not seriously damaged. She recalled that bombs landed in front of and behind her home but left no more damage than broken windows. Her home was still standing when the war ended: "Our basement was officially designated an air-raid shelter, but it was not at all safe. It was not built especially for air raids in any way. It would have protected us against shrapnel at best. All in all, we were very blessed so many times."

The city of Nordhausen was not as fortunate in general. According to official records, seventy-five percent of the structures were destroyed. At least 8,800 people (among a prewar population of 42,316) were killed during the night of April 3–4, 1945, alone. The city suffered a total of thirteen attacks.[5]

Emil Fuchs was killed in Hungary in 1944.[6] Back at home, his widow, Gertrud, did her best to protect her daughters as Hitler's Third Reich came crashing down around them. When the American army approached Nordhausen in April 1945, Frau Fuchs and her daughters joined many Nordhausen residents who heeded the recommendation of the mayor to take shelter in the underground facility called the *Felsenkeller*. There was no significant fighting when the city was invaded. Agnes recalled the day when the mayor of the city announced that it was safe to leave the shelter and return to their homes:

> One day, we heard that we were able to go home, so we put my mom [who was a sickly woman] on the handcart again and went home. We found our home in a little bit of a mess because people had looked through everything, but we were so glad to finally be home again. Some of our things were gone, and that might have been because people tried to look for things to exchange for food.[7]

Although Emil Fuchs did not survive the war, his sons Horst and Hermann returned to their mother and their sisters unscathed. The family apartment was intact, and life could begin again for them and the other survivors of the Nordhausen Branch. The American invaders had been replaced by Soviet occupation forces, but even that would be tolerated with time. Fortunately the meeting rooms at Waisenstrasse 5 had also survived the war and continued to serve as the home of this very small group of Saints.

No members of the Nordhausen Branch are known to have died during World War II.

Notes

1. Clark Hillam, interview by the author, Brigham City, UT, August 20, 2006.
2. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11.
3. Agnes Fuchs Richter, telephone interview with the author in German, April 29, 2009; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
4. Readers may recognize the name by association with the concentration camp Dora-Mittelbau, which was established close to the factory. Many camp inmates worked in the aircraft factory, but of course they were not free to go to Nordhausen.
5. Nordhausen city archive.
6. Emil had not been baptized into the Church. His wife, Gertrud, joined the Church after the war.
7. Some of those people may have been inmates of the concentration camp at Dora-Mittelbau; they escaped or were released when the Americans entered the area.

Weimar Branch

Two of Germany's greatest literary men, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, once lived in Weimar, and their legacy has given this small Thuringian city the air of intellectual greatness since then. It was that sense of intellectual greatness that prompted the German government to move the parliament from Berlin to Weimar in 1920 when the capital was besieged by revolutionaries (hence the name "Weimar Republic" for the German state from 1920 to 1933).

The branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Weimar might have numbered one hundred members in 1939, but no records have survived to establish the population. It is known that the branch held its meetings in the building at Seminarstrasse 4 downtown.[1] Katharina Dietrich

(born 1922) recalled the setting as a Hinterhaus: "There was a factory on the bottom floor. It was fine inside [our rooms]. It looked well maintained, and there was a pump organ and French-style chairs. There were about thirty or forty persons in attendance—maybe even more if you counted all of the children."[2]

Ruth Schlevogt (born 1926) added the following to the description of the branch rooms: "When we separated for class, we closed the curtain in the large hall and could hold two classes in the same room. There was another church congregation next door to us, but we never bothered each other."[3] Ruth's twin sister, Ursula, recalled that the neighbors were Adventists and that the restrooms for the branch members were outside.[4]

The family of Fritz and Alma Schlevogt lived nearly three miles away on the eastern outskirts of Weimar. They walked to church in the morning, then home for lunch, then back to town for sacrament meeting. They carried a lantern while walking in the dark and made it to church "in all kinds of weather," according to Ruth. "We did not miss our meetings." Ursula stated that many of the branch members lived in the suburbs rather than the center of Weimar.

Fig. 1. The main meeting hall of the Weimar Branch decorated for Mother's Day 1938. (E. Horn Pruess)

In the months immediately prior to the outbreak of war, the president of the Weimar Branch was missionary Ellis Rasmussen of Redmond, Utah. His counselors were Karl Wolff and Fritz Schlevogt. The former was also the leader of the Sunday School, and the latter the leader of the YMMIA. Klara Margarete Hess directed the YWMIA, and Elisabeth Köcher the Relief Society. There was no Primary organization at the time.

The Weimar Branch meeting schedule was a modest one, with only two meetings on Sunday: Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. and sacrament meeting at 8:00 p.m. The Relief Society sisters met on Thursdays at 8:00, and the MIA met on Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m., after which an entertainment gathering was scheduled.

Whereas the number of persons attending meetings in 1939 can only be estimated, there is some information available about who attended. Elder Rasmussen recorded in his journal the names of families represented on a typical Sunday by at least two members each: Barth, Blietz, Dempe, Dietrich, Fernstädt, Hess, Hönig, Köcher, Köhler, Rauch, Schlevogt, Semmler, Steinbrück, Thiemann, and Wolff.[5]

Walter Horn, an elder in the Weimar Branch, had what his daughter Evelyn (born 1932) described as a "horrific experience" one evening as he walked home from a meeting:

> It was dark, and he was walking home to where we lived, a little bit outside of Weimar, and he ran into a transport of Jews who were herded from the railway station and pushed and shoved onto big trucks. He said they were all ages—young, older children, older, really old people. And when he came home his face was as white as a sheet, and he was shaking. It was a horrible, horrible experience to see that, because outside of Weimar there was Buchenwald, the concentration camp. It was still secret, so they did their transports late at night so that nobody would see it.[6]

Ursula Schlevogt explained that while the people of Weimar knew of a prison camp at Buchenwald, they assumed that the inmates were average criminals who had committed offenses against the system. She noted, "We knew it was a place where nasty things happened. Sometimes we even saw workers [from the camp] in the streets, and people secretly gave them food. We never went to Buchenwald."[7]

With a negative attitude toward the government, Walter Horn was not interested in joining the Nazi Party. When a high-ranking party member pressured him to do so in early 1939, he responded by finding employment in Goslar, a town some eighty miles to the northwest. He moved his family there

Fig. 2. Members of the Weimar Branch on an outing in 1938. (E. Horn Pruess)

and survived the war in relative peace. He had successfully outrun the long arm of the party.[8]

When Elder Rasmussen was instructed to leave Weimar for Copenhagen, Denmark, on August 26, 1939, he may not have designated any of the local brethren as leader of the branch. According to Katharina Dietrich, the branch was not able to hold meetings for very long after the war started. The members were instructed to travel to Erfurt (twenty-five miles to the west) and attend meetings there. Initially, that was no major difficulty, but it became increasingly difficult as the war continued.

"We never had any disturbances while holding our meetings," recalled Helmut Wolff (born 1926). However, the same could not be said of the Jehovah's Witnesses who met upstairs. "We had seen how they were banned in 1937." Helmut also recalled that the meetings were discontinued just after the war began. He was fourteen by then and did not attend any more church meetings before leaving his hometown in 1943.[9]

Otto Dietrich, a veteran of the Great War, was a member of the Stahlhelm Party, a conservative group of veterans not appreciated by Adolf Hitler. Brother Dietrich was thus not free with his political opinions during the years of the Third Reich. He and others recognized that war was imminent when the American missionaries left Germany.

Katharina Dietrich said, "We had to be careful after the war started; you couldn't show your sympathies for America." The Dietrich family had maintained contact with a great aunt who had immigrated to Salt Lake City, but the correspondence between the two families ended when Germany and the United States exchanged declarations of war after Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The isolation from the Church increased with decreasing opportunities to travel to Erfurt for church meetings.

A dental office employee in 1939, Katharina was admitted to a dental school in Dresden and left home to study in that famous city. It was there that she met the brother of a classmate and fell in love

Fig. 3. Another outing of the Weimar Branch in the spring of 1938. (E. Horn Pruess)

with him. He had been wounded in Russia and was home on recuperative leave. Raised in the Lutheran Church, he was what she called "very religious," and she married him. During the last years of the war, Katharina was a mother and was concerned both about her child and the status of her soldier husband.

Alma Schlevogt was not enthusiastic about Hitler's government and staunchly refused to greet people with the expected "Heil Hitler!" Her daughter Ruth recalled that "people used to say that if she didn't say 'Heil Hitler!' she would eventually be arrested." When it came time for Ruth to join the Jungvolk, her parents declined to give her permission to attend the meetings. There were no negative repercussions. Regarding politics in church, Ursula Schlevogt recalled that whereas nobody prayed for Adolf Hitler in the meetings, they did pray for their branch members serving in the military.

After finishing public school, Ruth was employed as a salesperson at Hekra-Hepprich in downtown Weimar. She rode her bicycle to work every day. That was no challenge, except when air raids caused damage to the downtown and she was forced to make long detours on her way back home. When the sirens sounded, Ruth found her way to the basement of the company's warehouse. In her recollection, the branch meeting rooms were not destroyed, nor was her home damaged, but the beautiful city theater was destroyed.

Regarding the life of the young people of the Weimar Branch, Ruth Schlevogt made the following comment:

> I cannot say that all the things we did during the war were very serious. We found a way to have fun. There were many members who were willing to meet in the evenings so that we could play

> games. I had my friend with whom I could do many things. I also had friends from outside the Church. We didn't always just think about the war—it was not always that serious in our area.

In 1943, Helmut Wolf was drafted into the Reichsarbeitsdienst. A veteran of the Jungvolk, he had managed to avoid joining the Hitler Youth, but service in the national labor force was inevitable. His father, Karl, was already away from home, serving in Lithuania with the construction corps known as the *Organisation Todt*. By the time Helmut finished with the labor force, he knew that a summons to the army would arrive soon. He chose to enlist in the Waffen-SS instead, preferring to exercise some degree of choice in his military assignment. He was to experience a nomadic career, being trained in Poland before serving in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. He recalled, "I traveled a lot but didn't fight much."

A call to the national labor force arrived in the Schlevogt mail box in March 1944, and Ursula soon found herself on a train bound for Czechoslovakia. For the next six months, she worked on a farm in Moravia: "In the morning, we went to the farm to help and usually spent the entire day there until we went back to our bedrooms at night. We slept in sheds and wore uniforms." In October, Ursula and her friends were transferred to Prague, the capital of occupied Czechoslovakia, where she was assigned to an office. Regarding her experiences there, she said:

> We didn't have to wear a uniform this time and slept in a school. My job was to inspect all the armaments. We lived in the Mariankerschule, which was located a little on the border of the city. There were many young women with whom I could go to work and back to the school. I even had contact with the Church while I was in Prague. I wrote to Frankfurt, and they mailed me the address of a meetingplace in Prague. It was a small group, and I always went whenever I had my Sundays off. We met in the city center of Prague in the homes of members. The leader of the district there even gave me some books to read. During the night, there were always men who protected us while we were sleeping. They stayed outside of the school and took care of us.

By the last year of the war, meetings at Seminarstrasse 4 apparently had been discontinued. Eyewitnesses were not able to explain the change, because the building was still standing. Some at least recalled holding meetings in the apartments of various branch members.

Helmut Wolff's Waffen-SS unit was sent from the Eastern Front to an area near Paris in 1944, but arrived too late to keep the Allies out of the French capital. A few months later, he participated in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium and Luxembourg. Surviving a direct hit on his tank there, he was next sent toward Berlin to help save the Reich's capital city from the advancing Red Army. At the last moment, another transfer sent his unit to Austria and then on to Hungary. When the war ended for Helmut in April 1945, his unit was somewhere in Austria near the Czechoslovakian border—directly between the Soviets and the Americans. "Our only goal was to get home as soon as possible," Helmut explained. "We left everything behind and walked through fields. Soon we crossed paths with some American soldiers, and that was the end of our trip home." As a POW, Helmut was shipped to France and eventually "sold" by the Americans to the French government.

"At the end of March 1945, we were released [from the Reichsarbeitsdienst] just barely before the war ended," recalled Ursula Schlevogt. After a two-day trip back to Weimar through the ashes of firebombed Dresden, she found that just a few of the Saints were still meeting but only on Sundays. The sole priesthood holder left in the city was old Brother Köhler. Fritz Schlevogt had been away in military service but was transferred to Weimar, where he worked in a hospital in the final months of the war. He was not free on Sundays.

Ruth Schlevogt described the arrival of the Americans in Weimar:

> I remember watching them when they walked down the street. We were so excited that the war was finally over and we were not afraid of the Americans. They were very nice to us, didn't take away our property, and even gave candy to the children. They had orders to not have contact with the Germans because all of us were considered to be Nazis. We didn't hang out anything white. They also didn't shoot at us.

As the American army approached Weimar from the west and the Red Army from the east, Elise Dietrich decided to take her youngest children and move west toward the Americans. Daughter Katharina joined the group with her own infant. They had wanted to travel with the last train headed in that direction but were too late and had to walk. Their destination was Kumberg, about twenty miles distant. Along the way, they encountered long lines of German soldiers retreating from the advancing GIs. Many were wounded, and some were trying hurriedly to exchange their uniforms for civilian clothing.

"About halfway to Kumbach, a wheel on my baby carriage broke. We couldn't fix it, so I continued on three wheels," explained Katharina. On several occasions, American fighter planes swooped down to attack the soldiers and civilians, and Katharina's party took refuge in the brush by the road. They escaped harm, but her youngest sister (approximately the age of Katharina's own daughter) contracted measles along the way. With no available medical assistance, the little girl died after two weeks. Katharina had additional reasons to be discouraged, for she had not heard from her own husband since January. As it turned out, he had been captured by the Americans in Italy.

Shortly after the end of the war, Katharina and her mother, Elise Dietrich, returned with their children to their home on the outskirts of Weimar and found that it had not been seriously damaged. To their surprise and delight, Katharina's husband soon showed up, having been released from an American POW camp.

In one of the countless tragedies of the long war, two boys of the Weimar Branch became some of the last victims. On Mother's Day 1945, Karl Heinz Wolff (born 1931) and his brother Gerhard (born 1935) were searching for flowers for their mother in a forest near Weimar. One of them stepped on a mine hidden there by the invading American army, and both boys were killed instantly. According to Helmut Wolff, the death of his brothers was nearly too much for his mother to handle, coming as it did at a time when the whereabouts of Sister Wolff's husband and an older son were still a mystery. As far as she was concerned, they too might be dead.

On July 1, 1945, the Thuringian territory of eastern Germany was transferred from the Americans to the Soviets in accordance with Allied stipulations. The peaceful times of the American occupation were over, as Ruth Schlevogt recalled, "When the Russians came into Weimar, they came into our store and destroyed everything. It was horrible behavior." The residents of Weimar may have thought that the war was over by then. Regarding the revelations of Nazi atrocities in extermination camps in Poland and concentration camps in Germany, Ruth, like many other German civilians, claimed that she had no idea what was going on in camps such as Buchenwald.

Helmut Wolff had survived the war, but captivity among the French was no particular pleasure for him. However, with time, his existence there became more tolerable, and he eventually met and fell in love with a sweet French girl. He received permission to marry her in November 1948 and decided not to return to Germany. By then, he had established correspondence with his parents (his father had indeed survived) and told them that they would not see him again soon. Regarding his status as a member of the Church during the war, Helmut observed:

> When I was a soldier, I never met another member of the Church, not even while I was a captive of the Americans. I was also not able to attend any meetings of the Church anywhere. As soon as I left home, I seemed to have danger around me constantly. I was so glad and grateful that I always made it through. Many things happened that cannot logically be explained, but I believe that Heavenly Father protected me in many situations.

According to Ursula Schlevogt, regular church meetings resumed in Weimar after her father Fritz came home in the early summer of 1945. The building used by the church at the beginning of the war still stood but was in very poor condition.

In Memoriam:

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

Klara Margaretha ——; m. —— Hess; k. air raid Weimar, Thüringen, 1944 (Ursula Schlevogt)

Gertrude Dietrich b. about Jun 1944; dau. of Max Karl Otto Dietrich and Hewig Isa Else Stock; d. measles Thüringen, Apr 1945 (K. Dietrich Voigt)

Rolf Herbert Heinz Dietrich b. Weimar, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 1 Apr 1925; son of Max Karl Otto Dietrich and Hewig Isa Else Stock; bp.; conf.; ord. deacon; corporal; d. 10 April 1944; bur. Andilly, France (FHL microfilm no. 25755, 1930 census; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

Selma Bertha Anna Eberitsch b. Beutelsdorf, Sachsen-Altenburg, 8 May 1870; dau. of Johann Friedrich Eberitsch and Christiana Schrak; bp. 27 Aug 1929; conf. 27 Aug 1929; m. —— Barth; d. pneumonia 18 Dec 1940 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 465; FHL microfilm no. 25718, 1930 census)

Elisabeth Maria Magdalene Gäbler b. Leipzig, Sachsen, 27 Jul 1893; dau. of Gottlieb Bernhard Gäbler and Augusta Goldhorn; bp. 6 Dec 1931; conf. 6 Dec 1931; m. 5 Oct 1918, Karl Becker; k. in air raid 27 Nov 1944 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 627)

Minne Else Hasse b. Weimar, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 21 Nov 1876; dau. of Anthon Hasse and Emma Mayberg; bp. 31 Mar 1927; conf. 31 Mar 1927; m. August or Gustav Bruno Rauch; d. heart condition 19 Feb 1941 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 230; FHL microfilm 271399, 1930 and 1935 censuses)

Olga Friedricke Kirschner b. Hyn [?], Fieselbach [?], Germany, 18 Apr 1863; dau. of Theodor Kirschner and Louise Ginozel; bp. 25 May 1921; conf. 25 May 1921; m. —— Schulze; d. old age 3 Dec 1941 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 246)

Maria Emma Knopf b. Schönborn, Germany, 30 Jun 1863; dau. of Karl Knopf and Wilhelmine Bergner; bp. 27 Mar 1910; conf. 27 Mar 1910; m. 7 Jul 1889; Hermann Neudorf or Neundorf; d. old age 30 Mar 1943 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 216)

Marie Helene Kolba b. Ohrdruf, Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, 26 Apr 1889; dau. of Hugo Kolba and Helene Roth; bp. 11 Jul 1936; conf. 11 Jul 1936; m. —— Walter; d. gall stone surgery 8 Apr 1944 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 454)

Maria Antonia Rumel or Rummel b. Hohenlaum [?], Weida, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 13 Feb or Mar 1855; dau. of Christian Rumel and Ernestine Diebler; bp. 25 Jul 1924; conf. 25 Jul 1924; m. 23 Sep 1915, Christian Friedrich Buchner; d. old age 10 Feb 1945 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 48; IGI)

Werner Semmler b. Weimar, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 2 Jan 1924; son of Otto Semmler and Helene Spiegler; private; k. 10 Apr 1945 (CHL CR 375 8 #2459, 1146–47; volksbund.de)

Paul Peter Welzel b. Neustadt, Schlesien, 21 Sep 1919; son of Paul Peter Welzel and Hedwig Anna Krebs; bp. 15 Jun 1929; conf. 15 Jun 1929; k. in battle 27 Jun 1941 (FHL microfilm 68808, no. 553)

Gerhard Wolff b. Oberweimar, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, Thüringen 6 August 1935; son of Karl Herman Wolff and Klara Marie Gumpert; k. by land mine Weimar, Thüringen, 21 May 1945 (H. Wolff; FS)

Karl Heinz Wolff b. Oberweimar, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 9 February 1931; son of Karl Herman Wolff and Klara Marie Gumpert; bp. 13 May 1940; conf. 13 May 1940; k. by land mine Weimar, Thüringen, 21 May 1945 (H. Wolff; FS)

Notes

1. West German Mission branch directory, 1939, CHL LR 10045 11. The postwar address of the building was on Gropiusstrasse; the structure was razed in 1978, according to a report from the city office dated July 31, 2008.
2. Katie Dietrich Voigt, telephone interview with Jennifer Heckmann, October 24, 2008.
3. Ruth Schlevogt Bode, interview by the author in German, Erfurt, Germany, August 17, 2008; unless otherwise noted, summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
4. Ursula Schlevogt Herold, interview by the author in German, Weimar, Germany, August 17, 2008.
5. Ellis T. Rasmussen, journal (unpublished); private collection.
6. Evelyn Horn Pruess, interview by the author, Salt Lake City, December 1, 2006. The Buchenwald concentration camp was located just four miles northwest of the city, but a small mountain stood between the two and helped conceal the former from the latter.
7. Apparently the Schlevogt family members were not among the Weimar residents forced by American soldiers to walk up the hill to Buchenwald to view the camp after its liberation and before many of the bodies of inmates had been removed.
8. The Goslar Group chapter features the interesting story of the Horn family.
9. Helmut Wolff, telephone interview with the author in German, January 14, 2009.