7-1-2001

The Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions at the Outbreak of World War II

David F. Boone
FIG. 1. Czech city street, 1939. The banner reads: “One People, one Empire, one Leader!” Nazi troops marched into Czechoslovakia in March 1939, annexing the country in a bloodless takeover. The Czechoslovak Mission remained open for several more months, but by the latter part of August, Germany was mobilizing against Poland, and war with Great Britain and France was imminent. As a result, all American mission personnel in German-occupied lands were forced into an emergency evacuation. This affected three Latter-day Saint missions: the Czechoslovak, East German, and West German.
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The evacuation of Latter-day Saint missionaries from Europe at the outbreak of World War II was truly a unique event in Church history. At the beginning of World War I, a few American missionaries serving in Europe were moved to areas of safety, but until 1939 there had never been a large-scale evacuation of missionaries as a result of their being endangered by impending war (fig. 1). As the threat of war gathered over Europe in the late 1930s, Latter-day Saint Church leaders in Salt Lake City watched anxiously. In August 1939, there were missionaries laboring in Great Britain, Germany, Czechoslovakia, France, Switzerland, Holland, and three Scandinavian countries. The evacuation of American missionaries from Europe at the outbreak of World War II eventually affected ten missions and hundreds of missionaries, but only those in the Czechoslovak and East and West German Missions were forced into an emergency evacuation.

The European Setting

President J. Reuben Clark Jr., who had significant national and international contacts, kept general Church leaders and mission presidents apprised of conditions in Europe. As early as 1938, President Clark recommended to the European mission presidents that they make plans to evacuate their missionaries if conditions required. In August 1938, the mission presidents in threatened countries, particularly in Germany and Czechoslovakia, followed these plans and evacuated all mission personnel to neutral countries. Within a few weeks, however, tensions eased, and the missionaries returned to their fields of labor. This experience became known among Church personnel as the fire drill evacuation (fig. 2). Some Church members were critical of this 1938 evacuation and called it a false alarm rather than a fire drill. A year later, however, when evacuation again became necessary, “some felt the exodus of American elders might have failed if they had not benefited from the mistakes they made the year before.”

Upon their return in 1938, the missionaries focused on preparing local Church members to take over the leadership of their branches in the event the American elders were again forced to leave. They also assisted in preparing Church records so that information on members was available...
FIG. 2. Missionaries from the West German Mission in the Netherlands on the shore of the North Sea during the fire drill evacuation, October 1938. Kneeling: George Blake. Standing, left to right: Unknown elder, Lawrence J. Meyer, A. Burt Horsley, Wesley Knudsen, T. Frank Swallow, Wilford Woolf, Grant Baker, Clark Hillam, unknown elder, and John Dean. The experience gained during this evacuation prepared both the missionaries and the mission leaders for the emergency evacuation of August 1939.

to local leaders. Many of the missionaries ignored the political posturing and the military buildup occurring around them, but the people were uneasy. As frequently as time and distance allowed, mission presidents met with their missionaries to keep them focused on proselyting activities. It was difficult, however, for the missionaries to ignore the anxiety of the people with whom they associated.

Czechoslovakia

Germany overran and annexed Czechoslovakia in March 1939, nearly six months before marching into Poland (fig. 3). During the invasion, Martha Toronto, wife of President Wallace F. Toronto of the Czechoslovak Mission, was in the hospital recuperating from the birth of their child. She remembered the sounds of the invasion and the anxiety of the nurses:

There were rumbling[s] of every sort from vehicles large and small riding over the cobblestones [streets], noise of people running and shouting, and even much unrest and chatter among the nurses. I inquired of a nurse the cause of all this commotion, and she answered that a surprise [German] invasion was in progress. A phone call to Wally [my husband] confirmed this news, and when he came to see me that afternoon, he assured me that everything was all right, except that we were now being ruled by the Germans.3
Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions

President Toronto thought that they “wouldn’t have to leave the country . . . because the bloodless takeover . . . went very smoothly. Hitler’s thousands of troops had skillfully used this surprise tactic and were in complete control.”

The mission had to make adjustments, however, to comply with the regulations of the new government and to avoid any problems with the German-controlled government or secret police. President Toronto advised the missionaries to discontinue tracting, not because it was against the law, but because he deemed it prudent that they not be any more visible to the government than necessary. He restricted the elders to teaching contacts they already knew and those referred to them by local members. They concentrated most of their efforts on those already baptized (fig. 4).

When the German government imposed restrictions on public gatherings, the Church was already in compliance. Nevertheless, even the strongest members felt the pressures of the occupation and worried about what the new regime meant for the Church in Czechoslovakia. The Saints were

Fig. 3. From an upper-story window, Elder Verdell Ray Bishop of the Czechoslovak Mission photographed Nazi troops marching through the streets of Brno, Czechoslovakia, in March 1939. Early one morning, a horrified Martha Toronto, wife of the Czechoslovak Mission president, looked out her window and saw her “three-year-old [son] Bob, who was always fascinated by the soldiers, goose-stepping along side this mass of high black boots and uniforms,” Martha Toronto Anderson, A Cherry Tree behind the Iron Curtain: The Autobiography of Martha Toronto Anderson (Salt Lake City: By the author, 1977), 19.
never certain when they might be breaking the law, and with the people anxious and preoccupied, the missionaries enjoyed only limited success after the invasion. While meeting with a branch of the Church in Prague, President and Sister Toronto shared an experience that illustrates just how tense the situation was. Sister Toronto described the fear that gripped the congregation as a Nazi officer stepped into the meeting hall:

We were all in church on Sunday morning attending a Mothers’ Day Program. The service was drawing to a close but still in progress when the back door of the meeting hall opened, and in stepped a tall Nazi officer. . . . The congregation, members and friends alike, froze in their seats. A German officer appearing as he did meant but one thing to us all—arrest and imprisonment.

After hesitating a moment or two he smiled and started walking . . . toward . . . the front of the hall [where President Toronto was] presiding over the meeting. . . . [The president] rose and walked toward him and spoke to him in German. . . . We all sat like terrified mummies in our seats. At last, speaking now in Czech, Wally [President Toronto] turned to us and announced that this young officer had something to say to us and would speak to us in German.\(^5\)

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President Toronto told the story of the German officer in the April 1940 general conference. He recounted the officer’s words as follows:

Brothers and sisters, I come here not on an appointment of my own choosing. I come here [to Czechoslovakia] as a servant of my government. I know we have brought you considerable distress and dismay. We have caused already much suffering. Nevertheless, you and I have something in common, something which oversteps the boundaries of race, language, and color. You and I have the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite the fact that I speak German and you speak Czech, yet because of the Gospel we still speak in common terms. The time is coming when we shall know this better than ever before.\(^6\)

The officer reaffirmed his belief in the Church and asked if he could participate with the branch in their worship services. When he finished speaking, the members welcomed him with great emotion. For the next several months—until he was assigned to another area—the officer attended the branch meetings in Prague.

On June 3, 1939, President Toronto received a letter from the First Presidency, which in part directed, “In view of the political changes, it is deemed advisable to attach the Branches of the Church in Czecho-Slovakia to the East-German Mission. You are therefore authorized to close the office of the Czecho-Slovak Mission as of July 1, 1939.”\(^7\)

President Toronto was astonished by the announcement; he did not think the First Presidency was fully aware of how much political conditions
had stabilized since the German takeover. Later in June, he attended a
conference in Switzerland for the European mission presidents and discussed
his view of conditions with Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, who was presiding
at the conference. Elder Smith endorsed President Toronto’s position,
advised him to send a report to the First Presidency, and wrote them a let-
ter of his own. Before the end of June 1939, President Toronto received a
cable from the First Presidency deferring his release and delaying the evacu-
ation of the mission. Despite permission to remain, unforeseen events—the
direct result of the tensions of impending war—caused complications for
the missionaries remaining in Czechoslovakia.

Two American missionaries, Elders Robert Lee and Rulon Payne,
believing they were assisting a local member with American dollars, con-
tacted a Gestapo agent to exchange currency. (The elders did not know the
agent was part of the Gestapo.) This activity was illegal under German law
but fairly routine under Czech standards. The German agent arrested them
immediately and took them to Gestapo headquarters and then to prison,
returning later to search their apartment for evidence against them.

Unfortunately, Elders Verdell Bishop and Asael Moulton, who had not
seen Elders Lee and Payne during the day, went looking for them and
arrived at their apartment in time to be arrested by Gestapo agents as
accomplices. The four missionaries were incarcerated in the Pankrac
penitentiary (fig. 5). Elders Bishop and Moulton knew nothing about the
reasons for their arrest and might have been set free except that personal
checks bearing their names had been found in the possession of Elders Lee
and Payne. It was illegal to have foreign currency in one’s possession because
it was worth more than the local tender and was needed by the government.

President Toronto remained unaware of the arrests until Elder Moulton
was brought to the mission office by a government agent the next day.
Elder Moulton, a mission leader, had in his possession a key that opened
the cash box in the mission office. The cash box contained the Czech mis-
sion’s contingency funds in British pounds and American dollars, to be
used if an emergency evacuation was necessary. Elder Moulton distracted
the agents long enough for President Toronto to quickly remove most
of the cash from the box and hide it in a desk drawer. The agents con-
sicitated the rest of the money and returned Elder Moulton to prison.

The next day President Toronto went to secure the release of the four
elders, still not knowing why they had been arrested since no official
charges had been brought against them. When he arrived, he was told that
he must pay two thousand dollars each for the release of the missionaries.
For more than a month, each time he visited the prison the amount of bail
changed. Finally, the Gestapo chief, a Dr. Bäumelburg, told President
Toronto, “You have a rich church which could pay the required fine upon a
moment’s notice.” President Toronto realized that the government was trying to extract as much money from the Church as possible and felt inspired to tell the Gestapo agent, in exaggerated terms, just how much American money the missionaries brought into Germany each month:

It becomes perfectly clear that there are no serious charges against our missionaries, but that they are being held only for the purpose of exacting from our Church a great amount in American dollars, which the German government sorely needs at the present time. We are willing to pay a reasonable fine for our men breaking the currency regulations of the country, but not the great amount which you require of us...  

...If it is foreign currency you want, then let me point out that you are endangering one of your finest sources of income. Do you know that for the past few years there have been from 250 to 300 Mormon missionaries laboring in Germany to teach your people the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you know that each one of these [missionaries] brings into your country each month from 40 to 50 dollars? ...Figure it for yourself, Doctor, and you will find that it totals from approximately 10,000 to 15,000 dollars each month.10

President Toronto finished with a warning. “Now, Doctor,” he declared, “unless you come to terms and deal reasonably with us, I shall request our
FIG. 6. Telegram from the First Presidency to Raymond S. Bishop, father of Elder Verdell Bishop, informing him that his son had been released from prison.

Church to immediately withdraw every American missionary from the German Reich.”11

Of course the president was bluffing. There were less than two hundred missionaries then serving in the German-occupied territories, and President Toronto did not have the authority to remove missionaries from his own mission, much less from all of Germany. The bluff worked, however. Two days later, on August 23, 1939, the Finance Administration agreed on a fine totaling almost two hundred fifty dollars each, or one thousand dollars for all four, rather than the eight thousand dollars that had been demanded earlier. Within two hours, the missionaries were released (fig. 6).

During their confinement, the missionaries were kept in separate cells, isolated from each other. No talking was allowed among them while they were in their cells or the exercise yard. But according to Elder Moulton, they developed a series of messages that could be communicated by tapping on the walls of the cells or by winking at each other when they came face to face. Even this meager contact helped to maintain morale. The elders passed the time by remembering scriptures they had memorized and the love they felt from and for their families. One elder pressed bread into squares and allowed it to dry to form a crude pair of dice, which he rolled.
Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions

131

on the floor. Another made chess pieces. He learned from an Austrian cell-mate how to play the game, which he continued to enjoy throughout his life.

Sister Toronto was allowed to visit the prison once a week with a fresh bundle of clothing for each of the elders and to take their soiled clothing home to be laundered. The prisoners had little food, both in quality and quantity. Their rations consisted of a bean-meal bread and a watery, weak broth made from potato peelings. Nevertheless, the missionaries reported no torture, abuse, or serious mistreatment.

When the elders were released, they returned to their apartments to pack their few belongings because the evacuation of their mission was already in progress. Despite his earlier resistance to leave the mission, President Toronto had begun to evacuate the Czechoslovak Mission, on the advice of the American consul, even before he received a cable from the First Presidency directing him to do so. Sister Toronto and their three children were the first to leave. Before her departure, however, Sister Toronto insisted on cooking a "good meal" for the newly released prisoners. She cooked them "a big noon meal . . . but after a diet of bread and water and soup for 44 days they couldn't quite handle it, even though it tasted so good they overate and became ill." The day after the elders' release, while regular civilian train travel was still available, Sister Toronto and the children left for Denmark (fig. 7). After two arduous days of travel, by way of Berlin, they were met in Copenhagen by a delegation of mission presidents and their wives.

President Toronto intended to follow Sister Toronto and the children with the remainder of the missionaries within a few days but was delayed by the rearrest of Elder Rulon S. Payne. When Elder Payne went to the American consul to obtain an exit permit as required by law, he was taken into custody, frisked, strip searched, and

Fig. 7. Bob Toronto, age two (top); Marion Toronto, age five (bottom). Sister Toronto and her three children, including Marion, Bobby, and five-month-old Carol, were the first mission personnel to be evacuated from Czechoslovakia. President Toronto was anxious for them to reach Denmark before the public trains in Czechoslovakia and Germany were taken over for the deployment of troops.
arrested by German agents. After sending the other elders on to Denmark, President Toronto demanded an immediate investigation and learned that Elder Payne had been arrested "because he had the same name as a British spy the Nazis were looking for, a Mr. Payne." After verification of his identity by President Toronto and American consul representatives, Elder Payne was released amid profuse apologies and immediately granted his exit visa. That night, August 31, 1939, President Toronto and Elder Payne left Czechoslovakia for Berlin; they arrived in Copenhagen on the evening of September 1.

Sister Toronto had expected President Toronto and the rest of the mission personnel to follow within two or three days. When they had not come by the third day, she began to worry, and with each passing day without word, her anxiety increased:

I was so worried and upset. We were watching all these things that would come over the wires and these bulletins would go up in the square in Copenhagen and I’d come back to the mission home and say, “Brother Smith, what am I going to do?” He’d put his arm around me and say, “Sister Toronto, this war will not start until Brother Toronto and those missionaries get on Danish soil.” (fig. 8)

Sister Evelyn Wood, wife of President M. Douglas Wood, also remembered the tense atmosphere in Copenhagen as they waited for news:

Fig. 8. Sister Toronto and Elder Joseph Fielding Smith in Copenhagen. In a prophetic statement, Elder Smith promised Sister Toronto that war would not begin until President Toronto and all the missionaries were out of Czechoslovakia.
Being rather naive, I said to Joseph Fielding Smith, "Do you mean to say that they'd hold a war up, all the negotiations that are being made, while we get those missionaries out of there?" It didn't seem possible to me. He turned right to me, and he said, "The war will not start until those . . . men are out of the country."17

Although it was very close timing—less than twenty-four hours—all the missionaries made it out of Czechoslovakia before the German offensive against Poland began (early in the morning of September 1), thus fulfilling the prophecy made by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith.

**East German Mission**

On August 24, 1939, the East German Mission office received notice from Church headquarters to prepare the missionaries for imminent departure. Elder Paul Lambert, acting in the temporary absence of President Alfred C. Rees, sent telegrams to each companionship instructing them to call the mission office in Berlin. When the missionaries called, they were told to pack their trunks in preparation for immediate evacuation and to remain close to their residences so they could be contacted again if necessary.

A message sent the following day instructed them to go to the mission office in Berlin on the first possible train. Some of the missionaries were confused because they did not know how completely they were to close their areas and whether their departure would be permanent. A year earlier, during the fire drill evacuation, they had left not expecting to return. When they did return, they had to renegotiate housing, purchase food, and reestablish contact with the people they were teaching. The question now was whether to leave things ready to come back to or to close down their areas. Some of the elders who thought this evacuation would be permanent spent their extra money on cameras or souvenirs. Others left money with local members or their landlords with instructions that it be used for the benefit of the branch.

The missionaries traveling west to Berlin had a relatively easy journey, but the mobilization of German troops en route to the Polish border made it difficult for those traveling east to get through. Most of the trains that had been used for public transportation had now been pressed into military service. Although certainly aware that Germany was preparing for war, the elders had been preoccupied with missionary work since they had been in the country. Some expressed astonishment at the massive military buildup—fortifications, troop trains, and soldiers—they saw along the way to Berlin. Elder Albion Smith, from Idaho Falls, Idaho, described his reaction: "I was surprised to see the number of anti-aircraft guns, and cannons on the way. Behind every bush or tree and camouflaged place were all sorts of war mechanism."18
Elder Ralph W. Kauer and his companion caught the last regularly scheduled public train going east to Berlin. All subsequent eastbound trains were taken off the schedule for public use, and civilians who wished to travel were at the mercy of available train space. Because his companion had been in the mission for only a short time and could not read German, Elder Kauer had to be solely responsible for securing tickets and arranging connections. When the elders went to board their train, they found it completely filled with soldiers headed for the Polish border. The conductor saw their plight and pulled them up onto the endgate of the last car on the already moving train, where they rode until they got off to make another connection.19

The elders' troubles, however, were not over. When they ran across the tracks to board another train, they were apprehended by a local policeman for trespassing. Elder Kauer explained that his companion was new in Germany and could not read the signs, but the officer was apparently not convinced and announced that he must take them to the police station. Elder Kauer pointed to others who were crossing the rails and were also in violation. When the policeman went in pursuit of these trespassers, the missionaries ran for their connecting train, which was pulling out of the station. "The last we saw of this policeman," Elder Kauer remembered, "he was just standing there shaking his billyclub at us."20 Kauer worried that the policeman would call ahead and have the train stopped. When nothing further happened, Kauer decided they were probably not significant enough to be pulled off the train and was glad. Later that day and without further problems, the elders arrived in Berlin.

Overall, the missionaries from the East German Mission had less difficulty getting out of the country than those in the Czechoslovak and West German missions. Although the East German Mission had more personnel than the other two missions, it was on a more direct route to neutral areas. By Saturday, August 26, within sixteen hours of the order to evacuate, all the missionaries from the East German Mission had reached safety in Copenhagen.21

West German Mission

When the order to evacuate arrived at the West German Mission office in Frankfurt, President M. Douglas Wood was attending a conference in Hanover. He was accompanied to the conference by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, who was making a tour of the European missions (fig. 9). Elder Smith's new bride, Jessie Ella Evans Smith, traveled with him.22 She kept a journal during the tour, and on the day before the evacuation order was received, she wrote, "The feeling [at the conference] is very tense and we held meetings that night and had a very splendid service, but everyone was still wondering about conditions."23 Elder Smith and President Wood did
Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions

Fig. 9. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith and Sister Jessie Ella Evans Smith. The Smiths toured the European missions during summer 1939. When the First Presidency ordered the evacuation of the European missions, they appointed Elder Smith to direct the evacuation.

not tell the congregation about the telegram received on August 24 advising them to prepare to evacuate the mission. President Wood was anxious to get back to mission headquarters to direct operations, especially after the arrival of a second telegram on August 25:

Friday morning [August 25, 1939] we received a telegram from the First Presidency, which was relayed from our office in Frankfurt to Hanover, telling us that we should immediately evacuate Germany. . . .

I said to Brother Smith: "My wife and I should be in Frankfurt [at the mission office]. There are so many things to do. Things are beginning to happen so fast, you see here in Hanover the women are already driving the street cars [because many of the men had been mobilized and troops were moving toward Poland]."24

President Wood, at Elder Smith's urging, went to secure a flight to Frankfurt. The clerk thought that because they were on the main European transport line, all reservations would be booked. Flights had to be reserved at least two weeks in advance, and the current crisis made the clerk certain that no accommodations could be obtained at any price. President Wood asked the clerk to try anyway. To the clerk's astonishment, there were two seats available on the next flight to Frankfurt.25 The Wood's flight lasted almost an hour and a half, but that was four and a half hours faster than going by train.
Upon his arrival at the mission home, President Wood contacted the Dutch consulate. He made arrangements for the missionaries closest to Holland to enter the nearest border station so they would be in a neutral country and out of harm’s way. This was the planned procedure for evacuating the West German Mission and had been followed successfully the year before in the fire drill evacuation. The president then wired each companionship, directing them to evacuate as planned (fig. 10). Most of the missionaries headed toward Holland, but those in northern Germany set out for Denmark,26 and a few in southern Germany went to Switzerland.27 Because Holland, Denmark, and Switzerland were known for their traditions of neutrality, they were thought to be safe havens for the refugee missionaries. The West German Mission office sent telegrams to the mission presidents in each of these neutral countries notifying them of the imminent arrival of the American missionaries from the West German Mission. All the European mission presidents knew the general evacuation procedure, having participated in its planning and review as Elder and Sister Smith
Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions

toured each of the European missions. Most of the presidents had decided to follow the same routes used the year before.

President Wood could not know that the majority of the missionaries were being sent into trouble, rather than away from it, as they traveled toward Holland (fig. 11). The Dutch had learned important lessons from their experiences in World War I and now closed their borders to all foreigners unless they had tickets that ensured their continued travel out of the country. Like the missionaries from the Czechoslovak Mission, the missionaries evacuating from Germany faced restrictions on the amount of currency they could legally carry. With war imminent, they were allowed no more than ten German marks, barely enough for food and not nearly enough to purchase additional tickets.

Elder and Sister Smith were among the last Church personnel to get into Holland before the new regulation went into effect. They had arrived at the mission home in Frankfurt almost a day after parting company with President and Sister Wood. In Frankfurt, Elder Smith received instructions from the First Presidency to oversee the continental evacuation and decided to set up headquarters at The Hague in Holland. Elder Smith purchased two tickets, via train. These tickets, he was told, were the last two tickets on an overnight train to The Hague.

Without any public notification, the Dutch applied the new policy. When the missionaries attempted to follow instructions and cross into Holland, they were turned away. Elder A. Burt Horsley and his companion, Elder Richard D. Poll, were among the first missionaries to be stopped at the border. Elder Horsley remembered being taken off the train and firmly denied permission to continue:

When we reached the Dutch side of the border the train stopped again for customs inspection and we were taken off the train and arrested for vagrancy because we each had only ten marks with us. The people were very cordial to us but made it clear that they were not making any exception to their laws. But I was allowed to make a phone call. I phoned the mission office in The Hague.

It may be that this call was the first that Franklin J. Murdock, president of the Dutch mission, learned of the border closures. President Murdock instructed Elder Horsley to return to Germany and, when there, to call his mission president in Frankfurt for instructions. Elders Horsley and Poll returned to Germany, but once back inside, they were detained by the German government. Horsley tried to call his mission president for advice and help:

Here I made efforts to call the mission president from the post office and depot. I made the effort to get in touch with the mission president in Frankfurt, but was informed that the lines were all used by the military and that
Fig. 11. President Wood with his wife, Evelyn, and missionaries of the West German Mission on steps of the Ramerberg in Frankfurt, Germany, May 1939. Many of the missionaries would face complications as they evacuated from Germany. Montague, "Mine Angels round About," 23.
Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions

there was no way I could have access to a telephone, especially for a long distance call.33

Horsley realized he and his companion were stranded. He did not know what to do, so after being denied the use of a telephone, he just waited. Finally, "the clerk at the desk motioned to [him] and told [him] that if [he] would get in a particular phone booth [the clerk] would place the call to Frankfurt for [him]."34 After what seemed like a long wait, the call was connected. The mission staff had left the office but were waiting outside for their ride to the train station when they heard the phone ring. Elder Horsley explained to President Wood the predicament he and Elder Poll were in. They had been at the Dutch border for about six hours, without funds, and they could not proceed further. President Wood instructed Horsley to be patient and to look for other missionaries in a similar situation. Then he said, "Brother, if you will have faith, I will see that we get some money to you immediately." President Wood phoned the telegraph office with the money order, but before the wire went through, the operator called to say that no more orders were being accepted. She said, however, that she would attempt to get this one last wire through.35 She was ultimately successful, and Horsley and Poll received money and instructions to buy tickets to Copenhagen.

As Elders Horsley and Poll prepared to leave Germany for the last time, they found six other missionaries in a similar predicament, and Horsley and Poll shared the money President Wood had sent them so that these elders could travel with them to Denmark.36 After their experiences at the Dutch border, the missionaries had a largely uneventful trip, although they had to remain vigilant to make the proper connections and to keep track of their luggage, each other, and the direction they were going. After three days of travel, which included their delays at the border, they arrived in Copenhagen, weary but safe.37

In an unusual way, another group of missionaries stranded at a border crossing received funds to continue their journey. They also called President Wood for instructions, but by this time, it was no longer possible to transfer money by telegraph. The president explained his inability to assist them because of the government restrictions. The missionaries held a council to decide what their options were and what the best course of action might be. While they were meeting, they were approached by a young German soldier who had been taught by elders in the past and now identified the group as missionaries. When the elders explained their dilemma, the soldier took from his pocket a small roll of money, indicating that he was on his way to the Polish front and would not need it. The small roll amounted to fifty marks, not enough to see them through Holland to the safety of Denmark, but sufficient to enable them to return to the town
where two of the elders had labored. One of the elders had recently received his monthly allowance from home but, because he could not lawfully take the money out of the country, had left it with his landlady. He had instructed her to give the money to the local branch if he did not return. When the train arrived, he ran to his apartment, retrieved the money, and with it bought tickets for each of the members of his group. President Wood, reporting this episode in the April 1940 general conference, noted that the amount the elder had received from home was just enough to pay the passage of the missionaries to Denmark, with a little left over for food.38

Sister Erma Rosenhan, another missionary from the West German Mission, was one of only fourteen missionaries to get through the Dutch border.39 Having had a German member as a missionary companion, Sister Rosenhan had no American sister to travel with when the evacuation order came. Although she had been told that an elder would come to accompany her to Holland, he had not arrived by Saturday morning, August 26. Anxious to be on her way, Sister Rosenhan prepared to catch a morning train even though it meant traveling alone. The local branch president advised her to buy a ticket to London rather than just to Rotterdam, Holland. The British consulate was closed, so Sister Rosenhan could not get the required British visa, but she bought the London ticket anyway. Because of her foresight in buying the ticket to London and her insistence on catching the Saturday morning train rather than waiting for her escort, Sister Rosenhan easily passed through customs at the Dutch border. She arrived at The Hague without experiencing any of the problems many of the elders had to confront.40

Elder John Robert Kest as Courier. A third group of missionaries found themselves stranded at the border with little idea why they were not allowed into Holland or what they were to do. Elder Frank Knutti, one of the group,41 remembered crossing the border into Holland and then being sent back to Germany by Dutch officials:

We were checked through at Bentheim and went on to Oldenzaal inside of Holland where the authorities held us for a short time, took our passports to check them but later brought them back and called to us to follow them. We were led back to our train but on through it to the other side where another train was standing. After we were on, it pulled out and we were on our way, or so we thought. Before too long, someone noticed the country seemed familiar and we were dismayed to find that we had been returned to Germany. Our protests were to no avail. . . . We only were told the Dutch Government had refused our coming into the country because we had no tickets through Holland to another country.42

Unable to get through to President Wood, the elders tried to call the Dutch Mission office in The Hague, expecting that their fellow missionaries from Germany were there waiting for them. Unfortunately, President
Franklin J. Murdock was not in the office when the call went through, but the elder who took their call promised to have the president phone them when he returned. For hours the small group of missionaries waited for the phone call, but none came. It was late Saturday night, and the German border officials did not like the missionaries hanging around the station, so the elders pooled their limited funds and rented a room for the night. By Sunday morning, the call still had not come, and since they had no additional funds, the elders pretended it was fast Sunday. At least this solved the problem of having nothing to eat!

Meanwhile, President Murdock had sent a young elder, John Robert Kest,43 on a very early train to the Dutch-German border with money to assist the stranded missionaries. Elder Kest arrived in Oldenzaal only to find that the missionaries were no longer in Holland but were probably back in Germany. He did not have a visa to enter Germany and therefore was in a quandary about what he should do. He called President Murdock to find out if there had been any further contact with the elders and asked for counsel. President Murdock had heard nothing more from the missionaries and told Elder Kest to “do your best and use your judgment as to what should be done.”44

The stranded missionaries had to have help, so Elder Kest decided he must take a chance and try to get into Germany without a visa. Before leaving the Dutch border station, he purchased ten tickets that would take the stranded missionaries all the way to Copenhagen and another that would take him to Bentheim, on the German side of the border, and back to Oldenzaal, Holland. He then boarded the train, fully expecting to be discovered and thrown off at any time. “Why the Dutch authorities,” Elder Kest recalled, “allowed me to board that train, never asking for a visa, is a mystery; it was most irregular.”45 Elder Kest had second and third thoughts about what he was doing because, in addition to the risk of traveling into Germany without a visa, he was not sure where the elders were or whether they could still be contacted on the German side of the border.

In Germany, as Elder Kest expected, border officials asked for his passport. When they questioned why there was no visa stamped on the passport, Elder Kest “explained in exasperatingly slow and deliberately incoherent English that at present [he] was living in Holland, had heard that some of [his] friends were in Bentheim and knowing that railroad and train transportation was being curtailed, wanted to visit them while possible.”46

Having studied drama and music before his mission, Elder Kest decided that if he ever played a successful part, this was the time. He “rambled on, deliberately, on utterly pointless tangents, hoping all the while they would have great difficulty understanding [him]; which they did.”47 The man in charge could speak very little English, and in order to promote maximum
confusion, Elder Kest refrained from speaking German. Unable to make any headway with the American youth, the German border guard took him into a nearby cubicle for further questioning. Once the Germans had the missionary inside the cubicle, they began to search him for anything that would incriminate him or give them information as to his identity and his business in Germany. Inside one coat pocket, Elder Kest had the tickets he had purchased, which, if found, would be confiscated. In the other pocket was a set of Church lessons to be used in the Church auxiliaries during the coming curriculum year. Elder Kest was translating the lessons into Dutch and had brought them along to work on during the long train trips. As the guards searched the elder, they found the lessons first, perhaps because they were bulkier than the tickets. Several guards hovered over the lessons, trying to figure out what they were and suspicious of what they could be.\textsuperscript{48}

While the guards were preoccupied with the lessons, the elder, unobserved by the others, took the ten tickets from his coat pocket and placed them on the table before him. When the guards finished their review of the lesson material, they searched every pocket and confiscated his money, his passport, and all the other personal belongings they could find. After they had completed their search, the guards gave Elder Kest a receipt for his possessions and ordered him to be aboard the next train to Holland, which was scheduled to depart in about forty minutes. Elder Kest assured the officials he would be on time, grabbed the tickets off the table, and hurried out into the street. Surprisingly, “not an eye flickered” as Elder Kest picked up the tickets. “[He] had the strong impression that the action had been entirely unobserved.” He left the station, “knees weak, . . . palms sweating.”\textsuperscript{49}

Out in the street, Elder Kest could not find the American missionaries. Finally, someone remembered seeing them at the hotel where they had spent the night and gave Kest directions. By the time he found the hotel, it was nearly time to catch the train to Holland. He found the missionaries holding a council to determine what they should do. Elder Kest handed the tickets to a senior missionary, Elder Ellis T. Rasmussen. Without a doubt, the elders were delighted to see Kest. After a short conversation, the small group knelt in prayer. Elder Kest remembered the power of that prayer: “As the seven of us knelt in fervent prayer, we all felt a closeness and unity experienced very infrequently in life. We were truly united and prayed with power and faith, believing our request would be granted, for we realized the desperate nature of our situation.”\textsuperscript{50}

After the prayer, Elder Kest ran back to keep his appointment with the border guards, and the missionaries gathered their possessions. At the station, a guard returned Kest’s personal effects, his remaining money, and his lessons and personally escorted him to the waiting train. Elder Kest had to
buy a German ticket back to Oldenzaal even though he already had the ticket he had bought in Holland to guarantee his return. Once back in Holland, he telephoned President Murdock to report his success and to receive further instructions. Not knowing whether other missionaries might need assistance, the president asked Kest to remain near the border overnight.

In the meantime, Elder Rasmussen's group was on its way, but not without delays and additional problems. The trains were irregular, few were available for civilian travel, and even fewer were on time. Rather than make another attempt to get through the Dutch border, the elders decided to go back to the interior of Germany and then work their way north to Denmark. In spite of the problems, they at least knew they were making progress and going in the right direction. As they waited for connecting trains, they developed a system of communication that allowed them to scatter to get information and to find one another again before boarding. They selected a central point at which to meet at a predetermined time, or if they did not have a large area to cover, they maintained visual contact. During their wait, they mingled with other groups waiting for connecting trains. In this way, they learned about delays they could avoid, unscheduled trains, and express trains that had priority over local connections.

On Monday morning, the train they boarded did not move. The missionaries scattered. One of the elders learned that the delay was caused by the coming of a faster train that would stop briefly at the station and then proceed. Back together, the elders reasoned that if there was a faster train and it was going in the same direction, they should catch it. Soon the train came, and because of their system, the missionaries were ready. With luggage in hand, they exited the first train and climbed in through the windows of the express train. Almost before they could settle in, the train pulled away from the station, and the missionaries were on their way. They arrived safely in Denmark that afternoon.51

The Rescue Mission of Elder Norman George Seibold. With so many missionaries stranded without money and others unaccounted for, President Wood needed a courier who, like Elder Kest, could find the missing missionaries and give them tickets to Denmark and money. When Elder Norman George Seibold, who hailed from Idaho, came to the mission office to report the safe evacuation of all the missionaries in his district directly to Denmark from the north of Germany, President Wood suggested a new assignment.52 There were still thirty-one missionaries scattered between Frankfurt, Germany, and the Dutch border.53 President Wood asked Elder Seibold if he would be willing to go and find them. Elder Seibold assured the president he would try. President Wood counseled Elder Seibold to “follow his impressions entirely as we ha[ve] no idea what towns these elders w[ill] be in.”54
Elder Seibold was given five hundred marks, tickets for travel to London through Holland, and tickets to Denmark through Germany. Elder Seibold left Frankfurt around midnight on Saturday, August 26, on a train bound for the Dutch border. The train was so crowded that Elder Seibold had to ride standing up for the four hours to the first stop. When he arrived at the station in Cologne, Germany, he felt impressed to get off the train. “It was almost impossible to get off a train and get back on, they were so crowded. . . . I got off at the station there and hunted somewhat for anyone that I might know or anyone that might look like a missionary.”

According to President Wood, Elder Seibold was a “big football player . . . who weighed over 200 pounds.” Although his size made him conspicuous, it was an advantage to him at times. The big elder found the same crowded conditions inside the station as he had experienced on the train. In addition, the station was noisy, and people were trying to get through the crowd to find traveling companions and connecting trains. The elder pushed his way into the confusion but could not find any missionaries because of the crowd. He climbed atop a baggage cart for a better view and whistled a favorite mission song, “Do What Is Right” (fig. 12).

Elder Seibold hoped to call together those who heard and recognized the song without having to yell or draw unnecessary attention to himself. Fortunately, the tactic worked, and Elder Seibold found a group of elders and an elderly missionary couple:

To carry any kind of a tune or to whistle any kind of a song is beyond me really. Like the old saying, I couldn’t carry a tune in a bushel basket. But I did

![Image: Baggage cart in Frankfurt train station. To attract the attention of missionaries stranded in a crowded German train station, Elder Norman Seibold stood on such a cart and whistled the hymn “Do What Is Right.”](image-url)
a pretty fair job when I jumped up on that baggage car[t] and whistled “Do What is Right,” because it got around, and a lot of people stopped, but it picked up several missionaries.58

Elder Seibold gave each of the missionaries a ticket to London as well as sufficient money to see them through Holland to London. When they reached the Dutch border, the couple was allowed to enter Holland, but some of the elders were refused entrance by Dutch officials even though they also had tickets to London and the same amount of money as the couple. They were sent back across the border to Germany, where Elder Seibold caught up with them again. This time he bought them tickets to Hamburg, from where they eventually made their way to Copenhagen.

The couple was able to travel through Holland and on to England. From England they sailed home to the United States with a group of British missionaries. This couple’s experience was faith-promoting for Elder Seibold. As he noted in his journal, “That these old people got through shall be a testimony to me as long as I live, because what we went through in the next twenty-four hours, these old people could not have stood.”59

Unfortunately, Seibold’s whistling atop the baggage cart attracted the attention of some local policemen in the train station.60 After removing the missionary from his perch and asking him why he had been standing there whistling, they found that he had a large sum of money and decided to arrest him. Seibold resisted briefly, and the police threatened to take him out of the train depot and into the city police station. Besides his fear that the precious money would be confiscated, Elder Seibold “knew that if I got out of the station and got into city hands, I might be in a lot of trouble. At the time the policeman laid his hands on me, I knew better, but I told him that he’d better unhand me or there might be a fight. So he let me go.”61 Seibold felt that if his size had ever had an important effect, it certainly had on this occasion:

Now ordinarily you don’t refuse a German policeman anything. I told them that I would go see the military police, but I would not go into the city at all. Now why I did that I don’t know, but because I was large, maybe the Lord made me look larger or something and I got away with it.62

The police then took him to the military officials positioned in the train station. After listening to his reasons for being where he was and for carrying such a large amount of money, one of the officers gave him a letter of introduction and explanation—a military clearance, in effect—to use if any other official tried to stop him.

Although he started his journey alone, by the time he reached the Danish border, Elder Seibold had collected a group of thirteen missionaries.63 As he found them, he gave them tickets, money, or both, as needed, and traveled with them as he continued to search for other stranded missionaries. By this
time, most of the trains were being used only for troop transport, and the elders often traveled only a short way before being ordered off the train. They would then catch another train and ride until they were bumped off again. "[It] was just a matter of catching trains and bluffing conductors and policemen," Seibold remembered, "but we made it."

Finally reaching the Danish border, Elder Seibold and his group of missionaries ran into trouble. After the elders had bought tickets to cross into Denmark, the German guards would not let them board their train. The letter of introduction and explanation the officer in Cologne had given Elder Seibold now proved invaluable. On August 28, Elder Seibold wired the worried mission leaders waiting in Denmark that thirteen of the missing elders had safely crossed the Danish border and were on their way to Copenhagen.

Elder Seibold then turned back to Germany alone to continue his rescue mission. At places where he thought there would be missionaries, he received no impression to get off the train, so he continued on. At a town where he thought there was not a chance of finding any missionaries, he felt impressed to get off and investigate:

We had one experience that is faith promoting and really interesting in the way that it happened. I had a feeling or something that encouraged me to stop at a small station in a small town and to get out and go out into the station and look around. It was an out-of-the-way place and I had no idea that there would be anybody there. It felt like a waste of time. But I did it. There was hardly anyone in the station at the time and it was one of the more empty places on the whole trip. But I had a premonition to go outside the Bahnhof and out into the town, which seemed silly to me at the time. But we had a short wait and so I went. I passed a Gasthaus, a restaurant there, and I went inside and there were two missionaries there. It was fantastic, in that they both knew me and of course they were quite happy to see me. They had spent their last ten pfennigs, or you might call it their last dime, for a soft drink there—apple juice is what they were drinking.

Seibold acknowledged the influence of the spirit in finding these two elders: "I had to be led there, because I just wouldn't have been smart enough to go there myself. . . . As surely as if someone had taken me by the hand, I was guided there."

Seibold spent another day in Germany before he felt impressed that his job was done and it was time for him to leave. He had found seventeen of the thirty-one stranded or lost missionaries. The other fourteen had found their way out of the country in numerous ways. Elder Seibold was the last American missionary to come out of Germany after the Church ordered the evacuation. Looking back on his experiences forty years later, Elder Seibold admitted, "In a lot of ways it was a lot of fun. We were at that time too young to know what kind of trouble we could have got[ten] in. But it has been a testimony and it has been a guiding thing to me in my life."
The evacuation of the West German Mission had been accomplished in just over one week despite border closures, forced changes in travel plans, numerous problems due to lack of funds, and the restricted use of ground transportation and communications. Elder Seibold recognized the hand of the Lord in safely bringing the missionaries out of the war-threatened area:

“It was a wonderful time, and anything... I have said... might indicate... I had a whole lot to do with it needs to be qualified. The things that happened on this trip... were not my doing. It was strictly the hand and the guidance of the Lord. I feel it and I know it as well as anything. I’m not smart enough to comprehend or to foresee some of the things.”

The Final Step: Sailing for Home

Once all the missionaries had arrived in neutral countries, the focus of the evacuation changed to getting ship passage home, not only for the missionaries themselves, but for the mission presidents and their families as well. Getting steamship tickets was not an easy task (fig. 13). In Holland, President Murdock encountered

thousands of people waiting in line to purchase tickets. Some of the potential passengers were offering to pay as much as $2,000 for standing room on any of the ships [passenger or freight] going to America... when tickets were selling for about $200. They offered to provide their own food, sleep on the deck, if necessary, but would give the two thousand dollars for the opportunity to do so. Many of the steamship companies... had reservations as far ahead as February 1940.

Numerous people also clamored for passage out of British ports. “The usual complement of passengers for the SS Washington [out of Southampton, England],” for example, “was 1,200 passengers. But on this trip [September 1939] there were 1,800 paying passengers.” Among those sailing on this ship were American sport, theater, movie, and political celebrities. Because of the crowded conditions, every available space was used to accommodate passengers, including the drained swimming pool, movie theaters, lounges, hallways, and even deck space. From Scandinavian ports, most of the missionaries boarded freighters retrofitted to accommodate passengers in cargo holds.

Conclusion

By late September, all American missionaries from the Czechoslovak and East and West German Missions had returned to the United States. Those from other missions in Europe reached American soil by mid-December.
FIG. 13. The American freighter *Marmachawk* at Copenhagen, 1939. Freighters such as this were modified to accommodate passengers and used to transport mission personnel and other evacuees to the U.S. Although space was limited and tickets hard to come by, all American mission personnel were evacuated from Europe within three months.

Having directed the evacuation of the European missions, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith summed up the effort statistically:

There were in the European missions at the time [of the evacuation] 697 persons, of whom 611 were young men and 63 young women missionaries; the other 23 were mission presidents, their wives and children. These missionaries returned in 23 ships, mostly freight boats which had been improvised to care for the numerous passengers returning to America.74

Upon instruction from the First Presidency, Elder Smith "released those missionaries who had served twenty or more months of their missions and transferred the rest to safer fields of labor in the United States."75

In the April 1940 general conference, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. touched on the miracles witnessed during the evacuation:

The whole group was moved from the disturbed areas in Europe to the United States, and thence either to their new fields of labor or to their homes, without one accident or one case of [serious] sickness . . . . The entire group was evacuated from Europe in three months, at a time when tens of thousands of Americans were besieging the ticket offices of the great steamship companies for passage, and the Elders had no reservations. Every time a group was ready to embark there was available the necessary space, even though efforts to reserve space a few hours before had failed.76
Elder Harold B. Lee noted, "It is a matter of record that hardly had the last missionary been called home until all hell seemed to break loose in Europe, in veritable fulfillment of the prophecy that had been given."77

Epilogue

During the war, the Saints in Europe endured incredible privations and suffering. That Church units in war-torn countries continued in spite of conditions is nothing short of heroic. Unfortunately, however, some members felt that the Church had abandoned them when the missionaries left. A Swedish member suggested that "the rats all leave when the ship goes down."78 Another member charged that "at the first sign of trouble, the shepherd . . . run[s] off and leav[es] the sheep."79

Although the local members had to remain behind and face the terrors of war while the American missionaries sailed for safety in America, in reality, the members in Europe were not abandoned. The missionary’s role is that of messenger, not shepherd. A missionary is one appointed as a witness for Jesus Christ to take the news of the gospel to those who do not have it. When that messenger is unable to share the message effectively, he is no longer scripturally mandated to remain. The real shepherd of the flock is the Lord Jesus Christ, and he did not desert his sheep. Christ’s under-shepherds were the local Church leaders.

During the war, membership in several European missions grew, financial contributions as measured by the payment of tithes increased, and Church organizations remained largely intact despite the absence of American missionaries. Elder Ezra Taft Benson’s well-chronicled relief mission following the end of World War II contains numerous examples of individual privation and sacrifice but also notes the existence of functioning branches and faithful members. Much of the recent growth in Europe, as reflected in the number of members, local missionaries, stakes, and temples, can be traced to the leadership developed during an era when, because of the evacuation of the American missionaries, local individuals had to stand up and be counted.

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Boone has authored a companion article of the many missionaries from the Czechoslovak and East and West German Missions who evacuated Europe through Copenhagen. The article focuses on a thorough report of the evacuation by Danish Mission President Mark B. Garff. The article, based on a speech given at the Mormon History Association annual meeting in 2000, will appear in Regional Studies in LDS Church History: Europe (forthcoming, 2002).


5. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 19–20. See Wallace F. Toronto, in *One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1940), 52.


7. Czechoslovak Mission History, June 20, 1939, typescript, 13, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

8. In his mission report, President Toronto explained that “other American and English citizens living in the German occupied territory had been held in lieu of ten thousand dollars each.” Wallace F. Toronto to the First Presidency, September 18, 1939, 6, copy in possession of Allen Toronto.


12. Asael Moulton, interview by Allen Toronto, date unknown, notes in author’s possession.

13. Moulton, interview.


21. East German Mission Manuscript History, December 31, 1939, Church Archives.

22. As Sister Smith accompanied her husband on their European tour, she often used her distinguished, opera-quality, contralto voice to delight audiences of European members and missionaries. Occasionally she sang a song or two in the native language of her audience or persuaded President Smith to join her in a duet. Boone, “Worldwide Evacuation,” 13.
Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions

25. This was the last commercial flight for that aircraft. When the plane arrived in Frankfurt, it was taken off the public transportation route and sent to the Polish front to carry troops, munitions, and supplies. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 78.
26. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 77; West German Manuscript History, August 27, 1939, typescript, Church Archives; Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany, 95; Boone, “Worldwide Evacuation,” 23.
29. The Dutch had suffered a shortage of food during World War I and did not want foreigners in their country if war broke out again. They needed to save their limited food supplies for their own people. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 79; Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany, 93.
32. A. Burt Horsley, interview by David F. Boone, September 16, 1978, transcript in author’s possession.
33. Horsley, interview.
34. Horsley, interview.
35. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 79; Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany, 93.
36. As the missionaries traveled toward Holland or arrived at the border, they often came in contact with other missionaries in the same predicament. Most of them stayed together, which ultimately made locating them easier because they were in groups rather than just in pairs. The six elders who joined with Horsley and Poll were John Dean, Edward Mabey, Lawrence Meyer, Wilford Woolf, John Bingham, and Joseph Loertscher. They later met up with Wesley Knudsen, Ralph Thompson, Harold E. Kratzer, and Richard Larkin Glade. Terry Bohe Montague, “Mine Angels round About”: Mormon Missionary Evacuation from Western Germany, 1939, 2d ed. (Orem, Utah: Granite Publishing and Distribution, 2000), 71, 73; Rasmussen and Kest, “Border Incident.”
38. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 80–81.
40. Erma Rosenhan, Journal, August 26, 1939, typescript, Church Archives. There do not seem to have been any specific instructions regarding the evacuation of the sister missionaries, perhaps because there were so few of them. Except for Sister Rosenhan, there is no mention of lady missionaries from the Czechoslovak and German missions. This does not mean, however, that there were no other women. In addition to the mission presidents’ wives, a Miss Grace Olson is mentioned, although there is no specific information in available Church records about her status or her experiences during the evacuation. Sister Don C. Rigby (no given name listed) also traveled with the
elders during the evacuation. She had journeyed to Germany to meet her soon-to-be-released husband and accompany him home. Her plans were realized but certainly not in a way either of them could have imagined.


42. Frank Knutti, Journal, August 26, 1939, copy in author’s possession.

43. Elder Kest knew the Murdocks well, and according to his sister, John Robert’s association with the president and his family may explain why he was chosen for such an important mission: “[President Murdock’s] wife was Claire Murdock. She was very musical. And so my brother Bob, being so interested in music himself, he was a singer and an actor, became kind of special to them I think. They produced the opera Martha for the Dutch Saints during the early part of that year [1939].” Marjorie K. Crooks, interview by David F. Boone, September 29, 1999, transcript in author’s possession.


47. Rasmussen and Kest, “Border Incident,” 796.


53. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 79; West German Mission Manuscript History, August 26, 1939, quoted in Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany, 94.

54. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 80; West German Mission Manuscript History, August 26, 1939, quoted in Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany, 94.


56. Wood, One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference, 79, quoted in Scharffs, Mormonism in Germany, 94.


58. Seibold, Oral History, 12.

59. Seibold, Oral History, 6. The uncertainty of rail travel in a country involved in military mobilization took its toll on even the young elders. They had to change trains frequently, go out of their way to make connections, and endure irregular schedules before finally reaching safety, tired and often hungry, in either Holland or Denmark.

60. There are slight discrepancies, especially in dates, place names, and the sequence of events, in different accounts of the evacuation from the West German Mission. I conducted the interviews cited in this article in the late 1970s and early 1980s, approximately forty years after these events took place. As Seibold admitted, “Forty years is a long time and my mind is a little dim on some of it as far as the sequence of the thing. . . . I’ll tell the story as I remember it.” Seibold, Oral History, 4. Montague, in “Mine Angels round About,” 85–86, identifies the train station where Seibold confronted the police as the Emmerich, Germany, station rather than the Cologne station. According to Montague’s account, it was at Cologne that Seibold climbed onto the baggage cart and whistled but at Emmerich that he was threatened by the police, probably because they had seen the large amount of money he was carrying.
Evacuation of the Czechoslovak and German Missions

63. See Montague, "Mine Angels round About," 83–100. Montague based her account of Seibold’s rescue mission on an interview with him and also on interviews and correspondence with several of the missionaries he found along the way and who shared at least part of the journey through Germany to Denmark. Among them were Owen Ken Earl, Louis J. Haws, Charles Jenkins Jr., William Manning, Ferryle McOmber, and Frank Knutti. She also drew information from the journal of Ben Lasrich and from Rasmussen and Kest, “Border Incident.” (Rasmussen’s group met and joined with Seibold’s group and are among the thirteen elders who arrived in Denmark on August 28.) When I interviewed Seibold in 1978, he did not remember spending much time traveling with any group. “I was alone most of the time,” he recalled. “There were short distances that I would travel with the brethren and then I’d send them off. . . . I haven’t recorded it in my journal and I can’t remember for sure.” Seibold, Oral History, 5.
64. Seibold, Oral History, 6.
67. According to Montague, there were two elders from the West German Mission who were still in Austria. Assigned to a remote rural area, Elders Nephi Henry Duersch and Robert J. Gillespie were bicycling from village to village and staying with members during the last week of August when the telegrams ordering the evacuation went out. They did not return to their apartment and read their telegram until September 2. The two managed to catch a train to Stuttgart, Germany, and another to Basel, Switzerland, arriving there in the early morning of September 3. Montague, “Mine Angels round About,” 101–102.
68. Seibold, Oral History, 11.
69. Seibold, Oral History, 11.
70. England, Denmark, and Holland were, for the most part, the host countries for the evacuating missionaries. Except in isolated instances, the major focus of mission leaders in these countries was to provide ship passage home for the departing missionaries.
71. Franklin J. Murdock, interview by David F. Boone, January 20, 1981, transcript in author’s possession.
73. Unusual and faith-promoting experiences occurred in every aspect of the missionary evacuation. The missionaries leaving the Czechoslovak and West German Missions (almost one hundred in number) had the most harrowing experiences getting to neutral countries. Many of them recorded personal experiences in journals, correspondence, and mission reports, and these, along with oral and mission histories, provided many personal insights and details for this article. More than sixty years after the evacuation, many of these former missionaries still became animated and excited just remembering events and sharing their experiences. Several worthwhile compilations of the experiences of evacuating missionary personnel are also of great interest and are a valuable part of preserving the past. References include several graduate level studies on Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland. Published sources on the evacuation are limited but include Smith, Essentials in Church History; and James B. Allen and Glenn M. Leonard, The Story of the Latter-day Saints, 2d ed., rev. and enl. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992). Elder Smith’s volume is included because of his personal involvement as the General Authority supervising the evacuation. Works specifically dedicated to the missionary evacuation include Montague, “Mine Angels round About”; and Boone, “Worldwide Evacuation.” Histories on specific

74. Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, 526. Elder Smith’s summary refers to all the missions of Europe, not just the Czechoslovak and East and West German Missions.


76. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in *One Hundred Tenth Annual Conference*, 20.

77. Harold B. Lee, in *One Hundred Thirteenth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1943), 128.

78. Personal conversation by the author with Carl-Erik Johanson, December 17, 1980, notes in author’s possession.

79. Leone Openshaw Jacobs, interview by David F. Boone, transcript in author’s possession.