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Veterinary Medicine in European Countries

I. A. Merchant

Iowa State University

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THE INTERNATIONAL VETERINARY Congress was held at Madrid, Spain, May 21-27, 1959. Over 2500 veterinarians from all over the world attended. The meeting was devoted to general assemblies and specialty groups. In the general assembly meetings there were simultaneous translations into four languages—English, French, German and Spanish. The members of the audience were equipped with earphones and could listen in on any one of the four languages.

Papers of general significance and world-wide importance, such as radio active fallout and general philosophy on disease control were presented. The specialized groups were devoted to detailed subjects and no translation was provided. This made it difficult for many because of their inability to understand other languages. However, interpreters were on hand and did abstract any part of the talk that was asked to be interpreted into another language. There was great difficulty in making the papers given by the Russians known to all. Finally a person who understood Russian and German was found and his interpretation in turn was picked up by the other interpreters.

The Congress permitted men to become personally acquainted with others from all over the world where heretofore only their papers or other publications had been read. I know in my case I met a number of people whom I had known through literature for a number of years but had not met them personally.

At the conclusion of the Congress I had the opportunity to visit two veterinary colleges in Spain under an American specialist program with the Department of State. In general, I found that Spanish colleges of veterinary medicine are in need of a great deal of improvement to bring them up to our level. They lack buildings, equipment and staff. However, the staff they do have seem to be very energetic and capable young men. I know veterinary medicine will improve as the livestock industry of Spain improves. The development of the livestock industry in turn depends upon the development of water resources to irrigate dry land, upon reforestation and upon the entire economic betterment of the farmer.

In Lyon, France, I visited the world’s oldest College of Veterinary Medicine. It was founded in 1762. This college shows the effects of age but has a certain amount of prestige. They realize, however, they cannot forever live on tradition alone, so are building new buildings and developing a young staff.

Also at Lyon, I found one of the large biologic and drug companies of France, the Merieux Institute, which prepares all of the foot and mouth vaccine used in France, as well as many other veterinary biologics.

Mrs. Merchant did not attend the International Congress but joined me in Paris, France. One could not visit Paris, of course, without seeing the Pasteur Institute. It was interesting to visit the room where Pasteur died, the laboratory in which he worked, as well as the crypt in which he and Madame Pasteur are buried. The Pasteur Institute is one of the largest biological laboratories in France. They are entirely self-supporting and produce biologic and therapeutic agents used in both human and veterinary medicine in France.

Just out of Paris is located the Alfort Veterinary College. This institution has made great strides in recent years. There were over 400 students studying in a very up-to-date fashion all of the subjects we study in this country, as well as animal husbandry with all of its facets. They do have improvements to make, but I under-
stand that new buildings will be built this next year which will make this institution one of the best in France.

One of the most pleasant experiences was our visit to Holland where we found a very active veterinary profession. We found the people most congenial and cooperative. Inasmuch as this country is small and has a large cattle population, it is obvious that a great deal of attention must be paid to disease. The College of Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht is well equipped and staffed. The state laboratories at Rotterdam are of a high standard. The foot and mouth disease laboratory of which Dr. Fraenkel is the director is one of the outstanding laboratories in the world.

From Amsterdam we went to Hannover where I visited the Hannover Veterinary College. This is one of the largest colleges in Germany, having approximately 500 students. This college has been almost completely rebuilt with American aid. If they had the staff to go along with the buildings and equipment they would be in excellent shape. They are short on staff and do not have the necessary funds to employ more professors.

An interesting opportunity was given to me at Frankfurt, Germany, where I gave a talk to the local veterinary medical society. I spoke in English and a lady veterinarian who worked for the U.S. Air Force was my interpreter.

At Giessen, Germany there is also an excellent College of Veterinary Medicine at the Justus Liebig University. There, too, I found new buildings but a small faculty, nevertheless over 400 students were enrolled. I gave two talks at this university to senior students in Veterinary Medicine — one on brucellosis and one on veterinary medical education in the United States. I gave these talks in English and all of the students understood me. They have 7 years of English in their high schools. This, in addition to their contact with American soldiers has made them quite proficient in our language.

Our next stop was at Munich where I spent two days visiting the College of Veterinary Medicine. Here, too, one finds new and up-to-date buildings and equipment, some of which made me really envious.

One part I hadn’t anticipated was an arrangement to visit Berlin. I was rather apprehensive about this, but there was no problem. I not only visited West Berlin, but took a complete bus tour through East Berlin, where I saw the great contrast which we read about. West Berlin is an active business area, whereas East Berlin is quiet and dead as most cities are on Sunday. Bombed and dilapidated buildings still stand. I saw the block of concrete which is all that is left of Hitler’s Reichstag. The College of Veterinary Medicine at West Berlin Free University is scattered in large homes and farms that have been donated to the university. The old Berlin Veterinary College still exists in East Berlin, but I did not visit it. I understand it is not very impressive.

From Germany we stopped at London where we visited friends and I was able to visit the Royal Veterinary College. Inasmuch as the college is located in the heart of London, only lectures and laboratory work is given, along with small animal medicine and surgery. The large animal clinic work is carried on at a field station 20 miles outside the city. They said this was a great inconvenience but was the only solution to their problem.

We took a tour of London to see all the historic spots such as Buckingham Palace, St. Paul’s Cathedral, the Tower of London and Big Ben.

In retrospect both of us look back on this trip with a great deal of pleasure because we saw so many historical spots and met so many gracious people.

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