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# CHEMNITZ DISTRICT

## *East German Mission*



With a total of 1,051 members, the Chemnitz District was the second largest in the East German Mission at the end of the year 1939. The district consisted of six branches, all of which were situated in south-central Saxony. The city of Chemnitz, with two branches (Center and Schloss), had long been a bastion of the Church in eastern Germany. The city is located about 150 miles south of Berlin.

Because of the high concentration of Latter-day Saints in the area, the Chemnitz District territory was smaller than the Berlin District. Branches were located in Döbeln (twenty miles northeast of Chemnitz), Mittweida (ten miles north), Hohenstein-Ernstthal (nine miles west), and Annaberg-Buchholz (seventeen miles southeast).

Chemnitz District <sup>1</sup>	1939	1940	1941	1942
Elders	45	56		
Priests	32	22		
Teachers	42	43		
Deacons	54	54		
Other Adult Males	192	194		
Adult Females	596	599		
Male Children	41	46		
Female Children	49	48		
<i>Total</i>	1,051	1,062	1,058	1,022

In 1938, a mission directory showed that four small groups of Saints were also meeting in towns within the Chemnitz District:

Town	Host Family	Address
Geyersdorf	Wagner <sup>2</sup>	Hauptstrasse 92, main floor
Jöhstadt	Meyer	Innere Bahnhofstrasse 122
Schlettau	Hofmann	Markt 45
Walthersdorf	Petzold	Adolf Hitler Strasse 6, upstairs

Very little is known about those small groups of Latter-day Saints.

The East German Mission history has the following entry dated Sunday, May 29, 1938:

On this and the previous day, the annual spring conference of the Chemnitz District was held in Chemnitz. Mission Pres. Alfred C. Rees, and the Elders of the district were in attendance. The choir, with the help of an orchestra, rendered some very beautiful musical selections. The meetings were well attended.<sup>3</sup>

Karl Göckeritz of the Chemnitz Center Branch was the president of the Chemnitz District. His counselors in early 1939 were Paul Langheinrich and Emil Heidler. Although a relatively young man (born in November



Fig. 1. The Chemnitz District was in the heart of the old Kingdom of Saxony in eastern Germany.

1909), President Göckeritz was called by one elder “the driving force in all of the branches in the district.”<sup>4</sup>

President Göckeritz kept a diary for just more than a year, beginning in early 1941. He used a diary printed for the year 1936 and simply revised the date at the bottom of the page. The entries are very detailed and indicate a wide variety of family, church, occupational, and cultural activities. He even made frequent comments regarding the weather. The following are extracts from his diary:

Wednesday, March 19, 1941: Police monitored our building tonight regarding the blackout regulations.

Sunday, April 7, 1941: Very early wrote Church letters. Took Hannchen [wife Magdalena Johanna] and children to Center Branch. Train to Döbeln at 10:56. Gave talk and played music. On to Mittweida at 2:17. Visited Emmerlichs.

Rehearsal at church. Gave talk and played music. Home about 10:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 4, 1941: Conference. Went to church at 8:00 a.m. Everything is ready! Wonderful morning session. Superb decorations. Everything went very well. Choir practice. Solved all problems. Preparations for afternoon session. All went well. Then main session! 506 in attendance. Beautiful! Everything went well. The room was totally full! Gave one talk in each meeting and one prayer. Evening at home with Brother [Richard] Ranglack [from the mission office in Berlin]. Everything was wonderful!

Tuesday, May 20, 1941: Afternoon funeral service for soldier W. Opitz. Military ceremony. Very impressive! Evening in Central Theater for Paginini. Very nice. Heavy rain!

Saturday, May 31, 1941: Express train at 6:25 a.m. to Berlin. Great weather. In Berlin about 11:00 a.m. Walked to mission office. Met the people from the West German Mission: Brother and Sister Heck, Brother Huck, Sister Weipel, and Ilse Krämer. . . . Evening meeting at Hufelandstrasse [Berlin Center Branch]. Fine meeting!

Wednesday, June 25, 1941: Office work! Nothing special! Went to the dentist. In the evening wrote reports, then to Center Branch. Resolved various matters there. Rudi Seltmann killed in an accident near the Russian border.

Sunday, August 10, 1941: Took children to Sunday School early. Resolved some Church matters there. Rode my bicycle to Stollberg to take care of some matters there. Home with children. In the afternoon rainy weather! Took a nap. Then to Center Branch to speak with Brother Urban regarding members in Bohemia [Czechoslovakia]. Took care of some matters in Center Branch. Played [the piano] because nobody else was there.

Tuesday, September 2, 1941: Two hours of air-raid alarm during the night.

Friday, September 5, 1941: Held a baptismal ceremony. Six persons baptized, two confirmed. Very nice. Gorgeous summer evening!

Friday, September 12, 1941: In the evening to Center Branch. Construction work in upper

room with Alfred Schulz, Oskar Bonitz, Lothar Cieslak. Really dirty work. Had a bath later.

Sunday, October 12, 1941: Got up at 6:00! It snowed during the night! To church at 7:30. Last-minute preparations for the conference! 8:00 presidency meeting. 10:00 morning session. Choir practice. Lunch. 2:30 Relief Society and priesthood meeting. 5:00 main session. All meetings had good attendance. I conducted three meetings and gave one talk. It certainly was a successful conference! Approximately 1,385 total attendance!<sup>5</sup>

On October 17, 1941, the district presidency sent a letter to soldiers in the field:

Once again we have had a conference in the rooms you know so well, at Schadestrasse 12. Our district conference! Just as the earth has yielded the blessings of Almighty God through a fine harvest, so do we experience the goodness of our Heavenly Father in rich measure. . . . Although we cannot see you, we are still spiritually very closely connected with you. Just picture it: there was not an empty seat in the room. . . . As God lives, so lives His work. We greet you as loyal brethren in the gospel. Our fondest wishes accompany you. We ask the Lord every day to protect you, so that you may return in health to your homeland. May peace fill the earth very soon, so that all peoples may be joined in a righteous labor. . . . All of the branches you know are functioning as before: Annaberg-Buchholz, Chemnitz Center,

Schloss, Döbeln, Hohenstein, Mittweida. The wheel of truth continues to turn. . . . Be of the conviction that we are always thinking of you, though we may not write too very often. We too must respond to the call of duty here, as do you out there.

The back of the letter bore the signatures of forty-eight more members of the Chemnitz District.<sup>6</sup>

Karl Göckeritz did not know in October 1941 that his term as district president was nearing its end. Several diary entries of interest were yet to be made:

Tuesday, 28 October 1941: Air-raid sirens at 10:30 P.M. Very heavy antiaircraft fire. Ended about midnight.

Monday, 17 November 1941: Office work! Nothing special! Suffering from a very bad cold! In the evening a meeting of the elders. Fine meeting despite unsafe conditions.

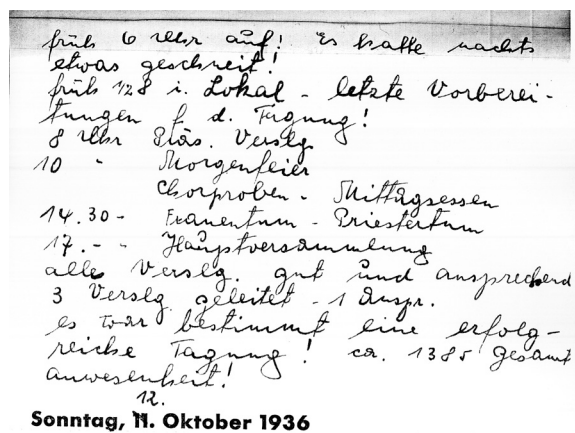
Saturday, 22 November 1941: In the evening wrote a letter to all branches, then did night shift at factory. Mölders fell to his death somewhere near Breslau.

Monday, 15 December 1941: Went to town and bought a Christmas tree. Very difficult. Films are done. In the evening worked on reports at home. Heavy rain!

7 January 1942: In the evening to the Center Branch for a little Christmas party. Received notice that I am to report for military duty on 15 January.

15 January 1942: Worked in the office! Hannchen called to say that I don't have to report for military duty until 19 January 1942.

19 January 1942: Reported for duty at 8:00 A.M. at the post of Infantry Regiment 102 on Planitzstrasse. Assigned to second platoon of first company of reserve infantry in Chemnitz. Assigned a room. Issued uniform. Cleaned closet. To bed at 9:00 P.M. Twenty-nine men and two trainers in the room. Very cold!



früh 6 Uhr auf! Ich hatte nichts  
etwas geschrieben!  
früh 12 Uhr i. Lokal - letzte Vorberei-  
tungen f. d. Tagung!  
8 Uhr Stas. Verslg.  
10 - Morgenfeier  
Chorproben - Mittagessen  
14.30 - Examen - Priestertum  
17. - Hauptversammlung  
alle Verslg. gut und ansprechend  
3 Verslg. geleitet - 1 Ansp.  
es war bestimmt eine erfolg-  
reiche Tagung! ca. 1385 Gesamt-  
anwesenheit!  
12.  
**Sonntag, 11. Oktober 1936**

Fig. 2. District president Karl Göckeritz wrote an enthusiastic entry in his diary regarding the district conference held on October 11–12, 1941. (H. Göckeritz)



Fig. 3. Karl Göckeritz (1909–43) was one of four current or former district presidents in the East German Mission who lost their lives in the war. (H. Goeckeritz)

Wednesday, 28 January 1942: The sergeant tells us that we will leave on Saturday for the Western Front—France.

30 January 1942: No special training. Had to get ready to move out. . . . In the evening one more visit from Hannchen and Papa and Emil Heidler and Paul Auerswald. At 5:00 p.m. Hitler gave a powerful speech.

The last entry in the diary of district president Karl Göckeritz is dated Saturday, February 14, 1942. By that time, he had been transferred not to France, but to Zwickau, a city just a few miles west of Chemnitz. He went to the movies that evening and saw the film *Über alles in der Welt*. In 1943, he was reported missing in action near Boldyrewka, Russia.<sup>7</sup> His successor was Emil Heidler.

Based on the testimonies of eyewitnesses, all six branches of the Chemnitz District of the East German Mission were still holding meetings when the war ended on May 8, 1945.

## NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
2. See the Annaberg-Buchholz chapter.
3. East German Mission Quarterly Reports, 1938, no. 22, East German Mission History.
4. Johannes Jentzsch, "History of the Mittweida Branch" (unpublished history, about 1992); private collection; trans. the author.
5. Karl Göckeritz, diary, 1909–1943; private collection.
6. Karl Göckeritz to soldiers on active duty, October 17, 1941; private collection; trans. the author.
7. Harald Goeckeritz, interview by the author, Draper, Utah, February 17, 2006.

## ANNABERG-BUCHHOLZ BRANCH

The twin towns of Annaberg and Buchholz are located seventeen miles south-southeast of Chemnitz and just six miles from the border of Czechoslovakia. Although geographically isolated in the Erzgebirge Mountains of Saxony, the branch there was strong and active.

Annaberg-Buchholz Branch <sup>1</sup>	1939
Elders	15
Priests	7
Teachers	11
Deacons	30
Other Adult Males	44
Adult Females	141
Male Children	13
Female Children	13
<i>Total</i>	274

The records of the East German Mission show several entries regarding the branch in Annaberg-Buchholz:

Friday, 1 July 1938: In order to repair the chairs in the Buchholz Branch hall, Chemnitz District, several special meetings were held to enthuse the saints to a united effort to raise money. The result was very good.<sup>2</sup>

Sunday, 17 July 1938: The Buchholz Branch, Chemnitz District, held a conference.<sup>3</sup>

Saturday, 6 August 1938: The Annaberg Branch choir, Chemnitz District, gave a very successful concert.<sup>4</sup>

Saturday, 8 October and Sunday, 9 October 1938: A branch fall conference was held in Annaberg-Buchholz; Herbert Klopfer [from Berlin] and Elder Roger A. Brown directed the conference.<sup>5</sup>