CHAPTER TEN

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PENTECOSTALISM IN RUSSIA AND THE UKRAINE

Pavel Mozer and Oleg Bornovolokov

This chapter is divided into two main halves. The first deals with Russia itself and the second with the Ukraine which, during the Soviet era from approximately 1917 to 1989, was incorporated within the socialist republic. There is an overlap between these two sections since Ivan Voronaev was active in both places and the same Pentecostal groups were to be found on either side of the border.

RUSSIA

Pavel Mozer, Roman Lunkin and Ilya Kartashov

The first news of Pentecostalism reached Russia soon after the outpouring of the Spirit at Azusa Street in an article entitled ‘Awakening of the Christian Church’ in the spring 1907 issue of Avots, a Baptist magazine. By 1908 Eleanor E. Patrick, a missionary who followed German immigrants to Estonia and Latvia had reached Belarus and Russia itself where she worked from 1911 until at least 1916; there she founded or strengthened Pentecostal congregations. Before 1920 and in separate initiatives Moncur Niblock, T B Barratt and Alexander Boddy also held meetings in St Petersburg.  

In the 1920s when much of Russia was starving during the terrible years at the start of the Soviet regime, a scattering of Christians in

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1 Pavel Mozer – The member of Russian Legal Association (Moscow), from a Pentecostal family well linked with the earlier underground churches, assisted by Roman Lunkin, Religion and Justice Institute Director, PhD - Science reviewer (Moscow), Ilya Kartashov translation (Moscow)

2 I am grateful to Mel Robeck for sharing this information with me as he has continued to follow the spreading ripples of influence from the Azusa Street revival in the writings of Frank Bartleman and others.
evangelical communities on the territory of the former USSR began receiving spiritual gifts including speaking tongues and the gift of prophecy. The Baptist Union and the Evangelical Christian Union Board had not previously exercised the gifts of the Holy Spirit because they had no spiritual experience of this kind. As a result, these new phenomena caused many believers in the Baptist Union and the Evangelical Christians Union to feel concern and even hostility. One needs to admit that such bright leaders of Russian Protestant communities as Ivan Prokhanov and Ivan Kargel created appropriate conditions for spiritual renewal in the churches of Evangelical Christians. The communities themselves, where this renewal started, needed teaching about how to handle these gifts, especially speaking in tongues. Many of them did not know that, at the beginning of the century, a similar movement of the Holy Spirit had already reached many Evangelical Communities throughout the world.

In August, 1921 Ivan E. Voronaev and V.R. Kotlovitch travelled to Odessa from the USA. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit and were ministers of the Slovenian Evangelical Communities in the USA. Voronaev, an experienced and gifted minister, was a native of Orenburg province who had suffered persecution for his protestant beliefs during the Tsarist regime. Koltovitch had gifts of prophecy and healing. They both received a clear revelation of their mission to Russia which is described in more detail in the memoirs of those who knew Ivan Voronaev personally. Immediately after their arrival in Odessa they and their families began to preach about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts in all the Baptist and Evangelical Christian communities. Those communities which did not have any superintendents were able to join the new union under Voronaev’s leadership. This Union was named the ‘Evangelical Faith Christian Union’ (EFCU). By this time Vasily Pavlov had become an active co-worker with Voronaev. In the years that followed he survived despite being imprisoned for his faith. In 1927 the Union had about 20,000 evangelical Christians throughout The USSR. The management of the Union in 1927 began to publish the Evangelist magazine on a regular basis. In 1927 Voronaev visited Moscow where there was already a community of those baptized with the Holy Spirit. The senior pastor of that community appeared to be Mikhail

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3 There is also a tape recording of the interview with Ekaterina Vornaeva who left for the USA back in 1960s (described in detail in ‘The sender of the Pentecost’).