

Kotz, Hans Ernst

(1910–1963)

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Godfrey K. Sang is a historical researcher and writer with an interest in Adventist history. He holds a B.A. in History from the University of Eastern Africa Baraton and a number of qualifications from other universities. He is a published author. He is the co-author of the book *On the Wings of a Sparrow: How the Seventh-day Adventist Church Came to Western Kenya*

Hans Ernst Kotz was an Adventist church leader in the mission field in Africa.

Early Life

Hans Ernst Kotz was born at Kihuriro, Tanganyika, on December 19, 1910, to German Seventh-day Adventist missionary parents Ernst Kotz (1887–1944) and Hilda Ella Marie (1888–1932). He was the eldest of three siblings, the others being Ilse (born 1912) and Siegfried (born 1915).

Hans grew up experiencing mission life in Africa, which he greatly loved. At the age of 16, he and his family left Africa for the United States of America when Elder Kotz was appointed associate secretary at the General Conference headquarters in Takoma Park, Maryland. There, he completed his college education and married Miss Viola Vanderberry in 1933.

Return to Africa

Soon after their marriage, and having obtained ministerial qualifications, the couple returned to Africa, starting first in Tanganyika where he had been born. Hans was posted to the Mwagala Mission in Maswa, in Tanganyika's Lake Province.¹ Tanganyika Mission, at this time, was managed through the Central European Division while Kenya and Uganda were under the Northern European Division.² G. A. Ellingworth was in charge of the Tanganyika Mission. In 1937, Kotz moved from Maswa to Musoma to run the Utimbaru Mission Station.³ He remained at Utimbaru briefly before returning to Mwagala, handing leadership over to E. A. Flammer.⁴ Mrs. Kotz, a trained nurse, ran the Mwagala dispensary.



Viola and Hans E. Kotz with Pr. Hubert M. Sparrow in Tanganyika, 1942. Photo courtesy of Michael M. Sparrow Collection.

In 1941, Tanganyika was moved from the Central European Division to the Southern Africa Division. It was also amalgamated into the East Africa Union, which brought together Kenya and Uganda, and it also was moved from the Northern European Division to the Southern Africa Division.

President of Tanganyika Mission Field

In 1947, Hans Kotz was appointed the president of the Tanganyika Mission, taking over from F. H. Thomas⁵ He now moved to the Busegwe Mission in Musoma, which was the headquarters of the Tanganyika Mission. He was replaced at the Mwagala Mission by W. W. Oliphant. Mrs. Kotz moved to the Busegwe Dispensary. Hans doubled up as the departmental secretary for the Home Missionary and the YPMV (Young People's Missionary Volunteers) departments.

In 1951, F. G. Reid was appointed the president of the Tanganyika Mission Field, taking over from Kotz.

Moving to Uganda

The Kotzes returned to the United States for their due furlough, and in 1953, he moved to Uganda where he was appointed the director of the Ruwenzori Mission, which had been established in 1945⁶ Uganda Mission Field at that time was led by Magdalon E. Lind. The following year, F. H. Muderspach replaced Lind. Uganda, at this time, had six mission stations – Ruwenzori, Kireka Hill in Kampala, Katikamu Mission in Wobulenzi, Kakoro Mission in Mbale, Ishaka in Ankole, and the Gulu Mission.

Moving to Rwanda

In 1961, Pastor Kotz was appointed the president of the North Ruanda Field, which was under the Rwanda-Urundi Union. The North Ruanda Field had been established in 1956, and so Pastor Kotz was based at Ruhengeri from where he was responsible for 90 churches with 11,841 members.⁷

Illness and Death

In November 1962, he travelled to Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), to attend the 12th Quadrennial Council of the Southern Africa Divison. While there, he complained of chest pains. When he returned to Rwankeri early on December 7, he suffered occasional spasms of pain, but he played down the situation. On Thursday evening, December 20, a day after his 52nd birthday, Pastor Kotz passed away quietly in his sleep.⁸ Pastor Kotz was laid to rest at the Rwankeri Mission in North Rwanda on December 21, 1962.

Legacy

Hans Ernst Kotz was a man of strong faith fully dedicated to missionary work in Africa. He had a friendly, cheerful disposition and was loved by all those who knew him. He planted many churches, particularly in Tanganyika, Uganda, and even during the brief period he was in Rwanda, he made an important impact. He was survived by his wife, Viola, and his brother, Dr. Siegfried Kotz, who at that time was in Takoma Park, Maryland, and his sister Ms. Ilse Kotz, who at that time lived in New York City.

SOURCES

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association. Various years.
<https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

Southern Africa Division Outlook 61, no. 3 (Kenilworth Cape, CA: Sentinel Publishing House, March 16, 1963).

NOTES

1. "Mwagala Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1934), 94.
2. Ibid.
3. "Utimbaru Mission Station," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1938), 98.
4. "Mwagala Mission Station," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1939), 100.
5. "Tanganyika Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1948), 163.
6. "Ruwenzori Mission Station," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 186.
7. "North Ruanda Field," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1962), 185.
8. F. G. Thomas, "At Rest – H. E. Kotz," *Southern Africa Division Outlook* 61, no. 3 (Kenilworth Cape, SA: Sentinel Publishing House, March 15, 1963), 11.

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