



11

“PUT THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER”

The Torontos had mixed feelings when they left their mission in September 1939. Wally wrote in his journal, “It seems that we have merely kept it going during these perilous times, and that little progress has been made. Going home! A queer feeling comes over one, when the reality of it strikes—partial sadness and partial joy. Sadness because we must leave this glorious work and these fine wonderful people who have meant so much to us in our experiences of the past three years, and joy in anticipation of seeing our loved ones again.”¹

The Torontos crossed the Atlantic by ship, landing in New York City, where they stayed at a hotel. As if the experiences of the past several months had not been enough, hair-raising incidents never seemed to cease. In New York one night, Marion and Bobby snuck out of the hotel room and managed to walk “down onto Broadway with its roaring traffic.” Martha frantically searched “high and low” for them before finally running downstairs, finding them “in the care of some strange

1. Toronto, journal, May 28–June 3, 1939, 366.

lady, who had pulled them off the street from in front of an on-rushing truck.” The woman who had found them said she could not understand the children when she asked them where they lived or who they were. After all, Marion and Bob still knew only how to speak Czech.²

The Torontos arrived in Salt Lake City soon thereafter. Now that they were home, Wally and Martha had to figure out how to move forward. Early in his mission presidency, Wally had already started to consider his future and what he would do when he returned home after his release. In 1937, he had had a conversation with Elder Richard R. Lyman of the Quorum of the Twelve. During their lengthy discussion, Elder Lyman “urged [Wally] to go on in the seminary work.” At the prospect, Wally wrote, “I told him of the uncertainty I felt in such work because of the frequent changes in administration and how a number of well-qualified men had been dropped like ‘hot potatoes’ because [they] had had college training in theology at the Eastern colleges. He seemed to feel that the seminary work was founded however on a solid basis of scholarship, and would become even more so in the future. I learned much wisdom and many things from [Elder Lyman] that evening.”³ After his talk with Elder Lyman, Wally began thinking of teaching as a postmission career.

In June 1939, when going home seemed inevitable, Wally had anticipated that the Church board of education would be sending contracts to him, offering him a part-time teaching position in Salt Lake, allowing him time to secure a degree as well; however, none had arrived before they left Europe.⁴ Regarding the transition from Czechoslovakia to home, Martha wrote, “The adjustment of being home after a mission is a difficult one, and we had to go through this period along with all the other mission presidents and missionaries.”⁵ The family returned in a very poor financial condition. To improve their situation, they decided that Wally should go back to school and work on obtaining his master’s degree. It was then that he decided to use his mission experiences as

2. Toronto, journal, October 8–14, 1939, 422.

3. Toronto, journal, January 24–February 6, 1937, 74.

4. Toronto, journal, May 28–June 3, 1939, 366.

5. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 35.

the basis for his master’s thesis: “Some Socio-psychological Aspects of the Czecho-Slovakian Crisis of 1938–39.”⁶ They borrowed money so that he could get a job with the state’s welfare department while they waited for a contract to teach. Finally, one came through authorizing him to teach early-morning seminary at South High School.

Students who entered Wally’s class keenly felt his influence as a seminary teacher. He had “a great love, wherever he taught or whatever he did,” and the students had a lot of respect and love for him in return.⁷ One of Wally’s students was young Henry B. Eyring—later to become First Counselor in the First Presidency. He remembered that Wally had “brought something intangible to [his] teachings.” Though he had not fully appreciated it at the time, he realized that Wally had “reached him in ways that went beyond curriculum, teaching style, or even personal testimony.”⁸ Elder Eyring remembered a story that Wally once mentioned in class about a spiritual experience he had enjoyed as a missionary. While tracting with his companion, they knocked on a certain woman’s door. Wally introduced himself and told her that they wanted to tell her about the Church, to which the woman replied, “No, I don’t want to hear about it. I’m very sad right now because I’ve lost a child.” At that moment, it occurred to Wally to teach her about the Atonement and the subsequent blessings of eternal life. He promised her that she would see her child again. As he testified, he spoke in the Czech language perfectly, the language he did not actually know yet. The woman felt the Spirit and ended up going to church.⁹ That story and other remarkable lessons left a lasting impact on Wally’s students.

In July of 1939, Wally received a letter from a Dr. Beeley of the University of Utah, informing him of a fellowship that would greatly enable him to finish his schoolwork.¹⁰ In June the following year, the university bestowed upon Wallace F. Toronto a master’s degree of

6. Toronto, “Some Socio-psychological Aspects,” 6–7.

7. Ed and Norma, interview, May 8, 2013, 25.

8. Robert I. Eaton and Henry J. Eyring, *I Will Lead You Along: The Life of Henry B. Eyring* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 122.

9. Ed and Norma, interview, May 8, 2013, 30.

10. Toronto, journal, June 25–July 1, 1939, 377.

science. Two years later in 1942, he became the director of the Red Cross for Utah.¹¹ Along with his new position, he became a member of the Salt Lake Kiwanis Club. Wally grew extremely busy during the war years in a variety of endeavors.¹² Nevertheless, the Czech people were undoubtedly never far from his mind.

In Church service, Wally became a member of the Mutual Improvement Association General Board and traveled a great deal and even spoke as an emissary of the board. His sister-in-law, Carma, recalled how straightforward he was in that position and how he affected the people around him. She particularly remembered one stake conference at which he was the visiting authority. Local leaders were talking about a certain boy who was traveling in a wayward direction. A moderator panel, which included the bishop, the young men's president, and the elders quorum president, gathered to discuss the problem. They wondered how they could help the young man. He had stopped going to church. Each of them mentioned what they were going to do. Finally, right in the middle of the meeting, Wally raised his hand and inquired, "Do you mean all you people are going to jump on this one kid and scare the hell out of him?" Not surprisingly, all ears were on him. "He said, 'We're shooting buckshot when we should be shooting with a rifle here. One person, one on one. Build a relationship with the kid first. Don't everybody pile on him.'"¹³ As was typical, his forthright manner caught the attention of all the rest, and his words influenced them for the better.

While Wally remained busy teaching, Martha attended to their ever-growing family. Their son, Allen, was born on June 2, 1945, the day after Judy's fourth birthday.¹⁴ Martha had settled back into life in Utah. She was seen as a "sophisticated lady with her harp," and her harp meant a great deal to her, as did many other things. She once again enjoyed wearing fine clothes and going to the beauty parlor

11. "W. F. Toronto Dies in S.L.," *Deseret News*, January 10, 1968.

12. "W. F. Toronto Dies In S.L."

13. Carma Toronto, interview, February 26, 2004, 5–6.

14. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 37.

every week to have her hair done. Carma remembered that Martha was always dressed perfectly when she went to church. She had her hat, gloves, purse, and coat—the entire ensemble that matched from an exclusive store in Salt Lake City: Maycotts.¹⁵

A few months after the armistice was signed on August 14, 1945, something completely unexpected transpired. Wally and Martha were called into the office of the First Presidency, where President David O. McKay asked how they would feel about going back to reopen the Czechoslovak Mission and "to put the pieces back together for preaching the gospel again in that land." Wally had never actually been released anyway. He had retained the title of mission president throughout World War II, "keeping in touch as much as possible with the [Czech] Saints." Neither he nor Martha had any "doubt in [their] minds about accepting [the] call from the Lord."¹⁶ So Wally gave up his three jobs to accept an overwhelming responsibility of restoring the mission to a nation he loved deeply.

His second stretch as mission president did not start out under the most ideal circumstances, for he had to go alone. He first had to find a house to live in. "It would be impossible to take a family of five children over into a European country that had been so recently ravaged by war, with no place to stay and no plans for a mission home." Martha readied her husband for his departure and bade him farewell at the train station along with two young elders, Victor Bell and Heber Jacobs, who would accompany Wally to Europe and assist him in fulfilling his many responsibilities.¹⁷

Wally traveled for quite a while before arriving in Czechoslovakia. He and his elders traveled by ship to Europe and spent several weeks on the ocean. They decided to spend their time doing what they would do if they were already in their areas. On their very first day, they and the presidents and missionaries of other European missions organized a gospel class that would take place from ten to eleven o'clock each

15. Carma Toronto, interview, February 26, 2004, 12.

16. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 37–38.

17. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 38.

Victor Bell, Wallace Toronto, and Heber Jacobs in Prague, 1945. >>
 Courtesy of Church History Library.

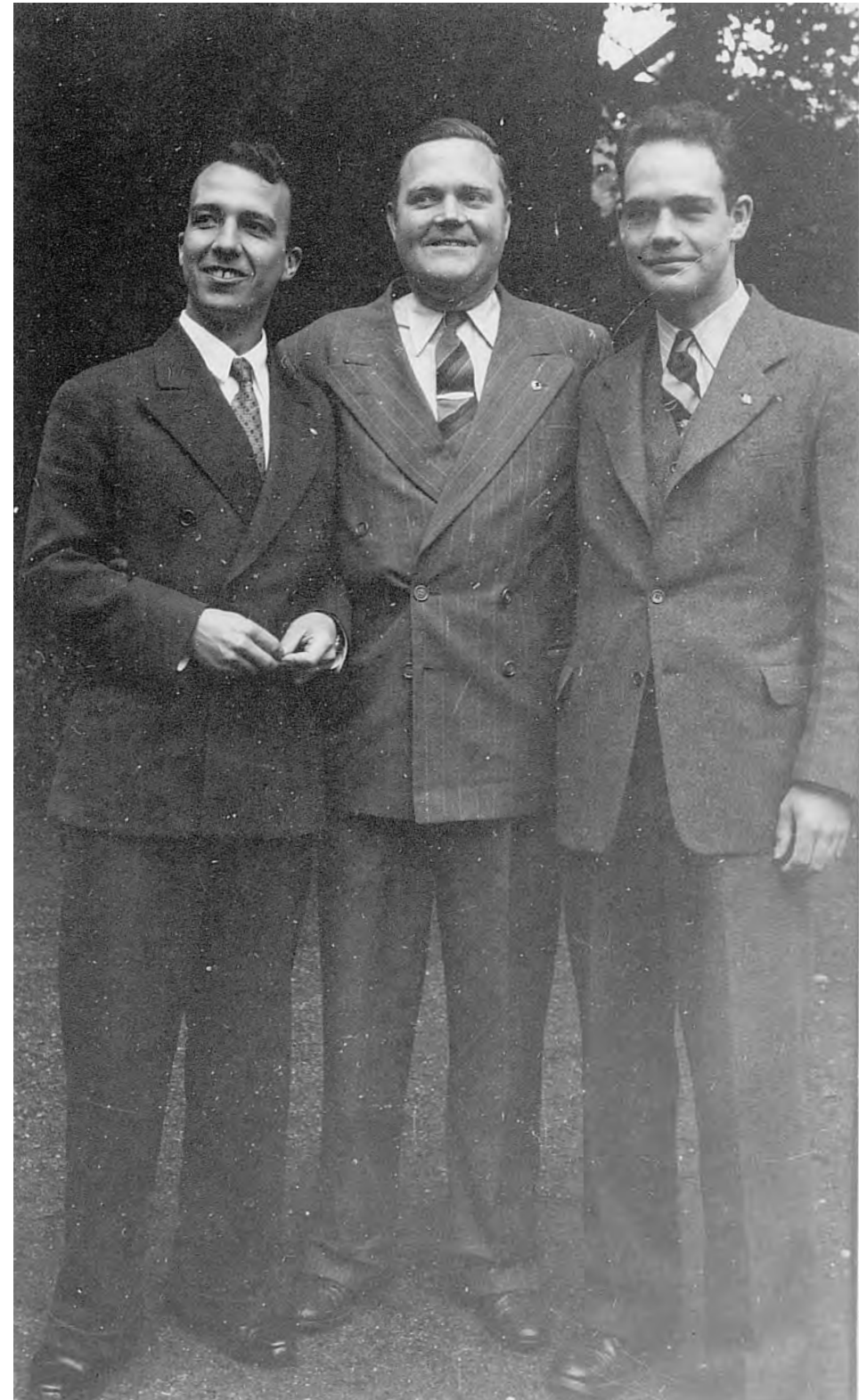
morning. They prepared and taught the lessons assigned to them. The mission presidents held classes for their missionaries to learn their separate languages. “Brother Weber takes the four new missionaries going to Switzerland and teaches them German, I have a Czech class for our two brethren, and the Hollanders get into a huddle on Dutch.” They often became acquainted with the passengers on board and engaged in gospel conversations with whoever was willing, keeping themselves quite busy.¹⁸

The leaders encouraged their young elders to attend the services and meetings held by the other denominations, including the Catholic and Protestant churches. They felt that “they might gain some insight into the viewpoints of members of other faiths, and thus be better prepared to introduce them to the Gospel.” They knew that their elders could benefit greatly by having a foundation of knowledge about other faiths. “These denominations know the truth in part only, and very often they misinterpret what they do know. They lack the depth and the vision, the stimulation and the inspiration of the restored Gospel. I came away from these meetings, fine as they were, realizing the more how blessed I was to be permitted membership in the Church of Jesus Christ.”¹⁹

When they reached the harbor in Le Havre, the ship’s captain announced that “[they] would remain outside the port all night since there were no facilities for unloading and checking until Monday morning.” The engines were turned off, and the boat stopped moving as everyone settled into bed. Wally did not fully understand what the captain meant until the following morning. The passengers were up early to prepare their luggage and rush to see Le Havre, which appeared rather beautiful in the night, the distant lights twinkling afar off. They were taken by surprise at what they saw instead. “The sight

18. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 15, 1946, Church History Library, MS 16693, Salt Lake City.

19. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 26, 1946, Church History Library.



was sickening. This sparkling gem of the night before, now flooded with the light of the morning sun, lay there a mass of rubble. . . . The wanton destruction of war lay on every side. The huge bombed and burned-out carcasses of proud ships, half submerged in the harbor, bore evidence of frightful days. The docks and warehouses were heaps of debris and stone, now partially cleaned up. Most buildings in the immediate background of the harbor itself stood half demolished, their remaining glassless windows staring over this once proud harbor in death-like silence.”²⁰

They traveled through France and Switzerland by train. As they passed through France, they noticed that Paris was one of the few large cities nearly untouched by the war.²¹ They arrived in Switzerland and proceeded to secure train tickets to Prague, but the next available train would not depart until the following Wednesday. However, Wally and the elders were not completely unhappy by setback, “for to remain in Switzerland, is like a sojourn in paradise.” In a letter to Martha, Wally wrote, “Switzerland profited by the war—and more particularly by staying out of the war. It truly blossoms with the fruits of peaceful living. Everyone seems to be well off. The store windows are full of everything that most countries lack—even our own. . . . Remember the delicious Swiss chocolate and sweet cakes? The shops are full of it.”²²

They passed through the Austrian Alps on their way to Prague. They tried hard to study Czech on the train, “but the scenery was too fascinating. Hour after hour [they] stood at [their] compartment window marveling at the rugged peaks, oft times at the snow-capped mountains in the distance, the high string-like waterfalls dangling as it were from the top of sheer cliffs, and at the surging mountain streams below us.” The beautiful “glories of Nature” were marred only by “the destruction wrought by man.” Many “bridges had been blown up.” Temporary ones had been built in place of them. “Railroad yards were full of turned and twisted equipment. Parts of fine stations were in

20. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 26, 1946.

21. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 26, 1946.

22. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 26, 1946.

ruins. A number of factories in these beautiful valleys along the way had been gutted by bombs and shells.” Wally thought, “Yes, here is the destructive, ugly side of man’s make-up against a background of God’s perfect creations; and man’s evil designs are so futile and so puny in comparison to the good things of life. How can man, or the devil himself, ever hope to win out against such odds!”²³

After reaching Salzburg, they headed onward expecting little sleep as they had to pass through several zones early in the morning and eventually the Czech border. A group of U.S. soldiers went around to check everyone’s passes. They honored the French military passes that Wally and the elders had, but they warned them that there was a possibility that the Russians would throw them off the train because they did not accept anything that was not written in Russian. The soldiers suggested that, if they were “bounced,” the missionaries carry their bags across the bridge to the American border station. Presumably, the officers there would put them up for the night. Wally found the news discomfiting since he had been assured by those in Paris that it would not be a problem. “The man in my sleeper—a Czech—hid all of his money, his wristwatch, and other effects, and suggested that I do the same, for, as he said, these Russian soldiers take anything they have a liking for, no matter who the victim is. This, too, was a pleasant thought to add to our apprehension. We must have waited upon this border for almost two hours—all of us lying in bed wondering about the situation.”²⁴

He recounted to Martha what happened:

Finally footsteps. The door opened and there appeared a young Russian soldier, bulky in his heavy uniform, but pleasant appearing. I handed him my French Military Pass. He looked it over carefully—upside down, first, and then with my help, right side up. He could find no Russian words and seemed a bit dismayed. However, had he found some, I think he could not have read them. Finally, I took my Passport and helped him compare my name there with my name on the military pass. That seemed to satisfy him, so he smiled, grunted something

23. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 26, 1946.

24. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 26, 1946.

and went on to the next compartment. I heaved a sigh of relief. Later I crept out of bed and two compartments down checked on Brothers Bell and Jacobs. The Russian boy had apparently noted that their arrangement was the same as mine—although they said he checked their permits upside down—and caused them no trouble. And so we thanked the Lord silently that we had encountered no difficulties in entering Russian territory.²⁵

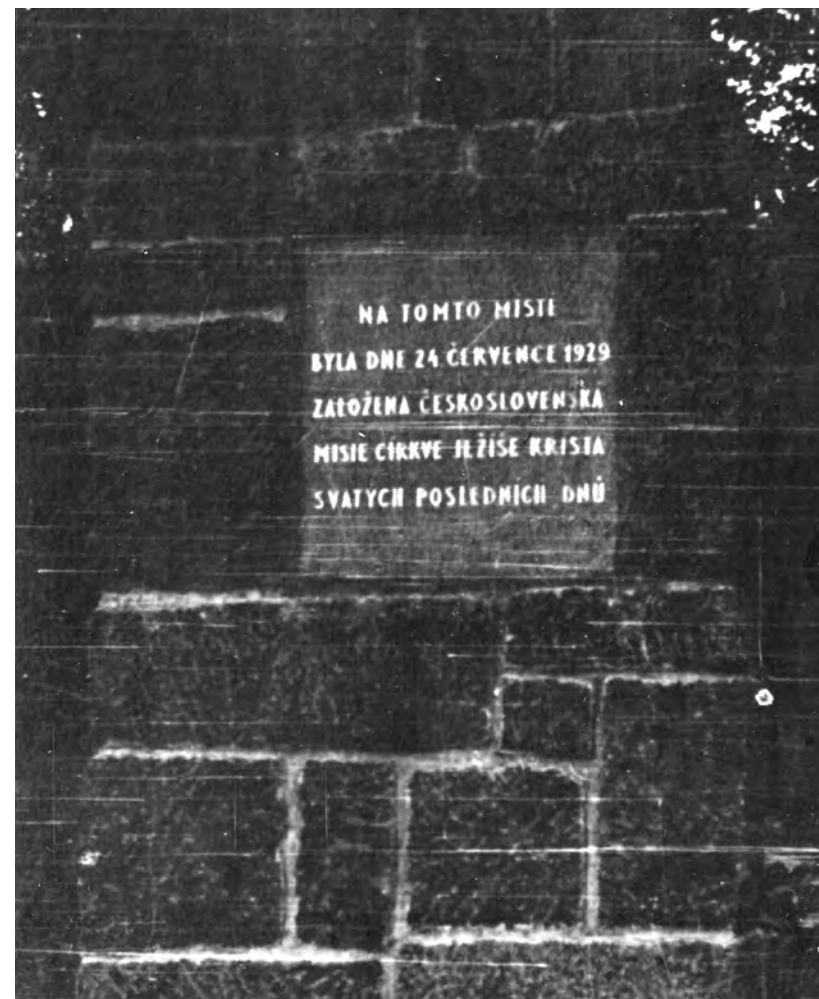
All throughout the journey, Wally seemed to enjoy the company with which he found himself on the train. Many of them were Czechs. He talked with them about the war and about the conditions of the country. They seemed friendly enough. “The only disquieting tone at all, was that some of the Czechs on the train were not sure just how the new Communist government, and the new Communist Prime Minister were going to work out. . . . The sentiment seemed to be, ‘We are lovers of freedom and the democratic form of life, but we must work with Russia and cater to her, for we have no other alternative. We cannot be sure how our experiment of walking the fence between the ideologies of the East and the West will work out.’”²⁶

The three Latter-day Saints reentered Czechoslovakia on June 28, 1946. “The membership had waited seven long years for this reunion.”²⁷ Wally was happy to find that the city, like Paris, had escaped much of the damage that most of Europe had endured. “We walked to the [Prague] Hotel, our first home, just around the corner from the Powder Tower (Prašná Brana). Outside of being a little dirty in some corners and a bit run-down because of lack of materials, Golden Prague still glittered.” President Ezra Taft Benson visited the sparkling capital of Czechoslovakia soon after Wally arrived, and Wally noted: “It is thrilling, indeed, how these members welcome the missionaries, and especially an apostle of the Church. It makes me feel that at home we don’t appreciate these leaders nearly enough. To have the guidance and association of such a man was a rare privilege. Here was a man, young in years, but rich in wisdom, directing the Lord’s work in

25. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, June 26, 1946.

26. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 2, 1946.

27. Mehr, “Czech Saints: A Brighter Day,” 50.



“PUT THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER”

Europe during its most distressing period. . . . His presence in Europe has been a blessing far beyond earthly value.”²⁸

While the prophet was there, Wally took him to the dedication site at the ancient fortress at Karlstejn. “There was the monument—erected when everyone thought it would be impossible. . . . The

Karlstejn monument, dedicated July 29, 1944, commemorates the opening of Czechoslovakia for preaching the gospel. Courtesy of Church History Library.

28. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 7, 1946.



Church members at the Karlstejn monument on July 29, 1946, commemorate preaching the gospel in Czechoslovakia. Courtesy of Church History Library.

chiseled stone plate reads something like this: On this spot the Czech Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ was organized July 24, 1929.” The place meant so much to him, as he was one of the missionaries present during the dedication seventeen years earlier when he was a young missionary.²⁹ He had always maintained the tradition of visiting the site on its anniversary every year. He, and likely everyone present, felt the sacredness of the spot, still standing even amidst the terrible tragedy of war.

After they left the dedication site, they visited Brno, which presented a stark difference to Prague. The once beautiful city had been bombed heavily in many areas. The home of the Vojkůvka family was destroyed. “It is miraculous how they escaped alive.” Wally and the others went up the hill toward the infamous Spielberg Nazi concentration camp. They

29. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 7, 1946.

looked over the valley of Brno. It still seemed the same, apart from the war damage, “all of it the work of American fliers.”³⁰

Despite the damage caused by the American army, the people of Czechoslovakia recognized that the Americans had saved their lives. “They loved Americans. Every person had a story to tell about Americans, how nice they were when the soldiers came.”³¹ While Wally was at the embassy, “a Czech military and civilian convoy brought the fragments of an American B-29 and some article of clothing from a dead American flier, shot down somewhere over Czechoslovakia, and presented them to [representatives of] the American Army.” Several speeches were given after flower girls lined up as the Czech band played. “The Czech representative, a soldier, said that this was symbolic of Czechoslovakia’s great regard for America, and that the Czechs had given . . . some three hundred fallen fliers decent burials throughout the land.”³² About a week later, Lieutenant Alden Anderson—a new friend of Wally’s—made sleeping arrangements for two hundred men of the Graves Registration Division of the army who would “begin the task of locating and disinterring the bodies” of the three hundred or so American fliers who had “lost their lives over Czechoslovakia soil.”³³

Wally set out to finding a house as soon as he could, but he had no idea that it would take so long to find a mission home. So many other responsibilities required his attention on top of house hunting. He was endlessly busy. In the end, it took an entire year to find an adequate villa before he was successful and could reunite with his wife and children. The year that he spent in Prague without his family was “one of extreme hard work, both physically and mentally.” “He spent many hours trying to find . . . Church members, some of whom had become lost or moved to other countries, or had been imprisoned for one reason or another.”³⁴ In fact, members of German ancestry had either been

30. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 7, 1946.

31. Dale Tingey, interview, 3.

32. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 14, 1946.

33. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 19, 1946.

34. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 38.

deported or imprisoned by the Czechs.³⁵ Wally wrote Martha, “The Czech government had followed the policy of sending all Germans, who did not prove themselves worthy of Czech citizenship during the war years, back to Germany. This is done on the principle that they are as guilty as the Germans in the Reich, and that the Germans in Czechoslovakia therefore should not escape the punishment which is being suffered by the German nation.” And that punishment was to be stripped of everything and forced to build up an economy of their own and “pay reparations for war damage to the Allies and former occupied countries.”³⁶

Consequently, almost two million people were forced to leave within the year. The population of the country then decreased by millions. Wally found that the Czechs at least offered what he called “a most magnanimous gesture.” To those who could prove that they had taken no part in Nazi citizenship, the government “offered citizenship and the right to retain their land and property.” All others were allowed to take only what belongings they could carry, except for their jewelry, which would be confiscated. They were given a supply of food to last them three weeks. Wally noted, “Families were kept together wherever possible, and fair treatment is being accorded them.”³⁷

With the help of the two missionaries, Wally distributed a train carload of welfare supplies, which Church headquarters had sent from Salt Lake City, to the Saints in the mission, as well as to any others who were suffering from afterwar effects. He was able to provide clothing and various kinds of food. Later, several people said that he had practically saved their lives.³⁸ Near the end of July, the boxes that had been lost during the long journey finally arrived. Some were regular boxes of food for distribution, but they had also put large portions of food in their own pieces of luggage. “Brother Bell brought four gallons of honey. Every one of his four cans sprung its lid, and his trunk was

35. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 39.

36. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 19, 1946.

37. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 19, 1946.

38. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 39.

nothing but honey from top to bottom.” The honey had seeped through all his extra clothes and shoes. “In short, it looked as though bees had been there for years. We cleaned it up and were able to salvage three of the four gallons.” Wally considered it “the sweetest day” of the elder’s young life.³⁹

Czech Church members had survived every hardship imaginable. Elfrieda (Frieda) Glasnerová Veněčková, a Jewish convert who was baptized in 1932, spent two years with her husband and two sons in a concentration camp. “Eleven members of her extended family had perished at Auschwitz.”⁴⁰ When they finally released her, her feet were so frozen that she could not walk, and she had to be sent to a hospital.⁴¹ Near the end of July 1946, Wally visited her in the hospital. She cried when she saw him and thought she was “looking at a vision.”⁴² She told him the story she lived during the war. “Two thirds of the nine million Jews of Europe were annihilated—her own sisters perished in the gas chambers in Poland—and the other third were tortured and plagued behind barbed-wire.” Frieda felt blessed that she only spent “a relatively short time in a slave labor camp, totaling six months. Her husband was confined and forced to hard manual labor for three months longer, and in another camp, for no other reason than that he had married a Jewess and would not give her nor their little family up.”⁴³

Despite months of hunger and intense suffering, Frieda’s face was “radiant and bright” as she talked with her beloved mission president. Wally continued listening intently as she relayed the account. “The Nazis, now knowing that they could not win the war, had ordered all the Jews in the Terezín concentration camp to be shot on the morning of May 5th. Frieda was in Terezín. She prepared with the rest of her dissolute countrymen to lose her life before a Nazi firing squad—but somehow felt that it would not be so. In the early morning of that very

39. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 27, 1946.

40. Mehr, “Czech Saints: A Brighter Day,” 50.

41. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013.

42. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013.

43. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 19, 1946.

same day the Allies liberated the camp, and her life was spared.” When she found herself in need of an operation, the doctors knew it was pointless. She was far too weak to survive it. “But she seemed to feel that the Lord had work for her to do.” Following the operation, the doctors called her the “miracle” because she had survived against the odds. “With the help of the Lord, she cheated the Nazis out of another Jewish death.”⁴⁴

Wally knew that he had “been in the presence of true greatness” after his visit with Frieda. He was impressed by her goodness and her conviction and love for the Lord. She recognized all the blessings that he had bestowed upon her and her family. When he was ready to leave, she called over to him and said, “When I am better, please come and visit me in my home. I have been saving up my tithing and would like to give it you.”⁴⁵

Before he rejoined the Czech Saints, Wally had learned about the demise of a small Czech village that had fallen victim to Hitler’s indignation. Lidice was nestled a short distance northwest of Prague near Kladno, a small mining town. Close to midnight on June 9, 1942, Nazi officers stormed the small cottage homes and ordered the inhabitants out on the street with all their valuables. The men, including any boy over the age of fifteen, were separated from their families and placed in a cellar for the remainder of the night; the women and children slept in a school. The following day, just outside Horák’s farm, the men were lined up a few at a time next to a wall and shot.⁴⁶

Before the executions began that morning, the Nazis transferred the women and children to Kladno, where they then separated mothers from their children. All girls fifteen and older were sent with the women to concentration camps. The officers picked out nine of the children to be adopted into German families. The rest of the children were to receive “special treatment” in the gas chambers. Based on certain defined criteria, 89 of the 105 children were killed after they

44. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 19, 1946.

45. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, July 19, 1946.

46. Eleanor Wheeler, *Lidice* (Prague: Orbis, 1957), 10.

failed the tests. The mothers “did not learn the truth about the fate of their husbands and children until they were crossing the border into Czechoslovakia, after the liberation in 1945” three years later.⁴⁷

Some of the men in Lidice had been working a night shift at the mines. When they returned home, the Nazis transferred them to Prague, where they too were shot and killed. By noon on June 10, “not a single male inhabitant of Lidice remained alive.” Nazi officials thrust the corpses into a common grave and proceeded to demolish the town primarily by blowing up and burning the houses and buildings. They documented their work during the course of their destruction. “Motion picture film and still camera shots were found in Nazi files under the heading ‘Instructional and Cultural Films.’ . . . Nazi soldiers are pictured as they desecrated the graveyard in their search for the gold teeth of the dead” and threw what they found into a basket. The purpose of the film was not only used to show their leaders that they had successfully carried out their duties, but it was also used as “an indoctrination film to instruct the Nazi youth in the methods of razing villages.”⁴⁸

The revulsion of the events was only augmented by the official Nazi declaration drafted to justify their horrific actions:

In the course of the search for the murderers of SS-Obergruppenführer Heydrich, incontestable proof was found that the population of Lidice near Kladno had given support and assistance to the perpetrators of the crime. The relevant evidence was, in spite of interrogations, collected without the co-operation of the inhabitants. The attitude toward the crime revealed hereby is still further emphasized by other activities hostile to the Reich, by stores of seditious matter, dumps of weapons and munitions, an illegal radio transmitter, and also rationed goods in great quantity, and by the fact that inhabitants of the village were actively serving the enemy abroad. Since the inhabitants of this village have in the most uncompromising manner opposed the published laws through their activity, and have given support to the murderers of SS-Obergruppenführer Heydrich, the male adults have been shot, the women sent to a concentration camp and the children

47. Wheeler, *Lidice*, 10.

48. Wheeler, *Lidice*, 10–12.

placed in suitable educational institutions. The buildings have been razed to the ground and the name of the place has been erased from the records.⁴⁹

Of course, none of it was true. “They [had] searched the town inside and out and found nothing.”⁵⁰ The small town of Lidice, along with the smaller town of Ležáky two weeks later, suffered the undeserved consequences ordered by an angered Hitler against the actions of two Czech paratroopers, Jan Kubis and Josef Gabčík, who had just killed his right-hand man, Reinhard Heydrich. Heydrich was the SS-Obergruppenführer, one of the highest-ranking officers in Hitler’s army. He had been sent to Czechoslovakia in 1941. His reign of terror commenced as soon as he entered the capital. “Immediately after his arrival in Prague, he had two hundred Czechs shot and several thousand imprisoned. Before his violent death, Heydrich was scarcely known outside of Germany, yet he was the architect of the death camps that annihilated six million human lives.” Within two months of his arrival, he and the Gestapo agents “delivered four hundred death sentences followed by immediate execution. Four thousand patriots and intellectuals were put into prisons and concentration camps. The Czechs had to be shown by forceful means that any resistance, however slight, would have disastrous consequences for them.”⁵¹

The two Czech patriots were hired to kill the despised Heydrich by the exiled Czech government, headed by former Czech president Eduard Beneš, seeking refuge in London. “The operation was organized by Frantisek Moravek, chief of the Czech secret service, who had fled to London, taking several boxes of secret documents with him, before the Germans arrived in Prague.” Moravek relayed all the details of the mission “of killing the cruelest enemy of their people” to Kubis and Gabčík, who were then given “special training in England.

49. Wheeler, *Lidice*, 12–13.

50. Wheeler, *Lidice*, 2.

51. Edouard Calic, *Reinhard Heydrich: The Chilling Story of the Man Who Masterminded the Nazi Death Camps*, trans. Lowell Bair (New York City: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 13, 249.

On the night of December 28, 1941, they parachuted into the protectorate with two other groups from a British Halifax bomber. Until May 27, 1942, they lived in hiding, making preparations to insure the success of their mission.”⁵²

For five months, they lay in wait. “On the morning of May 27, when Gabčík stepped in front of Heydrich’s car and tried to shoot him, his . . . gun failed to fire. But then Kubis threw [a] bomb. It exploded under the right rear wheel of the Mercedes, wounding Heydrich. Klein, the chauffeur, ran after Kubis in vain. The two Czechs escaped.”⁵³

While the explosion failed to kill Heydrich, his wounds proved fatal. He was rushed to a hospital nearby in Bulovka. Hitler sent doctors from Berlin to Prague. They tried to save Heydrich’s life while over 60,000 policemen searched for the assassins. “On June 4, 1942, the Prague radio station announced that Heydrich had died of his wounds. Hitler ordered that the body be brought to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. . . . The leaders of the Nazi party mourned their ‘irreplaceable’ policeman, the man who . . . in 1936 had become the dreaded chief of the Security Police.”⁵⁴

Only two weeks later, “a traitor named Karel Curda told the Gestapo what he knew about the agents who had come from England. . . . Kubis and Gabčík took refuge in the Karel Boromeus Greek Orthodox Church” in a crypt underground. At least 750 SS officers surrounded the church on June 18. “When Kubis and Gabčík refused to surrender, they were killed. All the priests involved in hiding them were sentenced to death and executed.”⁵⁵ However, killing Heydrich’s assassins was not enough. Hitler chose Lidice and Ležáky as the unfortunate recipients of his revenge because the villages were wrongfully alleged to have aided Kubis and Gabčík. Hitler needed to remind Czechoslovakia that they were not to defy his rule. Two years after the villages

52. Calic, *Reinhard Heydrich*, 253–54.

53. Calic, *Reinhard Heydrich*, 254.

54. Calic, *Reinhard Heydrich*, 9.

55. Calic, *Reinhard Heydrich*, 254.

were razed to the ground, the land was surrounded by a barbed wire fence to warn the Czechs against rebellion.⁵⁶

Hitler's plan backfired. Nations around the world felt sorrow for the people of Lidice. While Hitler intended for the name to be erased from the world, the world chose instead to react differently. As a sign of respect, several countries chose to change the names of cities, streets, and town squares to Lidice so that its name would never be forgotten. Ordinary people from dozens of countries raised funds to send to Czechoslovakia to rebuild the city after the war ended. When work began on rebuilding the village, young people from all over the world—India, France, America, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Canada, China, and many others—went to Czechoslovakia to help “lay the foundations for the road leading to Lidice.”⁵⁷

The tragedy that befell an unsuspecting, peaceful town generated the deepest sorrow among the people of Czechoslovakia. The events were horrific and appalling. Wally visited the site to see for himself the ruins of a once beautiful and thriving town. In a letter to Martha, he described the experience with respect and awe. “From the brow of this low hill we looked down on what was once Lidice—now nothing, absolutely nothing, except a barren, rolling country-side, marked only by the stark remains of a few white foundations, leveled to the ground, of former happy homes, where contented, loving families once lived; by the outline of a simple country schoolhouse, where formerly children learned, laughed and played; by a level rectangular area where stood a village church, where once were uttered humble prayers and supplications; by a few remaining shade trees and a quiet brook, which the former inhabitants of Lidice loved and enjoyed.” But behind it all stood a “simple wooden cross watching over the common grave” of all the men who had been martyred in cold blood.⁵⁸

Wally, touched by the reverence surrounding the little valley, walked over to the wooden cross and the common grave of the Lidice martyrs. Beside him “stood weeping a lean brown weather-beaten old

56. Wheeler, *Lidice*, 11.

57. Wheeler, *Lidice*, 17–20.

58. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, August 12, 1946.

woman with a peasant shawl drawn around her sad wrinkled face.” She told Wally that her son and her brother lie in the spot. The woman had traveled from a neighboring village to “place an offering of flowers upon their resting place.” Wally spoke to her with love and sympathy. “Her tear-stained face [brightened] somewhat when I told her that these loved ones, although robbed of life in the flesh, were yet living in the not-too-far-distant spirit world, and that she would see and embrace them again.” This experience alone “was worth the trip to Lidice, if for nothing else, to see [a] new hope kindled in the soul of this care-laden woman.”⁵⁹

Later, Wally gave a talk titled “Truth Must Prevail” that focused on the solemn fate of the Lidice people. Echoing his words that he wrote to his wife, he described the site of desolation and expressed his feelings as he bowed his head “in reverent silence as the evening shadows deepened over the valley.” He expressed how the people of Lidice were symbolic of the suffering and heartache of the entire Czech nation. They had been “stripped of every earthly possession” and their lives had been stolen from them “by an overwhelming power of evil, simply because they dared to believe in their hearts and in their actions that ‘Truth Must Prevail.’”⁶⁰

While Wally was experiencing such remarkable spirituality in Czechoslovakia, Martha was attending the farewell addresses of missionaries who would soon be joining Wally (and eventually she would too) in Czechoslovakia. She often wrote to Wally about the future missionaries. On one occasion, she went to the farewell of a missionary in the Yale Ward in Salt Lake City and wrote to Wally about the young man's previous experiences, “He's a fine fellow, and has quite a story to tell. . . . During the war he was shot down. . . . The Czech people hid him from the Germans who came looking for him. They cared for him and were finally able to get him out of the country through the underground. . . . Some of the people lost their lives because they aided him. His greatest desire ever since has been to go back to that

59. Wallace F. Toronto to Martha Toronto, August 12, 1946.

60. Wallace F. Toronto, “Truth Must Prevail,” 1946–47, Church History Library, MS 17103.

country and bring the Gospel to the Czech people.”⁶¹ She also attended the farewell address of Donald Whippman where former missionary Ed Lyon spoke, painting a “gloomy picture of [the] mission.” Lyon told the people, “It [was] the most difficult mission in the Church” because, among other things, it had the hardest language.⁶²

During the long year apart, Martha wrote to Wally of her longing for him and the troubles she encountered while he was away. In November 1946, she wrote of severe winter conditions and expressed that she was glad that the children were not with him in Czechoslovakia. She wrote, “I’m even worried about coming over at all unless conditions improve for the next winter. It would be very hard for them, and me too for that matter, to live in a cold house when we’re used to such a nice warm one. Golly, hon, I must be a sissy but I remember how cold it used to be even when we were there before and I get weak knees thinking about it.”⁶³

Wally replied with a thorough description of the conditions in Czechoslovakia. Martha shuddered at the things he was experiencing and began to have cold feet about joining him at all. “Darling, I just couldn’t bring these children over there to be cold all the time and be sick all winter. It worries me to think of it. Honey, *be sure* of the situation before sending for us. If only I could come alone, I know I could stand it if I didn’t have to see the kids suffer. If they didn’t *need* a father so very badly it might be best to go on like we are now. I’m sure we could live through the separation even as hard as it is. I’m just all mixed up about it. I know the Lord will see it through for the best so I shouldn’t worry about it.”⁶⁴

Wally and Martha remained apart during Christmas of 1946. Martha watched as their little “Gus” embraced a family friend. She

61. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, March 23, 1947, as found in Anderson, Martha Sharp, Letters to Wallace F. Toronto, 1946–47, 1956–1958, 1961, Church History Library, MS 17103.

62. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, April 14, 1947.

63. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, November 10, 1946.

64. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, December 1, 1946.



knew the “poor little guy [wanted] and [needed] a Daddy.”⁶⁵ This realization disturbed her, and she started to cry. However, Wally sent a telegram later that day, a tender mercy that cheered her up and helped her make it through the day. By the end of December, Martha was praying constantly with the children that Wally would find a house. In one letter, Martha wrote, “It will be a glorious day when you send word that you’ve found one. If you only could find one *now*, then I’d go ahead on getting passports, visas and what not. You

65. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, December 29, 1946.

Czechoslovak mission home, ca. 1947–50. Courtesy of Church History Library.

know, dear, it's only four months until school is out. . . . At least the longest part of this year is over and I'm sure these next four months will go by quickly."⁶⁶

During 1946, Wally missed out on some very important milestones in his family, such as Marion's first date and Carol's baptism.⁶⁷ But as time went on, he was finally able to find a mission home, a three-story villa in Prague that had all of Martha's requirements: a washing machine, an electric iron, a refrigerator, a stove, a sewing machine, and some toilet paper. In an effort not to leave anything out, she wrote him again to ask if she should take bedding, towels, dishtowels, soap, toothpaste, pans, kitchen utensils, pie plates, and cake tins.⁶⁸

In the spring of 1947, with the villa rented to serve as the mission home and as their residence, Wally was ready to have his family join him. Martha applied for visas in New York City at the same time that four new missionaries sent in applications to the Czech consulate in New York City. All of them received their visas at the same time, boarded the ship, and sailed across the Atlantic. In June 1947, at Le Havre, France, Wally met all of them on the docks, ready to serve in Czechoslovakia with his eternal companion once again.

66. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, January 26, 1947.

67. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, February 16, 1947.

68. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, March 27, 1947.

12

"THE LITTLE SPY"

Martha and the children traveled by ship to Europe. They were finally reunited with Wally in June of 1947 at the port in Le Havre. They brought with them a brand-new 1947 Ford. They might have expected a typical harbor, but instead they were greeted by an artificial one made of floating docks. The original dock had been decimated by the war, as Wally had described in his letter the year before. Martha and the children watched people from the ship throw cigarettes down to those gathered below on the docks. Wally told Martha that he too had cigarettes on hand. He explained, "I took cigarettes and soap with me because you could buy anything with cigarettes and soap." From the docks, the Torontos went to the Le Havre mission home, where they were delighted to eat french fried potatoes, "nice little chunks of potatoes french fried." After the meal, they proceeded to drive across Germany in the new Ford. Bob remembered stopping in one of the main cities in Germany and seeing a statue, "riddled with bullet holes," in the middle of the square. Because of World War II, "there was nothing