

Located near the middle of the Ruhr region with its critical war industries, the city of Bochum suffered severely during the war. Before the American army entered the city on April 10, 1945, there had been more than one thousand air raid alarms for at least 147 actual attacks, twelve of which were considered “heavy attacks.” At least 4,095 persons were killed, 5,000 more were injured, and “countless residents were left homeless.”¹⁰ Of the city’s living space, 22 percent was totally destroyed and another 74 percent badly damaged. Of the many Bochum men who served in the military, 7,048 died. As late as 1948, there were 8,089 residents reported missing or still prisoners of war. Life in Bochum was clearly fraught with hazards; therefore it is remarkable that no Latter-day Saints in Bochum became casualties of the war.

IN MEMORIAM

Only one member of the Bochum Branch is known to have died in World War II:

Marianna Hildegard Uhlig b. Chemnitz, Chemnitz, Sachsen, 24 Oct 1902; dau. of Oskar Uhlig and Auguste Hilde Wittig; bp. 1 Aug 1913; conf. 1 Aug 1913; m. 3 Jun 1922, Kurt Walter Müller; 2m. Chemnitz 19 Oct 1928; d. 20 Sep 1939 (FHL microfilm 68784; CHL microfilm 2447 pt. 26 no. 231; FHL microfilm no. 245239 1925 and 1930 censuses; IGI)

NOTES

1. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL 10045 11.
2. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” CR 4 12, 257.
3. George Blake, interview by the author, Provo, UT, April 1, 2009.
4. Erma Rosenhan, papers, MS 16190, Church History Library.
5. Bochum Branch general minutes, CHL LR 804 11; trans. the author.
6. *Ibid.*, 215.
7. *Ibid.*, 227.
8. *Ibid.*, 229–30.
9. *Ibid.*, 229–30.
10. Monika Wiborni, *Bochum im Bombenkrieg: 4. November 1944* (Bochum, Germany: Wartberg, 2004), 46.

BUER BRANCH

The smallest branch in the Ruhr District was in the community of Buer, nestled between several large cities in the region. Only ten miles north of Essen, the Latter-day Saints in Buer would have faced no great obstacles in attending district conferences in Essen. Thirty-one residents of this town were recorded as members of the LDS branch.

Buer Branch ¹	1939
Elders	2
Priests	2
Teachers	0
Deacons	1
Other Adult Males	0
Adult Females	11
Male Children	15
Female Children	0
<i>Total</i>	31

The dominant character in the Buer Branch in 1939 was Johann Nowotczin. Little is known about him, but he filled several positions in branch leadership: branch president and clerk, Sunday School president and clerk, YMMIA superintendent and secretary, and *Der Stern* magazine agent. His wife, Johanna, served as the president and secretary of the Primary organization, which had fifteen male children at the time. Their daughter Agnes served in two roles—Sunday School secretary and Primary secretary. The only person in leadership who did not belong to the Nowitczin family was Adolf Kerstan, Brother Nowitczin’s first counselor.²

The branch meetings were held in rented rooms at Horsterstrasse in Buer. Nothing is known about the building. Sunday School began at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 3:00 p.m. The Primary

met on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m., and MIA met two hours later.

As of this writing, no eyewitnesses from the Buer Branch can be found, and no records from that branch exist in the Church History Library.

No members of the Buer Branch are known to have died during World War II.

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.
2. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHLLR 10045 11.

COLOGNE BRANCH

In 1939, the city of Cologne was the fourth largest in the Reich with 767,222 inhabitants. Situated on the left bank of the Rhine River, it had been founded by the Romans nearly two thousand years earlier and featured the tallest twin-tower cathedral in the world.

Cologne Branch ¹	1939
Elders	9
Priests	3
Teachers	3
Deacons	5
Other Adult Males	29
Adult Females	78
Male Children	3
Female Children	13
<i>Total</i>	143

At the far south extent of the Ruhr District (forty miles southwest of Essen), the Cologne Branch was, by population, large enough to sustain itself; but

for some reason no functioning YWMIA, Relief Society, or Primary organization existed in 1939. (It is especially curious that a branch with so many adult women had no official Relief Society leadership.) The branch president was Gerhard Geller, and his counselors were Hugo Romboy and Albert Bauske. The Sunday School was led by Johannes Sachon and the YMMIA by Hubert Ernst. The only woman listed was Maria Ernst, who represented *Der Stern* magazine.²

The meeting rooms were rented in a building at Mozartstrasse 11. The only available description is provided by missionary George Blake of Vineyard, Utah:

They had a large room and two small rooms. There was a picture of Christ at Gethsemane and a picture of the First Vision on the left wall, and a board to post the numbers of the hymns on the right wall. Typical attendance [in December 1938] was more than thirty persons. The Romboys played a major role in the branch because there were so many of them.³

When the war began in September 1939, only three meetings were scheduled for the Cologne Branch: Sunday School at 10:00 a.m., sacrament meeting at 7:00 p.m., and Mutual on Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m.

“I remember that my dad [Paul Romboy] was drafted in 1941,” explained Ursula Romboy (born 1939). In addition to her memories of being alone with her mother, Grete, during the war, she recalled the air raids that severely damaged the city in the later years of the war:



Fig. 1. Paul Romboy as a Wehrmacht soldier around 1942. (U. Romboy Gamble)

We went into our cellar a lot of times during the heavy bombing in 1943 and 1944. There were bunk beds, and my mother took snacks, and so I never