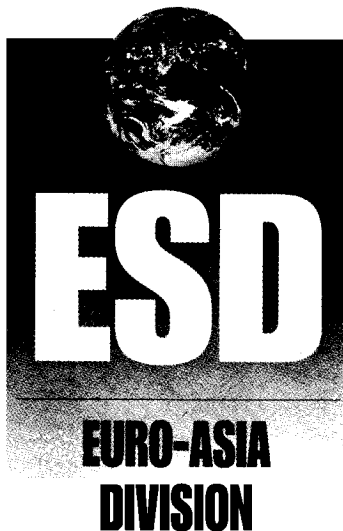


# WITNESSING, TRAINING WORKERS, AND OFFERING QUALITY INSTRUCTION 1995-2000 REPORT



**F**or decades, under the rule of Communism, the Adventist Church had no schools in the then-USSR. However, church leaders dreamed of opening a seminary to train pastoral workers.

Permission came in 1986. The village of Zaokski, 130 kilometers south of Moscow, was chosen. On property donated to the church for this purpose stood a three-story, burned-out hulk which, after remodeling, became the administration building of Zaokski Theological Seminary. Thus began our Adventist educational work in the Euro-Asia Division.

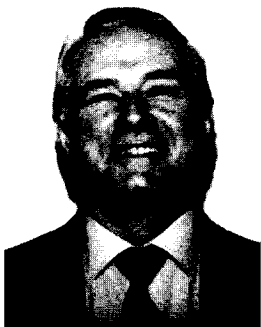
In 1992, Dr. Harry Mayden and Mrs. Raya Abadir were called by the General Conference to help establish church schools in the two-year-old division. One year prior to their arrival, a small church school had opened in Tula, Russia. That school now enrolls 138 students in grades 1 to 11.

Between 1990 and 1995, nine schools were opened, but two had to discontinue operation because of financial problems and local opposition.

In Ryazan, about 140 kilometers southeast of Moscow, the church members in 1993 opened a church school in an old kindergarten building given to them by the city. The school currently has 95 students enrolled in grades 1 through 9. During Communist times, it was all but impossible for Adventists to obtain university education, so the school in Ryazan combined Adventist teachers with non-Adventist instructors who had gone through an evangelistic series but had not yet joined the church. Each school day began with a short devotional and prayer in which all the teachers were required to participate. Several of them have since become baptized church members.

Music and art have always held a prominent place in Russian education. A young but experienced music teacher was hired at Ryazan and soon began to train a school choir, which entered the annual city choral competition. One school in Ryazan had won this competition every year for the past 20 years, but that

**Harry Mayden** is the Former Director of Education for the Euro-Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Moscow, Russian Federation.



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**School children at Sukhum, Abkazia, display new textbooks purchased with money from an American donor.**

tend an Adventist school.

In Sukhumi, in the little country of Abkhazia, which broke away from the republic of Georgia, we have one of our most successful schools, now in its fourth year of operation. It also has some non-Adventist teachers. Each morning, the school requires all teachers to attend Bible study before school

as a devotional and mini-faculty meeting. When the school first began, the board applied to the education department for a license. The superintendent of schools told one of his deputies to go close this school, since he felt that no private organization could meet both the demands of modern education and the city requirements. The deputy spent most of a day there observing, then told his superiors, "We would be out of our minds if we closed that school. It is doing a much better job of meeting the needs of the children than any of our schools. In fact, I left applications for my three children to be enrolled next year." This past year, the school enrolled 266 students in grades 1 through 8. The

Sukhumi city fathers have requested that one-third of the spaces for next year be reserved for the children of city employees.

In the country of Moldova, the Tiraspol church school, now in its fourth year, has 42 students in grades 1 to 8. It also employs several teachers who are not members of the church but uphold Adventist principles. Several of them have joined the church because of the Christianity they see practiced there.

In Tokmak, in the republic of Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, we now have a school in its third year of operation. Because this is a Moslem country, the conference administrators decided that they would start with a mission school to educate the few church members' children, with openings for some other children.

In planning for this school, the conference officials decided to include living quarters for 12 street children. (Street children in Kyrgyzstan are usually orphans.) When news about the new school and its orphans caught the attention of the president of the republic, he invited the school principal to speak to a special group to explain who Adventists were and why they were doing this for the people of Tokmok. Today, the church has a good relationship with the government of Kyrgyzstan. The enrollment at this school

year, everyone was astounded that our school won first prize.

At Zaokski Theological Seminary, one floor of the educational building has been set aside for a church school. This school has grown rapidly and now enrolls 140 students. Its high-quality instruction has attracted the attention of the local residents, many of whom would like to send their children to a school that offers not only academic instruction but also spiritual training.

In the Ukraine, it is against the law to operate a church-related school. However, the government does allow private schools, so in Kiev, we have established a private school with a Christian flavor where 27 students are enrolled in grades 1 through 3. Members of the all-Adventist staff are highly qualified. The parents sacrifice each month so that their children can at-

is 93 in grades 1 through 4.

Our newest school is in Mineralny Vody. In 1993, people requested an American type of education, so Marjorie Coon, a recently retired teacher from Portland, Tennessee, came to set up such a school. For five months, she endured all kinds of problems and hardships. It soon became apparent that we would have to buy a building, since we could not find a suitable building to rent. Mrs. Coon then asked to return to the United States and raise money for such a building. Because of her fund-raising and personal donations, an unfinished three-story building was finally purchased. One half serves as a church, the other half as a school. This school will begin operation in September 2000 with kindergarten as its first class. (Mrs. Coon passed away December 24, 1998.)

Our seminary in Zaoski is doing a marvelous job of preparing workers for the church. Before it opened, many dedicated pastors in the Euro-Asia Division had been unable to obtain formal theological training, although a number of them had taken some course work from an underground seminary that existed for some years in Moldova. Although they had received good instruction and were well grounded in the tenets of the Adventist faith, they lacked a formal education.

**T**he emphasis on evangelism shortly after the fall of Communism brought many well-educated people into the church. As a result, these pastors felt uncomfortable ministering to people who were more educated than they. Several of these pastors asked if they could be given credit for the course work they had taken in the underground seminary. Meanwhile, the seminary was upgrading many pastors through extension courses in five different locations.

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#### **Students perform at Zaoski Adventist School for Parents' Night.**

During the summer of 1996, plans were made to move up the graduation date of some experienced pastors. Of the 200 class hours required for graduation, experienced pastors could waive 50 in the area of practical pastoral studies by writing a short summary of their knowledge in each area. Another 50 class hours could be challenged by examination. The program had three prerequisites: Pastors must have a secondary school education, a minimum of 10 years of pastoral service, and be ordained.

By the end of 1998, 71 pastors had completed the requirements for graduation. An additional 19 graduated at a special ceremony in November 1998, and the final group of 20 completed their

#### **The upper-grade students at Tuia Adventist School sing at a special program.**

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#### **The first-grade class at Ryazan Adventist School.**

requirements and graduated in May 1999. The Zaoski seminary continues to prepare pastors, music personnel, secretaries, and treasurers.

The educational work of the Euro-Asia Division has made much progress in the past five years. Many young people are being trained to spread the gospel, and others are eager to attend the seminary to prepare themselves for this important work. We pray that funds may be found to expand this institution and its course offerings to meet the needs of the young people of this great division of the world church. ☞

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#### **Students at Tiraspol School in Moldova receive prizes for winning a game.**

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#### **A Bible pageant at Ryazan Adventist School.**

#### **A Bible lesson for the second grade in Tiraspol, Moldova.**