



The only LDS chapel in Poland, built in 1929



A 1927 Sunday School outing of the Saints of Breslau, Germany

The Church Among the

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● Few nations or peoples have enjoyed the power, commerce, educational attainments, scientific brilliance, and cultural achievements as did the Germanic lands during the last half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, the years in which the young Mormon missionary from the Far West first went to those countries.

The very names of people with gifted minds and noble spirits who were born in Austria, Germany, and

Elders of 1904 visiting German villages.



Switzerland form much of the vocabulary of man's greatest achievements: Martin Luther, Goethe, Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Copernicus, Kant, and literally dozens of others.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, Germany was a leader in nearly all scientific fields, was famed for her universities, which made her a mecca for students the world over, and was respected as the mightiest military and industrial continental power.

Church printing for eight languages is done in Frankfurt, Germany



Typical of new chapels is this one in Dusseldorf, South German Mission.



European Church administration offices, Frankfurt, Germany



Eager faces of Swiss Primary youth.



Frankfurt Conference

German-speaking Peoples

She was a bustling, confident nation, which only as late as 1871 had united her city and state republics under Bismarck to form the nation known as Germany—the youngest of all European powers. Into this maelstrom of intellectual, industrial, and military pride, the Latter-day Saint missionary began to sow his seeds of humility and peace. The planting was difficult.

The first known member of the Church to set foot on German soil, however, was not an American missionary; it was James Howard, a British convert who went to Hamburg to work in a foundry. At the request of the brethren in England, he tried to preach the gospel, but he found conditions such that on September 13, 1840, he wrote his wife, "I am too weak a creature to do anything without them [the brethren] in Hamburg."

For ten more years no one did much to spread the gospel in the Germanic countries, even though Elder Orson Hyde spent ten months in Germany on his tour to Palestine. Not until 1851 was the first recorded baptism performed in Germany. Even then the work progressed slowly, and with considerable governmental opposition, as first one elder, then another faced banishment from a city-state or small republic. By 1855, three years after the Book of Mormon had been published in German, only 165 persons had joined the Church in Germany. By 1854, Switzerland had done little better—with just 144 converts.

Not until the late 1860's did the picture begin to brighten in terms of a sharp increase in converts. In 1868 Karl G. Maeser, a German convert called to preside over a mission in Germany and Switzerland, wrote: "Many things throughout the mission had indicated, for some time, a coming change like the rippling of the surface before the coming breeze, and

it was apparent that another spirit was being ushered in."

By the time Brother Maeser returned to Utah in 1870 to direct the new Brigham Young Academy at Provo, some 600 persons had joined the Church, nearly all of them in Switzerland. But the typical reaction still facing missionaries was that reported by Elder C. W. Wilken: "The Germans say they are too smart to believe in angels appearing and men having revelations in these days. When I was in Holstein, I was told such stuff would do to tell the Indians, but to an enlightened people, they laughed at it."

And so it went. In contrast to the thousands who joined the Church in England and in Scandinavia, little success, sporadic and often short-lived branches, an apathetic public, and chilly relations with governments characterized the Church's experiences in German-speaking countries until the turn of the century. In Switzerland, in particular, convert success was even more dismal. For one century—from 1860-1960—reports showed that each year the number of convert baptisms was lower than the all-time high of about 300 in 1862.

Those persons who did join the Church soon realized that to raise their children among Latter-day Saints would require immigration to America—a pattern often followed by the German-speaking Saints until only about three decades ago. Such immigration decisions were fortified as a result of the German economic crash of 1875. It is estimated that following the crash some two and a half million Germans immigrated to America.

Year after year new missionaries arrived, and year after year "one of a city, and two of a family" (see Jer. 3:14) entered the waters of baptism. But year after year veiled or open hostility greeted these



Final scene in the dance festival of the All-Germanic Youth Conference. The letters GfV are German equivalent for MIA.



Architect in the Frankfurt office



President David O. McKay, presiding at the Swiss Temple groundbreaking

emissaries of truth, as is indicated by these quotes from the mission histories: "Our application to preach in Baden was denied"—1875. "President Stucki was arrested and fined for publishing a pamphlet"—1876. "The elders were jailed and banished"—1880. "The first converts baptized in Austria"—1883. "The congregation was arrested in an effort to find the missionaries. The books were confiscated"—1897. "In Saxony the Elders received word from the officers that they are not allowed to hold any Sabbath schools, neither are they allowed to admit any children to the meetings under 18 years old. They were also refused permission to distribute tracts"—1900.

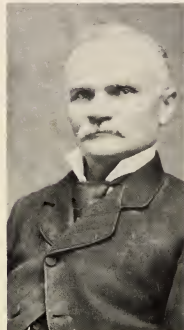
The new century seemed to open, at least in part, a new spirit in Germany. In 1906 President Joseph F. Smith, the first president of the Church to travel abroad during his administration, visited Germany. A year later, President Serge F. Ballif of the united Swiss and German missions wrote: "As I travel from place to place I see great masses of humanity who I believe are ready for the gospel; I feel it in my bones." His impressions were correct; in the next three years over 2,500 converts joined the Church—a figure that broke all baptismal records for the German-speaking countries.

But the resistance against the American-based Church did not decline. Four years later, on August 30, 1914, a startling message reached Germany from Church headquarters: "Release all missionaries and take immediate steps to get them to London. . . ." Nearly 200 missionaries left some 60 branches in Switzerland and Germany and headed for England. World War I was underway.

Three years to the month later, President Angus J. Cannon obtained government permission to visit the branches of the Church throughout Germany. He

reported: "Inevitably the ravages of war, in which many of the officers and members of the branches were called away into military services, some never to return, led to the dissolution of certain branches, and considerable diminution in numbers of others. It is most remarkable, however, that, in spite of this, most branches, in fact nearly all, have kept up some sort of organization and track of their members, holding meetings whenever and wherever possible. . . ."

Karl G. Maeser, German convert, early Church educator



President Heber J. Grant on European tour, at Breslau



Helmut Hubener, young Mormon beheaded by the Nazis

It was a pattern that was to be duplicated 20 years later when Adolf Hitler rose to power as "*der Fuehrer*."

During those 20 years between the two world wars, the story of the Church in the Germanic countries saw its finest hours. As peace settled once more upon the world, the plan of the Prince of Peace again began to seep into the souls of the honest in heart. Reviewing the Swiss-German Mission in 1920, President Serge F. Ballif said: "We have in the mission over 60 missionaries, and they are all traveling without purse or script. They are humble, prayerful, clean, and pure, willing and ready to do all that is required of them."

By 1925 the Germanic missions were divided, as they had been several times previously, into the German-Austrian Mission, with a record membership of 6,125 members, and the Swiss-German Mission, with a record membership of 5,305 members—over 11,000 German-speaking Saints!

It was a remarkable foundation for steady and sure growth. Taking a leaf from today's public relations booklet, German-speaking Saints celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the Church in 1930 with displays and exhibits that drew large crowds. Over 250,000 tracts on the Word of Wisdom were disseminated at an exhibit in Dresden, and in Bern the Saints won many friends with their Hygiene and Sports Exposition. "Never have we received more favorable publicity from the German press," said President Fred Tadge.

Elder John A. Widtsoe, then president of the European Mission, wrote shortly thereafter about the German and Swiss Saints: "None are more faithful and devoted in the whole Church."

But the forces of evil were not idle. Nazi soldiers were goose-stepping, and the regime's attitude toward the Church soon manifested itself. In May 1933 Nazi soldiers interrupted a gathering of the Saints; that same month in another part of Germany two missionaries were beaten by a uniformed Nazi. In 1934 the Church's Boy Scout movement was disbanded by government order, and the tract *Divine Authority* was prohibited. A year later *Articles of Faith* by Elder James E. Talmage was banned, and copies of the book were ordered burned. In 1937 permission was withdrawn for distribution of most of the other tracts of the Church. A year later some leading German Latter-day Saints were jailed and charged with "high treason" for fulfilling their religious duties. The shadow of Hitler had been cast.

Despite these difficulties, the forces of righteousness were not left without preparation for that which was to come. It is inspiring to read that on July 2, 1935, instructions were sent to all missionaries in Germany to find and set apart local leaders as branch

presidents and counselors. The Lord's faithful were not to be left untrained in the principles of the priesthood.

The instructions came none too quickly, for on August 25, 1939, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of the Twelve arrived in Germany to inform all missionaries to leave at once. And herein lies one of the most inspiring stories of World War II. President Douglas Wood called a tall, 200-pound missionary from Idaho into his office and said, "Elder, we have 31 missionaries lost somewhere between here and the Dutch border. It will be your mission to find them and see that they get out."

The young elder set out with 500 marks and some tickets for Denmark and London, and was told to follow his impressions entirely. He boarded a train and headed westward, not knowing where to go. Cologne was not his destination, but he felt impressed to get off the train there. The large station was filled with thousands of people. How was he to find the missionaries? He began to whistle "Do What Is Right," and in a corner of the station an elder and a married missionary couple heard the call and quickly received their tickets for Denmark.

The tall elder again boarded the train and continued his mission, getting off at border stations at town after town only when he felt inspired to do so. Led by

Highlight of a recent youth conference was Rhine River trip.



inspiration, he found 17 missionaries, who were able to flee Germany that night. Shortly thereafter a report reached mission headquarters that all missionaries were safely out of Germany. Nine days later the war broke out.

The story of the Church in Germany and Austria during the war years is full of inspiring incidents. Few dared speak against the Nazis, yet three young members of the Church did. After listening to a British



Quartet festival entries at Germanic youth conference

radio program, these youths printed and distributed the information in public places. One of them, Hel-muth Hübener, was given the death sentence for high treason and beheaded by an ax. The other two were sentenced to concentration camps. Today, a building in Hamburg honors young Brother Hübener, a Latter-day Saint who dared to speak out.

Some of the poignant stories surround the efforts of German branches to gather clothing for other German

Saints who had lost their belongings in the air raids, such as the efforts of the Altona Branch on behalf of suffering members in the Ruhr District.

Many times during 1943-44, when the Allies were bombing heavily, the Saints were inspired to leave their sacrament or Sunday School meetings to prepare for an air raid.

In 1945, toward the war's end, District President Willy Deters wrote: "Hell has opened its fiery portals. It is almost impossible to visit the branches. Planes attack trains constantly. No rest can be found at night. Many of the brethren are called into the service that are either very young, 15, or over 50 in an organization called 'Volkssturm,' so that they might save the father-land. Reasoning now has changed to madness."

The war had reaped its terror and destruction, and had left its mark on millions of Germans. More than 600 Saints were known to have been killed, another 2,500 were missing, and more than 80 percent were homeless. In Bremen alone, 95 percent of the Saints lost their homes. There was little food, and in Danzig members lived on "weeds, cats, dogs, a few potatoes, and carcasses of animals. As the old and sick couldn't obtain even these things, it was suggested that this 'food' should be tithed, and accordingly a tenth of it was given to the most needy." No finer testimony to

Typical new chapel is the Coburg chapel, South German Mission.



New Servicemen's Stake-Europe meets at Kaiserslautern chapel.



West Berlin chapel in Berlin Stake is styled in modern gothic.

the gospel's power and effectiveness need be given. Tested in the crucible of fear, hunger, and destitution, the faithful Saints who found themselves victims of man's worst expression—war—were characterized by love and brotherhood.

In 1945, when President Heber J. Grant died, memorial services were held in some of the branches. In Berlin, over 300 Saints crowded a hall whose capacity was 175. Among them were numerous Latter-day Saint American servicemen and women. The mission report reads: "In every instance the men and women in khaki were welcome and made to feel at home. They were met at the door with 'Ein Bruder?' When the answer was 'yes,' the doors opened wide. The word 'bruder' came to be sort of a password."

The rebuilding of a nation, a people, homes and families, and even one's life, now became the most dominant concern. Within months Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve was in Germany assessing the members' welfare needs, preparing the way for tons of clothing and food for needy Saints.

A year later the Dutch Saints sent a shipment of potatoes to the German Saints, and each member received 25 pounds. President David O. McKay called it "one of the greatest acts of true Christian conduct ever brought to my attention." Once more, the gospel's bonds knew no national barrier.

Soon Church conferences were underway: In Stuttgart over 800 persons attended the West German priesthood conference in 1946, and the East German Mission conference saw an attendance of 11,981 persons at Leipzig—the greatest attendance ever recorded for meetings of the Saints in Europe.

By 1947 a few American missionaries began once more to go into Germany. But their field of harvest was soon to be reduced. Russia, one of the Allied powers, disclosed the evil machinations of her rulers as she imposed the Berlin blockade. Another story of the denial of freedoms was about to be written, and within a short time, Germany became divided into the two Germanys of today—West Germany and East Germany. Only in West Germany are missionaries preaching the restored gospel today.

The past 18 years in the German-speaking missions are essentially a partial review of the administration of President David O. McKay, which has been, in short, amazing—characterized by five stakes (Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Swiss, and Servicemen's Stake-Europe for thousands of Latter-day Saints in U.S. military service); six missions; a temple at Bern, Switzerland; European continental Church headquarters in Frankfurt for legal affairs, real estate, building department, genealogical offices, printing, translation, and distribution; and favorable public, governmental,

and press relations. President McKay set the spirit for this remarkable accomplishment with his 1952 tour of Switzerland and Germany. Many tears were shed as "*Wir Danken Dir Herr fuer Propheten*" was sung in hallowed and reverent tones.

Three years later the Tabernacle Choir toured Germany and Switzerland and sang at the dedication of the Swiss Temple, spreading immense goodwill and stirring people of both nations with the goodness of the Mormon people.

At the opening temple session, Elder Benson declared: "This is the greatest event for our Church that has occurred in Europe since the gospel was brought to these lands 118 years ago. There is *no* greater faith in the Church anywhere than has been demonstrated by the Saints in Europe."

Today, some 30,000 German-speaking Saints enjoy the modern freedoms, comforts, and advances of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. As elsewhere, the Church enjoys increasingly good publicity and respect. Many Europeans listen to the Armed Forces radio network and hear the Tabernacle Choir's weekly broadcasts.

The Church there is symbolized by young missionaries going two-by-two throughout cities and villages. But today new symbols are breaking into public consciousness—beautiful chapels, stake centers, and many prominent Latter-day Saints. A roster of the members of the Church reveals successful businessmen, talented craftsmen, newspaper editors and reporters, doctors, dentists, teachers, university professors, architects, and persons well-known in the arts.

Modern communications systems bind these Saints into a strong link with Church headquarters, and sessions of general conference are relayed by direct wire to their chapels. In addition, German-speaking members receive inspiring and wholesome messages in *Der Stern*, which is celebrating this year its one hundredth anniversary. As part of the new 17-language Unified Magazine, it is correlated and directed by leaders of the Church.

A Germanic youth conference, held biennially, is as popular and famous in its own right as MIA June Conference is in America. It is on these youth, many of them young converts, that much expectation is being centered. Numerous leaders of the Church who have visited the Germanic lands have described the young members as being "some of the finest youth in the Church," "as talented and brilliant as are found anywhere," "remarkably spiritual and leadership-oriented."

Obviously, the next chapter in the story of the Church in the German-speaking countries may just be beginning. ○