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# GEDENKBUCH (MEMORIALBOOK)



*For the Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked; therefore ye need not suppose that the righteous are lost because they are slain; but behold, they do enter into the rest of the Lord their God. (Alma 60:13)*

One of the original goals of this study was to compile a list of German and Austrian Latter-day Saints who did not survive World War II. When estimates by previous investigators suggested that approximately 550 Latter-day Saint soldiers and 50 civilians had lost their lives in the two German missions, serious questions emerged.<sup>1</sup> Were not the majority of branches located in large cities—the principal targets of Allied bombing attacks? Would not civilian Church members and meetinghouses also lie beneath the sights of the enemy bombardiers? Would it not be logical to suggest that civilian Saints were killed by invading enemy ground troops? If, in fact, all of the members of the Church units in areas later annexed by Poland and the Soviet Union were driven from their homes, could it not be assumed that some of them would not survive a trek of hundreds of miles to the west, often made in the dead of winter?

From Church records, other written sources, and eyewitness interviews, we have compiled a memorial book (*Gedenkbuch*) with the names of

724 Saints from the West German Mission. For each person, every attempt has been made to show the birth date and place; marriage date and place; spouse; death date, place, and cause; baptism and confirmation dates and places; priesthood ordinations; and military rank of the deceased.

Who is included in the memorial book? The initial goal was to determine which Latter-day Saints died as a direct consequence of the war (what the Germans refer to as *Kriegseinwirkung*). However, it soon became evident that in many cases it was not possible to state that the death of a certain individual was or was not connected to wartime events or conditions. For example, toward the end of the war several diseases such as typhus were prevalent which would otherwise have been rare. Minor illnesses sometimes became major illnesses and causes of death for persons who spent a good deal of time in cold and dank air-raid shelters or out in the open after becoming homeless. The lack of qualified medical personnel and medical facilities certainly contributed to a general decrease in the quality of health care and thus an increase in mortality. Persons who died of heart attacks or strokes may have had their conditions deteriorate more rapidly when hurrying to an air-raid shelter or after receiving news of the death of a soldier. In short, it was decided that no cause of death—including old age

or senility—would be excluded from the list of persons who died during the war years.

Each Latter-day Saint who died is found listed in the branch to which the person belonged on September 1, 1939 (except for a very few who moved during the war years). The personal data collected from Church records and eyewitnesses have been compared to public genealogical databases, such as the International Genealogical Index, Ancestral File, and Pedigree Resource File. In many cases, multiple sources offer conflicting data, especially when it comes to name spelling variations and place names.

Who is not included in the memorial book? A great many Latter-day Saints in Germany and Austria in the war era were not married to Church members. Many adult women were the only members of their families to have been baptized. They lost non-LDS husbands, parents, and children, who are not included in our compilation. For example, Erna Kaiser of the Stuttgart Branch later documented no fewer than twenty-four close relatives who were killed in the war, only six of whom were Latter-day Saints. In other words, the sufferings of the Saints regarding the loss of life in their families were in many cases greater than can be reflected in the lists for branches shown in this volume.

Some of those Latter-day Saints who died were inactive and possibly unknown to other branch members. It is possible that several hundred such persons should be listed here, but there is no way of knowing who they were; nobody in the branches knew of their demise.

Finally, I include with some hesitation the names of persons shown in branch records as *vermisst* (missing) or *verschollen* (disappeared). Many of those Saints likely perished under the mountains of rubble resulting from catastrophic air raids over big cities,

but no proof is available. If the truth were known, there might be more than one hundred persons in this category. Some persons listed as missing may have been driven from their homes, sought refuge elsewhere, or simply lost contact with the Church.

The details shown in the memorial book section of each chapter do not represent original genealogical research. Entries include data supplied by eyewitnesses, descendants, and friends, taken from branch membership records, LDS Church censuses, and the following public sources:

**www.familysearch.org (FS):**

Ancestral File (AF)

**International Genealogical Index (IGI)**

**Pedigree Resource File (PRF)**

**new.familysearch.org (NFS)**

**www.volksbund.de:** This website is maintained by a society dedicated to the preservation of German war graves from the two world wars. The language is German. Searches can be made by the name of the soldier or the place of birth. Some women and civilians are included in this database.

Other abbreviations used in the memorial book lists include:

**CHL:** Church History Library of the LDS Church

**FHL:** Family History Library of the LDS Church

The names of persons who provided genealogical data are also found in parentheses.

#### NOTE

1. Gilbert Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany: The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Germany* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 116.