
DRESDEN DISTRICT

East German Mission



With the sixth-largest district population of Latter-day Saints in the East German Mission in 1939, the Dresden District was located in the south-central area of the mission. The district's neighbors were the Chemnitz District to the west, the Leipzig District to the northwest, the Spreewald District to the northeast, the Breslau District to the east, and the country of Czechoslovakia to the south.

Dresden District ¹	1939	1940	1941	1942
Elders	44	47		
Priests	11	13		
Teachers	27	23		
Deacons	60	56		
Other Adult Males	124	130		
Adult Females	429	430		
Male Children	38	36		
Female Children	42	45		
<i>Total</i>	775	780	775	766

When World War II broke out in September 1939, the Dresden District consisted of branches in the following cities: Dresden, Freiberg (eighteen miles southwest of Dresden), Nössige (fifteen miles northwest), Bischofswerda (twenty-five miles northeast), Bautzen (forty miles northeast), and Görlitz

(seventy miles northeast). According to the testimonies of eyewitnesses, there were two branches in Dresden by 1943: Altstadt (south of the Elbe River) and Neustadt (north of the river). When the war began, Max Hegewald of Freiberg was serving as the district president.

The East German Mission history includes an entry regarding the establishment of a new branch in Grosshartmannsdorf in January 1939. However, the mission membership records do not show any such branch at the end of 1939, and as of this writing, no surviving eyewitnesses from the Grosshartmannsdorf Branch have been identified.²

Max Hegewald was a bailiff for the city court in Freiberg. Born in 1897, he had served in



Fig. 1. The branches of the Dresden District.



Fig. 2. The official announcement and invitation to the 1940 fall conference of the Dresden District. (K. Bartsch)

World War I and lost an eye, thus making him unfit for military duty. According to his daughter, Judith (born 1924), he also carried in his skull a bullet that could not be removed, which was the cause of constant and severe headaches. “My father was a very steadfast man. During the war, the traveling for him [became] more difficult because he could not take public transportation that often anymore,” Judith explained.³

Rudolf Hegewald recalled that his father was very busy as the district president. “He was very seldom in Freiberg. He visited all of the branches in the district and even went to district conferences as far away as West Prussia [Schneidemühl District] and East Prussia [Königsberg District].”

In 1944, the German government announced that all older men and men usually classified as unfit were to be inducted into the Volkssturm (home guard). President Hegewald thus found himself back in uniform but was fortunate to stay close to home and avoid combat in the final months of the war.⁴

Heinz Hegewald explained that his father was a member of the Nazi Party “due to his occupation. All government employees had to be members of the party.” President Hegewald’s sons did not recall that their father had any



Fig. 3. The palace of the king of Saxony in Dresden stood as a burned-out ruin until the 1990s. (R. P. Minert, 1987)



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 41.⁵

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.

BAUTZEN BRANCH

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.

Bautzen Branch ¹	1939
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