
SCHNEIDEMÜHL DISTRICT

East German Mission



The six branches of the Schneidemühl District formed essentially a line along the Berlin-Danzig railroad. The distance from Landsberg on the Warthe River in the southwest to Flatow in the northeast is only about sixty miles.

Between those two towns were four other towns with branches of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Driesen, Kreuz, Schönlanke, and Schneidemühl.

Schneidemühl District ¹	1939	1940	1941	1942
Elders	21	21		
Priests	8	11		
Teachers	13	15		
Deacons	18	18		
Other Adult Males	53	52		
Adult Females	134	138		
Male Children	19	17		
Female Children	11	10		
<i>Total</i>	277	282	272	269

In June 1937, Johannes Kindt (born 1897) of Schneidemühl was set apart as district president by mission president Roy A. Welker and in the presence of Elder Joseph Fielding Smith. President Kindt faithfully carried out the duties of this office until the end of the war. A photograph printed in *Der Stern* just prior to the war shows Brother Kindt with the six branch



Fig. 1. The Schneidemühl District in 1939.

presidents (one of whom was an American missionary at the time).²

When the war began, there were just enough elders in the district to direct the programs of the Church. In fact, Johannes Kindt selected his counselors from among the serving branch presidents, asking them to continue as the leaders of the branches. His first presidency consisted of Fritz Birth of Schneidemühl (a brother-in-law) as first counselor, Arnold Schmidt, branch president in Kreuz, as second

counselor, and Wilhelm Jonischuss, branch president in Schneidemühl, as secretary.

Mission records indicate that a conference was held in the Schneidemühl District every six months until at least the fall of 1944. Because the Red Army had already conquered the region by April 1945, no spring conference was held that year.

Johannes Kindt and Frieda Fritz Kindt were the parents of four when she died from complications of surgery on August 7, 1939—just three weeks before World War II began. In order to sustain his family and maintain his high level of Church service, he married again on January 15, 1940. His second wife was Maria Bernau, only twenty-six years of age but mature in the gospel and dedicated to service in the family and in the Church.³

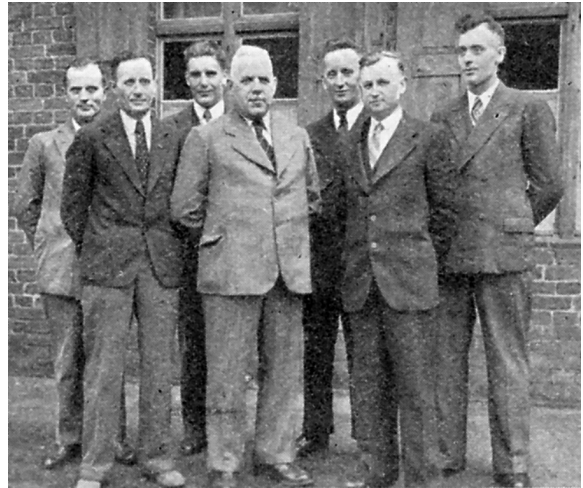


Fig. 2. Johannes Kindt (third from right) with the presidents of the branches of the Schneidemühl District (Der Stern, 1938)

President Kindt was employed at an army post in Schneidemühl and was therefore fortunate to live at home. According to



Fig. 3. Johannes Kindt married Maria Bernau on January 15, 1940. (W. Kindt)



Fig. 4. Survivors of the branches of the Schneidemühl District gathered for this photograph during a district conference in Dresden in July 1946. (W. Kindt)

his autobiography, he advanced to a “position of trust” and was thus a favorite of his commander, who then prevented any active duty call for him. In fact, when another officer tried to have Johannes assigned to active duty, the commander blocked the order twice. Eventually, however, the fact that he was not a member of the Nazi Party put an end to Johannes’s favored status. On September 23, 1943, a third draft order came which could not be avoided.⁴ Brother Kindt retained his Church calling for the duration of the war.

By the spring of 1944, Johannes had made two military journeys of four weeks’ duration each. The first took him through Poland, Austria, and Yugoslavia to Serbia. “Following many losses and adventures,” he later wrote, he was transferred back to Schneidemühl.

In March 1944, he was pleased to have both soldier sons at home for three full weeks—Hans from the Eastern Front and Walter from France. He was also back at work with all possible energy, visiting the branches in the district. “Little by little, I was dedicating more time and effort to my Church calling than to my personal affairs,” he wrote.⁵

In August 1944, President Kindt was sent to the town of Schöнау near Neustettin in Pomerania, where he was assigned as a guard at a POW camp. During the autumn, he was given leave for a month and was visited by his wife on two weekends. By January, his guard duty assignment was moved to Deutsch Krone, just fifteen miles from home.

During the war, the Flatow Branch was discontinued. President Kindt did not explain this

development in his autobiography, but the lack of priesthood leadership was likely the cause. By the end of the war, the following men were serving the five remaining branches as presidents: Wilhelm Jonischuss (Schneidemühl), Karl Beyer (Schönlanke), Arnold Schmidt (Kreuz), Walter Jeske (Driesen), and Fritz Fleischhauer (Landsberg).⁶

As guards, Johannes Kindt and his comrades moved their prisoners ever westward, trying to avoid the advancing Red Army. By the end of April 1945, the American army (advancing from the west) found them and disarmed the German soldiers, who a few days later were turned over to the Soviets. Then as prisoners they began their journey eastward, nearly to East Prussia. Because he was seriously ill most of the way, Brother Kindt was put in the worst physical condition category and was released early. In his recollection, there was a routine in the life of the POWs: "On even days we peeled [*sic*] potatoes, on odd days we were deloused."⁷

On September 9, 1945, Brother Kindt and other prisoners who were unfit for hard labor were set free. "They gave us food for about ten days, lectured us one last time, then threatened to lock us back up again if they could still see us fifteen minutes later." The 380 men hurried westward. Ten days later, Johannes Kindt located his wife and their children in an apartment in Tremsbüttel near Hamburg. As it turned out, the other family members had already reached the west in safety. Within days, the children from his first wife visited him in Tremsbüttel.⁸

Because the entire territory of the Schneidemühl District was ceded to Poland following World War II, no German members of the Church living in that region were allowed to stay. The branches of the Schneidemühl District ceased to exist by the fall of 1946.

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
2. Johannes Kindt, *My Book of Remembrance: My Life, Works, and Mission in the Family and the Church* (unpublished autobiography, 1948); private collection.
3. *Ibid.*, 23.
4. *Ibid.*, 28.
5. *Ibid.*, 30.
6. *Ibid.*, 35.
7. *Ibid.*, 37.
8. *Ibid.*, 38.

DRIESEN BRANCH

The town of Driesen is located about fifty miles southwest of Schneidemühl on the main railroad route from the latter to Berlin. During the generation between the world wars, the town was just a few miles from the Polish border. In 1939, Driesen (now Dresanus, Poland) had about seven thousand inhabitants.

Driesen Branch ¹	1938
Elders	5
Priests	2
Teachers	2
Deacons	4
Other Adult Males	9
Adult Females	27
Male Children	11
Female Children	3
<i>Total</i>	63

Before and throughout the war, the president of the Driesen Branch was Walter Jeske. The meetings were held in rented rooms on the main floor of the building at Kietzerstrasse 30. His daughter, Ilse (born 1921), later wrote about the meetings held there: "The branch observed the usual meeting schedule, with Sunday School in the morning and sacrament meeting