



Calls

by Joseph L. Pace, M.D.,
and Pauline Clyde Pace

As we reminisce back over the three missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that we have had the privilege of filling, we remember the incredible experiences that have been ours. We had experiences that were varied: They were challenging, frustrating, frightening, and spiritually fulfilling. Health-care professionals have particular talents, and these talents are particularly useful, given the need for medical care in every mission in the world. If you add medical knowledge to a firm testimony and a desire to serve our Heavenly Father, you have an unbeatable combination.

There are many different areas where you might be called to serve. There is a worldwide need for surgeons, cardiologists, neurologists, anesthesiologists, family doctors, internists, etc. There is always a place for you.

We would like to put your mind at ease about foreign languages. When you are called to a foreign land, you will inevitably find yourself not fluent in that language. Even after several months in the MTC, you will probably still find yourself having trouble. But realizing that you are called of God will give you the strength to continue. The Lord has called you because he has something for you to accomplish. This knowledge of our sacred calling gave us the encouragement we needed when the language seemed insurmountable. We've served in lands where Spanish was the language, where Chinese was needed, and where Russian was the native tongue. It would have been wonderful to be fluent in any of these. Instead we learned just enough to be street smart. But we remembered that we were called to serve in each land for a reason, so we plowed ahead.

We were married soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor. I graduated from medical school in March of 1942 and immediately began an internship at San Diego Naval Hospital. Following the internship I was sent to Pensacola, Florida, to prepare to be a flight surgeon. I served on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific theater of war. After six years in the Navy, I was released and settled in San Jose, California, where I practiced family medicine for 37 years. Seven children were born to us. After retiring from active practice, we moved to Salt Lake City, where I worked as a part-time consultant for Medicaid for the state of Utah.

MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA, ARIZONA, AND NEW MEXICO 1972-1973

We were living in San Jose, California, in 1972. In addition to my regular practice, I was also taking medical care of a lot of the missionaries coming to the area. I had been in touch with the Missionary Department and had helped revise the medical examination form for missionaries.

One day I received a call from Dr. James Mason, head of LDS Health Social Services at that time, asking me if I would consider going on a fact-finding Welfare Services full-time mission. At the time we had five of our children in college. It was the most productive time of my life in the medical field. While contemplating what to answer and wondering how we could afford to leave for 18 months, we went to the Oakland Temple for the wedding of a niece. The sealer talked to the couple about the law of sanctification. It seemed like he wasn't talking to them; instead, he was talking to us. After that, we could not say no. Each of our children pitched in to help. Our son in medical residency said he could probably save a hundred dollars a month to keep our youngest daughter at BYU. Another son in law school said he could go to night school and get a day job and work. He advised us to keep up our small house, where we could move our younger children, allowing us to sell our big home. Our daughter who was working on an advanced degree said she would quit school and run a business office we owned. Our other daughter at BYU married and would handle her own schooling.

After two months in the LTM (now MTC) learning Spanish and armed with our instructions to find ways to reduce the morbidity of missionaries (over 5,500 days per year in Mexico), we headed our VW bus south. That bus was to become our home a third of the time. The compact vehicle contained a bedroom, kitchen, study, and storage closet. We were to drive that bus over all types of roads under all sorts of conditions for 38,000 miles. This meant crossing Mexico three times, traveling every major road at least once. It meant driving to the Panama Canal and back. Under certain assignments we also traveled by bus and plane and with mission presidents in their cars. We lived in mission homes when accommodations were available. We saw Mexico covered with a vast green carpet as it experienced a very wet rainy season; and later we saw it dusty and hot during the dry season.

We had an opportunity to serve our Heavenly Father in a different type of missionary labor. We had a chance to work with many of the wonderful, unaffected, humble, hardworking people of Latin America as well as with 950 of the 1,275 missionaries assigned to our nine mission areas.

We also served closely with a choice group of 80 young college students and their leaders in a selfless, humanitarian project in the state of Pueblo, Mexico. Working with members of the Church in nine small villages, we taught health, nutrition, sanitation, farming, building, genealogy, cooking, sewing, and baby care. We collaborated with a group of 17 professors and students from Ricks College as they conducted tests on missionaries and members, collecting statistics on physical conditions of people living in areas where water and food are often contaminated and

where people often do not have enough to eat. We ended the mission in Arizona and New Mexico gathering comparison statistics on missionary morbidity.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA 1988-89

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints advises people writing about the People's Republic of China to be aware of possible misunderstandings at this time. The Church is concerned about the sensitive relationships that exist between religions in China. For this reason we decided not to write much about our experiences as missionaries without badges, teaching full-time in a medical school in the south of China during 1988-89. Nonetheless, we will say that it proved to be a productive and exciting mission. Perhaps our story will be published at a later date.

MISSION TO MOSCOW 1991-92

It was December 30, 1990, when we were called to go to the Helsinki East Mission. We entered the MTC July 4, 1991. Russian is a very difficult language, but the MTC is an incredible spiritual feast. September 4 we flew to Helsinki. Following a briefing by our mission president, we took the overnight train to Moscow.

We found a pleasant apartment, close to a metro station, overlooking the Moscow River. It was on the eighth floor and had a lift, two rooms plus small kitchen and bath, and a balcony. As we were unpacking, apprehensive because of our fragile language capability, we heard a voice say in perfect English outside our door, "May I help you?" So Irena Ludogovskaya came into our lives. She became a dear friend, eventual Church member, translator, and lifeline to whatever our needs were.

Even though we could have readily obtained any foods that we needed, we felt that it was better to be sensitive to the Russian people and to live as much like them as we could. This meant standing in long lines for bread, other lines for meager vegetables, and still other lines for meat, grains, cheese, or eggs. We had an ace in the hole, however: if we needed to, we could buy food at the joint-venture stores, where everything was available for a price in hard currency. The diet was low in fat; consequently we lost weight and our health was good.

In keeping with the mission rule to perform at least four hours a week of compassionate service, we met with Dr. Grunday, head doctor at the U.S. Embassy, and asked him how we could help the medical community. His answer was clear and precise: he said his number one problem was establishing confidence in existing medical

services available in Moscow. He introduced us to the medical staff at Kremlin Hospital in Michurinsk. This medical complex was built by the top Russian leaders for themselves. It was a nine-story, marble palace where knowledgeable doctors gave good care.

I was asked from time to time to consult with Dr. Grunday on patients who could not be airlifted out. The first such case was a prominent American woman who suffered a very bad fractured lower leg. It was necessary to reduce the swelling and stabilize the leg before sending her back to the United States for treatment. The care they gave her was excellent. When I said that I was a licensed M.D. from the USA, she relaxed. Then I related that I had had a conference with the doctors who were treating her and that I felt confident that she was being treated properly. This former Miss America, a close friend of the U.S. ambassador, raised up in bed and said, "God sent you." I took my missionary badge out of my pocket, saying, "Maybe you are right!" A second memorable case was a state department employee with a tension spontaneous pneumo thorax. After proper treatment he was back to work in a matter of weeks.

Eventually, I had an office there in the hospital. My wife and I taught English to a class of doctors two afternoons a week. Medical teaching was in the form of clinical conferences with presentations of cases, after which class members could ask questions. I helped the Russian doctors, who took turns presenting cases, with their pronunciation of medical English. My wife taught intermediate English. Our further responsibility was to assure that our mission president, our missionaries, and any Church officials could receive the best medical care available. If I wasn't satisfied with the care, we could evacuate specific patients to Finland.

I did have to hospitalize one elder with a cerebral concussion after a bad fall on the ice. He was pleased with the great care he had for three days. My wife was hospitalized for three days with atrial tachycardia and received excellent care in a beautiful private room.

After two months teaching at Kremlin Hospital, we were asked to also teach at the mother hospital of the fourth division, a complete hospital complex. Two afternoons a week a black sedan would pick us up to go to Kunsiva, in a forest near where Stalin had his dacha. At a 1,500-bed facility we had an opportunity to have as students the top medical staff.

Having been involved with organ transplants for Medicaid in Utah, I was anxious to expand our teaching to the Organ Transplant Hospital. (We gave Kremlin Hospital a rest interval.) It was interesting teaching English to this always fascinating group. I remember several unusual discussions with a man from Siberia awaiting a heart transplant. His knowledge of English was fair, and he

sometimes came to the class and asked questions about his future.

The Pediatric Cardiovascular Center became the last place we taught at. Located in a 250-year-old building in a commercial area of Moscow, the doctors were performing some 70 open-heart surgeries a week. Sometimes a physician would come to our class after a difficult six-hour surgery. We were amazed, as was another visiting Utah doctor, at their capabilities. We observed that (1) equipment, the kind we used a number of years ago, was still adequate; (2) sterilization was checked properly; (3) doctors and nurses seemed capable and dedicated; (4) medicines were hard to come by, but easier than the U.S. media had shown to its audiences; and (5) doctors were very concerned about their future.



Dr. Pace and his wife, Pauline, in Moscow, May 1992.

I became a member of the Moscow Medical Association. Dr. Carpenter of the British Embassy was president. From our medical contacts there and in the hospitals, we were able to find some medical personnel interested in knowing about our religious beliefs.

With our limited knowledge of Russian, we had to be creative in finding those to teach the gospel principles to. The community calendar in a free English weekly newspaper opened the door for us. Each week it ran an announcement of where and when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would hold church services in Russian and in English. It then listed Elder Joseph Pace and our telephone number. People would call us. We set up the appointments and taught in our own apartment. Who called? Russians, Africans, people from Iraq, etc. The Russians who spoke English generally were up-and-coming and well educated. Those converted would become the leaders that were so badly needed in the explosion of Russian branches. (When we arrived, there was one branch; when we left, there were eight.)

Two months after our arrival the International Branch was established, and I was called to be the branch president. We started with seven members, and when we left

Moscow upon completing our mission, there were 54 members. Our branch included Japanese, Koreans, Americans, Russians—who were there long enough to be given the after-baptism discussions, to be firmly established in the priesthood, and to gain some leadership experience—Canadians, and Germans, as well as students from Zimbabwe, Zaire, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, and Mozambique. Tichafa Chatitske was from Zimbabwe, and while in Moscow he finished up a master's degree in mining engineering. He was a joy to teach, so ready in every way for the gospel. He brought many friends to our branch, and before he left for his country upon graduating nine months later, I ordained him an elder.

Among those we were instrumental in converting were a brother and sister from Iraq, who could never go back to their homeland after their father, a high-ranking official, was executed. They fled the country with just the clothes on their backs, though they were college graduates and used to the trappings of wealth. To teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to two Moslems was a fascinating privilege.

Boris Koslov was Jewish. He showed up in priesthood meeting one day, raised his hand, and said, "I want to be baptized." Years before he had met a group of BYU Young Ambassadors. He had been looking for the "Mormons" and found the notice in the giveaway newspaper. He was baptized and later baptized his wife.

Irena Ludogovskaya lived with her parents and 20-year-old daughter on the same floor as we did in the apartment building. Her husband had passed away 12 years earlier. She worked for the British-American-Canadian Institute and had traveled in all those countries, so we knew she was involved in the KGB. She was a computer operator and secretary. She believed the gospel and accepted each principle as we taught her, but she said, "I can't be baptized, because I can't hurt my parents who had me baptized as a baby under dangerous circumstances." We finished the sixth discussion, and she continued attending church every week. Following a hysterectomy, when she hemorrhaged a great deal, she received a priesthood blessing and was healed. Immediately, she asked to be baptized as soon as she was well enough. She is now the Relief Society president in her Russian branch. She is also the pianist, and she works full-time for the Church as a principal translator. When General Authorities speak in Moscow, it is Irena who translates for them.

Over and over our testimonies to the truthfulness of the gospel were strengthened. Even though in each of our respective missions the languages proved to be difficult for us, the unique spheres of influence in which we were able to participate furthered the work of the Lord far more than we could have imagined. We do know from experience that "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform" (William Cowper, 1731–64). □