

Ceremonial closure

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Prof. Dr. A. Rohn,

Président du Conseil de l'École Polytechnique Fédérale à Zurich,
Président de l'Association Internationale des Ponts et Charpentres.

*Gentlemen of Bavaria and the City of Munich,
General Inspector and Congress President,
Ladies and Gentlemen.*

We have almost reached the close of the second Congress of our International Association. In eloquent words the representatives of a large number of states have spoken of their impressions of hospitality in the German Reich and the work done there by our German colleagues. I now venture to *sum up* briefly the impressions gathered, if only for the purpose of having them included in our Association's archives with the minutes of this meeting.

At the Opening Meeting in the Reichstag Conference Hall in Berlin the close contact between the headquarters of the Association and the German Organising Committee revealed that this Congress was prepared in a thorough and exemplary manner. And it has been carried through every bit as efficiently as it was prepared. Seldom has a scientific congress combined hard work with excursions, inspections and social gatherings in such a well-balanced way as this one. Last evening, in fun, I mentioned the inevitable signs of fatigue.

Permit me to summarise briefly the *main events* of this assembly:

During the week between October 1st and 7th nine working meetings were held, all of which were well attended. The well considered resolutions submitted to the Final Meeting in Berlin bear testimony to the amount and quality of the work done. I want to thank the German Organising Committee for the *technical preparation of the working meetings*. My thanks are also due to the experts of 20 nations who, in response to the appeal of our Secretaries General, contributed articles to Preliminary Publication and papers to the discussions. I thank our Secretaries General and Technical Advisers for their hard and unstinted work of the past few months. One must have been in the thick of it oneself during this brief period of Congress preparation to be able to realise what it means to publish a Preliminary Publication of more than 1600 printed pages in three languages. I thank the German Organising Committee for their substantial financial assistance, which enabled this Preliminary Publication to be published in all three languages and now enables us to issue the Final Report. I thank the printers, *Dr. Wolf & Son*, of Munich, for the excellent *printing work* in three languages which they achieved in so short a time. And, finally, I thank all our collaborators at headquarters in Zurich who have performed so much strenuous work during these last months.

Difficulties of no lesser magnitude than those connected with the actual preparation of the scientific Congress were presented by its *organisation* in Ger-

many — this in view of the magnificent frame proposed for it by the German Government and the President of the Congress, Inspector-General *Dr. Todt*.

At the opening ceremony of our Congress in Berlin, on October 1st, I mentioned the words in which the Chancellor of the Reich recently described *Dr. Todt's* activities. Now that we have been able to view some of his creations near Berlin and Dresden, between Schleiz and Bayreuth, and, finally, between Munich and Berchtesgaden, our colleagues from abroad will certainly share the opinion expressed by the Chancellor. In the organisation of this Congress, too, *Dr. Todt* has all through drawn upon the two aspects of his character, viz. the ideal cultural and the practical-realistic, which distinguish him as a road constructor. We should like to thank him most cordially for all he has done and had done. It is to him, in the first place, that we owe the splendidly smooth functioning of this assembly, its scientific successes and its spiritual and cultural influence, which has touched each of us personally.

All the time during this assembly you have been able to observe, among *Dr. Todt's* collaborators, the never-failing devotion of Ministerial Councillor *Schütte*. Obliging and courteous, he has been ever ready to help and to smooth the way. His closest collaborators, too, Messrs. *Sommerer* and *Langner*, have earned our warmest thanks for their splendid work.

In this expression of gratitude to our German colleagues I wish to include the name of that prominent German bridge-builder, Privy Councillor *Dr. Schaper*. Let me express here the recognition of the Congress for this revolutionary achievements.

On the evening of October 1st we were the guests of the City of Berlin. The consequence of that congenial evening was that we at once began to feel at home on German soil. Next day we were the guests of the Inspector General for German Roads and the Director General of German Railways. That evening, spent in the regally appointed halls of the Kroll Opera House, revealed to us our hosts' love and understanding of art; it also showed us that in the German Reich the *rail* and the *road* co-operate most harmoniously in the *realm of bridge-building*.

On the afternoon of October 3rd we had a choice of seeing either the latest bridges constructed in the neighbourhood of Berlin, or the huge Reich Sports Field.

On Sunday, October 4th, the majority of our Congress members paid a visit to the Lock at Niederfinow, completed two years ago and enabling barges of 1000 tons to negotiate a difference in height of 36 metres.

On Monday, October 5th, only a restricted number of Congress members, of course, could witness the inauguration of the Rügen Dam across Strela Sound. On this occasion, too, Director General *Dr. Dorpmüller* was kind enough to mention our international association of bridge-builders. Here, too, Congress members were honoured by an extremely kind welcome on the part of the German Railway Authorities. On the same evening we were the guests of the German Government in the National Opera House and treated to a brilliant performance of the "Rosenkavalier".

On Thursday evening a number of Congress members were able to attend the opening of the 1936/37 Winter Aid in the huge Deutschlandhalle and witness there the completeness with which the Führer of the German nation transmitted his impulse to his people.

On Thursday, October 8th, we began our beautiful journey through Saxony, Thuringia and Bavaria. First of all we were received, in just the same hospitable manner as in Berlin, by the Lord Mayor of Dresden in the Town Hall; then, after some sightseeing in Dresden and its surroundings, we spent the evening at a performance of "Die Fledermaus" in the Opera House, and the character of the opera just matched our own jolly mood.

On Friday various sections of the German Motor Roads between Dresden and Bayreuth were inspected. At the Saale Bridge we were able to get a glimpse of a large stone bridge under construction. Everywhere along the route, just as yesterday on the trip from Munich to the frontier, we could observe the outstanding technical feats accomplished in the construction of these Motor Roads, and in addition the effective manner in which the highway is fitted into the natural beauties of the landscape. It may be stated that a drive over the German Motor Roads is in the first place one of scenic enjoyment. But in order to pass just judgment on this question one must first hear Dr. *Todt's* own explanations of the many various artistic aspects of primary importance.

In Bayreuth we were unfortunately only able to imbibe the Wagnerian atmosphere for a very short spell. And finally, in Berchtesgaden, where an overcast sky veiled the beauties of nature, a general desire was expressed to re-visit this lovely spot in Upper Bavaria as soon as possible and to make its closer acquaintance when it is unveiled.

Last evening Bavaria and Munich revealed themselves in their hospitable, artistic and genial character to those members of the Congress as yet unacquainted with these qualities. This final evening formed a grand finale to the receptions which have distinguished this Congress.

Finally, we are holding our today's closing meeting in the Congress Hall of the world-famed German Museum which, in a manner that is perhaps unique, represents the evolution of engineering. We are grateful for being allowed to close an engineering congress in this house.

Ladies and Gentlemen: The history of the Second Congress which I have just summarised is as well known to you as it is to me. The reason why I have put it down on paper is, as I have already mentioned, because it is to have its place of honour in the proceedings of our Association.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

We have received the impression that everywhere in the German Reich we were given a special welcome as constructors and bridge-builders because the fundamental idea of our work so well matches the reconstructive will of the Third Reich, and because — as was particularly pointed out last evening by the Prime Minister — there is at present a special need for that spiritual bridge-building furthered, outside the sphere of politics, by scientists and practitioners.

In grateful recognition of the splendid organisation and carrying through of this Congress by the organs of the German Reich, I believed myself to be acting on your behalf when, yesterday, I sent the following telegram from Berchtesgaden to the Chancellor of the Reich:

“Before the closing of the ten-day Congress of the International Association for Bridge and Structural Engineering I have the honour and the pleasure to express the sincere and respectful thanks of this Association — and in particular of its 600 foreign Congress members — for all the measures taken in Germany to ensure the splendid success of this Congress. This association of engineers is especially grateful for the opportunity provided it of viewing at close quarters the roads and other constructions of the Third Reich; these constructional feats have found the highest recognition everywhere as a magnificent combination of traffic organisation and creation of labour.

On behalf of the International Association
for Bridge and Structural Engineering:
The President: *Rohn.*”

Already last evening I received the following reply:

“Professor *Rohn*, Regina-Palace Hotel, Munich.

My sincere thanks to the International Association of Bridge and Structural Engineering for the words of greeting which you, Professor, have transmitted to me. May the past days have shown all participants that the new Third Reich is putting forth all its strength to create works of order, of progress and of peace. With this in mind I greet all the participants in the assembly now closed.

signed: *Adolf Hitler.*“

We are especially indebted to the Chancellor of the Reich for having replied to our telegram of thanks with these kind words of greeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there remains but one more thing for me to do, and that is to bid you goodbye and good luck until our next Congress, which — God willing — will be held in 1940. Several invitations have already been received. You will be informed as to the place and date of our next meeting as soon as ever possible.

With this, its second Congress, behind it, our Association looks into the future with renewed strength and fortitude. May the future preserve this strength for us and develop our Association into a fount of ever-growing international spiritual and cultural co-operation.

Relatively speaking, the duration of this Congress was long; however, thanks to the splendid organisation and hospitality accorded none of our members has felt that it was lasting too long — on the contrary, we were enabled thereby to form very valuable and profound contacts, above all of a personal character. Incidentally, there has seldom been a congress of such a length that held together so compactly till the end.

Rest assured, my dear German colleagues, that we are all leaving your country filled with gratitude and with the desire to extend still further the relationships now formed.