

# Fuhrmann, Maximilian (1908–2008)

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## THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Maximilian Fuhrmann

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Maximilian Fuhrmann was a German born pastor, secretary, treasurer, administrator and auditor in Brazil.

Maximilian Fuhrmann was born on December 31, 1908, in Binswangen, near the city of Dillingen, in Bavaria state, Germany. He was the first male child of Karl and Therese Fuhrmann's seven children!<sup>1</sup> The family subsistence was based on agriculture activities. When the First World War broke out in 1914, Max Fuhrmann began working on the plantations, although having been only six years of age, since the adult men had been, mostly, drafted into the army. In accordance with the country law, he entered school at the age of eight and

studied until he was fifteen.<sup>2</sup>

The region where he was raised was traditionally Catholic, and so was his family. They were introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist Church by an uncle, who paid a visit to the family in order to share his new beliefs. They agreed to study the subject and concluded, along with other relatives, that they would accept Adventism as their religion.<sup>3</sup> The decision caused a certain revolt among the community members, who accused them as heretics. This directly affected his father, who was the city mayor at the time, leading him to expel his wife and children from home. At this moment, Max was working in the fields and only discovered what happened at night, when he went to his uncle's house and found all his family there. As the oldest son, at sixteen years old, Max was convinced by his mother to go home and ask his father to reconsider it. He eventually accepted them back and, on September 26, 1926, they were baptized into the Adventist faith in Augsburg, by Pastor Dürr.<sup>4</sup>

At the end of the 1920s, Fuhrmann was impressed by a Mexican pastor's sermon in Germany, who appealed on the need for workers in South America. In response, he took the decision to become a missionary in Brazil, along with his future brother-in-law, Otto Wörl.<sup>5</sup> They boarded in Hamburg in October 1928, and arrived at the harbor of Santos, state of São Paulo, after a 26-day travel. Following this they headed for Brazil College (today UNASP-SP), located in the city of São Paulo, where they studied Portuguese for a month with teacher Albertina Simon.<sup>6</sup>

Fuhrmann's main difficulty in the new country was communicating, since his Portuguese was at a very basic level. Even so, he decided to go canvassing, in order to better learn the language and pay for his studies. By this means he managed to complete his theological studies, which lasted for one year,<sup>7</sup> graduating in 1932.<sup>8</sup>

He began to serve the Adventist Church in the beginning of 1933 as an office assistant at the Rio-Minas Gerais Mission, where he served until April of the same year.<sup>9</sup> In May, the Rio-Espirito Santo Mission hired him as a treasurer and typist, where he served for five years.<sup>10</sup> In September of 1938, he returned to the Rio-Minas Mission, where he worked as a secretary-treasurer until the end of 1939. Afterwards, he was appointed as treasurer of the Northeast Brazil Mission, where he served until end of 1946.<sup>11</sup>

Through the outbreak of World War II, and the declaration of war against Germany by the Brazilian government in 1942, a strong persecution began against German immigrants living in Brazil. Even speaking another language other than Portuguese was prohibited. Many were considered espionage suspects and, for this reason, ended up in prison,<sup>12</sup> as happened to Max Fuhrmann. He managed to be released with the help of a friend, Laura Araújo, who had a friendship with the Army Commander and convinced him to release Fuhrmann.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, the Northeast field had an increasingly growing need for a place to build an Adventist boarding school. Therefore, in 1943, a group of pastors among which were Max Fuhrmann, Castelani, Jairo Araújo and Repogle, together with many church members who selflessly donated their golden marriage rings, managed to buy a piece of land in Belém de Maria, state of Pernambuco, for what would become the Northeast Brazil Academy (ENA).<sup>14</sup>

Still in this period, in 1944 Fuhrmann acquired an undergraduate degree in Business Administration at the Pernambuco College of Economic Sciences. Despite some difficulties related to Sabbath-keeping, he was able to complete the program, which he had started back in Espírito Santo.<sup>15</sup>

In 1947, he was appointed as treasurer and business manager of the Rio de Janeiro Clinic (White Nursing Home).<sup>16</sup> In addition, he became responsible for the construction of the Rio de Janeiro Sanatorium and Hospital, of which he was the treasurer and business manager from its inauguration, in 1948, until end of 1958.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after his arrival, he faced a problem with the renewal of the rental contract for the building where the clinic operated. It was decided that the White Nursing Home should be moved to the newly built hospital, which was still unprepared to support it at the time. In addition, the route for access to the hospital became very muddy on rainy days, which caused difficulties in transporting materials for the operation of the Hospital and Clinic. When telling about these problems to the master-builder of the Rio de Janeiro City Hall, he sympathized with the situation and sent stones to pave the surroundings of the hospital. Also, some members of the church in North America donated resources for them to buy a pickup truck.<sup>18</sup>

In October of 1958, Fuhrmann was appointed as treasurer of the Rio-Minas Conference, where he served for four years until accepting a call to pastor the district of Campo Grande, city of Rio de Janeiro. Before taking over the field, he was ordained to the ministry in 1963. Pastor Fuhrmann is considered a pioneer in the evangelization of Campo Grande, since during the nine years he served there, five new churches were constructed: Campo Grande, Santa Cruz, Santíssimo, Itaguaí and Sepetiba.<sup>19</sup>

In 1973 he was appointed as pastor of the church in Pavuna, district of Rio de Janeiro city, where he served until 1979.<sup>20</sup> Pastor Fuhrmann retired in 1980, but continued to work for the denomination, even being invited to participate in the administrative board of the new Rio de Janeiro Conference.<sup>21</sup> He worked there as an internal auditor for seven years, as well as church cashier for the Conference.<sup>22</sup>

However, in the beginning of 1987, he was removed from the board of active workers of the Rio de Janeiro Conference due to medical recommendations, after passing through a delicate surgery to remove a clot from his brain at Rio de Janeiro Adventist Hospital, after an accidental fall.<sup>23</sup>

In 1989, at the age of 81, Fuhrmann married Carmen Teixeira, also an Adventist worker. The religious ceremony was held by pastor Roberto Rabello and the civil ceremony by Ari Gomes, at the Rio de Janeiro Central Church. According to a close friend, he had remained single for such a long time due to total dedication to God's work.<sup>24</sup>

In 1992, the First Meeting of Spiritual Enrichment for the Elderly took place in the city of Duque de Caxias, state of Rio de Janeiro. On this occasion, Max Fuhrmann and Carmen were called as special guests, where he was honored for his 50 years of service to the Adventist Church.<sup>25</sup> Pastor Maximilian Fuhrmann died on March 19, 2008, at the age of 99, in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>26</sup>

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## SOURCES

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## NOTES

1. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 2.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 2-3.
4. Ibid., 4-5.
5. "Jubilado após 44 anos de trabalho," *Revista Adventista*, year 75, no. 3, March, 1980, 20.
6. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 6.
7. Ibid., 7-8.
8. "Formatura do Colégio Adventista," *Revista Adventista*, vol. 27, no. 11, November, 1932, 7.
9. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 9.

10. There is a divergence of information at this point because his Service Record (attached in the monograph "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann") states that Fuhrmann was hired as a treasurer, on the other hand, the *Revista Adventista* (H. B. Westcott, "Mudanças e Acréscimos de obreiros na União Éste-Brasileira," *Revista Adventista*, vol. 28, no. 5, May, 1933, 13), says he worked as a typist. However, he probably worked on both functions.
11. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 9-10; "Rio-Minas Geraes Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1939), 184; "Northeast Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), 184; Northeast Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 146.
12. Daniele Lessa, "Segunda Guerra Mundial: as restrições enfrentadas por estrangeiros que viviam no Brasil - Bloco 2", Câmara dos Deputados, November, 2011.
13. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 10.
14. Shichiro Takatoki, "História das Camas de um Educandário," *Revista Adventista*, year 47, no. 6, 1952, June, 9.
15. *Ibid.*, 10.
16. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 24; "Rio de Janeiro Clinic and Rest Home," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948), 288.
17. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 13; "Rio de Janeiro Hospital," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 274.
18. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 13.
19. *Ibid.*, 14-15, 23.
20. *Ibid.*, 15.
21. "Jubilado após 44 anos de trabalho," *Revista Adventista*, year 75, no. 3, March, 1980, 20.
22. Stanley Teixeira, "Vida e Obra do pastor Max Fuhrmann" (Monograph, Instituto Adventista de Ensino, 1999), 16.
23. *Ibid.*, 17.
24. *Ibid.*, 18.
25. "Terceira Idade," *Revista Adventista*, year 88, no. 3, March, 1992, 21.

26. Márcia Valdo, to Camila Chede, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, May 15, 2019.

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