



Eva Crane Trust

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A PREVIEW OF THE XVIII INTERNATIONAL BEEKEEPING CONGRESS

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I was fortunate enough to be able to visit Madrid in April 1960, as a guest of the Committee organizing the next International Beekeeping Congress. It seems useful to publish some idea of what is proposed, for those readers of *Bee World* who are thinking of attending this Congress.

The Congress is being organized by the *Sindicato de Ganadería*, the 'Livestock Syndicate', which is a Government-aided body looking after the interests of persons who raise livestock, whether cattle, sheep, goats, rabbits or bees. This Syndicate seems to fulfil functions which in Britain, for instance, are carried out either by the Ministry of Agriculture or by the National Farmers' Union; other Syndicates take care of other branches of agriculture, and of Spanish life in general. The Livestock Syndicate already has experience in running international congresses, for instance for veterinarians, and has at its disposal the *Casa Sindical* (Syndicate House), where the Beekeeping Congress will be held. Those who have an interest in Spanish art will be especially pleased about this, because the *Casa Sindical* is in Paseo del Prado, immediately opposite the Prado Museum, the famous Spanish treasure house of art.

The *Casa Sindical*, like the F.A.O. Headquarters in Rome, is a modern skyscraper building of offices, with a section of the lower floors laid out as a conference block. There is an air-conditioned lecture theatre with comfortable seats for six hundred or more, each chair having the customary headphones and dials for listening in one of several languages. There will be four official languages for the Beekeeping Congress: English, French, German and Spanish. In addition to the main theatre there are a dozen or more smaller lecture or committee rooms, some also with facilities for simultaneous translation. All of these are to be placed at our disposal. It will be the policy of the Congress Committee to offer these rooms during the Congress to specialist groups which wish to use them — such as editors, pathologists, or trade associations. This would seem a valuable service for an International Congress to give, and doubtless many organizations will take advantage of it. Applications should be made to the

Congress Secretary, whose name and address are given at the end of this article.

In the basement of the *Casa Sindical* is a cafeteria, where prices seemed to be very reasonable. In one wing of the ground floor is an excellent exhibition hall, which will be used for a beekeeping exhibition. This will naturally be concerned largely with beekeeping in Spain and Portugal; the extent to which exhibits from other countries should be invited has not yet been decided. But there will certainly be a photographic exhibition, as in Vienna, open to all countries. There is also to be a 'film festival', as in Rome, but the films will be shown in the main lecture hall during the afternoons, not in a cinema elsewhere in Madrid. Both inside the *Casa Sindical*, and in the gardens of Paso del Prado outside, there are plenty of meeting places and seats for informal discussions.

In response to requests, the date of the Congress has now been changed from October, to 25th–30th September, 1961. Although it is not so convenient to the Spanish themselves, the new date will enable many more from other countries to attend the Congress, especially those who make it part of their family holiday. This willingness to accommodate themselves to what others want is but one example of the traditional Spanish courtesy which I encountered wherever I went in Madrid. Another example is the absence of pressure on a visitor to see what his hosts would like to show him, if he would prefer to see something else—or to do nothing for a spell.

The Congress excursions are well in hand. I was taken to several apiaries and beekeeping establishments near Madrid, and in each I saw much which will interest Congress visitors. One apiary was in the grounds of the very new Artificial Insemination Centre for Livestock, just beyond the University City with its thirty thousand students. The Centre will be in operation by next summer, and visitors will probably be able to see it as well as the apiary. Here, under a group of stone pines, and with a hoopoe flying constantly overhead, I joined a class of students from different parts of Spain who were learning how to transfer bees from a cork hive into a movable-frame hive. This is not an academic exercise in Spain, for a third of the colonies are still in fixed-comb hives, mostly of cork, since this is readily available and provides excellent thermal insulation for the bees.

One of my first enquiries was about the possibility of a visit to the famous cave at Bicorp with the palaeolithic painting of the honey gatherer. It is too far to go in one day from Madrid, but an opportunity will be provided immediately after the Congress for an excursion there. The painting is not inside a cave, but on a cliff face (in an *abri*), in the mountains behind Valencia on the Mediterranean coast. It is difficult of access, but a path is to be built to it in time for the Congress, so that we can make our pilgrimage. In the Museum of Natural Sciences, I had the pleasure of meeting Señor F. Hernández-Pacheco, the son of E. Hernández-Pacheco who discovered the painting in 1920, and of hearing at first hand about it. There is some concern lest the Congress members should be disappointed when they see the actual painting, since this is quite tiny, not very clear, and also one of a group of other paintings. Sr. Hernández-Pacheco gave 6000–7000 B.C. as the probable date of the painting.

We also visited the National Library of Spain, and arranged for an exhibition to be held there during the Congress, to show some of Spain's historical treasures of interest to beekeepers. I was able for the first time

to see a 1586 copy of the *Tractado breve de la cultivació y cura de las abejas* by Luys Méndez de Torres, the first man to recognize the queen bee as a female and as laying eggs ; he says that the large bee called the king is really *la maestra*—the mistress, or teacher. We also saw an edition of Jaime Gil's famous book on beekeeping dated 1621.

In the adjoining Archaeological Museum I found the Codex Troana and the Codex Trocortesianus, with their stylized designs of hives and bees—and of fermenting mead. These are two of the very few survivors of all the writings of the Maya civilization in Yucatán in Mexico. It may be possible to include these also in the exhibition in the National Library.

One word of warning to those who attend the Congress : although I found punctuality to be the rule rather than the exception in modern Spain, meal times are no earlier than in former years. Lunch is usually some time between 2 and 4 p.m., and dinner from 10 p.m. onwards. A special effort is to be made for the Congress banquet, which may possibly be held mid-day instead of in the evening; the time 1.30 p.m. has been suggested as a possible compromise.

An official notice about the Congress will be published next month. Anyone who needs an official invitation from the Congress Committee, in order to obtain permission from his own country to attend the Congress, should write to the Secretary, who will understand what is wanted. The address is : Sr. Secretario General del XVIII Congreso Internacional de Apicultura, Calle de las Huertas 26, Madrid 14, Spain.
