



July 26, 1954

127 Ninth Avenue, North — Nashville, Tennessee

BAPTIST WORK IN GERMANY

Fifth in a Series

BY: J. W. Storer

We left Zurich on last Monday for Berchtesgaden and the chaplain's retreat, pausing at Stuttgart for Sunday. Then on July 8, we left for what has been the busiest leg of our journey. When we drove up to the Europe Hotel at Heidelberg, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Clarence Q. Jones met us and signed us in. His home is in Muskogee, Okla., and he is a veteran of many campaigns--Europe, Japan, and Korea. A very real Baptist gentlemen. Early the next morning Eherhard Schroeder, the head of our German Baptist Publishing House, together with his wife, was at the hotel to drive us down the Rhine, a trip which took us all day. He was in the states for the Baptist World Alliance at Cleveland and visited Ridgecrest--won second prize in the writer's contest, so he said. He speaks excellent English and is one of our very best German Baptists--never was tainted with the party tag during the Hitler regime. It is impossible to find any who will admit it now, but the Holland and Norwegian pastors had no hesitancy at Rieschlikon in naming some of the Baptist preachers who were--and they say still are. As I have indicated before the memories are still strong, even if it is nine years since the end of fighting. One can understand why after seeing some things for example, one of my young men in Tulsa, a very fine and active deacon, was a colonel with the first group that got to Dachau, April 29, 1945. He has told me of what he saw, but it seemed too horrible to believe. We took a short detour after leaving Munich on our way from Berchtesgaden, to go to Dachau. The U.S. has a kaserne there. We went out to the crematories where were burned the prisoners who were starved to death, clubbed to death, or shot--20,000 of them. Then there were those who perished in the gas chamber. Of the 250,000 men of all races who were confined there, 70,000 perished. Twelve thousand of them being Jews, 33,000 were liberated April 29, 1945, the rest were released or transferred--and people don't forget these things. The Nazis responsible were not all brought to justice at Nurenberg by any means. Yet the people of the beautiful little village, a town rather, swore that they were unaware of what was going on out at the ovens on the edge of town. That does not make sense. All this was a gruesome thing and I only cite it to give substance to the statement "hatred embers still are there." But Schroeder was not, as to be sure, many, many other Germans were not members of the Nazi party.

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The Rhine country is so beautiful--old crumbling castles are still on the banks of the Rhine and the commerce is heavy on the river. Railroads and autobahns on either side of the river. Rest assured that West Germany is strong--give it five years more and it will control Europe. It is the opinion of the military that with a German army equipped with American aid all fear of Russia will be needless. You just can't keep a people who have the know-how down. France is through and England is no more the roaring lion--watch out for Germany. And so far as one can judge by the things one sees and hears, a resurging Germany is to be welcomed, providing the atrocities which were so unspeakable in Holland, Netherland, Norway, etc. can be eradicated from her life. I don't think economic treaties, sanctions, or barriers, will do that--only the gospel can. And do not look to the state churches or Roman Catholicism to supply the gospel. Rome is too busy playing politics to care about anything but might, always has been and don't fool yourself, always will.

Enough of that for now. On Saturday, Chaplain David Weaver, another of our good Baptist chaplains, came for us and drove to Kaiserslautern. There we visited a struggling little band of Baptists, most of them refugees from East Germany. The young pastor has the framework up for the church building, but has reached the end of his finances. How I did wish I could have given him what he needed. We went to see a lovely German Baptist family, and sang together "Blest Be The Tie That Binds"--they in German, we in our brand of U.S. English. They (the chaplains of that area) had arranged a dinner for us at the officer's club, and the C.O., General Reber, and his charming wife sat with us at the head table. He is not a Baptist but was most kind in his words of commendation for our chaplains in general and Baptists chaplains in particular. After dinner Chaplain and Mrs. Weaver drove us to Baumholder (about 200 miles) where he is base chaplain, and where I was to preach on Sunday morning. We got to bed about 11:00 p.m. both of us very tired. After service at 11:00 a.m., which was rather formal until it got to me, I was never starved for such, we had a hasty lunch and drove another 200 miles to Karlsruhe, where I had the evening service and my soul was thrilled when some fourteen people (all military) confessed Christ--it was a blessed hour indeed.

Then we drove another sixty miles to Heidelberg and a Pepys says "so to bed." Only that old rascal had not been to church!

You will understand that all over Germany we have these military establishments, for security reasons, numbers are not revealed. But they are here--make a peg down

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on that. And I have been on live kasernes, where in event of an alert things of all branches would be moving within minutes and right now it is the only thing that stands in the way of another war. Our installations are road blocks against Russian aggression and our people back home ought to realize this. If our country ever had to suffer as these nations have we would appreciate more what they have gone through, and I wonder if we could take it. We have grown mighty shy of anything that smacks of hardship. Ruins are still in evidence in all these cities of any industrial or transportation importance -it will take years to clear it up. In the meantime, the empty shells of once great buildings, cathedrals, etc. must be a daily reminder of what terrible retribution the blasting London took when the goose step was in power. This city of Heidelberg suffered little--it was a great hospital center and then too the educational culture was, and is, so widely known. I have not yet been about the city much, save to the post chapel of which Chaplain Harry Hand, a Wake Forest man, has charge. He is another of our Baptist chaplains of whom I am proud. By the way, last night at Karlsruhe, the chaplain in charge, James C. Sherwood, was largely responsible for the wonderful service we had. He is leaving the service and returning to the States in September. He is most worthy, and fully qualified to give out of a tremendous experience in combat, East and Europe, as well as peace time to some church preaching and pastoral experience, by which they could richly profit. The German brethren tell me that the army chapels have a spiritual impact and life that is sadly missing from the German churches which go through the motions (slow) and have the form without meat so characteristic of lands long cursed with church state combinations. It is ritualistic, and the only places where what we call "an invitation" is given, are in the military chapels, and by the chaplains.

I have met men from all parts of our land--they keep you long after the service is over asking about this place or that person--it makes you long to love them in your heart. This is not to say there are not those of a sorry stripe--there are, and there are many moral problems, grave and sinister. One of the worst is in the marital realm, where men with no moral fiber have let all holds go and disgrace the name of men and the flag that floats over them. I talked with a lovely Japanese girl the other night whose marriage took place in Japan. When her husband was transferred over here "shacked up" as they call it, with a German girl, by whom he now has a baby--and the poor Japanese girl has to face it--what can she do? Yes, the "sad discussion of sin" goes on over here believe me.

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But, the great majority of our men are decent and live as near as they can to the ideals their mothers taught them. Alas, there is the increasing rub-- the short circuiting of these things back home. It is almost too much to expect that these young men will acquire over here, what they did see was a living reality back home, in mom and dad, and in, God help us, us preachers.

We will not go to Berlin as was scheduled. I am too tired as is Mrs. Storer, and we are going to rest here until Thursday, July 15, when we leave from Frankfurt for London. We will leave London, Monday, July 19, 8:00 p.m. and are due home in Tulsa at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday. Fast flying, but you see we gain time going west. Perhaps, I shall have time for another letter from London. But please know that we are aware of the prayers which have gone up from the many members of the Southern Baptist Convention for us on this strenuous trip, and that we are grateful for them.

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