

Munzig, Richard (1882–1915)

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Richard Munzig was a German Adventist missionary, martyr, and defender of the Adventist faith.

Early Life

Richard Munzig was born in 1882 near Liegnitz (province of Prussian-Silesia) in East Germany. This region is now part of Poland as it was one of the lost territories of Germany during the Second World War.

Profession and Education

At a young age Richard became a forester/ranger. It was here he learned to use firearms. Later, in 1911-12, he went to the Adventist Mission Seminary at Friedensau. Together with F. Bornath, Munzig attended the famous Colonial Institute in Hamburg for six months to prepare himself for missionary service in German East Africa. While studying at the Colonial Institute, he took some basic courses to familiarize himself with Swahili and East African culture.¹

Missionary Work

On March 14, 1912, a ship left Hamburg for the Victoria Nyanza Mission in Tanzania. In this ship were H. B. Schurich and F. Bornath and his wife. Munzig joined the ship in Napels after he had spent some weeks visiting his relatives.² By June 1912 the crew arrived Tanzania. Munzig was stationed at Victoria Nyanza. Two months after his arrival he went to visit Bruno Ohme in Sukuma land in order to find proper places to establish Adventist mission stations. His visit to Ohme proved successful as two mission stations were founded later that year at Ntuzu, close to Bupandagila, and at Itilima, close to Bariadi. Surprisingly, a third mission station, though remote, was founded by Munzig in in Kanadi (Habiya) the following year in 1913.

Martyr and Defender

Sadly, on April 10, 1915, Munzig's missionary work was ended due to his early death³ during the construction of the new mission station at Kanadi. Since it was wartime, British soldiers from British East Africa were crossing the borders and attacking villages where Germans lived. The Britons encouraged some Massai warriors to raid cattle⁴ and possibly attack the mission station. On hearing this, a local chief appealed to Munzig to help protect his cattle.⁵ During the attack, Munzig joined the Wasukuma warriors in defending the mission station.⁶

According to a report in 1917 by fellow missionary H. B. Schurich on the death of Munzig, this was clearly a war-related casualty as up to 30 people died. Among them were 15 Masaai warriors, ten of which were killed by Munzig himself just before he was attacked by a spear from behind. Munzig did not die immediately. His young boy who was his mission helper stayed at his side until he died, but then had to leave so as not to be caught by Massai warriors. Munzig was buried at the place where he intended to build a chapel for the mission station, and his grave still exists today.⁷

At Munzig's funeral, Schurich led out in the service with Revelation 2:10: "Be faithful unto death so I will give you the crown of life." It is said that the Sukuma people who knew him were deeply impressed by his courage and willingness to risk his life to protect the mission station, the lives of the few church members, and those who sought refuge in the mission compound. Some of his pupils who attended his missionary school were baptized by Schurich shortly thereafter to honor God and their "spiritual father" as they used to call Munzig.

Although the mission station was abandoned after Munzig's death, it was later rebuilt after World War II. Munzig was not married. He was a highly dedicated missionary who was largely left on his own in this remote area.

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NOTES

1. See report by Ludwig R. Conradi, "More Workers for Africa," *ARH*, April 11, 1912, 15.
2. See report by the European Division of the General Conference, "General Conference Missions," *Quarterly Report of the General Conference of S.D.A. European Division*, first quarter, 1912, 12
3. "Obituary Record for 1915," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1916), 245, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1916.pdf>.
4. "Survey of the field," *Ibid.*, 252.
5. Virgil Robinson, "Third Angel over Africa," TMs, n.d., accessed June 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Books/TAOA1954.pdf>.
6. "Missionary Experiences in War-Time," *The Present Truth*, March 15, 1917, 171, accessed July 18, 2018 <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/PT/PT19170315-V33-11.pdf>.
7. See H. B. Schurich "Missonar Munzig Tod," in *Freud und Leid der Missionare des S.T.A. Missionsgebiets am Victoriasee*, ed. Ludwig R. Conradi (Hamburg: Internationale Traktatgesellschaft, 1919), 49-51; W. Cuthbert, "Reconstruction in Tangayika," *ARH*, January 31, 1924, 17.

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