

From the G.C. President

February 1, 1993

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1. Report on M P Kulakov: M P Kulakov, former president of the Euro-Asia Division, apparently suffered a light stroke Sunday night, January 24, at the Zaoski Theological Seminary where he has been working on a new Russian translation of the Bible. He was taken to a local hospital. A report received on Jan 28 indicates he was in good condition and will be released from the hospital to go to Moscow for further medical diagnosis and care. Please pray for the health of this spiritual leader and his special work in the ESD.

2. '93 Week of Prayer goes video: The '93 Week of Prayer series (Theme: "Called, in Christ") will be produced on video in several major world languages for distribution to world division. Hosted by Elder W G Johnsson, and including music for worship, this series will bless congregations around the world.

3. Asbestos litigation update: In 1971 the General Conference built the "North Building" at its former Takoma Park campus. Unknown to the General Conference, asbestos was used as fire-proofing in the construction of the building and was determined to be a toxic substance. In 1980 the General Conference hired an industrial hygienist to inspect the building, and it was certified as asbestos-free. Upon contracting to see the building, the buyer hired another hygienist to do its own examination. When this hygienist discovered asbestos fire-proofing on the steel beams on the 2nd through 10th floors, the buyer threatened to sue the GC unless it was released from the contract. The GC released the contract. After repeated and unsuccessful attempts to see the building, with full disclosure of its asbestos contamination, the asbestos was removed between March and December of 1990.

Investigation, subsequent to the discovery of the asbestos, revealed that the manufacturer of the asbestos-contaminating fire-proofing material allegedly knew as early as 1969 (2 years before the "North Building" was constructed) that their product was toxic, and their correspondence revealed an admission of an ethical obligation to remove asbestos from their fire-insulating material.

Other companies, having the same information, began to manufacture asbestos-free fire-insulation material prior to the time the asbestos was installed in the North Building. After considerable deliberation, litigation was initiated to reclaim the losses suffered by the GC. A jury trial commenced Jan 11, 1993 and on Jan 19 a verdict was rendered for the church in the amount of US 4.5 million as compensation for actual losses sustained by the GC. The manufacturer is expected to appeal.

4. Baptismal explosion in Veracruz Mexico: 2,368 were baptized January 23 & 24 in Catemaco, Veracruz Mexico, reports Leo Ranzolin (GC VP) who was there for the festivities. Laity of this 45,000 member conference, through an impressive evangelistic program planned for 1993, have already surpassed 50% of their year's goal of 5,000 baptisms!

5. Target, Lebanon: With a ratio of 1 Adventist to every 50,500 (the world ratio is 1:799), the Middle East has the lowest ratio of members to population of any "entered" country of the world. With 55% of its 3.3 million population claiming to be Christians, and a Christian heritage dating back to the first century AD, Lebanon is one of the Middle Eastern countries more receptive to the gospel. However, Islam is growing, while Christianity is declining. With 1,300 members, Lebanon has more Adventists than any other country in the region; yet there are many portions of Lebanon that have not heard the gospel message. The Middle East Union has laid plans, and requested Global Mission's financial assistance to enter four large cities: Jounea, Tripoli, Zahle, and Byblos. Plans call for a series of health, literature, and Bible programs carried out by students from Middle East College; local-language radio programs; and Bible correspondence courses which will be followed by public evangelism. Please pray for this challenging gospel endeavor.

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