



International Journal of Mormon Studies

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MORMON STUDIES

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Bombs: The Experience of the German
Saints and World War II

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Volume 5 2012 [06-28]

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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International Journal of Mormon Studies (Print) ISSN 1757-5532

International Journal of Mormon Studies (Online) ISSN 1757-5540

Published in the United Kingdom

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<http://www.ijmsonline.org>

PATRIOTISM AND RESISTANCE, BROTHERHOOD AND BOMBS: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GERMAN SAINTS AND WORLD WAR II

Steve Carter

The rise of Hitler and the Second World War had an enormous effect throughout Europe, particularly Germany. In the Third Reich, there was a great loss of life—both soldiers and civilians—destruction of property as cities were bombed and a disruption of people’s way of life. As with other Germans, Mormons suffered greatly. Many German Latter-day Saints served patriotically in the military—a number of whom lost their lives. LDS congregations were decimated due to the destruction of buildings where they worshiped and the scattering and deaths of civilian members. As members of an American-based denomination, cut off from Church headquarters in the United States, German Mormons had to avoid running afoul of the Nazis while at the same time maintaining cohesion, integrity and order within the Church institution itself.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN GERMANY UP TO WORLD WAR II

In the mid-nineteenth century Mormonism was introduced to Germany and although the denomination remained quite small, missionary efforts prior to, and following World War I, won many new converts to the religion. By the end of the 1920s, LDS membership in Germany had reached 13,000 and represented the largest pocket of Latter-day Saints outside the USA.

When the National Socialists came to power in 1933, the Mormons were able to avoid persecution. The Latter-day Saints adhered to their “accommodation” policy, adopted in 1890, in which they would abide by the national laws, avoid confrontation with secular authorities, remain apolitical, and be loyal citizens¹ as outlined by the LDS

¹ Douglas F. Tobler and Alan F. Keele, “The Saints and the Reich: German Mormons under Hitler,” unpublished essay, copy in author’s possession, 2, 6-9; Douglas F. Tobler, “The Narrow Line: The Experience of the American Mormon Missionaries in Hitler’s Germany, 1933-1939,” unpublished essay,

Twelfth Article of Faith.² What harassment Mormons endured was carried out by local Nazis and varied by location. There was no national policy against the Mormons, nor did the national Nazi party target them.³

Throughout the 1930s, Mormons strove for “acceptance” in Germany. The Nazis tolerated the Latter-day Saints believing that they could do some good for the Reich like the Baptists and Methodists. LDS missionaries continued to proselyte and even helped stage the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. After the Olympics, however, the Nazis began to grow suspicious of the Mormons. Nevertheless, they scaled back on religious harassment in general during the final years of the 1930s because of their preparation for World War II. As the international situation worsened, the Mormon Church evacuated its American missionary force from Germany twice: once temporarily during the Sudeten crisis of 1938 and permanently in late August 1939 just days before the outbreak of war.⁴

THE NEW LDS LEADERSHIP IN THE REICH

The evacuation of American missionaries in August 1939 necessitated entrusting Church leadership to native Germans. Since World War I, American mission leaders had been turning more leadership responsibility over to native Germans, and while many larger branches and some districts were led by locals, as late as 1938, a number of congregations still relied on the American missionaries.⁵ The

photocopy in authors' possession. See also, Steven E. Carter, “The Mormons and the Third Reich, 1933-1946” (Ph.D. diss., University of Arkansas, 2003), 22, 57-61.

² *Pearl of Great Price*, Articles of Faith 1:12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honouring, and sustaining the law.

³ Carter, “Mormons and the Third Reich,” 71-76; Tobler and Keele, “The Saints and the Reich,” 13.

⁴ For a thorough review of this period, see Carter, “Mormons and the Third Reich,” chapter 3 and especially chapter 4.

⁵ “East German Mission Manuscript History, 1938-1959,” manuscript on file in Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, entry for 31 December 1939; Gilbert W. Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

1938 evacuation had reinforced in the minds of Church leaders the urgency of preparing Germans for leadership positions.⁶ In both German missions,⁷ LDS leaders identified the most devout and capable individuals to assume leadership duties in the event of war.⁸

During the 1939 evacuation, branch, district and even mission presidencies were turned over to the locals. In the West German mission, Friedrich Biehl was chosen as “acting mission president” while Herbert Klopfer was appointed to preside over the East German mission.⁹

Most of the newly appointed leaders took their positions seriously. Commenting on the leadership change in a conference address in 1940, European mission president, Thomas E. McKay, reassured the Church that the German Mormons were in capable hands.¹⁰ Although the new German church leaders were devoted to their duties, many lacked experience in ecclesiastical administrative matters.¹¹ Even

in Germany (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1970), 106. In the East German mission alone, 23 of the 65 branches had been under the leadership of American missionaries.

⁶ Notes from Conversation with Douglas F. Tobler, 30 April 1998, Provo, Utah; Tobler, “The Narrow Line”, 17–18. Apostles James Talmage and John Widtsoe both supported the proposal, while Richard Lyman, president of the European mission during the late 1930s, opposed it. See also “Chronik der Gemeinde Bielefeld, 1896–1996,” 1 Auflage 1–150, Archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 44–45, 48.

⁷ In Germany there were two missions: The West German Mission headquartered in Frankfurt am Main and the East German Mission headquartered in Berlin.

⁸ Ralph Mark Lindsey, Oral History, interviewed by Matthew Heiss, 1990, typescript, The James Moyle Oral History Program, 19–20. See also Walter H. Speidel, Oral History, interviewed by Steve Carter, 1 May 1998, tape recording/typescript, 5–6. The American District President in Stuttgart designated his German Counsellor to succeed him if and when the American missionaries were withdrawn again.

⁹ “East German MSS History,” entry for 31 December 1939. “Quite a number of those people who are now in charge of the work have been born in the Church; they understand the Gospel and are well qualified to carry on....”

¹⁰ *Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Ut.: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), 5 April 1940, 49.

¹¹ Tobler and Keele, “The Saints and the Reich,” 22.

McKay, who had publicly praised them, had his reservations. Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, while still in Europe, McKay sent a circular letter to the German branches encouraging the leaders and individuals to follow the prescribed program of the Church.¹² After contact with the mother Church in the United States was lost completely in 1941, these leaders were left alone to guide the denomination through the Second World War.

“NORMALCY”

The first priority of these new LDS officials was to ensure the continued function of the Church. From 1939 until 1941, worship meetings and conferences were held on a regular basis; and as with most other denominations,¹³ Mormon branches reported increased attendance.¹⁴ The LDS community also observed special religious commemorations such as the 110th anniversary of the founding of the Mormon faith.¹⁵ By utilizing a handful of “local missionaries,”¹⁶ Ger-

¹² “West German Mission Manuscript History, 1938-1968,” manuscript on file in Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, entry for 25 September 1939; “Chronik der Gemeinde Karlsruhe,” comp. Karl Lutz (Karlsruhe, Germany: Gemeinde Karlsruhe, Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage, 1997), Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 103.

¹³ Ernst C. Helmreich, *The German Churches Under Hitler: Background, Struggle, and Epilogue* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 347. Helmreich refers to a Gestapo report from 12 November 1939 in which the agent monitoring the Catholics noted that church attendance was better with many soldiers present.

¹⁴ Letter from Ema Klopfer, wife of President Herbert Klopfer, to Heber J. Grant and Counselors, 16 April 1940, in “East German MSS History,” entry for 16 April 1940. “Our districts and branches are in good condition; meetings are being held regularly and are, as a rule, well attended.... Spring conferences are being held in all districts of the mission. Those already conducted...have without exception shown a wonderful spirit, perfect preparation and comparatively large attendances. A good number of friends have been visiting us for these conferences too.” See also “West German MSS History,” entry for 31 December 1939.

¹⁵ Letter from Ema Klopfer to Heber J. Grant and Counsellors, 16 April 1940, “East German MSS History,” entry for 16 April 1940.

man Mormons carried out successful proselyting activities during the war as well.¹⁷ For example, during the first eight months of 1940, fifty-five individuals converted to Mormonism in the East German mission.¹⁸ Throughout the war, there were on average sixty conversions per year in that mission alone.¹⁹ Encouraged by their successes, ecclesiastical leaders in Germany sent enthusiastic reports to Salt Lake City—reports that pleased and reassured the Mormon hierarchy.²⁰

However, German Mormons soon faced the realities of the war. When hostilities broke out, many Latter-day Saints were called to arms. By the spring of 1940, over six hundred Mormons were in uniform; seven had already died for the fatherland.²¹ These numbers continued to climb throughout the war, and the results were immediately obvious. Friedrich Biehl presided over the West German mission until early 1940 when he was drafted. Christian Heck succeeded Biehl until he too left to serve in the *Wehrmacht*. Both Biehl and Heck eventually lost their

¹⁶ “East German MSS History,” entry for 31 December 1939. In late 1939, the East German mission reported twelve natives still engaged in missionary work and the administration of the mission office in Berlin.

¹⁷ Since 1933, both missions had used part-time “local missionaries” to supplement the full-time missionaries in their work. After the departure of the Americans, local missionaries shouldered much of the proselyting activities. See “German–Austrian Quarterly Reports, 1930–1937,” manuscript on file in Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, September 1933, circular letter #7. See also Walter H. Speidel, Oral History, interviewed by Steve Carter, 30 April 1998, 8.

¹⁸ Letter from Johanna Berger to Thomas E. McKay, 9 September 1940, “East German MSS History,” entry for 9 September 1940.

¹⁹ “Report Tells of Saints in Europe,” *Church News*, 24 November 1945, 5.

²⁰ Letter from Thomas E. McKay to the East German Mission, c/o Johanna Berger, 10 April 1941, “East German MSS History,” entry for 10 April 1941. “We congratulate you upon your splendid report of conditions in the East German Mission.... [The First Presidency and other General Authorities] were all very much interested in the progress being made and wish me to congratulate you on the splendid manner in which you are looking after the East German Mission.... They are especially pleased to know that all the meetings are being held as usual, especially your fall and spring conferences.”

²¹ *Conference Report*, Thomas E. McKay, 5 April 1940, 50.

lives on the Eastern Front.²² From 1942 on, pro-Nazi Anton Huck led the West German mission. Conditions were similar in the East German mission. Herbert Klopfer entered military service soon after the outbreak of hostilities. During the first couple of years of the war, Klopfer's military assignment kept him close to Berlin where he conducted mission affairs both through his wife and through his counsellors, Richard Ranglack and Paul Langheinrich, via correspondence and telephone.²³ However, in 1943, Klopfer was transferred away from Berlin and eventually died on the Eastern front in the closing weeks of the war.²⁴ The loss of leadership at all levels severely disrupted the Mormon community, and resulted in the elevation of individuals with relatively little experience in Mormon administration to positions of great responsibility.

ATTITUDES OF AMERICAN AND GERMAN MORMONS

In the 1930s, Church authorities in Utah were isolationists, advocated strict American neutrality in international affairs and condemned warfare in general.²⁵ Moreover, fearing atheistic Communism²⁶

²² Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 105. Friedrich Biehl was killed in battle on the Russian Front on 3 March 1943. Christian Heck, wounded by the Russians, died on 19 April 1945.

²³ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 107-110.

²⁵ Robert Jeffrey Stott, "Mormonism and War: An Interpretive Analysis of Selected Mormon Thought Regarding Seven American Wars" (M. A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974), 81-82. See also *Conference Report*, J. Reuben Clark, 4 April 1937, 23-25; *Conference Report*, Heber J. Grant, "Message of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 6 October 1939, 8-9; *Conference Report*, Reed Smoot, 7 October 1939, 45-47; Joseph F. Merrill, "Address to the Salt Lake City Rotary," 18 May 1937, Joseph F. Merrill papers, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

²⁶ *Messages of the First Presidency*, comp. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1975), VI: 16-18; *Conference Report*, David O. McKay, 8 October 1939, 104. Most of the general authorities viewed atheistic Communism as a greater threat to building the "Kingdom of God" on earth than Nazism. Although David McKay kept in close contact with his brother, Thomas, who was still in Europe, and was well informed on the perils of Nazism, even after war broke out, he still reiterates his concerns over Communism.

and worried about endangering their fellow Mormons in Germany,²⁷ they said little about Nazism. After the German invasion of Poland, however, American Mormons became more vocal in their opposition to Hitler. In the early 1940s, Church-owned *Deseret News* published two articles—"If Christ came to Germany," by Arthur Gaeth, and "The Christian Aspects of Totalitarianism," by Nephi Morris²⁸—both were highly critical of the Nazi regime and argued that Nazism was the antithesis of the teachings of Christ. The publication of these twin articles in the LDS-owned newspaper indicated tacit Church endorsement.²⁹

After the United States entered the war in 1941, however, the views of American Mormons changed. Confronted with the problem of Latter-day Saints opposing each other on the battlefield and not wanting to take sides, general authorities approached war in terms of "patriotic duty" as prescribed in the Twelfth Article of Faith. There was also an underlying religious view that the war was caused because the belligerent nations had rejected God's laws.³⁰

German Mormons had already accepted the "patriotic duty" of military service two years before their American coreligionists. Although most German Mormons were apolitical, they served in the *Wehrmacht* because they believed it was their religious duty to defend their homeland.³¹ They also believed that it was their responsibility to support their

²⁷ Conversation with Tobler. According to Tobler, some general authorities viewed the Church in Germany as the model for Mormonism abroad and did not want to endanger their brethren.

²⁸ Arthur Gaeth, "If Christ Came to Germany," *Deseret News*, 25 January 1940, Church Section 1, 6, 8; Nephi L. Morris, "Christian Aspects of Totalitarianism," *Deseret News*, 17 May 1941, Church Section 3. Gaeth had been a missionary in Germany as well as the first President of the Czechoslovakia Mission. He had also read *Mein Kampf* and *The Myth of the 20th Century*. See also Tobler and Keele, "The Saints and the Reich," 31-31-A.

²⁹ Tobler and Keele, "The Saints and the Reich," 31-31-A.

³⁰ Stott, 84.

³¹ Klaus Hansen, "Growing Up in Hitler's Germany," *Queen's Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 81; Notes from phone conversation with Walter Kindt, 6 February 1999. See also Alfred P. Schultz Journal, in "East German MSS History," entry for 31 December 1939, (original journal on microfilm in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Historian's Office). Schultz wrote, "[m]any things have happened in politics in that year. Hitler had made several proposals to Poland which naturally had not been accepted. On the contrary,

government as enjoined by the Twelfth Article of Faith. Like most Germans, the LDS community was not enthusiastic about the conflict. Nevertheless, as Douglas Tobler and Alan Keele state, German Mormons “in their continued naiveté and accommodating mind-set” supported “a patriotic effort.”³² Mormons, such as Erna and Herbert Klopfer and Johanna Berger of the East German mission office, expressed their patriotism in letters to Church headquarters in Salt Lake City in which they related how LDS men were loyally and religiously serving the country and their belief that God was on their side.³³

There were some, however, who went beyond national loyalty and became actively involved in Nazi politics. In the West German mission, numerous individuals in leadership positions, including members of the mission presidency, expressed sympathy for National Socialism or became Party members.³⁴ As one Mormon wrote after the war,

some of the presiding brethren...were 100 per cent Nazis and tried to preach national socialism instead of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.... The Saints were asked to pray for the “Fuehrer” [sic] in their meetings and in their homes and regard

Poland made a military treaty with England and France, and drove Germans out of the country. Refugees reported of horrible persecutions so that the Fuhrer had to declare war to Poland.”

³² Tobler and Keele, “The Saints and the Reich,” 22.

³³ In one letter, Erna Klopfer writes: “[h]undreds of LDS men are serving their country as loyal citizens true to the teachings of their religion. The Lord is with them.... All is well in the East German Mission. Everyone is doing his duty. God bless our leaders of this country and His Church.” See Letter from Erna Klopfer to Heber J. Grant and Counsellors, 16 April 1940, “East German MSS History,” entry for 16 April 1940. Johanna Berger wrote to Thomas E. McKay: “the prayers at the time of services are also for those who stand far away protecting the nation and fighting for the rights of our country.” See Letter from Johanna Berger to Thomas E. McKay, 9 September 1940, “East German MSS History,” entry for 9 September 1940. Herbert Klopfer wrote to Alfred C. Reese, former East German mission president: “[t]hanks to the bravery of the German army our land has been spared the ravages of war.... As long as this struggle of our nation at this time is for the protection of the German homeland and the German people, we believe that God will help us. This gives us peace at this difficult time.” Letter from Herbert Klopfer to Alfred C. Rees, 15 August 1941, in “East German MSS History,” entry for 15 August 1941

³⁴ Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 101.

him as a divinely called man, who had to prepare the world for the United Order. A lot of foolish things must have been said by these brethren and the people did not always know where the Church stood in this matter. Many were under the impression that we as a Church were in favour of Nazism. Attempts were made to harmonize Hitlerism with Church doctrines, even to prove that the Nazi party was organized after the pattern of our Church.³⁵

Although most Mormons professed national loyalty and support for Hitler's war, a small group had second thoughts and believed that the war was futile.³⁶ Alfred Schultz wrote in his journal:

[I]n June we were told that we were in war with Russia. This made me very sad, causing a certain foreboding and anguish which cannot be described. Although our troops advance speedily, I cannot be very enthused about the victories.... The Destroying Angels had been sent out and none can hold back. We are longing for peace and are praying that it will come soon, for the war has lasted too long already and the people are getting tired of it. Many casualties on both sides.³⁷

Klaus J. Hansen recalls his father's attitude about the war:

[i]t came as a profound shock when my father, home on furlough from the military (...in 1944), gathered us together, closed the door, and launched into a frank discussion on the fate of Germany.

The war was lost, he said, or in any case had better be, for it was an unjust war, and had been so from the beginning.³⁸

Others understood the evil nature of Nazism and the negative consequences a German victory would have on religion in general and

³⁵ "Report Tells of Saints in Europe," 5. See also Sharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 101.

³⁶ Tobler and Keele, "The Saints and the Reich," 7; Alan F. Keele and Douglas Tobler, "The Führer's New Clothes," *Sunstone* 5 (November/December 1980): 28.

³⁷ "East German MSS History," entry for Wednesday, 31 December 1941.

³⁸ Hansen, "Growing up in Hitler's Germany," 81.

Mormonism in particular. As Tobler and Keele write, “[Mormons]...began to see through the pervasive Nazi propaganda. Rosa Böhringer, Johannes Kindt, Walter Krause and President Willy Deters of Bremen were among the Saints who either overtly opposed the regime or else dragged their feet while praying for German defeat in the war and the regime’s early demise.”³⁹ Some Latter-day Saints became outspoken in their criticism of the regime.

THE HELMUTH HÜBENER GROUP

One of the most significant events experienced by the Latter-day Saints in the Third Reich was both tragic and controversial. This was the case of the Helmuth Hübener group.⁴⁰

In 1941, Helmuth Hübener, an intelligent sixteen-year-old from the Hamburg-St. Georg branch, began listening to BBC broadcasts on shortwave radio.⁴¹ Convinced that the British propaganda was

³⁹ Keele and Tobler, “The Führer’s New Clothes,” 28.

⁴⁰ Helmuth Hübener has been recognized as a figure in the resistance movement. For example, see, Annadore Leber, Willy Brandt and Karl Dietrich Brachter, eds., *Revolt of Conscience*, trans. (Berlin: Mosaik Verlag, 1954). In recent years, more attention has been paid to the Helmuth Hübener group. See, for example, Joseph M. Dixon, “Mormons in the Third Reich, 1933–1945,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* v. 7 (Spring 1972): 75; Rudi Wobbe and Jerry Borrowman, *Before the Blood Tribunal* (Salt Lake City, UT: Covenant Communications, Inc, 1992); Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, ed. and trans. by Blair R. Holmes and Alan F. Keele (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Robin K. Berson, *Young Heroes of World History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 135–143; Keele and Tobler, “The Führer’s New Clothes”; *Truth and Conviction*, Documentary DVD (Provo, UT: Covenant Communications, 2002). For a German perspective, see, Ulrich Sander, *Jugendwiderstand im Krieg: Die Helmuth-Hübener-Gruppe, 1941–1942* (Bonn: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag Nachfolger GmbH, 2002).

⁴¹ Those who knew Helmuth Hübener described him as exceptionally intelligent. He possessed an exquisite understanding of political issues and was well versed in Mormon theology and scriptures, often explaining complex ideas to friends and debating LDS dogma with branch members and missionaries. Some thought he was somewhat arrogant. See Wobbe and Borrowman, 14–15, 18; statements by Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, Douglas Tobler, Alan Keele and Otto

accurate,⁴² Hübener and two friends from his branch, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe and Rudi Wobbe organized a resistance group.⁴³ All three teens had been turned off by Nazi anti-Semitism and brutality.⁴⁴ Moreover, they were concerned about the growing influence of the National Socialists in their own branch as the branch president, Arthur Zander, and his first counsellor were both members of the Nazi Party.⁴⁵ Helmuth, using a branch typewriter and mimeograph machine,⁴⁶ com-

Berndt Jr. in *Truth and Conviction*, Tract 2; Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, 29. See also Marie Sommerfeld, Oral History, interviewed by Douglas Tobler, transcript, Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 18.

⁴² Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, 29-30. According to Schnibbe, Helmuth believed German victory was impossible. "Just think about it,' he said. 'England, France—it is strategically impossible! It just can't be. Germany is cut off, has no raw materials, everything will collapse.' He put two and two together and figured out what many had not. 'Listen, an army needs so much gasoline every day, and this and that. It goes okay for a while, but then comes to a halt when nothing more is available.'" Commenting on Hitler's invasion of Russia, "Helmuth also said to us, 'It cannot succeed!' He had thought about it a lot and was firmly convinced of it. Thus it came about that he invited me to visit him...." See also Statements by Tobler, Keele, Schnibbe and Philip M. Taylor in *Truth and Conviction*, Tract 5.

⁴³ Schnibbe was 17 years old and Wobbe was 15 years old at the time.

⁴⁴ All three had been horrified by *Kristallnacht* in 1938 and the notorious anti-Semitic film *Jud' Suess*. Nazi brutality struck close to home when Heinrich Worbs, a member of their branch, was arrested and sent to a concentration camp for speaking out against the regime and when Solomon Schwarz, a Jewish friend who had converted to Mormonism was forced to wear the yellow star and live in a ghetto. See Tobler and Schnibbe statement in *Truth and Conviction*, Tract 3; Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, 21-23, 45-46. Wobbe and Borrowman, 18-19, 25-26.

⁴⁵ Branch president Arthur Zander and first counsellor Freidrich Jakobi were both active Nazis and promoted National Socialist ideology at church. They wore their uniforms to meetings and forbid Jews (in particular Solomon Schwarz) from attending services. Zander frequently locked the doors of the chapel compelling members to listen to Hitler's speeches on a radio. For the youth, this raised theological questions about what to do in the event of a conflict between God and Caesar. Keele and Tobler, "The Führer's New Clothes," 21-22; Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 102-103; Wobbe and Borrowman, 31-32.

⁴⁶ Since Hübener possessed typing and shorthand skills, he was called to serve as an assistant branch clerk in the Hamburg-St. Georg branch. Because of his

posed a series of leaflets which he and his comrades disseminated around Hamburg.

Hübener and his friends eluded the Gestapo for several months. However, when he tried to expand his resistance activities, Helmuth was denounced by a co-worker and was arrested on 5 February 1942. Soon thereafter, Schnibbe and Wobbe were apprehended as well. Immediately, Zander excommunicated Hübener from the Church for being a traitor who had violated Mormon doctrine enshrined in the Twelfth Article of Faith. Mission records indicate that Hübener was expelled for "listening and spreading news of foreign broadcasts."⁴⁷ Zander also claimed that Hübener had jeopardized the Hamburg Mormon community. Therefore, the Nazi branch president resorted to excommunication to demonstrate his loyalty to the Party as well as to distance himself, his congregation and the whole LDS community from Hübener's actions. After the war, Hübener's membership was formally reinstated by the First Presidency of the Church.⁴⁸

In August 1942, the Hübener group went on trial before the infamous *Volksgerichtshof* (People's Court) in Berlin. The court sentenced Wobbe to ten years and Schnibbe to five years in prison.⁴⁹ The

position, Helmuth had access to the branch typewriter and mimeograph machine which he utilized for his pamphlets.

⁴⁷ "West German MSS History," entry for 31 December 1941.

⁴⁸ In 1946, Otto Berndt and Max Zimmer, acting mission president of the Swiss mission discovered Hübener's membership record and wrote on it: "Excommunication was done by mistake." In 1948, the First Presidency formally reinstated Hübener's membership, overturning the spurious excommunication. Otto Berndt, district president in Hamburg, refused to countersign the excommunication, so Zander went above Berndt's head and had Anton Huck, acting mission president of the West German Mission approve it. Berndt's opposition to Hübener's excommunication did, however, prevent Schnibbe and Wobbe from being cut off from the Church as well. "West German MSS History," entry for 31 December 1941. In particular, see Berndt Statement under the same entry.

⁴⁹ See records of the *Volksgerichtshof*, "In Namen des Deutschen Volk in der Strafsache gegen...Helmuth Günther Hübener,...Rudolf Gustav Wobbe,...Karl Heinz Schnibbe,...Gerhard Heinrich Jacob Jonni Düwer," photocopy on file in Helmuth Hübener papers, special collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. For an English translation, see Document 52, "Verdict of the People's Court," in Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, 220.

judges were not as lenient with Hübener. They sentenced him to death for listening to enemy broadcasts.⁵⁰ On 27 October 1942, Helmuth Hübener was beheaded at the Plötzensee prison in Berlin.

The Gestapo, suspicious of Church complicity and adult involvement in the Hübener affair, launched a thorough investigation of the LDS community in Hamburg as well as mission headquarters in Frankfurt. The secret police interrogated several prominent Hamburg Mormons including district president Otto Berndt but concluded that Hübener had acted on his own.⁵¹ Had the authorities discovered anything incriminating that linked Berndt to the Hübener group, it no doubt would have led to full-scale persecution of Mormons in Hamburg, and perhaps throughout Germany.⁵²

Nazi policy at the time of Hübener's arrest was to defer religious persecution until after the war. Prosecutors during Hübener's trial made little mention of the trio's religious affiliation,⁵³ except to state that the accused were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁵⁴ The lack of attention paid to Hübener's religion did not go unnoticed by officers of the Hitler Youth who suggested that the People's Court look into possible connections between the Church and Hübener's crimes.⁵⁵ Obviously, inspectors could have investigated further, but instead seemed content to let the issue rest for the time being.

⁵⁰ Decree Extraordinary Radio Measures, 1 September 1939 in Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, 154-146.

⁵¹ Berndt Statement in "West German MSS History," entry for 31 December 1941.

⁵² Keele and Tobler, "The Führer's New Clothes," 24.

⁵³ Klaus J. Hansen, "Foreward: History and Memory," in Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, xiii.

⁵⁴ See records of the Volksgerichtshof, "In Namen des Deutschen Volk in der Strafsache gegen Hübener, Wobbe, Schnibbe, Düwer," Their Mormon religion is only mentioned as part of their backgrounds.

⁵⁵ "It is regrettable that in the judgment of the People's Court against Hübener the question remained open, whether and to what extent the religious sect to which Hübener belonged is to be ascribed as the intellectual originator of Hübener's crimes." Document 58, Letter from National Socialist German Worker's Party, Hitler Youth/Youth Leadership of the Reich, Office of the Hitler Youth Jurisdiction to Chancellery of the Führer of the NSDAP, Central Office for Clemency Cases, RE: Clemency Case Helmuth Hübener, Hamburg, 15 September 1942, in Schnibbe, *When Truth was Treason*, 238.

A more significant indicator of the regime's policy on religion and its connection with the Hübener case occurred during the Gestapo interrogation of Otto Berndt. When finally released, Berndt was warned that after the war and the elimination of the Jews, the Mormons were to be done away with.⁵⁶ Similar threats were made to other religious leaders at the time including Bishop Galen of Münster.⁵⁷ Officials were willing to ignore the question of religion until after the war.

The Hübener case presented a conundrum for the Mormon Church and its accommodation policy with secular governments.⁵⁸ Many German Mormons at the time of his arrest believed that Hübener was a "heretic" because "he had violated the Twelfth Article of Faith."⁵⁹ To conclude otherwise would have raised troubling questions regarding the accommodation policy and trying to co-exist and maintain amicable relations with the Nazi regime as emphasized by American leaders before the war. Did the German Mormons compromise? Had other Latter-day Saints emulated Hübener and defied the regime, would they have jeopardized the whole LDS community? Otto Berndt confided to Schnibbe later that had he known what Hübener was doing, he would have joined the group.⁶⁰ However, Berndt understood the dilemma German Mormons faced. When a 1969 article praising Hübener ap-

⁵⁶ Berndt Statement in "West German MSS History," entry for 31 December 1941.

⁵⁷ Helmreich, 350.

⁵⁸ The Church ignored the Hübener case and shunned the surviving members of the group, Schnibbe and Wobbe, for nearly fifty years and in 1976, cancelled a play about Hübener produced at Brigham Young University. The Hübener case simply ran counter to the Mormon accommodation policy with secular governments. See Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, Oral History, interviewed by Steve Carter, 2 May 1998, Holladay, Utah, tape recording/typescript, 11 and David C. Nelson, "The Hübener Syndrome: How Mormons Remember Church History in Nazi Germany," Unpublished paper presented at the Mormon Historical Association Conference, May 2000, Copenhagen, Denmark, 11. In recent years, however, the attitude toward Hübener has changed. In 1992, BYU again staged the play, *Hübener*, without interference. *Hübener* has also been performed in the greater Salt Lake City area. Finally, the Hübener Group was recognized at the 2003 Freedom Awards Gala at Brigham Young University. See also, Leigh Dethman, "America's Freedom Festival: Nazi Resister lives in S. L. and love Liberty" *Deseret Morning News*, 3 July 2003.

⁵⁹ Keele and Tobler, "The Führer's New Clothes," 26.

⁶⁰ Schnibbe, Oral History, 3.

peared in *The Improvement Era*, (one of the rare times Mormon literature even mentioned Hübener),⁶¹ Berndt, responded in a scathing editorial letter:

That which Brother Huebener [sic]... did... was very commendable, but it was not inspired by the Church. As I recall, the Church, represented by the missionaries and the mission presidents, which are the voices of the First Presidency, has taught us to be subject to the laws of the land. If you try to make a hero out of Helmuth Huebener, how do you classify those who did follow the laws of the land? Are they cowards?⁶²

WAR CONDITIONS AND MORMONISM AFTER 1941

The years 1942 to 1945 brought unimaginable hardships to Germans as civilians were killed and cities destroyed by Allied bombing while more and more men were sent to the fronts. This period, in particular, was the most challenging faced by Mormons during the entire Third Reich.

Soon after the outbreak of hostilities, Allied air forces began bombing German cities, bringing the war to the civilian population. By 1945, over 600,000 civilians had been killed, millions left homeless, Mormons included. Most LDS congregations lost members in air raids. Paul Müller of Karlsruhe died in an air raid shelter in 1940, while Heinrich and Maria Dröscher and Margaretha Meier of Bielefeld perished during a bombing.⁶³ After the intense bombing of Hamburg in 1943, the St. Georg branch reported twenty-eight congregational members had died and 90 per cent of the branch had lost their homes.⁶⁴ The story was repeated across Germany.⁶⁵ By 1945, 85 per cent of

⁶¹ Jay M. Todd, "The Church Among the German Speaking People," *Improvement Era* (March 1969): 7-8.

⁶² Otto Berndt, Letter to the Editor, *Improvement Era* (May 1969): 100-101.

⁶³ See "Chronik der Gemeinde Bielefeld," 51; "Chronik der Gemeinde Karlsruhe," 103.

⁶⁴ "West German MSS History," entry for 3 August 1943.

⁶⁵ For example, the Königsberg branch reported thirty-five families had been bombed-out after an attack. See "East German MSS History," entry for 31 December 1943.

Mormons were homeless⁶⁶ forcing many to find alternative quarters or leave the cities altogether, dispersing the LDS community throughout the Reich.⁶⁷ The bombings also destroyed many Mormon meeting halls,⁶⁸ as well as the East German mission office.⁶⁹

It was not uncommon for air raids to disrupt worship services. In 1941, for example, the Bremen district was unable to hold conference because air attacks were “constantly keeping the population of the city of Bremen in tension.”⁷⁰ This was not the last time Bremen was unable to hold conferences due to the bombings.⁷¹ Many branches experienced similar disruptions. In 1942, air raids interrupted Sunday services in the Wilhelmshaven branch twice in one day.⁷² In most branches, “[i]t became customary during every meeting for a member of each branch presidency to listen to the radio for information on coming air raids.”⁷³

A critical issue faced by most churches in the Reich was the conscription of clergymen into the armed forces.⁷⁴ As noted, many LDS

⁶⁶ Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 117.

⁶⁷ “East German MSS History,” entry for 31 December 1944. See also Hansen, “Growing Up in Hitler’s Germany.”

⁶⁸ Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 105, 114. In Hamburg, for example, by 1944, three of the four branch meeting halls had been destroyed and the fourth was badly damaged. In April 1945, it too was finally destroyed.

⁶⁹ “East German MSS History,” entry for Monday, 22 November 1943. According to Erna Klopfer, “Mission office was temporarily moved into the home of the second counsellor, [Paul] Langheinrich.... After a few days, both of us went into the ruins of the destroyed mission office to see whether or not we could find anything there. Everything was burned. At last, we discovered the safe. It had to be removed from its position. It was hard work, and in vain. The heat had penetrated through the metal, the papers were burned, and the coins were melted into one piece.” For the duration of the war, mission headquarters were located in the home of Paul Langheinrich of the mission presidency.

⁷⁰ “West German MSS History,” entry for 7 February 1941.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, entry for 31 May 1943.

⁷² *Ibid.*, entry for 29 November 1942.

⁷³ Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 104.

⁷⁴ Helmreich, 306–308, 352–354. By 1943, over 41 per cent of ordained and 78 per cent of non-ordained ministers in the Evangelical Church had been drafted. Such depletion of clergymen took its toll on that denomination. In contrast, most Catholic clergymen in accordance with the Concordat were immune to conscription.

leaders were called to arms which nearly paralyzed the Church. In December 1941, one district president complained that it was difficult to hold conferences because “there were only a few who could work, for many had been called into the military service.”⁷⁵ However, in 1943 the army High Command ceased inducting Protestant “officiating clergymen.” Such protections were extended to other denominations including the Mormons.⁷⁶

With the men being drafted, the mounting civilian deaths and the evacuation of women and children from the cities⁷⁷ attendance at Mormon worship services fell.⁷⁸ By 1944, most branches consisted of “children, young mothers, and older couples. Nearly all of the young and middle-aged men of the branch who had not been killed in the war remained in the German army or in POW camps.”⁷⁹ Due to the circumstances, some branches functioned on a limited basis or altered their meeting schedules. For example, the Bielefeld branch held only one meeting on Sundays at 4:00 pm to allow people to return to their homes before air raids began.⁸⁰ It was not uncommon for several congregations to combine either.⁸¹ After the bombing of Dresden in 1945 and the destruction of the Altstadt branch facilities, the displaced con-

⁷⁵ “East German MSS History,” entry for Wednesday, 31 December 1941.

⁷⁶ Helmreich, 354. According to the provision, however, a clergyman was subject to the draft if he held another job. Since the LDS Church relies on a lay ministry and most of those serving in ecclesiastical positions held other employment, the 1943 military exemption technically would not be extended to LDS officials. Though subject to the draft, no mission leaders in either mission were called up after 1943. Apparently, governing authorities, at least for the time being, were content to allow Mormons the same privileges.

⁷⁷ For example, see Hansen, “Growing up in Hitler’s Germany”,

⁷⁸ Branches such as Bielefeld, Wuppertal and Karlsruhe experienced a drastic decline in attendance at church meetings. See “Chronik der Gemeinde Bielefeld,” “Chronik der Gemeinde Karlsruhe” and “Entwicklung der Wuppertaler Gemeinde der Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage,” Microfilm, Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁷⁹ Garold and Norma Davis, “Behind the Wall: The Church in Eastern Germany,” *Ensign* (April 1991): 22.

⁸⁰ “Chronik der Gemeinde Bielefeld,” 49–50. The branch president also alternated the meetings: One week was Sunday School was held, the next a Sacrament meeting.

⁸¹ “West German MSS History,” entry for 3 August 1943.

gregation met with the Neustadt branch.⁸² A more common practice was for branch presidents to conduct meetings with the few members still remaining in individuals' homes.⁸³ In other areas, Mormon leaders simply dissolved congregations, some of which had been large such as Stettin, Breslau and Königsberg, because there was no one left in the branch.⁸⁴ One branch president summed up the situation in 1943:

The conditions in the branches are becoming increasingly more difficult. The lack of food is more and more noticeable. The constant air-raids make the people nervous and irritable. There are only the real faithful Saints coming to the meetings now. However, these are in sufficient numbers to carry on the work.⁸⁵

During the war, both Protestants and Catholics began efforts to aid their needy countrymen⁸⁶ and Mormons followed suit. In 1943, the Relief Society organized an assistance program (Hilfswerk) in which Latter-day Saints donated clothing, food and furniture for those in

⁸² Davis and Davis, "Behind the Wall," 22.

⁸³ Fred Gassner and Erich Bernhardt, Oral History, Interview by Justus Ernst, 8 June 1985, transcript, Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 28. See also "Chronik der Gemeinde Bielefeld," 49-50; "Chronik der Gemeinde Karlsruhe," "Entwicklung der Wuppertaler Gemeinde."

⁸⁴ Tobler and Keele, "The Saints and the Reich," 32. For example, the Stettin branch, before the war, boasted an average attendance at meetings of approximately one hundred persons. By 1942, this number had shrunk to around forty. In March 1945, the branch president, with only six members in attendance dissolved the branch completely. See also Douglas Tobler, "Before the Wall Fell: Mormons in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-89," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 25 no. 4 (1992): 14.

⁸⁵ "West German MSS History," entry for 1 January 1943.

⁸⁶ Helmrich 334, 446. Bishop Theophil Wurm assembled a group of leading Protestant churchmen who created an Evangelical church aid society to oversee relief efforts. The German Association of Catholic Charities (*Deutsche Caritasverband*), which had not been dissolved by the Nazis, coordinated Catholic relief during and after the war.

need and stored them in five warehouses throughout Germany.⁸⁷ Branches and districts also set up local relief programs.⁸⁸ Although most of these warehouses were bombed or captured by invading armies, they nevertheless provided for the needs of destitute Mormons during the war and served as the foundation for post-war relief measures.⁸⁹

Throughout the war, Mormons patriotically served in the *Wehrmacht*. Their experience in the military varied greatly. Herbert Klopfer, stationed outside of Berlin, held a clerical position in his military unit until 1943, which enabled him to conduct mission affairs out of his office. Although Klopfer enjoyed this privilege,⁹⁰ it was an isolated case and he was often monitored and questioned by the Gestapo about his religious beliefs and activities.⁹¹ Most Mormons in the *Wehrmacht* reported general ridicule endured by young religious people; others faced outright harassment.⁹² John Dahl was denied promotion after revealing that he had been a Mormon missionary because his commanders feared that with his ties to an American religion, he could be a spy.⁹³ It should also be noted that there were those who received

⁸⁷ The locations for the warehouses were Breslau, Spreewald, Berlin, Kreuz and one in the Erzgebirge. See Memorandum, RE: Statement by Paul Langheinrich to Justus Ernst, "East German MSS History," entry for 31 December 1942.

⁸⁸ Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 111.

⁸⁹ "Report Tells of Saints in Europe," 5.

⁹⁰ Erna Klopfer comments on her husband, Herbert Klopfer, "East German MSS History," entry for 19 March 1945. According to Erna Klopfer, her husband had won the respect of his commanding officers who allowed him this privilege.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Speidel, *Oral History*, 30 April 1998, 6.

⁹³ John A. Dahl, *Oral History*, interviewed by Steve Carter, 21 March 2000, Salt Lake City, Utah, tape recording/typescript, 23. "My commander for the detachment said... 'Hans, ... Why did you have to tell them you fulfilled a mission for the Mormon Church? You were the top on our list.' But the commander, they feared I was an agent, a spy. That's why I was never promoted." See also, *Saints at War: Experiences of Latter-day Saints in World War II*, ed. Robert C. Freeman and Dennis A. Wright, (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications Inc., 2001) 83. Dahl states, "But any expected promotion was not granted. I found out much later from one of the lieutenants of our regiment the reason why I was not promoted. Here are his words, as far as I remembered them: 'Why did you mention in your vita that you are a member

regular promotions and honours throughout the war.⁹⁴ This indicates that in the military unit officers rather than the *Wehrmacht* itself determined the degree of harassment.

On the home front, Mormons also faced harassment because of their ties to an “American” religion. Once, during an air raid, an LDS woman was accused by her neighbours of having allowed missionaries to spy before the war and who now were bombing them.⁹⁵ Such remarks, though, were made by those who themselves were under great stress. In other cases the harassment on the home front was real. One historian observes that “[a] few German saints were released from their Church assignments at this time because of the pressure applied by the Nazi party, which threatened to take their jobs from them if they continued to officiate in the Church.”⁹⁶ Alfred Schulz, for example, revealed that his son was unable to obtain a teaching position because of his Mormon membership, indicating the capricious nature of the local officials.⁹⁷

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

Throughout the war years, Mormon leaders had the daunting task of maintaining the integrity of their doctrines and practices. Some inexperienced Church officials, isolated from the United States, initiated unauthorized rituals and procedures in worship services, but these changes were not significant. On the other hand, they made few, if any,

of an American church? This made you suspect of being an agent for America.”

⁹⁴ “West German MSS History,” entry for 31 December 1941. Erich Leis and Friedrich Peters received the Iron Cross second class and Leis was promoted to “Unteroffizier (sergeant).”

⁹⁵ Speidel, Oral History, 30 April 1998, 12.

⁹⁶ Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 107; “East German MSS History,” entry for Thursday, 31 December 1942. Alfred Schultz reported that “[a] colleague, who knew the Mormons, made it very hard for me on my job, and had told the officials that I was preaching against the Party. I was asked to come to the Gestapo where I was questioned. I could produce evidence that this was not true. Nevertheless, I was told to resign from all offices held. I was also told to leave this religion alone. I discussed these matters with the District President, who said it would be the best to release me from all my offices which was done at the fall conference.”

⁹⁷ “East German MSS History,” entry for 31 December 1942.

doctrinal changes.⁹⁸ One should not assume that the Church remained completely insulated from the political atmosphere of the Reich. Some branches, such as Strasbourg, struggled to resist Nazi influence,⁹⁹ while others, like the St. Georg, were presided over by Party members who tried to preach National Socialist ideology to their congregations.

The war itself raised questions in the minds of German Mormons about the morality of combat. Although Mormon doctrine condemns warfare except in self-defence and as a last resort, Latter-day Saints are not pacifists.¹⁰⁰ There were individuals within the Latter-day Saint community, such as Erich Kramer, commandant of the General Pape Street jail, who saw no contradictions between theology and armed conflict.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, numerous Mormons struggled with a moral dilemma. Many Mormons served in Hitler's armies because they had been taught to support the "powers that be."¹⁰² Others realized that to object to military service would endanger the whole LDS community.¹⁰³ While serving under arms, many Mormons endeavoured to avoid immoral deeds. One LDS mother counselled her son to refuse any order that would require him to commit a "grievous sin" even at the cost of his life.¹⁰⁴ Apparently such concerns were common as many Latter-day Saint men sought assignments in which they would not have to take another's life. Klaus Hansen recalls that when

⁹⁸ Commenting on this, historian Joseph Dixon writes, "[s]ome local church authorities had instructed the members to rise whenever Church officers came into the service, a practice generally reserved to show respect for the president of the Church. In meetings, however, the members continued to testify to the divinity of the Mormon Church and did not repudiate the divine call of the General Authorities in the United States." Dixon, 74.

⁹⁹ "Report Tells of Saints in Europe," 5.

¹⁰⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 98:16, 33-37. Tobler and Keele, "The Saints and the Reich," 9.

¹⁰¹ Frederick Kempe, *Fatherland, A Personal Search for the New Germany*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999), 92-96, 175-191, 269-282. The name Kramer is an alias Kempe used to hide the identity of his relative at the request of his family.

¹⁰² Hansen, "Growing up in Hitler's Germany," 81.

¹⁰³ Conversation with Kindt.

¹⁰⁴ Speidel, Oral History, 1 May 1999, 8.

his father was drafted he requested to be assigned as a medic.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe of the Hübener group found a silver lining in his imprisonment in that he did not have to serve in a military capacity where he would have had to take another's life.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, other Latter-day Saints found themselves on the front line.

The issue of the Holocaust also raises moral questions. Mormons, along with their fellow countrymen, witnessed the persecution of Jews during the pre-war years. The extent to which German Mormons knew about the slaughter of the Jews after 1941 varied from case to case. Latter-day Saints who fought on the eastern front heard accounts of the atrocities early on.¹⁰⁷ One Mormon actually helped construct Auschwitz; he later suffered a mental breakdown.¹⁰⁸ Others serving in different theatres of war only heard of the Holocaust at the end of the conflict.¹⁰⁹ Some dismissed the rumours of the Holocaust as enemy lies.¹¹⁰ Then there were those under Nazi influence who believed that Hitler was rounding up the Jews to send them to Palestine, thus bringing about the "gathering of Israel" as predicted in the Bible and by Mormon leaders.¹¹¹

As with other small religious denominations in the Third

¹⁰⁵ Hansen, "Growing up in Hitler's Germany," 82. In this capacity, he not only avoided having to kill, but also helped to save many lives. He even helped deliver babies while he was in Poland.

¹⁰⁶ Schnibbe, Oral History, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Dahl, who was serving in Lithuania in 1942, was greatly disturbed when a group of soldiers invited him to see a mass grave. Dahl flatly refused to do so. Gassner had a similar experience. En route to the front, Gassner saw women and children working on the railroad tracks. When he inquired who they were, the guard informed him that they were Jews who would soon be "sent to Byalistok and there they are to be gassed." See Dahl, Oral Interview; Gassner and Bernhardt, Oral History, 13.

¹⁰⁸ Dixon, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Gassner and Bernhardt, Oral History, 13.

¹¹⁰ Walter Speidel, who was a POW in a camp in Alabama, recalled seeing several films documenting the horrors of Buchenwald before his release in 1946. Initially he discounted these films as mere propaganda, but after viewing them several times, he came to the horrifying conclusion that such crimes had been committed by his fellow countrymen. Speidel, Oral History, 1 May 1999, 9.

¹¹¹ Gassner and Bernhardt, Oral History, 12.

Reich, such as the Methodists, Latter-day Saints kept quiet about the plight of the Jews until the details of the Holocaust became known.¹¹² Given their philosemitic traditions, this raises disturbing questions. What did German Mormons know about the condition of the Jews? Should they have seen the Holocaust coming? Were they afraid? What could they have done to aid their “brethren?”¹¹³

CONCLUSION

When the war ended in 1945, contact between German Mormons and Church headquarters was once again re-established through LDS soldiers in the American army. During the war years, the LDS community had suffered staggering losses both materially and spiritually. Yet, it also had managed to avoid destruction. Most meeting facilities as well as the East German mission office lay in ruins. Many Church members had lost their homes and possessions—a number were refugees. Of the more than 14,000 German Mormons over 600 soldiers and civilians had died, or five per cent of the LDS population in the Reich.¹¹⁴ Among the dead were mission, district and branch leaders.¹¹⁵ In the years to come, the LDS Church in Germany needed and received great assistance from the USA to aid the needy and reorganize church structures. Nevertheless, in spite of Hitler’s reign of terror and war, Mormonism in Germany had survived for five and a half years virtually on its own—though not without difficulty.

¹¹² Douglas F. Tobler, “German Mormons as ‘Righteous Gentiles’: Trying to Save a Few Jewish Friends,” unpublished essay, photocopy in author’s possession, 3. See also Helmreich, 375.

¹¹³ Speidel, Oral History, 1 May 1999, 9-11

¹¹⁴ Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany*, 116.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116. Acting mission presidents, Friedrich Biehl and Christian Heck of the West German mission and Herbert Klopfer of the East German mission. Other local leaders who lost their lives during the conflict were district presidents Martin Hoppe of Breslau, Carl Goeckeritz of Chemnitz and Erich Behrndt of Stettin.