
ROSTOCK DISTRICT

East German Mission



With only 248 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints within its boundaries at the end of the momentous year 1939, the Rostock District, with its four branches and two groups, was the second smallest in the East German Mission. On the other hand, the territory covered by the district was significant. The historic provinces of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Mecklenburg-Strelitz were the core of the district, which also included a small portion of western Pomerania.

The landscape along the Baltic Sea is relatively flat, sandy countryside with very few cities, many of which are close to the sea. The principal city in the district was Rostock, a stronghold of the old Hanseatic League. The Barth Branch was twenty-five miles to the northeast, also a coastal town. Demmin, in Pomerania, was thirty-five miles to the east. In 1939, there were groups of Saints meeting in Stralsund (thirty-five miles northeast) and Wolgast (sixty miles to the east).

The president of the Rostock District in 1939 was Walter Czerny.¹ He was succeeded on January 14, 1940, by Rudolf A. Noss of Rostock.² Arno Dzierzon is listed as district president as of April 23, 1941.³ Little is known

about the service of these three men in this important calling.

The Rostock District was annexed to the Stettin District (to the east) on February 15, 1942. The announcement made in the sacrament meeting in Rostock on that date did not include details for the change. Perhaps the lack of priesthood leadership within the three branches of the district required more direct involvement of district presidents Erich Berndt and Ernst Winter of Stettin.

Rostock District ⁴	1939	1940	1941	1942
Elders	17	16		
Priests	3	4		
Teachers	6	8		
Deacons	17	14		
Other Adult Males	35	39		
Adult Females	145	146		
Male Children	13	11		
Female Children	12	13		
<i>Total</i>	248	251	249	242

It appears that at least three branches of the Rostock District were holding some meetings (usually in private homes) at the end of the war. From the accounts of eyewitnesses, few members fled the invading Red Army. As difficult as life under the conquerors was, the



Fig. 1. The Rostock District was one of the most sparsely populated in the mission.

Latter-day Saints in the district were usually able to maintain their homes.

The group meeting in Stralsund had declined into historical obscurity, but at least one family is known to have belonged to the group in Wolgast (see that chapter).

NOTES

1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Geschichte der Gemeinde Rostock, 1893–1944* (Rostock, Germany), October 30, 1939; trans. the author.
2. *Ibid.*, September 15, 1940.
3. *Ibid.*, March 23, 1941.
4. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” CR 4 12, 257.

BARTH-STRALSUUND BRANCH

Located not far from the Baltic Sea in the province of Pomerania, Barth was a town of about ten thousand inhabitants in 1939. Of those, only thirty-eight were Latter-day Saints at the onset of World War II. As part of the Rostock District, the members in Barth rode the train west twenty-five miles (forty minutes) to attend district conferences in Rostock.

The closest branch was in Demmin, thirty-five miles to the southeast.

In September 1938, the members of the Barth Branch met in rented rooms at Baustrasse 36 on the main floor. The same rooms were used for the next few years.

Before the war, the branch was home to two American missionaries, but the city government was not enthusiastic about their presence. The mission history includes the following statement in November 1938: “Elders Burke M. Snow and Everett L. Cooley were not allowed to register with the police, either in Barth or Stralsund. Therefore, they were transferred to Rostock, where the permission still was pending at this time.”¹ The practice of having all residents register with city hall allowed the city to deny a person the privilege of living there.

Barth Branch ²	1939
Elders	1
Priests	1
Teachers	1
Deacons	3
Other Adult Males	6
Adult Females	19
Male Children	5
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	38

Konrad Friedrich Langer was the president of the Barth Branch from 1933 to 1941. After he was killed in the Soviet Union that year, he was replaced by Günther Zühlendorf, who served simultaneously as the president of the Rostock District and the president of the Barth Branch. The branch likely relied heavily on priesthood visitors from other branches or on the district leaders for important functions and events in the Church.

Brother Langer’s son, Karl Werner, later wrote, “Unfortunately, we four children did not enjoy a long and happy family time with