



*Fig. 4. Dresden's Frauenkirche was one of the many cultural monuments destroyed in the firebombing of February 13–14, 1945. (R. P. Minert, 1987)*

interest in politics or participated in Nazi Party meetings. As far as they knew, his work as district president was never hindered by his occupation.

The mission records indicate that in January 1943, a group of Saints held church meetings in the small town of Rechenberg-Bienenmühle, about twenty-one miles south of Dresden as the crow flies and two miles from the Czechoslovakian border. There is no indication of how many members were living in the area, but it was likely the case of a family or two, and perhaps they were refugees from areas hit hard by the war. The address of the meeting place was Muldenthalstrasse 41.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the condition of Dresden after the catastrophic firebombing of February 13–14, 1945, a district conference was held there on Sunday, April 29, 1945. The rooms of the Altstadt Branch had been totally destroyed and those of the Neustadt Branch confiscated for refugee housing, so the conference was held in a Lutheran Church building in Neustadt. Both Margot Burde and Edith Schade had recollections of that conference. Both recalled attending the Sunday meetings while hearing the Soviet artillery and tanks in the distance. The invaders arrived in downtown Dresden the next day.

In light of the widespread destruction in that area of Germany, it is remarkable that when World War II came to an end, members of most of the branches in the Dresden District of the East German Mission still had a

place to meet and that meetings were still being held. After only slight interruptions caused by the victorious Allied armies in this region, the branches were alive and well and looking forward to better times.

## NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
2. East German Mission Quarterly Reports, January 15, 1939, no. 53, East German Mission History.
3. Judith Hegewald, interview by the author in German, Schwerin, Germany, June 11, 2007; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
4. Rudolf Hegewald and Heinz Hegewald, interview by the author, Salt Lake City, January 19, 2007.
5. East German Mission, "Directory of Meeting Places" (unpublished manuscript, 1943); private collection.

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## BAUTZEN BRANCH

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The city of Bautzen is located forty miles east-northeast of Dresden on the main railroad route from Dresden east to Breslau in Silesia. In 1939, the city had a population of about forty thousand people. The branch membership was only forty-nine persons when World War II began. It is interesting to note that nearly three-quarters of the members were adult females.

<b>Bautzen Branch<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1939</b>
Elders	2
Priests	0
Teachers	2
Deacons	1
Other Adult Males	6
Adult Females	36
Male Children	1
Female Children	1
<i>Total</i>	49

The meetings of the Bautzen Branch were held at Gerberstrasse 16 in the apartment of the Nikol family. Hermann and Martha Nikol had two sons and two daughters. Marianne (born 1922) recalled that her father was the branch president and the only elder still active after the first year or two of the war. Some members lived out of town, and transportation became increasingly problematic. "Sometimes we only had three or four people in our meetings," Marianne explained.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Marianne told of holding meetings at other locations:

We also met in some restaurants during the war. We had nice rooms until the missionaries left, then we lost those. We rented the back rooms of hotels or restaurants. One was in Nordstrasse [the Gewerkschaftshaus] and another was Gaststätte [restaurant] Spenke in Wendischer Graben [where we held meetings for some time].

The Nazi Party was not a positive factor in the life of the Nikol family. Hermann declined to join. According to Marianne, "Thanks to his opposition, I was denied a place in a higher school, or so a teacher told me." She instead attended business school for two years, during which time the war started.

Besides the absence of young men and the occasional tragic news from the battle front, the war did not come home to Bautzen until the last year. Marianne recalled shortages of food, but explained that ration cards were not used in Bautzen: "The merchants would run out of [certain items]; then they would tell us to come back when there was more." Other shortages were also apparent, such as in the world of entertainment. Marianne explained that dances were cancelled and movies were rare in her town.

From 1942 to 1945, Marianne was assigned to the staff of the regional Wehrmacht command office near Radebeul (northwest of Dresden). One of the privileges of the office

was that she and her friend were allowed to issue themselves passes for public transportation until the firebombing of Dresden occurred on February 13–14, 1945. Marianne gave this account of conditions at the time:

That night [February 13] we had to walk for ninety minutes to our apartment because the streetcars did not run. From there we could see the flares over the city. It was horrible. We watched as the planes attacked the city. . . . Then we saw the planes coming at noon [February 14]. It was really terrible. After the attacks, I saw the downtown. It was a catastrophe. You cannot possibly imagine how terrible it was. [Many] people were burned [to death], and the survivors had swollen red eyes from the smoke.

A few days later, Marianne used one of her self-produced passes to take the train home to Bautzen. Soon after her arrival, it was time for civilians to flee the city: the Red Army was approaching. Marianne's description of the family as refugees reflects reality for most Germans living in the path of the invaders:

When we left, we took a Leiterwagen with some bags of clothing and bed linens.<sup>3</sup> We put our grandma with her heart condition on top, my three-year-old brother on her lap. My sister and my mother pulled the wagon, and I pushed. We left the city near the end of the war [April 1945]. . . . We walked from Bautzen [southwest] to Neukirchen and on to Bad Schandau [by the Czech border].

Near Bad Schandau, they encountered their father, Hermann Nikol, who had been inducted into the Volkssturm (where he was fortunate to be assigned noncombat duties). Brother Nikol told his wife and his daughters to go back to Bautzen as fast as they could; he believed that they would be safer there. They hurried through the night to complete the journey of twenty miles home. As they entered the city over an obscure bridge on the

south side of town, they could see that many structures in Bautzen were still burning.

To their relief, Sister Nikol and her daughters learned that their home was intact—except for the damage done by enemy soldiers who had quartered there for several days. Marianne described their home in May 1945:

Our windows were broken, but we were able to use our shutters to close the opening, and we could lock those. It was dark, but we were safe. We used wood and cardboard to cover the windows. We were very fortunate. Our cellar was cut out of stone and went back into the yard, but you couldn't tell it was there, so it had not been ransacked. My mother had put up lots of potatoes and bottled fruits, so we had food to eat when we got home.

Now and then, Red Army soldiers came to the door of the Nikol apartment. Because they seemed to have evil intentions, Marianne's aunt kept a constant vigil. She was fluent in both Russian and Polish and was therefore able to give them a good tongue-lashing whenever she felt that they were after her nieces. She did indeed save the girls from abuse.

With the war over in May 1945, the Latter-day Saint branch in Bautzen slowly came back to life. There is no record of any members of the Bautzen Branch losing their lives in World War II.

### NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
2. Marianne Nikol, telephone interview with the author in German, June 26, 2008; summarized in English by the author.
3. The typical Leiterwagen was the size of a Bollerwagen, but had frames like a ladder (*Leiter*) rather than solid panel sides. Cardboard could be added to make the frame sides into panel sides. See the Halberstadt chapter for a photograph of a Leiterwagen.

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## BISCHOFSWERDA BRANCH

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Members of the Bischofswerda Branch could attend district conferences in Dresden. The train ride took them twenty-five miles to the southwest in less than one hour. The branch was not large, but the Saints there had and exercised great faith in the Lord. For example, the following was reported in the history of the East German Mission:

Mon 5 Dec 1938: Elder Otto Hass, president of the Bischofswerda Branch, Dresden District, was called to administer to an eight-year-old friend of the Church, who was sick with diphtheria. On the day following the administration, the child was completely recovered.<sup>1</sup>

Bischofswerda Branch <sup>2</sup>	1939
Elders	1
Priests	0
Teachers	1
Deacons	3
Other Adult Males	3
Adult Females	14
Male Children	4
Female Children	3
<i>Total</i>	29

In early 1939, the branch meetings were held at Brauhausgasse 1 in a Hinterhaus, with access from the Albertstrasse.

Unfortunately, the mission history after 1941 has not been preserved, and little else is known of the Bischofswerda Branch during World War II. Heinz Koschnike was the only eyewitness available at the time of this writing. He did not come to Bischofswerda until 1946, when he and his family were evicted from Breslau along with other members of the three LDS branches in that city. Government officials