

“At the opening meeting of the new Potsdam Branch hall, twenty-five Saints and fourteen friends were present. The new hall was located at Kaiser Wilhelm Strasse 28.”³

Friedrich Fischer, first counselor in the Berlin District presidency, and two sister missionaries also attended. No description of the meeting rooms is available.

While the Potsdam Branch members were striving to maintain and improve their presence in that city, things were not going as well in the city of Brandenburg, fifteen miles to the west. The mission presidency found it necessary to take the following action on Sunday, December 10, 1938: “The Brandenburg Branch, Berlin District, was dissolved. The members were transferred to the Potsdam Branch books, bringing the total membership in Potsdam to fifty-four.”⁴

As of this writing, no survivors of the Potsdam Branch could be located for interviews.

IN MEMORIAM

One member of the Brandenburg-Potsdam Branch did not survive World War II:

August Adolf Liedtke b. Mahnsfeld Ostpreußen, Preußen Apr 1859; son of Karl Ludwig Liedtke and Caroline Wilhelmine Buchholz; bp. 4 Apr 1904; ord. elder; m. Mansfeld, Ostpreußen, Preußen 8 Oct 1882, Auguste Koesling; 7 children; d. stroke Potsdam, Brandenburg, Preußen 17 Nov 1939 (*Stern*, 1 Jan 1940, no. 1, 15; IGI)

NOTES

1. East German Mission Quarterly Reports, 1938, no. 35, East German Mission History.
2. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” CR 4 12, 257.
3. East German Mission Quarterly Reports, 1938, no. 44.
4. Ibid., 10.

EBERSWALDE BRANCH

Located forty-five miles northeast of Berlin, Eberswalde was a city of approximately thirty thousand inhabitants in 1939. It was the home to a very small branch of the LDS Church, established in 1934. Ursula Jawureck moved with her parents, Johannes and Herta Jawureck, from Pomerania to Eberswalde in 1932, where they became acquainted with the Church through the Zaar family. Years later, Ursula recalled the rented meeting rooms used by the Church at Schicklerstrasse 11:

From the street, we went through a portal of the main building, across the courtyard, then into the Hinterhaus. We went up a spiral staircase outside, into the foyer that was about fifteen by twenty feet in size. There was a space for leadership meetings behind the table that we used for a pulpit. It was just a table with chairs and a tablecloth. The children’s class was in the foyer—all of the children together. There were only a few of us. We met there from 1934 through the end of the war.¹

Sunday School was held in the morning and sacrament meeting in the evening. The members went home between the meetings. Approximately twenty persons were in attendance on a typical Sunday during the first few years of the war.

A prominent family in the Eberswalde Branch was that of the branch president, Hermann Bünger, a letter carrier by trade. He went to church early every Sunday morning in order to heat the rooms. “Somehow he always came up with enough coal to do that,” recalled Ursula Jawureck. “His family always cleaned the rooms but never took credit for it. The children had piano lessons so that they could play the pump organ for us. Brother Bünger

wore the same suit every Sunday for years, and he gave a talk and a lesson every Sunday.”

Eberswalde Branch ²	1939
Elders	1
Priests	0
Teachers	0
Deacons	3
Other Adult Males	4
Adult Females	11
Male Children	2
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	23

The general minutes of branch meetings show an interesting statement inserted following the entry for October 1, 1939:

Sacrament meetings were held regularly during October and November [1939]. Because of the war, several missionaries and brethren have been drafted, causing frequent changes in branch leadership and several gaps in the records regarding meetings.³

Wartime conditions caused a change in the meeting schedule, according to the minutes recorded on December 10, 1939: “The members have agreed to change the starting time for sacrament meetings to 3:00 P.M., due to the blackout regulations caused by the current war.”⁴

During the first few years of the war, branch activities continued as before. For example, on July 9, 1941, a Sunday School excursion took place. According to branch records, “Eleven persons participated, and the hours went by all too fast. It is the general consensus that we need to do this again soon.”⁵

The average attendance at sacrament meetings in the latter years of the war was fewer than twelve persons, but once in a while the group was much larger. For example, following the sacrament meeting on March 15, 1942, there was a centennial celebration for the Relief Society. As reported in the branch

minutes, “The words and deeds of the [found-ing] women were memorialized in poems and talks. Those women showed the way for the next generation of service. Twenty-one persons attended the celebration.”⁶

Johannes Jawureck did not allow his wife to be baptized until after the war, but he granted his daughter, Ursula, permission to join the Church just before her twelfth birthday. The baptismal ceremony took place in the city’s lake, the Bachsee, on September 12, 1942. Ursula later described the event in these words:

We gathered at the market place then walked together to the lake for this little outing. It was cold, but the sisters wrapped me up in blankets when I got out of the water. We didn’t have to do it in secret. Brother Dröhner confirmed me, and I will never forget the event.

According to the branch minutes, the baptism of Ursula and two other members was originally scheduled for August 16. However, several problems arose, and the ceremony was postponed. The start of the Relief Society meeting that day was delayed for one hour due to an air-raid alarm. Then there was no longer time to walk ninety minutes to the baptismal venue and back before the visitors from Berlin would have to leave town. Thus the Relief Society meeting was postponed, and the members walked to the baptismal venue but found that there were too many people bathing in the area to allow for the proper spirit for the ceremony. The members prayed and were directed to try again a month later.⁷

Shortly after her baptism, Ursula was inducted into the government’s Jungmädel program along with all of the other girls in her school class. However, because of her apprenticeship, she was not required to join the League of German Girls when she became fourteen. Her father, not a member of the Church, belonged to the National Socialist Party. Ursula did not remember any conflict between the

Party and the Church at home or in school, nor did she recall any discussion of politics during Church meetings: "Brother Büniger said that we would put ourselves into the hands of the Lord and politics was not part of our church life. He was very careful about that."

Life in Eberswalde during World War II was relatively peaceful. The city had no critical war industry and was thus spared attacks from the air until the last year of the war. The Eberswalde Branch continued to meet on Sundays without interruption. Because there were so few priesthood holders in the branch, visitors from the district presidency and the mission office were frequently in attendance. Shortages and rationing did not allow for as many branch parties and celebrations as had been held before 1939, but the branch members remained a tight group during the war and helped each other through the privations. An average of six members of the Eberswalde Branch attended semiannual district conferences in Berlin.

Johannes Jawureck was drafted just after the war started and was gone the entire time with the exception of a few furloughs. In his absence, his wife, Herta, and his daughter, Ursula, were able to remain in their apartment and had enough food to sustain themselves. When Eberswalde was attacked from the air toward the end of the war, many homes were destroyed, but neither the Jawureck apartment nor the branch meeting rooms were damaged. No members of the branch lost their homes during those air raids.

The last entry in the branch general minutes written during the war states, "On April 2, 1944 a fast and testimony meeting was held. Regular sacrament meetings were held under local leadership on April 9, 16, 23, and 30, with an average attendance of six members."⁸

As the Red Army drove toward Berlin in April 1945, they found the city of Eberswalde prepared to surrender without any resistance.

However, in a vain attempt to stop the invaders from taking the city, the German air force attacked the old core of the city and destroyed it.⁹

Ursula Jawureck had been told in school that the Red Army soldiers would put out the eyes of German children. At fourteen, she was terrified. Her mother had been told to leave town and flee to the west, but they had no place to go. Herta Jawureck helped her daughter disguise herself as an older woman, hoping to spare her the terrible fate that befell so many German women and girls at the hands of marauding Soviet soldiers: "For two or three weeks I could not wash my face or hair. I smeared my face with soot." Ursula's fears were soon on the verge of becoming reality, as she will never forget:

Many of us were in the Engels' house. We were all hiding together. A Mongolian came by and wanted me to go with him. He was really drunk. I was only fourteen years old, and I was shaking with fear. All I could say in my prayer was, "Dear Heavenly Father, Dear Heavenly Father." I couldn't get past that.

The house was really big, a villa really. He took me away, and I screamed, "Mommy, Mommy, Mommy!" And she yelled back, "Go with him or he will kill us all!" and I thought, "What kind of mother is she?" but later I realized that she had to do that to spare the rest of them. Then the soldier told me to take off my clothes, and then he lay down. I undid my top two buttons, then buttoned them up again, and did that back and forth so that he could see that I was doing something.

Meanwhile I continued to pray, "Dear Heavenly Father, Dear Heavenly Father." I was so rattled that I could not think of anything else to say. Then I heard him breathing; he had fallen asleep, so I got out of there. When I got back, they asked if he had hurt me. "No, he's sleeping." The next morning the soldier woke up and went looking for me. He searched for me in the living room and the kitchen. My mother covered me up with a blanket. He didn't find me.

The war did not end officially for two more weeks, and the terror in Eberswalde continued

for Ursula Jawureck and her mother. On one occasion, they were again hiding in the basement of the Engel villa. The Soviets had broken the windows a few days before and water stood a foot deep in the basement. Despite the cold water and the glass on the floor, members of the branch knelt in prayer and begged for deliverance. As Ursula later explained, “The house door was open, and Russians could have just come in. So we prayed that the Lord would make the Russians blind so they couldn’t see us. The entire episode was terrifying. I was shaking the whole time, and I thought I’d never survive it all.”

Herta Jawureck was spared violation because she had been kind to a Russian prisoner of war in previous months. He took it upon himself to protect her when his comrades arrived. Johannes Jawureck was still a prisoner of war somewhere; toward the end of 1945, he appeared at their home in Eberswalde in relatively good health. Ursula recalled the following:

After the war when we went back to the church rooms, the spiral staircase had been removed and the pump organ was gone. The building was still there and was not damaged. So we didn’t have meetings for a while. Then the brethren came from Berlin and tried to find the whereabouts of every member. So we started to have meetings in the living room of Sister Zaar.

Fortunately, President Hermann Büniger had not been required to serve in the Germany army and thus was able to remain in Eberswalde to direct branch activities until shortly before the conquerors arrived.¹⁰

IN MEMORIAM

The following members of the Eberswalde Branch did not survive World War II:

Hermann August Karl Felger b. Schulzendorf, Brandenburg, Preußen 7 Apr 1859; son of Johann Friedrich Felger and Hanna Charlotte Friederike Richter; bp. 7 Aug 1933; m. Marie Klamann; 2 children; m. Eberswalde, Brandenburg, Preußen 6 Mar 1894,

Liesette Marie Anna Prinzler; 1 child; d. Eberswalde, Brandenburg, Preußen 17 Jan 1941; bur. Eberswalde 22 Jan 1941 (*Sonntagsgruss*, no. 11, 16 Mar 1941, 43; IGI)

Paul Otto Bruno Friedrich b. Eberswalde, Brandenburg, Preußen 28 Nov 1899; son of Bruno August Friedrich and Berta Auguste Elisabeth Schilsky; m. 15 Jun 1923; d. 21 Nov 1940 (CHL Microfilm LR 2481 11, 130; IGI)

Felon Hermann d. 17 Jan 1940 (CHL Microfilm LR 2481 11, 131; IGI)

Hermine Elwine Auguste Klamann b. Brunow, Oberbarnim, Brandenburg, Preußen 25 Dec 1863; dau. of Karl Klamann and Friederike Sachtleben; bp. 2 Jul 1932; conf. 2 Jul 1932; m. 2 Aug 1885, Oskar Lehmann; d. stroke 28 Oct 1940 (FHL Microfilm 68809 no. 51; IGI)

Helene Johanna Eliesabeth Lemke b. Greifenhagen, Pommern, Preußen 17 Apr 1878; dau. of Wilhelm August Karl Lemke and Johanna Elisabeth Fransiska Baltzer; bp. 29 Aug 1928; conf. 29 Aug 1928; m. Eberswalde, Brandenburg, Preußen 7 Apr 1906, Karl August Gustav Martin Glaevcke; 1 child; d. suicide Eberswalde, Brandenburg, Preußen 24 Apr 1945 (FHL Microfilm 68809 no. 50; IGI)

Liesette Marie Anna Prinzler b. Salzmünde, Sachsen, Preußen 10 Feb 1862; dau. of Heinrich Karl Prinzler and Liesette Hecklau; bp. 12 Jul 1930; m. Eberswalde, Brandenburg, Preußen 6 Mar 1894, Hermann Karl August Felger; d. Eberswalde 19 Jan 1942 (IGI)

NOTES

1. Ursula Jawureck Schieleit, interview by the author in German, Eberswalde, Germany, June 8, 2007; summarized in English by the author.
2. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” CR 4 12, 257.
3. Eberswalde Branch, general minutes, 125, LR 2481/11, Church History Library.
4. *Ibid.*, 126.
5. *Ibid.*, 133.
6. *Ibid.*, 137.
7. *Ibid.*, 139.
8. *Ibid.*, 146.
9. City of Eberswalde’s official Web site, <http://www.eberswalde.de/Historie.1337.0.html>.
10. He fled to the west with his family and eventually settled in Celle in West Germany.