



SGA founder, Peter Deyneka, preaching at Moscow's Central Baptist Church

## *Born Through Prayer . . .* SGA's Foundation for 75 Years

By Ruth Deyneka Erdel

I was five years old when Slavic Gospel Association was *born through prayer* on January 6, 1934. Of course I do not remember that day. But I recall the wonderful, warm, loving days of my childhood. My parents,

Peter and Vera Deyneka, taught me to love God and to love my Russian people.

They also taught me the value of prayer. We often knelt around the dining room table to pray. My father's strong, booming voice would call out to God for help in time of need or ask for guidance. And, oh, how he prayed for the salvation of his people. Then my mother's soft,

lilting voice would ring out in prayer.

Yes, my father was also a man of vision. He was consumed with looking for ways to take the Gospel to his Russian-speaking people. He ministered in Russia and Poland until those doors closed to visitors. Since Alaska was bought from Russia, he went there to look for Russians and found them. Immediately he began to seek missionaries to go to Alaska. How happy he was when several young people responded to this challenge and went to Alaskan villages where there was no

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Gospel witness. Today there are vibrant churches in many of those areas.

In 1940, an invitation came to preach in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, where Slavic immigrants had arrived by the thousands. There was a great revival. People were saved and begged him to send missionaries. On his return to the United States, he stopped at Quito, Ecuador, where his friend Clarence Jones had started HCJB — the first short-wave missionary radio station. “Preach in Russian,” suggested Mr. Jones. From Quito, my father notified my mother the exact hour and place on the radio dial where the broadcast could be heard. Right on time, my father’s voice came booming into our Chicago home. I listened to the first Russian Gospel radio program in history. (At age 13, I never dreamt the Lord would some day call me to serve at that radio station for almost 30 years.)

Radio became the new tool to penetrate the Iron Curtain in the dark days of communism. SGA missionaries were sent to HCJB Quito, TWR



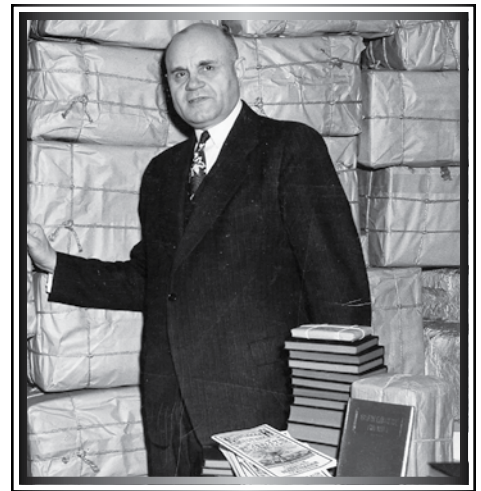
Monaco, HLKX Seoul, and FEBC Manila. Over the years, thousands of radio listeners heard the Gospel and received the Lord into

their hearts. Missionaries needed to be prepared. My father envisioned Bible institute training centers to train them, so he started the first Russian Bible Institute in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, with Dr. Oswald J. Smith. Many of those graduates went on to minister across the world.

My father recognized the value of the printed page. Because of his vision, SGA printed many

thousands of tracts, books, children’s literature, and hymnals. They were greatly prized by those who received them.

Today I realize I grew up along with SGA. What a testimony it was for me to see my father always moving forward and to feel his excitement of seeing the work of the Lord expanding. He never looked back. He always focused on the future. He was always searching for open doors.



We learn from our memories. The greatest memory I have is hearing my father say, “Much Prayer, Much Power”, and then seeing him live by the power of prayer as he committed SGA and its budding ministries into God’s hands. In 1987 my father died. I miss him. But as his daughter, my heart sings for joy as I see my father’s vision continue.

Seventy-five years after SGA was born, books continue to be printed. Missionaries and church planters are scattered in all parts of Russia. Bible training centers are expanding, and seminaries in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine continue to train future pastors and missionaries. Other ministries are going forward such as the *Antioch Initiative* and *Orphans Reborn*. How I thank God for all the blessings of the past. Today we are celebrating 75 years since my father founded this mission. We must embrace his vision and look to the future. Just as Slavic Gospel Association was born *through prayer* in 1934, may SGA meet the new challenges as we continue to take the Gospel to the corners of the world *through prayer!*



# Teaching From Generation to Generation

*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).*

In chapter 10 of *Peter Dynamite* — the biography of Peter Deyneka, Sr. — our founder's heart's desire was plain at the outset . . . "As Peter Deyneka charted his global travels among Slavic peoples, he longed to raise up an army of trained Christian workers to win his countrymen for Jesus Christ. The words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:14 burned in his heart: '*How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*' Josef Stalin was busily training workers in scientific atheism, but there was no program of biblical instruction for young Slavic Christians. No Bible training institution in the world offered pastoral coursework for Russian-speaking young people, or served the cultural needs of this segment of youth."

With the 1943 opening of the Russian Bible Institute at People's Church in Toronto, SGA's top priority of biblically sound Christian education got its start. Next was the Russian Bible Institute in Rosario, Argentina. Before the Soviet Union began



First graduating class from SGA's second Russian Bible Institute, in Rosario, Argentina

to open up in the late 1980s, our partners enabled many avenues of providing biblically sound Bible teaching for Russian pastors and lay workers, including the Moody Bible Correspondence courses and radio programs such as the "Seminary of the Air". Then God brought the Iron

Curtain crashing down, creating unprecedented opportunities to provide Bible training in-country. And the need was so great!

In 1991, SGA brought seven outstanding young men, selected by the national church leaders, to America for training. SGA sponsored their training at Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary. Viktor Krutko went back to Belarus and became the founding president of Minsk Theological Seminary. Anatoly Prokopchuk went back to Kiev, Ukraine, and became the founding president of Kiev Theological Seminary. Igor Yaremchuk completed the D.Min. at Dallas Seminary in 2007, and in 2008 became the president of Irpen Theological Seminary.

Only a few years before his arrival as SGA president, Dr. Robert Provost heard the heart cry of Ukrainian evangelical church leader Jakob Dukhonchenko, for whom the wonderful prospect of religious freedom also held great concerns. Pastor Dukhonchenko presciently knew that cults and false teachers would flood into the former Soviet Union to take advantage of the wide open door, and with tears expressed that concern to Dr. Provost. Deeply moved, Bob made a personal commitment to this tested, proven elder statesman of the faith. "Brother Dukhonchenko, as long as God allows me, I will do everything in my power to help you and your fellow pastors build a doctrinal fence around your churches." And since then, with the help of SGA partners, look at what God has done since 1994!

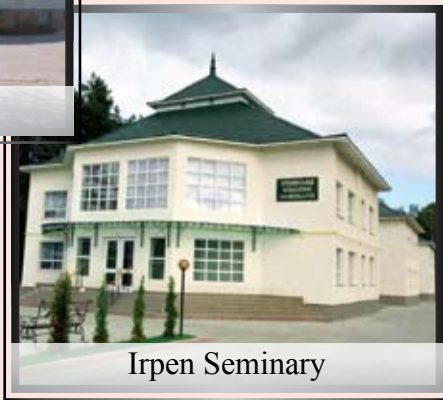
## ***SGA-Sponsored Seminaries***

Today, SGA sponsors four top notch, doctrinally sound seminaries within the former Soviet borders. The newest is Novosibirsk Biblical-Theological Seminary in Russia, launched in 1999. In Ukraine, SGA began its partnership with Irpen



Novosibirsk Seminary

Biblical Seminary in 1994, followed by Odessa Theological Seminary in 1998. SGA also sponsors the Minsk Theological Seminary in Belarus. Outside the former Soviet Union, in 2005 SGA helped launch the Southeastern Europe Theological Seminary in Tirana, Albania.



Irpen Seminary

These seminaries are making a tremendous difference for the future of the church as their graduates move on into lifetimes of fruitful ministry. In addition to the pastoral and theological programs, several of these seminaries also have tracks for music and worship leaders, along with Christian education. Irpen Biblical Seminary has a program to equip and certify teachers to teach the required Christian ethics courses in the public schools of Ukraine, as well as a special program to prepare teachers for the deaf. Women participate in the CE, music, and deaf ministry programs.

Since the 1970s — and especially since teaching in-country became possible in the 1990s, SGA professor of Bible Dr. Roman Dechtiarenko has had a major impact in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. In addition to his ongoing teaching ministry in the seminaries, Roman has authored several theology books, and many of his Bible and theology lectures have been recorded on audio and video and widely distributed.



Dr. Roman Dechtiarenko

Through 2008, the number who have completed their training for ministry in the five seminaries is Irpen: 1,059; Odessa: 924; Minsk: 691; Novosibirsk: 343; and Tirana: 5; for a total of 3,022 graduates. And more than 90% of them are serving in local churches.

### *Bible Institutes*

SGA has also sponsored several Bible institutes across the CIS, including Almaty Bible Institute in Kazakhstan with 444 graduates, Baku Bible Institute in Azerbaijan with 60 graduates, Dushanbe Bible Institute in Tajikistan, and the International Bible Institute of Ukraine, were begun in 2008. Since 1994, SGA partner-churches from North America have sponsored Strategic Bible Institutes and supplied the teachers. Thirty, one-year full-time SBIs have been held to prepare missionary church planters in 23 different locations in Russia. The most recent SBIs are being held in the Russian cities of Surgut and Kursk, where up to 37 students are expected to graduate by the end of 2008, bringing the total number trained in the SBI program to over 600 faithful men.

### *Antioch Initiative*

Through the SGA-sponsored *Antioch Initiative*, some 100 North American churches have banded together in AI regional coalitions to provide Bible training and resources to specially selected, high impact churches across Russia — churches that have proven their zeal to win their regions to Christ and plant daughter congregations throughout. These coalitions have sponsored 108 *Antioch* training sessions for the enrichment and strengthening of nearly 400 pastors. To support and encourage the coalition pastors, SGA holds annual



*Antioch* training session

conferences in Loves Park, Illinois, where our mission's headquarters is located.

### Training Conferences

Pastors' conferences have played a huge role in SGA-sponsored training ministries. In 1995, SGA sponsored a major conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan, with Dr. John MacArthur as the featured speaker. More than 1,000 pastors attended from the five central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Similar conferences were held with Dr. MacArthur in 1997 (Voronezh) for 700 Russian pastors, and 2004 (Moscow) when more than 1,500 pastors gathered from the twelve nations of the CIS. SGA also sponsored a major Moscow youth ministers' conference in 2008 with national youth leader Eugene Bakhmutsky, drawing 500 youth leaders from all across Russia for a time of training, worship and encouragement.



John MacArthur teaching at the 2004 pastor's conference in Moscow

These training opportunities are vitally important because the many new churches being planted need godly, well-trained shepherds. Even more important — should the doors finally close for Western missionaries, these future national church leaders will be able to go on teaching others and preparing them for decades of service to Christ.



# Canadian Connection



Celebrating **75** years



Rev. Allan W. Vincent  
*Director, SGA Canada*

When Slavic Gospel Association was organized in 1934, no one knew how far God would cast Peter's shadow. Canada was one of those places where Peter's passionate ministry made an indelible imprint on the hearts and minds of many believers. Many, whose

hearts were stirred by his fervent preaching, also remember Peter's sharing a humble meal and endearing himself to their entire family.

In 1924, while serving as the supply pastor of the Gospel Tabernacle of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Clear Lake, Iowa, God used a report written by Oswald J. Smith to encourage Peter and crystallize in his mind what God was calling him to do. After five years of no contact with his family, Peter had received a letter explaining that



Gate at the Soviet border

three of his brothers and two of his sisters in Belarus had perished from hunger. Agonizing over his relatives who had never heard the Gospel, Peter could hardly eat or sleep. He spent entire nights in prayer for his family. Dr. Smith's report of his preaching tour of Russia

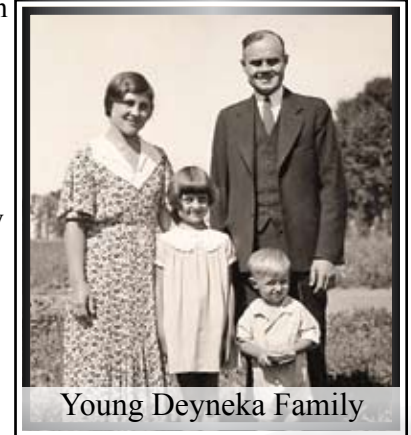
and its border countries impacted Peter greatly.

"How can I describe my experiences?" Smith wrote. "How can I tell what my eyes have seen and my ears have heard? Words fail me as I seek to unburden my heart and convey to others the impression of my visit to the mission fields of ancient Russia. Never again can life be the same, nor my ministry continue as it was."

Having read of thronging multitudes, crowded aisles, congested pews, plaintive songs and fervent prayers from a broken people, Peter wrote, "My heart was greatly stirred. I knew the Russian language and I began to pray that I might get out to that field." God wonderfully answered that prayer.

After the founding of SGA, Peter's extensive travels

eventually took him to Peoples Church in Toronto where he met Pastor Smith in 1943. Since the 1924 trip of which Peter had read, Dr. Smith had gone to the borders of Russia again in 1929 and in 1936. Dr. Smith's magazine articles passionately presented the need and opportunity for ministry in Russia. The challenge was that there were no trained workers. While Josef Stalin was investing in training workers in atheistic communism, there was no program for biblical instruction for young Slavic Christians. When Peter approached Dr. Smith about the need for a Bible Institute to train Russian workers, both the pastor and congregation of Peoples Church were ready for the united effort.



Young Deyneka Family

That same year classes for the Russian Bible Institute (RBI) began in a large room in the educational building of Peoples Church. Enrollment consisted of 45 students, who were taught by four professors. The three-year Bible course program covered all of the basics such as Bible doctrine, personal evangelism, church history, homiletics, Christian education, pastoral training, missions, hermeneutics, Old and New Testament and other subjects. All lessons were taught in the Russian language. To enable the students to better communicate in their mother tongue they were also taught Russian grammar, vocabulary and phonetics.

By God's grace, the RBI continued for seven years and graduated eighty-five well trained, well educated Russian young people. In addition to their training, the unique missionary program of Peoples Church gave the graduates a comprehensive global perspective. Most of the RBI graduates were commissioned for full-time Christian service in South America, Korea, Europe, Canada, the Philippines and the United States.

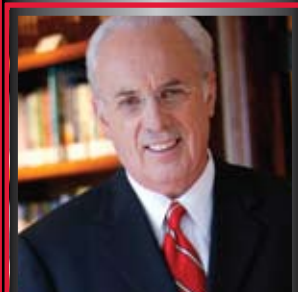
The graduates of the RBI were the children of Russians and Ukrainians who had recently immigrated to Canada or the United States. God wonderfully used

those graduates to not only plant many churches and begin varied ministries, but also to expand the growing ministry of SGA.

Ministry Itinerary: A & L Vincent, Ruth Deyneka Erdel  
January 23 – Summerland Baptist Church – Summerland BC  
January 24 – First Baptist Church – Armstrong BC – breakfast  
January 25 – Revelstoke Fellowship Baptist Church – Revelstoke BC

January 26 – Golden Baptist Church – Golden BC  
January 27 – Fellowship Baptist Church – Kimberley BC  
January 30 to Feb. 1 – Vancouver Missions Fest  
Feb. 1 – Aldergrove Baptist Church – Aldergrove BC

## What Christian Leaders are Saying...



John MacArthur

*In a day of transitions and fads, superficial and short-lived ministries, I am profoundly grateful for the enduring testimony of Slavic Gospel Association. A clear vision, an efficient and effective strategy, along with the unwavering, historic commitment to prayer and evangelism, have set this ministry apart to the promised blessing of God.*

Dr. John MacArthur  
Pastor-Teacher, Grace Community Church

*In 1930, the Independent Fundamental Churches of America was founded in Cicero, Illinois. One of the earliest members was a young Russian immigrant named Peter Deyneka . . . Today, 75 years later, we thank God for all that He has accomplished through SGA in the lands of Russia. Your faithful partnership in the Gospel over the decades has been appreciated more than we can say. And may the past blessings of God be a prelude to an even greater ministry for His glory.*

Dr. Les Lofquist  
Executive Director, IFCA International

*During the time of Robert Robertovich Provost's leadership at SGA, our partnership has brought special blessings. You organized dozens of missionary and pastoral schools, and our churches have become strong through them. We began to send more and more people to the mission field, and your support for church planters has helped us plant 1,000 new churches in Russia. It is impossible to enumerate all things. We thank you, and congratulate SGA on its 75th anniversary!*

Rev. Yuri Sipko  
President, Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists



Yuri Sipko

# 75 Years of Equipping the Saints

... for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

Looking through SGA's archives is almost like a treasure hunt. It is such a wonder and joy to see God's faithfulness through the years as He has provided for this mission — small in size but eternally consequential in terms of the tremendous spiritual fruit gathered since 1934. From Peter Deyneka's time to the faithful, constant leadership of Dr. Robert Provost today, our founding principle remains ... to equip God's people across the lands of Russia for the ministry He has given them.

Even during the communist years when ministry was so difficult, so much was accomplished for the glory of Christ. In the aftermath of

the Soviet breakup, SGA was able to help Bible-preaching churches take the utmost advantage of the unprecedented freedom that had broken forth. Today, even as the door begins to close again and government restrictions tighten, there are still many ministries to pursue while we still can. Indeed, much has been accomplished and God is faithful!

Continuing in future publications throughout 2009, we will look back on what God has done in all our primary areas of ministry, while also trusting faithfully in what God will yet do through His people across the lands of Russia.



**Church Planting**



**Camps**



**Immanuel's Child**



**Orphans Reborn**



**Training**



*InSight* is published to report religious news about Russia, the rest of the CIS and the ministries of:

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