

Chapter 16

Germany



OAC Germany has a rich heritage and lots of history. Much of this history is found in Jim Duffecy's 1983 edition of the "Truceless Warfare Advances" book. To recap some of this history, we remember an American named Keith Rudkin who had served in the military and was stationed in Germany during the time of the Korean War. He married a German lady named Eva and felt a desire to reach the German people for Christ. In preparation for that ministry, he and Eva returned to the States, where Keith attended Asbury Seminary. While a student there, he was exposed to two guest speakers representing Open Air Campaigners, Les Werry and Jim Duffecy. After listening to their presentations, he felt the Spirit telling him that this was the way to reach the Germans for Christ! After several years of working as US staff and ministering to Germans who had settled in Cincinnati, he felt ready to make the big step. In 1963, he and Eva moved back to Germany, founding what was called "Freiversammlungs Mission" in the name of Open Air Campaigners. German Christians joined him. Among them were Horst Ludwigs from the Torch Bearers Bible College and Emil Boehnke, who used three pet monkeys as evangelistic tools. Ministry began to be held in a number of places in Germany, including Cologne, Munich, and even the crossing point between East and West Berlin during the cold war named "Checkpoint Charlie."



KEITH RUDKIN

Keith and Eva settled in Wuppertal. This city had been a center of Christian activity since a revival had taken place there in 1849. Training seminars were held, as well, in a huge 35-room building the Lord had given to them, which also became an ideal conference center. Among the students was a young Swiss couple, Kurt and Susanne Schafli, who would later join OAC staff and open up Switzerland.



KEITH RUDKIN AT THE SKETCHBOARD

In 1967 at a Youth for Christ crusade, a young man named Ulrich (Uli) Hofius was saved. Uli started working with Keith as a volunteer until he finished Bible college and then came on staff in 1974. Some of his first evangelistic experiences included conducting outreaches in Austria. He also took some summer teams to Vienna in the

early '90s. He married Anne in 1976 and they have been ministering together ever since.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, which included the falling apart of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, very quickly changed the map of Europe, with many of these countries joining the European Union. OAC Germany received many requests from churches in these countries to train their people in the work of evangelism. Uli went on numerous mission trips into countries like Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia. When Germany reunited into one country after 45 years on October 3, 1990, Keith was able to minister in the barracks of Russian soldiers in Eastern Germany before they were withdrawn.



ANNE & ULI HOFIUS



ULI AT THE SKETCHBOARD IN HUNGARY

Many of these soldiers took the gospel back to their own countries. Uli and Anne had already been working secretly with East German churches before the change and now were able to use their contacts to help these churches with evangelism training, so that they could reach out in their local communities.

Uli took over the leadership of the German branch in 1992 and subsequently officially appointed as an OAC International Evangelist. In these roles, God has used him to train and minister for many years in the following countries: Austria, Switzerland, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia (Serbia), Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakian Republic, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Ukraine. Today, he continues as the director of OAC-Missionsteams in Deutschland e.V, which translated into English means, "OAC Ministries in Germany." Through the years, staff members have included Hendrik Hofius, Frank Heinrich, and Dorothee Kluitenberg.

Uli and Anne began reaching out to the Gypsies (Roma) in Southern Hungary in 1986. At first, there was no fruit until around 2012 when the first Roma came to Christ. Since then, many Roma have trusted Christ and are following Him. From this small group, several house churches have been formed. Rev. & Mrs. Georg Bayer are permanently working there



ULI USING OBJECT LESSON TO SHARE SPIRITUAL TRUTH



ULI SPEAKING IN THE OPEN AIR

now, which is partly supported by OAC Germany. Prior to this, a Roma couple, Mr. & Mrs. Jozseph Olah, where part of the work for a short time. Several times a year, Uli has the opportunity to visit and preach in Hungary.

Work is also going on in Slovakia, which is covered in a separate chapter.



IT'S A GREAT BLESSING TO HAVE VOLUNTEER WORKERS

Regarding modern-day evangelism in Germany, Uli writes, "Street evangelism, in the traditional sense, is no longer as easy as in former times. People in this generation aren't as open anymore and only like to stop shortly [briefly] to hear what we have to say. However, there are still good opportunities during city festivals and similar occasions. In such situations, we are happy to help local churches be present at such events and to reach the people in their area."



SHARING CHRIST THROUGH THE USE OF STORY CARDS

Although Uli and Anne are the only full-time OAC workers currently in Germany, they do have a wonderful core of volunteers who work with them. They work closely with local churches, and Uli often has opportunities to preach in them and helps to equip folks in reaching out into their communities. They also run seminars in sketchboard preaching and other methods of evangelism. Additionally, Uli speaks in Bible colleges and helps other organizations to train their people to reach out with the gospel.



TEAM MEMBER USING ARROW ILLUSTRATION

In the summer, they offer young Christians the opportunity to participate in three missions. This gives young people the opportunity to experience outreach so that others can learn about Jesus Christ. These three missions take place in June at Kiel Week, in July at the campsite at the Ulmbachtalsperre and in August at Lake Balaton in Hungary. With over three

million visitors, Kiel Week is the largest folk festival in northern Germany. In a fascinating maritime atmosphere, Uli and Anne lead the team in conducting creative missionary activities on the waterfront. The group is housed together for the entire week and enjoys the blessing of being a unified community.



SUMMER WORKERS REACHING THE BEACH CROWD IN HUNGARY

At the Ulmbachtalsperre campsite on the edge of the Westerwald, they organize effective children's programs and live on the "Kirchwiese," a meadow in the middle of the campsite. There, they also hold their programs for youth and adults and every Sunday morning church services in the open air.

The Balaton (Plattensee) in Hungary is the largest inland lake in Central Europe. There, they design and conduct children's programs on the beaches in the afternoon and programs for adults on the waterfront

promenades in the evening. All these programs are translated into Hungarian, so Hungarian and German tourists can be reached at the same time. As a team, they live in a holiday home on the southern shore of the lake.



PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL IN KIEL

In Northern Germany, a big sailing regatta takes place during the Kiel week festival mentioned above.

During this week, ships from all over the world arrive, and about three million people attend this event. The whole town is also filled with festival activities. There is a long promenade where they have been

able to conduct open-air meetings each year for the past 30 years! They print special tracts to distribute and have team members help them with this special outreach.

At another annual event called Stünzelfest, about 15,000 people show up to look at animals of all sizes in a village, which has only 70 inhabitants. This event has been taking place since 1832 near Bad Berleburg. They are able to conduct programs to explain the gospel for children and adults in between the rabbits, hens, cows, horses, sheep, and a host of other animals! You can see on the sketchboard the words "Right or wrong" and different statements, so for example, **God is dead / People will go to heaven / Jesus lives / I'm a good person / Forgiveness is secure.** They are able to have many good opportunities to speak with the people in this way.



ANNE HOFIUS AT THE SKETCHBOARD DURING STÜNZELFEST

