

D. Closing meeting

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D

CLOSING MEETING
SCHLUSS-SITZUNG
SÉANCE DE CLÔTURE

Reichstag Assembly Hall of the Kroll Opera House

Berlin, October 7th, 1936, 3 p. m.

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Address by the President of the International Association for Bridge and Structural Engineering.

Prof. Dr. A. Rohn,

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

*Inspector General,
Ladies and Gentlemen.*

In accordance with the programme of our Congress as issued to you, the final meeting of our Berlin proceedings takes place to-day in this ceremonial room, and the ceremonial final act of the Congress — whereat an opportunity will be given in particular to the representative of the foreign countries to speak — will take place in the Congress Hall of the Deutsches Museum in Munich on Sunday next, at 11 a. m.

In accordance with the programme we have held nine working meetings, three of them devoted to steelwork, three to reinforced concrete, two to free discussions on both these fields of engineering, and one on foundations.

To-day our principal business is to establish the conclusions from the reports and discussions of the working meetings. The first part of this closing meeting of our working agenda will deal with these conclusions, and will afford an opportunity if necessary for further observations thereon.

In the later course of this closing meeting we shall ask you to deal with the question of the constitution of the next congress, in the light of our experience here.

A first draft of the conclusions has been given out to you some few days ago in three languages, this being the text prepared by our General Secretary, as far as possible, before the Congress, on the basis of the papers submitted.

These drafts for the conclusions have, as far as possible, been read out at the conclusion of the working meetings, and moreover those participating at these meetings have been invited to propose amendments to the drafts of the conclusions in writing.

Subsequently to the working meetings, the Working Committees responsible for the arrangements met again in order to draft the conclusions in the light of the proceedings at the meetings themselves, and of the proposals which had been submitted to them in writing.

The text of the conclusions which have been issued to you to-day — printed in German and French and typewritten and duplicated in the English language — unfortunately does not correspond in all respects with the conclusions as drafted by the Working Committees. The last meetings of these Working Committees could not be held until yesterday evening, after the order for the printing had

already partly been fulfilled. This observation applies particularly to Question II, which relates to reinforced concrete.

In regard to the closing meeting to-day, we propose to you the following arrangements. The General Secretaries will read out the drafts for the conclusions as prepared by the Working Committees in German. As regards Question II for which, as just mentioned, the conclusions were amplified at the last moment, a French translation will also be given.

In regard to the remaining questions we are unfortunately compelled, through lack of time, to abstain from any translation. We therefore request those members of the Congress who are not familiar with the German language to read through the French or English text which has been handed out to them, while the German text of the conclusions is being read out aloud. It is hoped that you will be pleased to agree to this procedure and with the draft of the conclusions as now issued, although it will not be possible to enter upon any discussion of the text of these conclusions in this last assembly, but we nevertheless wish to give you the opportunity of bringing forward and briefly supporting further amendments to the wording of the conclusions. It is impossible, however, to discuss such amendments in such a way that it would be necessary to put them to the vote, and the amendments will therefore be dealt with at the next meeting of the Permanent Committee of our Association, to be held immediately after the final report has been printed. The Permanent Committee will then determine the final text of the conclusions for insertion at the end of the Final Report in accordance with the wishes so expressed.

Before we go on to explain the conclusions in the way I have outlined, I shall be grateful if you will signify your agreement with this procedure.

We now pass to the detailed consideration of the conclusions which relate to Questions I to VIII respectively.

(Messrs. *Karner* and *Ritter*, General Secretaries, here read out the conclusions relating to the various Working Meetings. The text of these conclusions will be found in Section C, above).

At this stage I attach great importance to the holding of a brief discussion of the way in which this Second Congress has been carried out and on its scientific results, with particular reference to any observations that may be put forward in regard to the technical and scientific organisation for our third Congress which it is intended to hold in the year 1940.

I should particularly like to emphasise that even should the answering of this question give rise to criticisms the latter will apply only to the Central Office of our Association, which accepts responsibility for the technical and scientific execution of our agenda.

I believe, also, I am myself in a position to express the most important observations likely to arise:

You will doubtless have reached the opinion, like ourselves, that in the future it will be necessary to delimit more rigidly the scope of the subject matter to be handled at the Congress so that more time can be allowed for free discussion, and that prepared discussion should relate more closely to the particular question under review which is treated in the papers.

The same thing was already experienced at Paris in 1932, and we have endeavoured as far as possible, therefore, to take this point of view into account in the preparations for the present congress. The difficulty of limiting the number of questions and prepared discussions in this way lies in the fact that during the preparation for the Congress expression was given on all sides to wishes which, on grounds of international courtesy, we did not always feel able to resist. We had, as far as possible, to take account of the wishes of prominent people in all countries, and there was a further difficulty in the fact that often these wishes were made known to us only at the last moment.

I believe, however, that such observations made in the course of our Working Meetings as may have given ground for criticism are none other than may be observed at every large international congress.

At the same time, we shall receive with special thanks any suggestions proposing new ways of procedure and calculated to raise the efficiency of our Congresses, and will willingly test them. In this spirit I ask you to bring to our notice any observations that may have occurred to you in the course of our Working Meetings.

At the termination of our Berlin working agenda I should like to express my pleasure in the sustained high attendance at the Working Meetings. Despite the fact that the receptions and excursions to which we have been invited here — regarding which I shall have more to say on the occasion of the ceremonial closing meeting of the Congress in Munich — made great demands on the “resistance” of the members of the Congress, nevertheless the seating capacity of the beautiful great auditorium of the Physics Building of the Technische Hochschule was always very well taken up. We are able, therefore, to record with pride that our young Association has given proof at this Congress of a notable spirit of keenness and pleasure in its work. There can be no doubt that an important part of the explanation for this favourable result lies in the circumstance that the Technische Hochschule was able to place at our disposal an auditorium particularly well adapted to awaken pleasure in one’s work. For this auditorium, and for the numerous other rooms in the Physical Institute of the Technische Hochschule, in Berlin, we offer our thanks to the University and its Rector.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I believe that the prosperity of an international scientific association depends, particularly at the present time, on the spirit in which its cultural work is performed. From this point of view I should like once again to express to all our members who have participated actively in the scientific preparation for our Congress — representatives of at least twenty countries — our thanks for their valuable collaboration. Our thanks to our Secretaries General and their collaborators, and to our technical advisers and others, I shall express in Munich.

But our trust in the future development of our Association is supported also by the working spirit manifested at our nine Working Meetings. As a result of the excellent and laborious preparations for this Congress made by the German

Organising Committee, our Association has been placed on a road which it must never again leave. The thanks which I owe on this account to the German Reich and to the German Organising Committee I will express at the ceremonial closing meeting at Munich. Today I will confine myself to voicing our most sincere thanks to the government authorities and to the city of Berlin for their friendly help towards the success of this Congress. The kind welcome which we have encountered in Berlin will undoubtedly inspire many participants in the Congress with a wish to return once again, as soon as may be, and renew their acquaintance with the capital of the Reich, its population, and the mighty works of technical civilisation which they have erected!