

Ruta Sprogis – Labored in Germany

First Missions

Western Europe – Germany

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First of all, I want to say that I haven't written the following to receive sympathy, but to show that these experiences were the means of leading me to enjoy things that are of eternal worth

My parents had a farm in east Prussia, Germany, near the Baltic sea. Until 1945 all went well for us, but then the Russian Front came nearer and we had to flee. But the Russians were much quicker than we were and my father was taken away to their prison. They took away all our possessions. We became poorer and poorer. Mother had us 3 children, my 2 brothers, one 2 years old and the other 3 and I was 7 years. We came as far west as the river but the bridges had been destroyed so we had to turn back. During the next year we made our way back to our farm but there was nothing there. The Russians had taken all. Mother and I had to take turns going begging.

My parents were God-fearing Protestants. Mother often told us stories from the Bible and about Jesus. What she told us about Him made a real impression on my young heart and I had a great desire to get to know Jesus. I told mother this and she answered, "Pray to God, perhaps He will show you Jesus in a dream." But I never had such a dream. She said, "Have patience, perhaps the time will come when God will show you Jesus."

In 1947 my father came back from Russia prison camp and then again they began to farm on a small portion of the land that had once belonged to us. In 1948, on Sunday morning, some armed men came and took us all on a wagon to the town of Memel, where a train of cattle wagons was waiting for us. We were 70 to 80 people in such a wagon, old people, parents and children, all together. The doors were shut and the train moved off to where we didn't know. We were two weeks in this train and finally arrived at the town of Kraanokarsk, a town in Siberia.

After three days in barracks, we were taken to a ship and we traveled 24 hours on the river Jenisy, until we came to another river called Angara. There on the shores of this river we stayed 10 days and nights. Every day we received something to eat, all in one pot, and then we traveled farther. The river was about two kilometers wide. The district looked rather nice: mountains, woods, wild trees, little villages made up of primitive huts.

After another two weeks we came to the end and landed in a little village 1,000 kilometers from the nearest city and 1,000 from the nearest road or railway. A large group of people waited there for us; they were singing, Russians. We were taken into barracks, many people together.

After three days, those who were able to work were taken away to another village 18 kilometers away and there they had to work felling trees in the woods, men, women and youths, and my father was among them. Once a week they were allowed to come home to their families. On Sunday evening they had to return. Mother and we children stayed in the barracks. We didn't have very much to eat and everyone was hungry, so we had to go into the woods and gather berries and mushrooms.

One day my mother went out to gather berries and never came back. Then the need in our family was still greater, I was then ten years old and had the responsibility for my two brothers who were then 5 and 6. I gathered berries and mushrooms, ears of corn and I sometimes even stole potatoes from the fields. We always looked forward to the weekend when father came, although he could bring us hardly anything, we were glad to have him there. We were always the first to stand on the shore to wait for the boats coming in, and were always the last to leave on Sunday evening when he went away.

A lot of people died in that time because of the great change in climate, hunger and work. After three months we were allowed to go to where father was and live with him in a little room in the barracks. That was something very special for us to be with him every eve.

The winter was very severe, and my brothers became sick. There were no doctors, no medicine, no help. One of my brothers died in December 1948, and the other in February 1949. They died really of hunger and cold. We prayed a lot in these experiences. Their death made a great impression on me and I began to question, "Why do we live? What is the purpose of life? What does the future hold for me?" Everything seemed so dark, as dark as night.

In the autumn of 1949, my father married again, a German woman, also a refugee. The circumstances were so that I had to leave them and went to work for a Russian family who had two children. There I received enough bread and potatoes, and I also learned the Russian language. I even went to school in the mornings. In the afternoons, I looked after the children, and in the evenings I did my homework. Once a week I visited my father. We loved each other. I was with the Russian family 4 years, and they were quite good to me. After that I returned to my parents, the circumstances had improved. Now and again I felt the desire to see Jesus and get to know Him, but I could not think how this would ever come about.

In 1956, I could return to Memel, but alone. My father and stepmother were not allowed to come with me. My father thought it was better for me; he didn't want me to live under such difficult circumstances with them, and thought I could get a better job there. So in July 1956, I returned to Memel to my stepmother's sister. They did not have much either, and I had just what I had saved and what my father had given me, which wasn't enough to go to a higher school to learn anything. So I had to look for work as soon as possible.

My first job was on a building; digging and carrying bricks and cement to the second and third floor. There were no cranes there in those days, and as much was expected of women as of men. After two months I had the opportunity to work in the household of a family and there I learned to do housework their way. The lady was the head of the lingerie department in a large store. After 3 months she suggested I work in her store, as she needed an honest girl. I was very happy for this opportunity. I got to know more people, and different experiences among young people, but I could not enjoy the world as other young people did, and I still had the desire to get to know Jesus.

In 1956, Chancellor Adenauer visited Khrushchev in Moscow and discussed the matter of prisoners and refugees from Germany and then made a law that the Germans who could prove their nationality and had relatives in West Germany could go to them. My mother's sister was already in West Germany. They had more success in fleeing; and through the Red Cross she found out where we were, got the necessary papers for me, sent them to my parents in Siberia, and to me in Memel.

In October 1958, I came to my aunt in West Germany, near Hamburg. It was like fairyland to me, and I thought, "Now I have reached the land where I will be happy and have all I want." I had to begin to learn the German language because I had forgotten it. By this time I realized that this fairyland didn't give me what I had expected and what I needed, and then I began to look for Jesus. I went to church and then to other meetings. Everywhere I heard the Word of God, but not His life, and I was still dissatisfied.

In 1959 my parents also returned from Siberia and found a place to live in Bremem. Quite near to them, the brothers put up their tent, **Arnold Scharmen, Horst Schulz and Jim Jennings**. So my parents were the first to attend. In August, I went to live with them and in September also attended the tent mission. At that time, the brothers were **Carl Leonhardt, Horst Schulz, and Waldemar Dettman**. These meetings brought me into fellowship with Jesus. Germany didn't satisfy me, but the Kingdom of God did. My parents, sorry to say, didn't accept the Truth and tried to destroy the life of Jesus in me, but God helped me, just like He helped Mary and Joseph to care for this life.

In 1970, my stepmother died. I came home when she became ill to care for her. After her death, the sisters had Gospel meetings in our home. My father listened every evening, but still didn't accept the Truth. Three years later it was again necessary for me to come home because of my own health and meetings were held again. This time God could open the blind eyes of my father. He severed his connections with all other religions and began in simplicity to serve God. Now he is in hearty fellowship with God and His children. The meetings are held in his home, and his home is open for the workers. This is a great miracle to me and I am thankful .

(Ruta Sprogis' companion asked Ruta to write out her testimony so as to share it with her home folks. I thought it so interesting and wanted to share it with you. Ruta labors in Germany. Her father is dead now. He left the home to a professing aunt so meeting is still in the home.)

Wolfgang Klussmann writes that Ruta Sprogis, who laboured also in Siberia, where she grew up, has been seriously ill and very weak. Some of the sisters have stayed with her all through this time. Ruta passed away in Germany December 28, 2001.

Ruth Sprogis – Germany

Her Companion's Account of Her Testimony

I'd like to acquaint you with the youngest sister worker in Germany, Ruth Sprogis. She is 27 years old, truly a genuine, godly girl. She, along with her companion, **Anne Markle**, visited us recently. I asked Ruth to give us her testimony, and it touched my heart so deeply, I want to share it with you.

Ruth was Born in East Prussia, the oldest of three children in the family. She had 2 younger brothers. Ruth remembers, as a child, that her mother often told her about Jesus, who helped people in their need, and who went about doing good. When she was about 7

years old, she said to her mother one morning, “Mother, I’d like to see Jesus.” Her mother answered, “Pray, my child. Perhaps God will show you Jesus in a dream.” Ruth went to her room and did that, but the next morning she returned to her mother and said, “Mother, I prayed for God to show me Jesus, but I have not seen Him.” The answer was, “Just keep on praying, my child. Perhaps someday God will show Him to you.”

The family lived on a farm, but at this time, conditions were already bad enough so that there wasn’t much to eat. Ruth had to go from house to house begging for food. It wasn’t long till one morning the Russians came and announced that they should get ready. In an hour a car would come and take them away. No reason was given. At the appointed time, the car arrived, and the family was taken captive. Along with 70 or 80 others, they were put aboard a train... on the way to Siberia. It was a 2 week trip. For the children, it was a new and exciting experience...a chance to see a little of the world, and nothing mattered, just as long as mother and daddy were along. Many became sick and died on the trip...others were born.

Upon arrival in Siberia, they were put off the train, and they lived under the open sky for 10 days and nights. It was June, but the nights were icy cold and it often rained. Food was very scarce. Along with many others, Mrs. Sprogis became very ill...she also had heart trouble. At the end of 10 days, all were led into a village. There the Sprogis were given a room to stay in. The father worked in the mines and was only allowed to come home weekends. Mrs. Sprogis wasn’t able to go in search for food, so each morning at 3:00 Ruth had to get up and go into the woods, with other women, to gather berries, mushrooms and herbs. At this time, Ruth was about 8 years old. They could hardly go later on in the day because of the heat and poisonous mosquitoes.

One afternoon when Ruth returned from the woods with her berries, her little brothers, 5 and 6 yrs. old, told her the mother had gone with some others into the woods to look for food. But when those returned with whom the mother had gone, Mrs. Sprogis was not with them. The women said they had lost sight of the mother and assumed that her pail was full and that she had returned home. At this time, Ruth was 10 years old. She, along with some of those women there, went back to the woods to search for her, without avail. Darkness fell upon them, and they had to return home, sick at heart.

The father came home that evening, and Ruth said it was a sight she’ll never forget. He looked into the room, saw the 3 children huddled together, crying, and when he was told what had happened, he collapsed. The next day, he and some of his friends set out to search for his wife, but found no trace. They assume she was either eaten by wild animals, or that she sank in quick sand. This happened in August.

The father had to return to the mines, of course, so the 3 children were left alone. Three whole months they stayed alone, only seeing the father once a week when he was allowed to come home. Each day, Ruth went seeking enough food to keep the 3 of them alive, until snow came, which was in September. Each time the father came, he brought two small loaves of bread, which Ruth carefully divided, so that each had a little each day. At the end of 3 months, the father was able to secure a room in the barracks where he worked, so the children moved there with him.

In December of that year, the youngest boy, who had just turned 6, died of starvation and cold, and in the following February, the other boy, then 7, became very ill, and because there was no medication, he also died. Ruth saw all this and in her young heart, she cried out to God. She remembered what her mother had told her, that Jesus helped people in their need and she felt so alone and in need...she prayed that God would send Jesus to help her...but He did not come...there was no help.

Things began to go a little better for them, naturally speaking. Ruth and her father were able to have a little garden and raise a few chickens, etc. In 1958 the ruling was made that those in West Germany who had relatives who had been taken captive in Siberia, could get papers to have them freed. So Ruth’s mother’s youngest sister in Hamburg did this and Ruth and her father returned to the west. The father remarried and the family moved to Bremen. Ruth worked away from home, in a bank, I believe.

A tent went up close to where Ruth’s parents lived in Bremen, and the parents attended the meetings. They were impressed by what they heard and wrote for Ruth to come home, so she could hear it, too. This she did, and after conventions, when the tent went up again, Ruth went to the meetings also. She was now 21 years of age. **Carl Leonhardt, Waldornar Dettmann and Horst Schulz** were in the tent.

Ruth had completely forgotten the German language in the time she was in Russia, so at this time she was just in the process of relearning the German and couldn’t understand so much of what was said in the meetings. (She had attended the Russian school for 7 years. and they were forbidden to speak German.) However, she said, for the first time in her life, she saw Jesus. Carl was able to speak Russian with her between meetings, which meant much to her.

Even though the parents attended the tent mission each evening, they went to the Lutheran Church each Sunday morning, and Ruth had to go along. Her father was very strict. But the time came when Ruth saw she couldn’t continue going both places; so one Sunday morning, her father came to her and said, “Ruth, get ready. We’re going to church.” Ruth looked at him and said, “No, father. I’m not going any more.” Her father was astonished at her answer, and fell to his knees, weeping and pleading. Ordinarily, Ruth would have then given in. Her love for her father was so great, but she thought, “I cannot.” She went to her room, weeping... got down on

her knees and prayed that God would help her to have strength to do the right thing. She opened her Bible and it fell open to Matt. 10, where Jesus said, "If ye love father or mother...more than me...ye cannot be my disciple." To her, this was the answer. She arose, put on her glasses, so no one could see that she had been weeping, took her Bible and went to the park to await time to go to the Sunday a.m. meeting in the tent. That scripture was her testimony that morning. From that time on, her parents turned very bitter and never attended another meeting. They have made it very hard for Ruth, but she remains true.

At the age of 24 years, she entered the Harvest Field. The strong dislike Ruth had in her heart for the Russians, who brought so much suffering and grief on the family has now turned to a deep love for the souls of those people, and her greatest desire is to carry the Gospel to Russia...to help them to see Jesus, as she has seen Him.

Truly, the work of God in a human heart is wonderful. It's a miracle!

Ruta passed away in Germany December 28, 2001