youth Friend"), and *Nastoyashchaya Istina* ("The Real Truth") were published in Harbin. Each magazine was targeted at a specific audience, depending on their age and attitude toward religion. However, the publication of all the above-mentioned magazines stopped soon after 1935, when Harbin was occupied by Japan.

In 1928 Feofil F. Babienko was transferred to Riga, where he started publication of a popular Adventist magazine *Obzor Mirovykh Voprosov* ("World Issues Review"), with Pavel A. Matsanov as permanent editor. In 1928 one issue of this magazine was published; in 1929 four issues; from 1930 to 1936 six issues a year; and in 1937 only two issues, at which point the authorities banned the magazine. The so-called "Harvest" issue of this magazine appeared annually and was devoted to overview of preaching the Adventist message all over the world.

In the 1930s the Adventists in Russia received, though not regularly, the "Signs of the Times" magazine in Russian that was printed in Romania and Poland. In the 1940s to the 50s it was almost impossible to publish magazines or deliver them from abroad.

In the 1960s our church even managed to receive "These Times" magazine from California. At the same time in Siberia our brethren started publication of Samizdat magazines, whose chief editors were M. S. and A. I. Zozulins. The artwork was done by V. A. Syomin, and the typists were Olga Zhukova (Murga) and Lidiya Syomina. They printed several single magazines such as *Brosaemaya Bureyu* ("Thrown by the Storm"), *Seyatel* ("The Sower"), *Tvoy Trud--Tvoyo Blagosloveniye* ("Your Labor-- -Your Blessing"), *Zhena--Drug i Pomoshchnik* ("Wife -Friend and Helper"), *Khristos i Semya* ("Christ and the Family)." Average circulation of the typewritten magazines (about 100 pages of A4 paper) reached 100 copies. For each issue they produced handmade pictures, photographs, captions for titles, and sections.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Pastor Aleksander F. Parasey (1912--2007), published in Ukraine a typewritten magazine *Svetilnik* ("The Lamp"). The magazine had the following sections: "Stewards of God's Mysteries" (sermons), "The Spring Garden" (missionary experiences), "The Parceners of Blessed Life" (articles for women), "Family and Education" (articles devoted to family life), "The Anatomy and the Bible" (materials about the organization of the human body), "From the History of the Christian Church," and "History, Archeology, and the Bible." The magazine capacity reached 174 pages. The published articles were distinguished by academicism,

sound biblical analysis, and, at the same time, apprehensibility.

In the early 1970s, in Kazakhstan, N. I. Libenko had typed and prepared for distribution eight issues of the *Stremeniye* ("The Endeavour") magazine in 20 copies, and as little as this resulted in his arrest and a two-year term of jail. All the copies of the magazine were confiscated.

In Moldova a quarterly typewritten magazine *Adventistskaya Molodyozh* ("The Adventist Youth") was published with the circulation of up to fifty copies. It included articles about youth, a biblical Quiz section, and youth projects.

In 1971 the Moscow church applied to the Council for Religious Affairs with a request to permit the publication of an Adventist calendar (morning devotionals). They received the permission so that the first pocket-sized 12-page Adventist calendar in 500 copies was published. The calendar had scriptural passages printed near the dates. A few years later the authorities allowed the publishers to supplement the Bible passages with 5 to 7 lines of commentary. In 1979 the church was allowed to appoint a literary-editorial committee. It was actually an editorial board, which included M. P. Kulakov, A. F. Parasey, N. A. Zhukalyuk, N. N. Libenko, and D. O. Yunak. The committee functioned until the Euro-Asia Division was set up. In the intervening years, the committee authorized the publication of the "Calendar" (morning devotionals), "The Guide for Preachers in the First Part of Worship Service" (Sabbath School lessons), "Pastor's Desk Diary," and other materials.

In 1987 when the Soviet-American relations became warmer, the church published two issues of the *Vzaimoponimaniye* ("The Rapport") magazine, prepared jointly by Soviet and American Adventists, and two Soviet-Finnish joint issues of the *Znameniya Novogo Vremeni* ("The Signs of the New Time") magazine. The "Power Over Circumstances" magazine, prepared by the General Conference Health Ministries, was also published in Russian.

Meanwhile the Adventist Church still could not get permission for publishing periodicals that would serve the needs of church members and provide necessary information and timely spiritual support. Nevertheless, the church leaders used best endeavors to handle this problem. Those were the days when the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR was looking for ways to open a dialogue with those religious movements that were not very loyal to some governmental requirements. M. P. Kulakov seized this opportunity, offering "assistance" in contacts with the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement. With this in view, the Inter-Republic Meeting of Adventist Leaders held in Moscow on August 12, 1987 adopted a letter to leaders and members of communities calling themselves "Loyal and Free Seventh-day Adventists." Thus, they received permission to issue a monthly *Tserkov' Ostatka* ("The Remnant Church") bulletin, which was to serve the purpose of reconciling our confessions. The first version of the bulletin was prepared in the summer of 1988 as a 38-page booklet. However, the authorities were not ready to allow the church publishing such an extensive periodical and gave permission to publish only a four-page church "leaflet." Initially, during the first two months, the leaflet was published under the name *Tserkov' Ostatka* and then finally renamed *Slovo Primireniya* ("The Message of

Reconciliation”), a phrase taken from Second Corinthians 5:19.

SOURCES

Due to decades of persecution, historical sources were very often not preserved in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and as a result, Adventist history in Russia and other successor states of the USSR is dependent on collective memory and oral traditions, on which this article draws.

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