

The Baptist World Congress at Berlin.

THERE were many doubts and fears as to the wisdom of attending the World Congress of Baptists at Berlin, but some three hundred of us felt that we ought to go, and we started by special train from Liverpool Street on August 3rd. The journey was delightful. Having a special train and boat meant that we were all friends and could speak one to another without waiting for introductions of a formal kind. The voyage was comfortable and some of us were almost sorry when the Hook of Holland was reached. Here we waited some time while the Customs people interviewed our leaders, but ultimately the boat was cleared and we got aboard another special train en route for Berlin. I have heard since of the wonderful night's rest some had, but such did not come my way, for just as I was dropping off to sleep I was roused with a request to say what money I had. I was too sleepy to comprehend really what was being said to me, but I pointed to my bag hanging on a hook and the man did what he thought well with it.

With daylight we were able to realise how widespread was the sorrow for the death of President Hindenburg, for every house we passed, whether in town or village, or merely isolated farm, seemed to be displaying a flag. I am bound to say that this gave the towns the appearance of being *en fête*, until one noticed the black ribbons fastened to the ends of the scarlet flags.

We were an hour late arriving at Berlin, and were welcomed by German Baptists wearing coloured armlets. These friends were extremely anxious to be of use, and many delegates staying some distance from the station were glad of assistance. Those of us who were bound for the Hotel Continental saw our hotel from the station entrance, and had only to cross the road to find our temporary home.

Being an obedient person, as soon as I had settled into my room, I went to the bank to draw some German money, and then made my way to the Congress Hall some four miles from the centre of the city. There is no need to say anything of the city of Berlin. Those visiting it for the first time were entranced by its beauty and we were especially struck with the wealth of trees in every street. Berlin is a city of trees. The Congress Hall was one of a series of vast halls erected since the war for exhibitions and similar gatherings. There was a wonderful

flower show in the hall next to the Congress Hall, and this attracted many delegates from the morning sessions of the Congress. There are a dozen or more of these halls of varying sizes, and many of them have restaurants attached. Our hall had several restaurants, and these were fully occupied most days of the week.

The first meeting of the Congress was timed to begin at two o'clock, but for some time before that, delegates had been struggling to get their congress hymn-books, programmes and badges. These cost ten marks, and for the first couple of days admittance was difficult without the card which was enclosed with the other things in a large envelope. Supervision was not so strict after the early meetings, and we came and went without showing anything but our badges.

The vast hall was a wonderful sight when the first meeting began. The walls were hung with the flags of all nations, the swastika, of course, being specially prominent. At the back of the platform was a large banner bearing pictures of Spurgeon, Carey, and Oncken standing beneath a Cross, by the side of which were the words, "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism. One God and Father of all." Every part of the world seemed to be represented in the vast audience. Some delegates were dressed in the picturesque costumes of their countries, and these added to the beauty of the scene.

We began with a hymn which all of us sang in our own tongues. I was in a crowd of Germans, but I sang lustily as did they. The effect to anybody outside the hall must have been strange, but to us who were singing it was a great experience and made us realise afresh that the love of Jesus Christ transcends differences of tongues, colour and races. We stood a moment in homage to the dead President of the German people, and then Dr. Simoleit, the Vice-President of the Baptist World Alliance and President of the Elders of the German Baptist Union, suggested that a message of greeting should be sent to the President of the Alliance, Dr. John MacNeill, who had taken a great share in planning the Congress, but who was detained in Canada through illness. Mr. Aubrey followed by suggesting that a message of sympathy should be sent to Mr. Herbert Marnham, the Treasurer of the Alliance, whose illness is so deeply regretted by us all. We also sent our sympathy to Dr. Whitley, whose work as Minute Secretary is well known. His place was taken by Rev. R. L. Child, of Broadmead, Bristol, and I hope he received the hearty thanks of the Congress for his week of hard labour.

Dr. Simoleit, speaking in German, went on to welcome the Congress to Berlin, as did Rev. F. Rocksches, a representative

of the German Baptist Union. These speeches were translated sentence by sentence for the benefit of those of us who had not much German, and this naturally took much time. A civic welcome came from the Deputy Burgomaster of the city. Parts of his speech were remarkable to English ears, for his speech was a long eulogy of the present régime. He stressed the work which had been done for children and the unemployed by the present administration, and pleaded for sympathy and understanding of Germany's problems at this time. The Reichsbischof, Dr. Müller, sent a greeting from the Protestant Church of Germany. In it he said, "It is the Church which is conscious of its responsibility that can face other denominations honestly and frankly." Other speakers followed, most of them far too long. It was late when Dr. Rushbrooke rose to reply on behalf of the Congress. His speech was a model of tact and discretion, as well of warm Christian feeling. He acknowledged the warmth of the greetings, but said that he would have to challenge some of the speeches on religious as well as political grounds.

At the end of his speech, Dr. Rushbrooke read a message which was to be sent to Reichskanzler Hitler. It expressed the sorrow of the Congress at the death of President Hindenburg, their sincere and prayerful desire for the welfare of the land, and thanked the people of Germany, and especially of Berlin, for the welcome and hospitality extended to them. Dr. Rushbrooke and the Congress have been severely criticised since for having sent this message, but the bulk of the delegates at the Congress thought it only common courtesy.

The roll call was taken so late that it could not be concluded on Saturday. Some seventy countries were represented, and the only European country not represented was Russia. Greetings came from Africa, Ceylon, Burma, Palestine, Syria, Siam, U.S.A., Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Brazil, Chili, Dutch Guiana, Australia, New Zealand and many other places. This part of the proceedings ought to have been very impressive. That it was not was due to the fact that many delegates thought that to give a greeting meant to recite their life histories. At the next Congress this matter will have to be dealt with, or we shall need a fortnight instead of a week to get through the business. The Rev. Gilbert Laws was one of the very few speakers who remembered that a greeting meant a greeting and not a speech. He did very well in a few sentences.

At the second session Dr. Rushbrooke had a great reception on rising to present the Report. This dealt with the detail work of the Alliance and spoke of the essential unity of Baptists throughout the world. It was a fine report and was received with enthusiasm. Seeing Dr. Rushbrooke through the Congress

week one realised anew what a great soul he is and how much the Alliance owes to his statesmanship and constant endeavour. Before this session Dr. Rushbrooke spoke over the radio, and at the end messages were broadcast by Dr. Truett and others.

Sunday morning was wet, and being unable to find anybody going to the church I wanted to visit for the nine-thirty service, I waited and accompanied some American Baptists to the American Church to hear Dr. Beaven. This is a beautiful building and there was a large congregation. The form of service pleased me greatly, for we had in it only two hymns. The service began with the Doxology, and I liked the order of it. Dr. Beaven is a fine preacher, and I shall not readily forget his address.

Very large crowds gathered at the Congress Hall for the Young People's demonstration, which was addressed by Mr. Aubrey. His address has been printed in the *Baptist Times*, and it was exceedingly effective. Looking at the vast audience I felt that no man could face an audience like that without being compelled to give his very best. The singing was fine.

On Monday morning the subject under consideration was "The Nature of Christ." Addresses were given by Swedish and New Zealand speakers, and the Rev. B. A. Nag, of India, opened the discussion which followed. Mr. Nag was one of the most popular figures at the Congress, and every time I saw him seemed to be signing autograph books.

On Monday afternoon various sectional meetings were held, and I spent the afternoon as a member of the Nominations Committee considering names for the new Executive. It was interesting work and I enjoyed it. Monday evening's session was a missionary one, and under the chairmanship of Dr. Simoleit, speakers from Denmark, China, Argentina, Camerouns and the U.S.A. took part.

On Tuesday morning the Congress meeting was suspended while we listened-in to the funeral service of President Hindenburg. A portrait of the old man stood on the platform wreathed with evergreens. We listened to the Chaplain of the German Army, to Hitler, to guns firing, and to a verse of *Ein feste Burg*. We stood for a moment in silence, and I think that all of us prayed for the German people at this time.

The women's meeting on Tuesday afternoon clashed with a drive which had been arranged, and few British women were at the meeting. It was a very large gathering, presided over by Mrs. Armstrong, of U.S.A. Many delegates came to the platform to bring a greeting from their countries, and again it seemed that most of them did not understand the meaning of the word greeting. Three of the ladies spoke for forty-five

minutes each, so that their speeches became wearisome. The leader of the Baptist women of Germany, Frau Berta Gieselbusch, spoke in English, and made a deep impression by her charming personality. She gave us a warm welcome and assured us of the interest of the German women in our work. Dr. Rushbrooke paid a hurried visit to the meeting and told us that it had been decided to increase the number of women on the Executive of the Alliance by five. That will give seven women a place on this body, and I am very pleased that I am one of them. The British Baptist Women's League are sure of representation on the Alliance committee for the future, I think.

The women's meeting was the most orderly of the week! Most of the meetings were constantly interrupted by boys selling ices, chocolates, postcards, newspapers and even cigars, and this going on before the Sunday evening meeting considerably upset some of the British delegates. It is only fair to say that there was considerable improvement in this respect as the week went on. The merchants were absent from the women's meeting. They probably realised that women have no money to fritter away on unnecessary things.

On Tuesday evening we were invited by Dr. Newton to hold the next gathering of the Congress at Atlanta, Georgia, and told that President Roosevelt had seconded the invitation. This was, of course, accepted, and we go to America for the next Congress.

Wednesday morning's session was one of the best of the week. The Hon. Corwin Shank was in the chair, and he insisted on order being observed in the hall, and also instituted a time limit for speakers. Principal Nordstrom, of Sweden, Rev. C. E. Wilson, of England, and a negro, Dr. Nabrit, were the speakers. The closing address was given by Dr. Beaven on the subject of Christ, the Giver of Peace. It was beautifully phrased and was received with enthusiasm.

On Wednesday evening most of us at the Continental Hotel did not attend the Congress, but after an English dinner at the hotel, held an informal meeting in one of the lounges. This was the idea of Rev. S. W. Hughes, and it was a delightful evening. He took the chair and gave us some reminiscences of Dr. Clifford. Mr. Grey Griffith and Rev. Pearce Carey also spoke, and we sang some hymns to Welsh tunes. All of us enjoyed the fellowship and were the better for it.

On Thursday morning we heard of conditions in Russia. This address had been prepared by Rev. F. Fullbrandt, but was given in German by his brother. The address was much too long and the speaker had to be stopped when he was only two-thirds or so through it. It gave a very clear idea of the terrible conditions under which Russian Christians, and particularly Russian

Baptists, are now living. Rev. E. A. Payne spoke about "Anti-God propaganda," and did exceedingly well. He had to read his address much too fast to keep within his time, and it was here that one regretted that so much time had been occupied by other speakers earlier. The third speaker was Dr. Dodd, of U.S.A. His subject was "The Gospel for To-day," and he spoke with torrential eloquence which roused us all to enthusiasm.

The addresses were followed by a very carefully drafted resolution on Peace and War. Dr. Truett moved this in a few sentences, and I had the honour of seconding it. A dissentient note was struck by a visitor from California. He did not seem to disagree with the official resolution, but did not think it went far enough. He seemed to be one of the large army of people who want something done, but never seem to know quite what is to be done or by whom it is to be done. He was supported by a lady from Mexico, but the resolution was carried by a very large majority. It was rather remarkable that mine was the first woman's voice to be heard at the Congress apart from the women's meeting, and I was not on the programme. I hope the new women on the Executive will see to it that women get some share in the programme of the next Congress. So many brethren seem still to be of the opinion that women should be seen but not heard.

On Thursday evening a Spurgeon memorial meeting was held. This proved to be one of the largest of the week. The platform was occupied by a very large choir, which rendered selections from various oratorios. Rev. Gilbert Laws presided, and the speaker was Principal Percy Evans. No better choice could have been made, and my only regret was that he could not be given longer time for his address.

On Friday morning the speakers were Dr. Friden, of Sweden, and Dr. Bela Udvarnoki, of Hungary, with Dr. Dakin, of England, as the third speaker. The meeting closed early, as most of the delegates were going on an excursion to Potsdam. This was very pleasant, though palaces are very wearying when one has seen a few rooms, I always think. Sans Souci was delightful, and all of us enjoyed the excursion by boat before joining the motor-coaches again for Berlin. We reached the city by seven o'clock, and most of the delegates went to the Hall for the closing session of the Congress.

The last meeting was presided over by Dr. Truett, the new President of the Alliance. Delegates were delighted to hear the American Ambassador, who is a Baptist, and has a Baptist minister for a brother. He was cordially welcomed to the Congress, and in reply said that our coming to Germany at the present juncture must have a tremendous influence. The

speakers at the meeting were Dr. Clifton Gray, of America, Dr. Simoleit, and Dr. Rushbrooke. The last speaker had a reception which showed how much the Congress appreciated all the hard work he had done to make the gathering possible and such a great success. The Congress ended with the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus.

Looking back on it, the outstanding personalities seem to me to be Dr. Truett, of America, Dr. Simoleit, of Germany, and Dr. Rushbrooke. Dr. Truett has a great following and is a dominant personality. He will bring strength to the Alliance as its new President, and all of us wish him well in his great task. Dr. Simoleit is a great soul and a most attractive personality. German Baptists are fortunate in their leader, for he gave me the impression that he was not easily ruffled and that he realises always that in quietness is his strength. Dr. Rushbrooke was wonderful. He guided the Congress with much skill when guidance was necessary, and he was always ready to say a word to anybody who seemed to want to speak to him. All leaders are not like that.

The Congress was excellently served by its interpreters, Dr. Müller, of Brooklyn, and Pastor Grimm. They had a difficult task with some of the speakers, but they did their work well, and with their help the language difficulty disappeared, and English and German speaking people alike were able to understand most of the addresses. Contrary to my expectation, I did not find the printed addresses helpful. It was so difficult to keep up with the speaker that one lost all sense of the address while struggling to find the place.

The attendances at the meetings were remarkable, especially when one remembers that for the most part the weather was exceedingly hot, and that the hall apparently was without any sort of ventilation. Baptists, however, are tough folk, and we sat hour after hour listening to addresses till we could listen no longer. I am looking forward to the official report to refresh my failing memory.

It is difficult to estimate the effect of the Congress upon Germany, or indeed upon Berlin. The German papers gave us a certain amount of space, although all controversial matters went unreported, but it will be readily understood that the death of the President made heavy demands upon newspaper space, and we were somewhat blanketed by this happening.

We experienced no sort of trouble. On the contrary the German people seemed only too anxious to be helpful to us. I had to ask the way several times, and was guided by people most kindly, some of them indeed going out of their way to make sure I was on the right road. We were given complete liberty of

speech and used it. While much at our meetings was not reported, the German people present at the meetings listened without resentment to all that was said.

It is not possible to say anything about the state of things in Germany at this moment. There seem to be as many different views as there were delegates. What struck me about the city was that it was a place without laughter. Nobody seems to have time to smile. I did not see any children at play in the streets as one sees them in this country. I saw plenty of children, but they were being taken in companies to look at statues and buildings. But I dare say if I had visited other parts of the city I might have seen plenty of playing children. Berlin struck me also as being a city of uniforms. I never before saw so many young men in uniform of various sorts. Most of them seemed so conscious of their uniforms that they had no joy of living. Of course, I may be mistaken.

The ban on some English newspapers seemed to be curious. I tried many times to buy a *Daily Telegraph* and failed. I could get a *Manchester Guardian*, however, and the *Times* and the ever-present *Daily Mail* were on sale at our hotel. Dr. Carlile has told in the *Baptist Times* of the ban on that paper.

There was little opportunity of seeing anything of the work of Baptist women in Germany. On Thursday afternoon, however, a small party of us went to the Home of the German Sisterhood. The Sisters wear a curious uniform of black cloth, very hot-looking in such hot weather as we experienced. They also wear a large white cap stiffly starched. They seemed to be more like Sisters of Mercy in what they did than our Church sisters, for they do anything necessary in a home. They will stay in a home for a fortnight or so to let an overworked mother get a holiday, secure in the knowledge that the children are being properly cared for. They also do similar work to that done by our Women's League, while a body of Deaconesses do Church work in various parts.

We were very warmly received and entertained to coffee in the garden while we listened to speeches and singing by the Sisters. It was a great pleasure to me to express the thanks of the foreigners present, and in doing so I said that we should be delighted to see any of the German Sisters at the Church House if any of them ever came to England.

I have returned from the Congress prouder than ever of being a Baptist. I have returned resolved to do more than ever before to win disciples for Jesus Christ, for I am convinced that what Germany and the whole world wants at this time more than anything else is a revival of spiritual religion.

EVA BROWN.