
ZWICKAU DISTRICT

East German Mission



In the former kingdom of Saxony, where The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had its highest concentration of members in Germany before World War II, the Zwickau District had the highest number of branches in the smallest territory. The district measured approximately forty-two miles north–south and twenty-five miles east–west. Within that small area were eight branches and one group of the Church with a total membership of 690 at the end of 1939.

Zwickau District ¹	1939	1940	1941	1942
Elders	38	36		
Priests	9	10		
Teachers	18	23		
Deacons	32	29		
Other Adult Males	111	109		
Adult Females	438	433		
Male Children	24	24		
Female Children	20	22		
<i>Total</i>	690	686	675	666

Traveling distances to district conferences in Zwickau were relatively short. Meerane is ten miles to the north, Wilkau-Hasslau two miles to the southeast, Beutha twelve miles to the east, Schwarzenberg eighteen miles to the southeast, Auerbach seventeen miles to



Fig. 1. The Zwickau District of the East German Mission shared borders with the nation of Czechoslovakia, the West German Mission, and the districts of Chemnitz and Leipzig.

the south, Planitz two miles to the southwest, Plauen twenty-four miles to the southwest, and Werda five miles due west. One could take the train from Zwickau to every branch city



Fig. 2. Members of the Zwickau District gathered for a conference in 1940. (M. Gangien Mannek)

in the district except Planitz (in the Zwickau metropolitan area) and Beutha (where a small group of Saints met).

Adult women constituted the major demographic group in the Zwickau District—more than 63 percent. There was also a very large number of adult males who did not hold the priesthood—111. Relatively few children (barely 6 percent) lived in the nine units of the district when World War II approached.

The district president was Bernhard Unger until November 6, 1938, when Walter Fassmann, Sr. of the Zwickau Branch was named to that office.² Brother Fassmann served throughout World War II and for several years thereafter. As of March 19, 1939, Carl Neumärker was the first counselor in the district presidency and Alfred Klopfer the second counselor.³ Sister Lina Ebisch of the Zwickau Branch was appointed district Relief Society president on August 7, 1938.⁴

The history of the East German Mission provides interesting details regarding the Zwickau District until March 1939, beyond which the mission records have been lost. For example, from November 5 to 23, 1938, Elder Roger A. Brown of the East German Mission Auxiliary Committee visited the branches of the Zwickau District “and discussed with the branch presidents and leaders of auxiliary organizations their various problems and gave suggestions and advice for improvement.”⁵

On Saturday and Sunday, November 5–6, 1938, the fall conference of the district was held in Zwickau. President Alfred C. Rees of the East German Mission presided. The attendance at the general session on Sunday included 250 members and eighty-two friends.⁶ It seems that the members in the district were quite willing to invite friends to join with them on these occasions. As in other districts in the East German Mission, the district

conferences in Zwickau included cultural events such as concerts, dances, and theatrical performances in the years leading up to the war. Unfortunately, many such events were no longer possible when the privations of the war increased. Nevertheless, district conferences in Zwickau were held twice annually, at least through the year 1944.

The last pre-war conference for which a report exists in the record of the mission office in Berlin was held in Zwickau on Saturday and Sunday, March 18–19, 1939. Herbert Klopfer of the mission office staff represented President Rees on that occasion. The main session on Sunday evening was attended by 280 members and friends.⁷

NOTES

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.
2. East German Mission Quarterly Reports, 1938, no. 46, East German Mission History.
3. Ibid., 1939, no. 58.
4. Ibid., 1938, no. 35.
5. Ibid., 1938, no. 46.
6. Ibid., 1938, no. 46.
7. Ibid., 1939, no. 59.

AUERBACH BRANCH

Nine miles from the border of Czechoslovakia, the town of Auerbach was home to a tiny branch of Latter-day Saints in 1939. Amidst the beautiful Erzgebirge Mountains of Saxony, the town is just seventeen miles south-southeast of the city of Zwickau. When the war began, there were about fifteen thousand inhabitants in Auerbach. Only sixteen were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

At the end of the year 1938, the Auerbach Branch was holding meetings at Kreuzstrasse 8B, apparently the home of a family named Seifert. That location is not in Auerbach itself, but rather in the neighboring community of Rodewisch, one mile to the north.

Auerbach Branch ¹	1939
Elders	1
Priests	0
Teachers	0
Deacons	1
Other Adult Males	1
Adult Females	12
Male Children	0
Female Children	1
<i>Total</i>	16

The adult female members constituted three-quarters of the branch population. The one elder may have been Brother Seifert.

By 1943, the location of the meetings was listed as Ottostrasse 17. This address in Auerbach was likely the home of some of the members of the branch.

As of this writing, there were no eyewitnesses to describe life in the Auerbach Branch during the war or the fate of the Latter-day Saints there.

No members of the Auerbach Branch are known to have lost their lives in World War II.

NOTE

1. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," CR 4 12, 257.