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# Beekeeping round the world

## A preview of the XX International Beekeeping Congress

A short visit to Rumania in January has clarified various points about the Congress to be held there from 25th to 31st August. None of the preceding nineteen Congresses can have been prepared with more energy, or more determination to attract visitors to the country and to persuade them to stay as long as possible—and to make the Congress itself a resounding success. Rumanians are passionately devoted to their country; this is an enclave of mainly Latin peoples surrounded by Slav and other races, and throughout their history they have suffered as a result of having more powerful neighbours.

The Communist Party of Rumania has been active ever since 1921, but the present Communist state only dates from 13th April 1948, shortly after which all industry, mining, banks, etc. were nationalized. The present constitution is modelled on that of the Soviet Union. Until very recently travel restrictions were such that few foreigners visited the country and even fewer Rumanians left it, but the situation is now different, in that there is a planned development of the tourist industry, which is a valuable source of hard currency. Visitors receive a great welcome, due partly to the Rumanians' natural hospitality and partly to their isolation for so many years from western European and other peoples with whom they have affinities. Beekeepers attending the Congress in Bucharest are thus assured of a very real welcome.

All visitors will be impressed by the strength and activities of the Rumanian Beekeepers' Association (Asociația Crescătorilor de Albine din R.P.R.) which is host to the Congress. Although it has a superficial resemblance to national Associations in non-communist countries, the scale of its activities is very different, and may make some of the hard-pressed Association officials from other countries very envious indeed. There is inevitably a difference between the workings of such bodies in communist and capitalist countries; here in Rumania there are two added factors. Up to 1957, when the present Association was founded, beekeeping was still suffering from the war and its after effects, and was undeveloped and 'unorganized', so there was great scope for organization and expansion. Added to this, the Association has been managed by a man with enormous drive and imagination—Professor V. Harnaj, who is now Chairman of the Congress Committee and will surely be the Congress President. Professor Harnaj is by profession a water engineer, but every spare moment he has must be spent in thinking or working for the advancement of beekeeping in Rumania.

The Association began its *economic* activities in 1960, and from that year seems to have had a virtual monopoly of the 'means of production' of the beekeeping industry, except that by prior legislation the Beekeeping Institute (just across the road from Bucharest Airport) has the monopoly of making wax foundation. The Association manufactures and sells all beekeeping supplies, including not only hives and other equipment but

also pollen supplements, which are known as 'biostimulators'; foundation is bought from the Institute and resold; various drug preparations for treating bee diseases are distributed in the same way. All these are sold to the collective and state farms (known as the socialist sector), and individual beekeepers (the private sector), whose honey is in turn processed by the Association for the government-controlled food shops. The Association adds further to its income by selling royal jelly preparations to the public; at the moment cosmetics are the best money maker.

The work of production and distribution is done by a paid staff of 700; at headquarters in Bucharest there are 120 office workers (who are doing the clerical work of organizing the Congress, including sending out the multiplicity of brochures and forms). There are 17 regional branches, each with 7 or 8 employees; these are subdivided into about 150 local branches with 2 or 3 further staff each, who run the beekeeping supply shops, and so on. The local branch has perhaps 200 beekeeper members, the total being 40 000 for the country, representing 70% of all beekeepers. The total number of hives in the country is put at 90 000. Membership fees are nominal, and mostly go towards the cost of the Association's journal *Apicultura*, which is of course issued to all members. The Association's income is thus derived not from membership dues, but from its production and trade.

The high standing of the Association with the State is exemplified in the sites allocated to its new buildings that are under construction. These are in or adjacent to one of the beautiful parks in Bucharest—Herăstrău Park—and are an architect's dream. A rectangular building, with two long walls entirely of glass framed in hexagonal units, is being built for honey processing; a model of this building appears on the cover of one of the Congress leaflets. Another building, to be used as a showroom for beekeeping equipment, is in the shape of three adjoining hexagons, with a single central supporting pillar. These are for permanent use; a third building not yet started is being put up for the 'First International Beekeeping Exhibition-Fair' in August. Round the buildings, but probably not in time for the Congress, will be an extensive bee park and garden.

We know that many beekeepers genuinely interested in attending the Congress have been frustrated and discouraged by their inability to get the travel information they want, either in their own countries or from Rumania; instead of the answer to their question comes another bunch of irrelevant leaflets. This is not due to lack of interest in getting people to Rumania; it is simply that the state-organized machinery is geared to process organized groups by the coach load or plane load, but not individuals, with whom it has rather little experience.

A word to those who decide to go to the Congress: meal times are even later than in Spain, lunch being at some hour between 2 and 4 or 4.30, and dinner at 9, 10 or 11 at night.

I cannot finish this short note without expressing my appreciation of the hospitality of the Rumanian Beekeepers' Association, both as an organization and through the personal attention of so many of its officers. They enabled me to get a very good picture of what the Congress will be like; I feel sure it will be an occasion that no participant will forget.

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