



**Br Stanislas Zak, S.J.**  
**(1902-1995. In Zambia 1931-1975)**

**19 March 1995**

Stanislas Zak was born on 10 November 1902 in Kamionka Wielka near Tamow in the south of Poland, of Jan and Zofja Zak. There is nothing about his youth in our archives. I remember, however, writes Fr Cickecki, from his conversation that as a young man he was in the army. He was attached to the mechanics department where he had an experienced supervisor who could handle all kinds of mechanics including blacksmith's work and gun repair. There were no sophisticated machines: a rifle barrel had to be repaired by a good look at it and with sometimes a delicate blow of a hammer in the right spot. A good eye and careful precision was the order of the day. Both of these Br Zak had and it even saved the lives of his fellow missionaries in some dramatic situations.

He entered the Society on 10 April 1926 in Stara Wies, just a year before the Polish Province was divided into two: the Polish Major (Warsaw) and the Polish Minor (today South) Province. Br Zak coming from the south remained in the latter. After vows, he stayed on in the novitiate in the mechanic's workshop looking after the water pumps, electricity etc.

In 1931 on the anniversary of his entry into the Society, he arrived in Northern Rhodesia. His first assignment was in Kasisi with Fr Spendel as superior. In 1935 he is already found in Katondwe where he was badly needed. In time he served in all the mission stations.

He was responsible for designing the Chingombe road through the Muchinga Mountains but due to lack of funds the project had to wait until after the war when Br Perdik constructed it in 1951. Br Zak was responsible for constructing the first dam in Kasisi and for improving the one in Katondwe, together with the water system for the whole mission.

While in Katondwe he took his last vows in 1936. As a good marksman he provided occasional meat for the table, especially in Katondwe and Chingombe and even in Kasisi. Once a lion was just about to jump on Br Misiag from behind and Zak, with cool presence of mind, brought down the attacker with one bullet. On another occasion when Br Bulak had been killed by a lion at night in Katondwe, he tracked the lion the following morning and took him down with one bullet firing across a stream. The local population was greatly relieved for they believed that otherwise the lion would become possessed by a spirit and become so much more dangerous.

During his stay in Katondwe he was infected by sleeping sickness and while the cure was long and painful, he never really recovered his initial strength. Though working with zeal and dedication he never got over it fully and became somewhat lethargic, unsure and restless. He requested to go on leave in order to recover. Regular leave, as we know it today, did not exist then and he was the first to go on such a leave. He started the ball rolling and after him others went. During his leave his health deteriorated due to ulcers. The doctors operated on him and a long period of convalescence was needed to get him back on his feet. He returned to Zambia in 1967.

Although somewhat recovered he was now 65. In addition, he found all the changes of the post-Vatican era hard to take and eventually he requested to return to a more congenial atmosphere of his homeland. When he was 72 he returned and went to Stara

Wies where he had started his religious life 49 years before and worked at the reception. He still felt attached to the Mission and kept writing letters to the superior asking him to let him return despite the fact that he knew he could not do much in the line of work. Despite all his requests he was asked to remain at the door in Stara Wies and keep up his interest and prayers for the Mission he so much yearned for. On 19 March 1995 he passed away at the ripe old age of 93.