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Autor: Gimsing, Niels J.

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Invitation to the 15th Congress of IABSE

Extract from the Invitation Address by the chairman of the Danish National Group of IABSE, Professor Niels J Gimsing at the closing session of the IABSE Congress in New Delhi:

The very successful 14th Congress of the IABSE has come to an end, so it is time to look ahead to 1996 when the next of the large IABSE Congresses will be held.

On behalf of the Danish National Group of IABSE it is a privilege and a great honour for me to invite you all to come to Denmark in 1996 for the 15th Congress of our association.

For the 1996 Congress it is proposed to use the motto:

ENGINEERING - ENVIRONMENT - ENERGY - ECONOMY

to emphasize these important aspects that should be integrated in the the work of structural engineers as we move into the 21st Century. It is, however,, not the intention to deal with these aspects in a general, talkative way but - where appropriate - to let them form an integral part of the specific sessions on structural engineering and science.

The congress will in 1996 be held in June close to midsummer so you will experience long days and short nights. Thus, at that time of the year there will be almost 18 hours from sunrise to sunset in Denmark. So you can enjoy plenty of daylight even if you are attending all of the technical and scientific sessions of the congress.

To give you an idea of the country you are going to visit in 1996 it could initially be mentioned that Denmark is the oldest Kingdom of the world as there has been a continuous row of sovereign kings - and a few ruling queens - for more than one thousand years, not even interrupted by the Thirty Years War, the Napoleon Wars or the two World Wars.

To-day the history of the kingdom is reflected in the large number of castles spread out throughout the country, but concentrated in North Zealand within reach on a one day tour from the capital, Copenhagen.

In Copenhagen the tourist will, however, also find more modest sights than large castles - such as the famous Little Mermaid at the waterfront.

As most other European capitals Copenhagen has an old city center, and here



the pedestrians have the priority as motor cars are either completely abandoned or subject to strong restrictions.

In 1996, Copenhagen will - besides hosting the IABSE Congress - also be the Cultural Capital of Europe so there will be many opportunities to combine the technical activities inside the conference halls with cultural experiences outside. However, the coincidence between hosting the IABSE Congress and being the Cultural Capital also gives the opportunity to emphasize that the large buildings and structures of our time form a very important part of the culture in the 20th Century.

As in many other countries this fact is illustrated in Denmark by many modern buildings and structures that are designed not only to be functionally efficient but also to be acceptable in the visual environment, as it can, e.g., be illustrated by some of the recent power plants in the vicinity of Copenhagen.

When you come to Denmark you should of course also try to get outside the Copenhagen area to see the countryside with small villages, old churches, farms, fields and forests.

If travelling around you will soon realize that Denmark is a country surrounded by the sea, as you cannot find a spot in Denmark with over 50 km to the sea. Also, despite the fact that the longest distance from one point in the country to another hardly exceeds 400 km, the total coastline is close to 7000 km long.

Being composed of a peninsula and numerous islands separated by water, the Danes have from ancient times been forced to rely on transportation by sea to get from one part of the country to another. Famous were the vikings (that did not really confine themselves to the internal waters) but the seafaring traditions have been kept alive to our times, and when you come in 1996 you will still be able to experience the ferries that have been an important part of the infrastructure for more than a century but are now rapidly being substituted by fixed links in the form of bridges and tunnels.

In Denmark bridges have been built for many centuries, first across narrow streams and small rivers and later across the straits separating the different islands. Initially, these strait crossings were built as pontoon bridges, but in the 1930.es a major bridge building programme was initiated to substitute a number of ferry routes by fixed road and railway links.

The first major bridge from this period was the Little Belt Bridge, opened in 1935, between the island of Funen and the peninsula Jutland. Two years later, the 3.2 km long Storstrøm Bridge, at that time the longest bridge in Europe, was completed to connect the main island of Zealand with the islands of Falster and Lolland to the south, and to improve the traffic route from Scandinavia to the

The prewar bridges were generally constructed with steel superstructures but after the war prestressed concrete became the preferred material for most of the strait crossing bridges. Only when large spans were required, steel superstructures were still used, such as in the Second Little Belt Bridge constructed as a suspension bridge with a 600 m main span or in the Farø Bridges with a 290 m cable-stayed span.

The final link in the Danish infrastructure, the Great Belt Link, will be nearing completion in 1996 when the IABSE Congress takes place in Denmark - so the construction site of this link will certainly be on the list of technical excursions.

The Great Belt Link will comprise

- the second longest underwater railway tunnel in Europe, the 8 km long East Tunnel, that will be surpassed only by the Channel Tunnel.*
- the longest combined road and railway bridge in Europe, the 6.6 km long West Bridge.*
- the longest road bridge, the 6.8 km long East Bridge, with the longest free span of 1624 m in Europe.*

But the Great Belt Link is not going to be the only major bridge and tunnel project to be under construction in the area at that time. Thus, in 1996 Sweden and Denmark are about to establish a fixed link across the 18 km wide Øresund (The Sound) between Copenhagen and Malmö. This link will comprise both an immersed tunnel, a low level bridge and a high level bridge, all for both road and rail traffic.

So it is believed that it will be worthwhile for all members of IABSE to reserve June 1996 for a trip to the 15th Congress of IABSE in Copenhagen, and as chairman of the Organizing Committee I can assure you that we will do our utmost to make your attendance a memorable experience.

Niels J Gimsing

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