

Berg, Henrique

(1932–1997)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Henrique Berg

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Henrique Berg was a pastor, missionary, and administrator in South America.

Henrique Berg was born on September 19, 1932, in the city of Bom Retiro, state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. His parents were João Berg and Margarida Berg, a Dutch-Russian immigrant couple. Henrique was raised in the city of Mogi das Cruzes, state of São Paulo, where he was an active member of the local church, serving there as a secretary in his youth.¹

Still young he went to study accounting at Brazil College (today UNASP-SP), in the city of São Paulo, where, on feeling called to become a pastor, he later applied to the theology program. One year before graduating, on February 23, 1960, he married Miriam de Azevedo Berg (1938–2006) and they had two daughters, Lívia and Lélia.

²³ She was of great support to her husband in different areas, especially in the former Dorcas Department, today Adventist Solidary Action. In the missionary field, she was also involved in welfare activities. In Mozambique, for example, she instructed a group of women on cutting and sewing skills. In the churches, she held many courses on healthy cooking.⁴ She also served the Church at the South America Division office, where she was director of Children's Ministries from 2001 to 2003.⁵

Henrique graduated from Theology on December 9, 1961,⁶ and began his ministry on the 12th of the same month, as a district pastor for the São Paulo Conference, which at that time comprised the whole state of São Paulo.⁷ He held this position for eight years until 1969.⁸ During this period he was ordained to the ministry in 1966, while a pastor in the city of Bauru.⁹

In January 1970, Henrique was appointed by the South Brazil Union Conference as president of the Santa Catarina Mission,¹⁰ where he also led the departments of Education, Evangelism, and Stewardship.¹¹ Shortly after, in 1971 he was called by the Portuguese Union Mission to lead the Mozambique Mission, which at the time was a detached field, not pertaining to any division.¹² In the same year the field was reorganized into a Union Conference and came to be part of the Euro-Africa Division. Pastor Henrique would have the responsibility to manage and strengthen the Union in its new stage. He arrived in Mozambique with the family in 1972,¹³ and later in the same year, another change was made in the field organization by the establishment of three Missions – Central, North, and South, the former comprising the districts of Gaza, Inhambane and Lourenço Marques (today Maputo). Henrique was president of both the Mozambique Union and the local South Mission from 1972 to 1975.¹⁴

Faced with missionary challenges, he also took over the departments of Radio-TV, Sabbath School, and Stewardship, both of the Mozambique Union and the South Mozambique Mission.¹⁵ At the lack of a canvassing leader in the initial years, he assisted in the organization of the canvassing work in the country, which became a strong missionary front.¹⁶

By the year 1975, there were almost 20,000 baptized members and 30,000 people in Sabbath Schools. Also, there were about 8,000 students in the alphabetization schools in the jungle and 7,000 in the Bible Correspondence Course. The independence of Mozambique from Portugal in June 1975 made the missionary team optimistic. However, they began to face difficulties due to the Marxist regime, which declared as the propriety of the state all the medical and educational institutions. In addition, leaders and members from different denominations came to be attacked and imprisoned. On October 24, 1975, Pastor Henrique was arrested along with Pastors Geraldo Clajus and Bernardino Pene Mabote, at the city of Lourenço Marques (today Maputo).¹⁷

The former Brazilian Republic prosecutor, Dr. João Batista Clayton Rossi, also elder of Brasília Adventist Church, worked hard alongside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that Pastors Henrique Berg and Geraldo Clajus, his mission partner, would be free and could return to Brazil with their families. They were in prison for a total of

182 days.¹⁸

After five years in Mozambique, Henrique returned to Brazil on April 26, 1976, being appointed as pastor of the Curitiba Central Church, state of Paraná.¹⁹ Following this he was president of the Paraná Conference over the year 1977.²⁰ In 1978 he accepted a call to be president of the Inca Union Mission, which covered the territories of Bolívia, Ecuador, and Peru. During his term, the Peruvian Union University was established.²¹

After six years in Peru, Henrique returned to Brazil in February 1985, to be the director of the Sabbath School and Church Ministries departments of the South Brazil Union Conference.²² Nonetheless, he led these departments for a short time; in July of the same year, the General Conference Council named him as director of the South American Division Church Ministries Department,²³ a position held until 1994.²⁴ In addition, Pastor Henrique was editor of the *Sabbath School Portuguese Auxiliary Study Guide for Teachers*,²⁵ and of the *Auxiliary Material for Sabbath School Children Ministry Teachers* in Spanish, from 1986 to 1996.²⁶

Due to his experience in foreign missions, in 1995 he was chosen by the General Conference Council to lead the South American Division Global Mission Department.²⁷ Henrique occupied this position until March 17, 1997, when he passed away due to a lymphoma cancer he was fighting since 1993. He died at the early age of 64, at the Silvestre Adventist Hospital, city of Rio de Janeiro. Three months before his death, Henrique was awarded the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* by the Peruvian Union University.²⁸

Henrique Berg's story as a missionary in Mozambique was portrayed by the writer Miriam Wood in the book *Prendam-no!* (Arrest him!), published by the Brazil Publishing House in 1982.²⁹ He left an important legacy of 36 years dedicated to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil, Mozambique, Peru, and South American territories. His greatest joy was to study the Bible with others, and he is remembered as a very responsible and hard-working pastor.³⁰

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