

# Gaidischar, Ferdinand (Fyodor) Adamovich (1879–1941)

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## DMITRY O. YUNAK

Dmitry O. Yunak graduated in Finance and Economics from a Soviet secular educational institution and completed a six-year course of Theology at an underground SDA Theological Institute (Moldova, USSR). In the Soviet times, he served as a pastor, administrator, and bible/history professor in the underground Theological Institute. In 1990, he was appointed as Treasurer and Publishing Ministries Director for the USSR Division. After the Euro-Asia Division was organized in 1991, Dmitry O. Yunak served as ESD auditor and under treasurer. He was the author of a dozen of SDA history books and scores of other publications. He owns a major SDA history archive.



Ferdinand Gaidischar, 1911.

Photo courtesy of D.O. Yunak.

Ferdinand (Fyodor) Adamovich Gaidischar was a Seventh-day Adventist minister who served the church in Russia during years of totalitarian atheism.

## Early Years

Ferdinand (Fyodor) Adamovich Gaidischar was born August 21, 1879 in St. Petersburg, Russia. His father, Adam Gaidischar, was an ethnic Czech, Catholic. His mother was a German Lutheran. Ferdinand had four younger brothers: Johannes, Vladimir, Albert, and August. After the death of Adam Gaidischar in 1901, the entire family accepted Lutheranism (their mother's faith). Five years later in 1906, Mrs. Gaidischar and her five sons accepted the Adventist message.<sup>1</sup>

In 1907, Ferdinand left for Germany to study at the Adventist Seminary in Friedensau, and returned to Russia two years later, after graduation.<sup>2</sup>

Ferdinand Gaidischar married Amalia Davidovna Erhardt. They had one son Vladimir who died in combat during the war in the Caucasus region; and four daughters Lidiya (b. 1922), Elvira (b.1924), Rosalia (b.1926) and Martha

(b. 1927).

## Ministry

Ferdinand Gaidischar lived in Moscow from 1909 to 1912. In March 1910, at the Adventist conference held in Mitava (Jelgava), Latvia, he was appointed as a Bible worker for the Middle Russian Missionary Field. He also assisted Otto Ivanovich Wildgrube, the chair of that field, and served the Moscow Adventist congregation. In 1911 Gaidischar was arrested in the city of Kirzhach in the Vladimir Region, charged with missionary activities on behalf of the Adventist Church. "Gaidischar and a French woman Mrs. Peugeot were charged with instigating Mrs. Oparina to burn icons."<sup>3</sup> During his incarceration, Gaidischar became ill, and consequently, he was released, and left for the city of Bendery, Moldova, to improve his health.

## Ordination

From 1912 to 1915 Gaidischar lived in Kiev and served as an itinerant Adventist preacher. In 1913, he was ordained to pastoral ministry. Between 1915 and 1918 he lived and served in the city of Tsaritsyn (now Volgograd). In 1916, he was sentenced to four months in prison for his public preaching. In 1919, he was conscripted into the Red Army and served as a hospital attendant, but was soon dismissed. From 1919 to 1922, he lived in Kamyshin and then moved to the city of Samara to serve as a pastor. From 1922 to 1924, he served in the Adventist church in Moscow and represented the Moscow district of churches on the extended All-Union Council of Seventh-day Adventists.

In 1924, Gaidischar was selected as a delegate to the 5<sup>th</sup> All-Union Session of SDA Church. This session voted for transferring him to Caucasus where in November 1925 he was elected president of the Middle Caucasus Conference with office in the city of Pyatigorsk. Gaidischar guided the conference until early 1927 and wrote often for church magazines.

In April 1927, Gaidischar was appointed vice president of the Chernomorskaya Conference, and settled in a village in the Moldavian ASSR, where he also served as a district pastor until 1932.

## Later Years

From 1932 to 1934, Gaidischar served as pastor of the Adventist church in the city of Odessa. In 1934, he was arrested and sentenced to three years of exile in the north of the country. From 1937, after return from exile, Gaidischar served as pastor in the city of Kirovograd. On April 11, 1941 he was arrested again and endured police interrogation for more than three months.<sup>4</sup> Interrogations often lasted for hours at night and included physical harassment, sleep deprivation and torture, sometimes to the point of prisoners fainting. Gaidischar, like other detainees, were charged with "counterrevolutionary crimes"<sup>5</sup> and sentenced to be shot. Aside from

Gaidischar, the other ten pastors and active members of the Adventist Church from Kirovograd and surrounding area were sentenced to death with confiscation of their properties. The sentence was executed on July 13, 1941.

Gaidischar's wife and children fled to Germany, but in December 1945 they were returned to the USSR and exiled to special settlement for Germans in the Tomsk Region. One of Ferdinand's daughters succeeded in moving back to Germany, where she lived for the rest of her life.

## Legacy

In spite of difficulties, adversities, arrests and prison sentences, Adventist ministers relied on God's guidance in doing His work in Russia. Ferdinand Gaidischar was one of those ministers who leaned on God's strength and trusted in His guidance in serving the church during years of totalitarian atheism.

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### SOURCES

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### NOTES

1. Three of her sons – Ferdinand, Johannes (Ivan) and Vladimir – became Adventist ministers
2. Kirovograd Region Archives. The Case of the People Versus F. Gaidischar, No. 10174. Autobiography.
3. Russian State Historical Archive, Fund 821, Inventory List 133, Case Number 309, 31-35.

4. The four bulky volumes of the materials of investigation that are stored in the Kirovograd Region Archives contain the records of the interrogations of Ferdinand Gaidischar and other Adventist ministers connected to his case.

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