

# Ginter (Hinter), Johann F. (d. 1919)

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Johann F. Ginter (Hinter) was the first pioneer Adventist missionary in Romania.

## Early Years and Ministry Firsts

The birth date of Johann Ginter (Hinter)<sup>1</sup> is not known. It is claimed that “he was born to a German Protestant family in southern Russia at Velikoknyasheskoye, east of the Don River and north

of the Caucasus.”<sup>2</sup> After becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, he worked as a colporteur in the German colonies in Russia. At the German Union Conference session in Friedensau, Germany, in July 1904, he was asked to move to the Balkan states for pioneer work.

## Pioneer in Romania

That year, Ginter<sup>3</sup> moved to Bucharest, Romania, where he began pioneer Adventist mission work. First he studied the Romanian language. But he did not wait to master the language before he began mission endeavors among the Romanian and German speaking people. He found a company of sixteen indigenous Romanian Sabbath-keepers who became the first Adventists in Romania.<sup>4</sup> Later he worked in Rustchuk in the same country. After getting permission to preach in Romanian, he began holding evangelistic meetings with the help of an interpreter.<sup>5</sup>



Johann F. Hinter

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Ginter raised up a small band of Adventists. Among them were Peter Paulini, a medical student, and Ștefan Dumetrescu, a Romanian Army officer. They proceeded to the Mission Seminary in Germany to be trained as pastors. However, Ginter was always monitored by the Romanian authorities. When he conducted meetings, armed policemen sat in his congregation to arrest him in case he said anything against the state religion.<sup>6</sup> Ginter's mission there proved successful and his message compelling, for even a policeman sent to arrest him joined the Adventist church.<sup>7</sup>

Around 1906 or 1907, Ginter was made director of the Balkan Mission, overseeing Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro.<sup>8</sup> According to a mission report, "at the end of 1908 the church at Bucharest had grown to 108, the members representing twelve nationalities."<sup>9</sup> At the end of 1909, there were 137 members, two ministers (in training at Friedensau, Germany), and four Bible workers.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, before Paulini and Dumetrescu returned to Romania, the government banished Ginter from Romania, in April 1909, because they felt threatened by the growth of the Adventist Church.<sup>11</sup> The newly trained Romanian Adventists were ready to take his place.<sup>12</sup> Ginter settled on the Bulgarian border, from which he continued the mission and supervised the new Adventist workers.<sup>13</sup> That year, just before he was expelled by the authorities, Ginter had received a delegation of three peasants who had walked fifty miles to meet Ginter and to learn the way of salvation.<sup>14</sup>

## Russia, Death

With Ginter's banishment from Romania, it is no surprise that in June 1909 he was appointed president of the East Russian Union,<sup>15</sup> the territory of which covered the area from Azof to the Ural and Volga rivers as well as the White Sea.<sup>16</sup> From 1910 through the war years until 1919, Ginter served as president of the Volga Mission (1910, 1915), Ural Mission (1911-1917), and East Russian Union Conference (1917-1919).<sup>17</sup>

Ginter died in Russia from typhus in the post-war famine and epidemic. Two dates, February 25 and April 1919, were given for his death. The first date was given by O. E. Reinke, a church unit administrator in Russia, in a letter to the General Conference<sup>18</sup> that appeared in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. The second was given by W. A. Spicer, then secretary of the General Conference in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

## Contribution

Although his death came rather early, Johann Ginter's service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as pastor, missionary and administrator still speaks. As a pioneer missionary in Romania, he was instrumental in planting Adventism by building on the Sabbatarian group he found there. As an administrator in the Balkan Mission and later in Russia, he played a strong role in leading the Adventist church in his region during the difficulties of the pre-war and post-war periods.

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## NOTES

1. The variants of spelling Ginter's name are due to different transcriptions of Cyrillic script and differences in pronunciation e.g. between Russian and Ukrainian.
2. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, second rev. ed. (1996), s.v. "Ginter (Hinter), Johann F."
3. Ibid.
4. See W. A. Spicer, "Another Year of Missionary Advance," *ARH*, November 18, 1909, 18; M. Ellsworth Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Takoma Park, Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1926, second edition), 611
5. "Good Word from the Balkans," *The Signs of the Times*, March 1907, 133.
6. Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, 611.

7. "Good Word from the Balkans," 133.
8. "Balkan Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1908), 107.
9. Ibid.
10. "Reports from German Union Conference," *ARH*, May 27, 1909, 14.
11. Ibid.
12. See Gary Land, "Romania," in *Historical Dictionary of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), 252.
13. Emma E. Howell, *The Great Advent Movement* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: 1935, revised 1941), 157.
14. Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, 611.
15. General Conference Committee Minutes, May 28, 1909, General Conference Archives, accessed October 2, 2019, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1909.pdf>.
16. See "East Russian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1920), 144; "General Conference Committee in Council," *ARH*, June 17, 1909, 24.
17. See the Seventh-day Adventist yearbooks from 1910 to 1920. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.
18. See O. E. Reinke, "First Message from Russia," *ARH*, November 25, 1920, 7.
19. W. A. Spicer, "News from Russia," *ARH*, May 13, 1920, 3.

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