

# Strala, Artur

## (1913–1992)

---

### BURKHARD MAYER

Burkhard Mayer is a pastor and coordinator of evangelistic programs and seminars in the Northern German Union. He lives with his family near Lübeck.

---

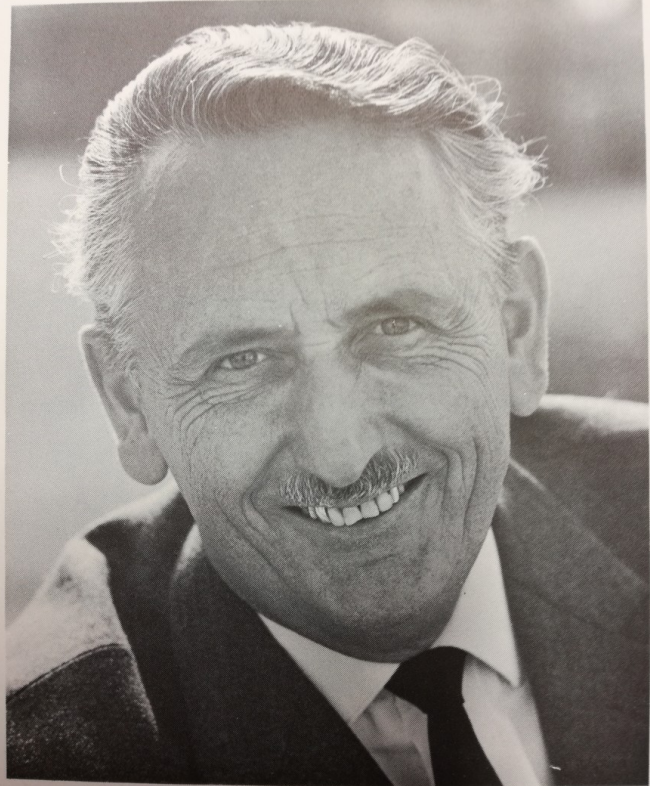
Artur Strala was a pastor, evangelist, teacher, and church administrator in Russia and Germany.

### Early Life

Artur Strala was born March 23, 1913 as the ninth and youngest child of a German family living in Gablonz (Jablonec nad Nisou, Czech Republic).<sup>1</sup> His father owned a glass painting company. The family held the Catholic faith but were not churchgoers. Mr. Strala died when Artur was two years old. It was through their father's sister that the family came in contact with Adventists. As a young boy, Artur attended the local Adventist church with his mother.<sup>2</sup>

### Education

Strala had very good grades in school, but he was not able to attend the university due to lack of funds. Instead, he began training in the export business with the goal of leading his father's company along with his brother Leo. In the meantime, Strala got more involved in the life of his local church. He became a youth leader, visited the Bible study group led by the local pastor, Josef Schor, and decided to be baptized along with his brother Leo. During the time of his professional training he tried to get his days off on Sabbath. He was called to the office of the company owner, but Strala took his time thinking, and then he showed up and asked to get the Sabbath free. This was a time when many people were jobless and just two months before the end of his official job-training. The owner finally allowed him to be free on the Sabbath. This experience helped Strala to maintain his faith during difficult situations of life.



A. Strala

Artur Strala

Photo courtesy of Friedensau Archives.

Strala decided to become a pastor and spread the Adventist message. He studied at the Adventist Theological Seminary Lodenice (1931-34) near Prague under difficult financial conditions and at a time when the National Socialist ideology and rule came into power. The teachers were united in their Adventist theology and avoided extremes. Diverging views, like that of Conradi concerning the doctrine of the Sanctuary, were presented and openly discussed or disapproved. On finishing his studies, Strala served as pastor in the local churches of Gablonz, Reichenberg, and Trautenau, (Czech Republic) where he started a mission school for young Adventists. The mission school was quite successful. In Gablonz he lived in the house of his mother, Laura, because of his low income as a young unmarried minister.

## Marriage

On October 11, 1941, Strala married Esther Weinert, the daughter of Adolf Weinert, senior pastor of Gablonz. Three children, Sieglinde, Johannes, and Edeltraut, were born to the couple. Strala was confronted with the closing down of his local churches but managed with others to get back the keys so that the chapels could be reopened. Furthermore, Strala showed courage in holding evangelistic meetings during the war, in 1942, although it was forbidden by the Gablonz authorities. He preached about prophecies such as Daniel 2, and as a result the local church grew.<sup>3</sup>

## Imprisonment and Ministry

When World War II broke out, Strala had the status of a stateless person, but he was able to serve as a pastor until 1944, which he saw as a miracle. Then he served as a soldier in Russia. He was severely wounded and kept as a prisoner of war in Russian camps in Lemberg and Brest Litowsk in Poland. While in prison he won the trust of the guards, so he was ordered to carry and distribute bread. He was also allowed to sing and have worship and Bible studies with other soldiers in the camp. Against the strong medical counsel not to damage his voice by preaching and singing because he had received a shot in his lung during battle, Strala ignored this, knowing that God had called him to be a minister. After his release in 1949, he returned to Germany and found a new home in Hildesheim near Hannover, where his wife and children and his parents-in-laws had fled.

Reunited with his family, Strala took up service as a church pastor in Hannover (1949-1957), starting with public singing with a group of enthusiastic singers of the local church as a mission activity. Together with his colleague, Ernst Denkert, who was pastor of the other Adventist church in Hannover, North-West Germany, he began to preach at several evangelistic series. The results were very encouraging: membership in the Adventist churches in Hannover doubled.

Later Strala became the Youth Department director for the union (1957-1961), worked as a full-time evangelist for the Western German Union of the Seventh-day-Adventist-Church (1957-1963), and served as Ministerial

Secretary for the union (1964), before he was appointed director of the Marienhöhe Mission Seminary, Darmstadt (1964-1971). At Marienhöhe, he taught Daniel and Revelation and introduced a course on evangelism which included the process of visiting interested people. During those years he held a number of evangelistic meetings accompanied by students in several large German cities such as Dortmund and Düsseldorf and even bigger cities such as Hamburg (1963) and West-Berlin (1965).<sup>4</sup>

## Later Life

In 1966 Strala held evangelistic meetings in Zurich and Hamburg. In 1971 he was elected as the Ministerial Secretary in the Euro-Africa Division, a position which he held until his retirement in 1977. After his retirement Strala served as first deacon in his local Adventist church in Darmstadt-Eberstadt and continued to preach at evangelistic meetings in different cities such as Wuppertal (1977), Fürth (1978), Spaichingen (1979), Altenkirchen, Neustadt an der Weinstraße, Darmstadt-Eberstadt, Schweinfurt, Nürnberg, Erlangen, and Mersch, Luxemburg.

As a retired pastor he presented devotionals and gave pastoral counseling in retirement homes near Vienna for several weeks each year. One series contained seven topics and focused on the gospel of Christ, the prophetic message, and the joy of a Christian Adventist lifestyle. Some of his sermons and evangelistic topics were recorded by the "Voice of Hope" – Germany. In a report about the evangelistic series in Wuppertal in a school hall, published in *Adventecho*, it was stated that "his known and proven way of preaching with the power of the Holy Spirit touched the hearts of many of the listeners."<sup>5</sup> This service was carried on by him until his health declined.

He also reunited with a youth group he had ministered to in Reichenberg as a young pastor. He and his wife lived in Darmstadt and he died September 9, 1992, at the age of 79 in Delmenhorst where his son Johannes, a medical doctor, still lives. His wife Esther died in Hannover five years later.

## Contribution

Artur Strala was active in the Adventist church as a young believer and pastor when the Adventist Church was under pressure from the Nazi Regime. Strala supported the Adventist Church in West Germany in its mission and its growth in membership during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, as a pastor, evangelist, department director, and as Ministerial Secretary of the Euro-African Division. As director of the Marienhöhe Theological Seminary, Darmstadt, Strala integrated evangelism into the curriculum and motivated and trained young ministers and church members by coordinating and holding evangelistic series in several large cities in West Germany.

---

### SOURCES

"Evangelization in Spaichingen." *Adventecho*, September 1, 1979.

Gemeinde Wuppertal-Barmen, "Evangelization in Wuppertal." *Adventecho*, February 15, 1978.

Huber, K. H. "Evangelization in Fürth mit Artur Strala." *Adventecho*, September 1979.

Liske, B. "Nachruf für Artur Strala:" Unpublished manuscript, Historical Archives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Europe, 1992.

"Nachruf." Strala, A. *Adventecho*, January 1993.

Rüdiger, B. "Biography of Arthur Strala." Term Paper, Marienhöhe Seminary, Darmstadt June 1981.

Strala, J. "Erinnerungen an Meine Vater: Leben mit einer Legende." *Adventecho*, 1997.

---

## NOTES

1. Gablonz was culturally a "German" city in Czech territory close to German cities across the border, a city that was tolerant and flourishing and belonged politically to the Austrian Monarchy at that time.
2. Rüdiger Bergmann, "Biography of Arthur Strala," Term Paper, Marienhöhe Seminary, Darmstadt, June 1981, 18.
3. Vital information for this article was obtained from M. Bukhard, phone interview by Sieglinde Keil, October 15, 2018.
4. Up to 1,000 individuals attended such meetings. Of that number, 150 non-Adventists were in attendance while 25 were baptized.
5. Gemeinde Wuppertal-Barmen, "Evangelization in Wuppertal, *Adventecho*, February 15, 1978, 17.

---

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000