REPORT FROM SCANDINAVIA – NO. 4

Ishpeming Pupil Visits Denmark;
Finds Copenhagen Lively Capital

(EDITOR’S NOTE - This is the fourth in a series of special feature articles written by Vincent H. Malmstrom, Ishpeming. As the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship grant to Norway, he is spending the year in research and travel in northern Europe. From time to time, The Mining Journal will publish his articles touching on various phases of life in modern Scandinavia).

BY VINCENT H. MALMSTROM

OSLO, Oct. 7 - Only a one and three-quarter hour ferryboat ride separates Sweden’s third largest city of Malmö from the Danish capital of Copenhagen. Greater Copenhagen, with over a million inhabitants, is Scandinavia's largest metropolis. But size alone is not its only characteristic of note.

Even the proud residents of Oslo and Stockholm willingly concede that it is the gayest, most lively of the northern capitals. Both Norwegians and Swedes confess that the Danes have "something" which they do not -- some spirit, zest or frivolity which they cannot match. If the tourist comes to Scandinavia looking for night-life, he will find its fullest expression here in Copenhagen.

Crowning the roster of merrymaking spots are the famous Tivoli Gardens, a sort of a combination Riverside Park, Chicago, and Esplanade concert of the Boston Symphony orchestra. One can find entertainment for all tastes within its bounds.

Comparison With U.P.

If we compare parts of Värmland and Småland in Sweden with our own Upper Peninsula, we will find a considerable similarity between these regions. By the same token, if we were to compare Denmark with some area close to, home, I think we would find that southern Wisconsin or the Lower Peninsula south of Bay City have somewhat the same over-all appearance. Denmark, unlike either Norway or Sweden (or, for that matter, the Upper Peninsula) is a land of glacial deposition. In other words, it has become the resting place of great quantities of soil materials scraped off the Scandinavian Peninsula by the ice sheets. Consequently, it has the rich soils that the rest of Scandinavia lack, just as southern Wisconsin has fallen heir to soils removed from our own area.

The parallel does not stop there, however, for among the nations of Europe, Denmark is the dairy country par excellence, just as Wisconsin boasts of being "America's Dairyland." Danish agricultural products have a reputation for being of the highest quality. Danish cheese, butter, eggs and bacon are exported in large quantities to
the industrial nations of Europe, principally England, and form the basis of the whole Danish economy. Without her foreign markets, Denmark would not be the prosperous, progressive nation she is today.

**Under Hitler's Heel**

Speaking of Danish prosperity, it was difficult to realize that Denmark, too, had fallen under Hitler's heel. Now, five years after the war, except for a couple of rationed items on the shopping lists and some grizzly blockhouses haunting the corners of her principal streets and highways, Denmark shows no signs of having suffered under the German occupation. It is not surprising that with her greater population and richer resources she had made a much more rapid comeback than Norway. The surprising thing has been the speed and completeness of this recovery. The Danes today looked better fed than even the Swedes who escaped occupation. Their shops and restaurants were just as full of delicacies and luxuries as were Sweden's and it seems to be "business as usual" once more in Denmark.

As a glance at a map of Denmark will reveal, the country is made up of a large peninsula in the west, Jutland, and a number of islands to the east. My tour took me across Zealand, the largest of the Danish archipelago and the island on which Copenhagen is located; Fyn, the stepping-stone island between Zealand and the peninsula of Jutland; and finally along the eastern side of Jutland to Frederikshavn where I caught the ship back to Oslo.

**Story-Book Land**

As is often the case, the most productive regions of the globe may likewise be the least attractive from the tourist's standpoint. In our own country, for example, one can cite the very fertile but quite monotonous corn belt of the mid-west as compared with the beautiful but almost worthless Black Hills. I don't mean to imply that Denmark is monotonous but it is plain, simple and unspectacular after seeing Norway and Sweden.

But one need not be disappointed in Denmark if one goes there looking for the story - book land of Hans Christian Andersen, for it is that. The entire country is a picture, a neat water-color of fields and sky framed by the sea.

One of Denmark's smallest islands, and actually her most remote island, is Bornholm, that lies in the Baltic Sea nearer both to Sweden and Poland than it is to Denmark proper. In point of time, I visited Bornholm before I saw the rest of Denmark, and probably that explains why the other sections of the country suffered so much in comparison. The Danes call Bornholm the "Pearl of the Baltic" and Bornholm is a gem. Perhaps I am being too categorical in saying that it is the most idyllic place I have yet visited in Scandinavia but if I had at this moment to cast my ballot for the one spot which combined the greatest beauty, variety and charm, the Danish island of Bornholm would get my vote.
Synthesis In Miniature

Bornholm is about 200 square miles in all. One could easily walk across it in a day, for no place is more than 25 miles distant from another. Yet within its confines one finds a synthesis of all Scandinavia in miniature -- broad rolling fields with golden grain and lazy brown cows; forests so dense that sunlight cannot penetrate to the mossy floor beneath; long crescent-shaped beaches of dazzling white sand, jagged headlands of red granite carved into grotesque forms by the pounding storm waves; ancient Gothic fortresses and quaint, round churches dating back to the 12th century. Against this backdrop are all the contributions of the 20th century -- modern homes and resort hotels, diesel railroad trains, paved highways and fast, efficient connections by air and sea with both Denmark and Sweden.

Surrounded by the incredibly blue waters of the Baltic, Bornholm stands like a part of Paradise on the brink of Hell. One has only to remember that the same sea that washes the shores of this peaceful playground isle also rolls up on beaches, not far distant, which are covered not by lolling bathers but by tangled barbed-wire and gun emplacements. The realization that Russian air fields lie not more than 20 minutes away is hardly a comforting thought, especially in these days of uneasy international relations. The Danes that I talked to, however, displayed little or no anxiety over their proximity to any would-be aggressors. On the contrary, they seemed more calm than many Americans in the relatively more remote mid-west of our own country. The Danes refuse to be frightened by the dark clouds that have gathered around their paradise isle. But then, what other alternative is there for a small and defenseless country on the edge of the Iron Curtain?

Pays Tribute To Norwegians

From Denmark I took a ship back to Oslo, knowing that I was leaving behind many of the delicacies and luxuries I had enjoyed both in that country and in Sweden. Norway is the poorest of the three Scandinavian countries, not only because of its initial lack of resources as compared with Sweden and Denmark, but also because it suffered the highest per capita costs of any occupied country from the German occupation -- more than twice that of France and well over three times that of Denmark.

When one realizes that, despite the adversities of its physical geography and its history, Norway still has a standard of living very nearly equal to that of its more fortunate Scandinavian neighbors, one cannot help but admire the valiant Norwegians. To build a first-class nation with the iron, timber and grain that Sweden possesses has meant considerable toil and sacrifice; to transform the morainic sands and gravels of Denmark into fertile fields and pastures has meant much painstaking labor and care; but to carve a nation out of solid rock and make it nearly the equal of its neighbors has been little short of miraculous. All fair-minded Scandinavians, be they Swedes or Danes, must take off their hats to their Norwegian brothers. Where else in the world has so much been wrought from so little?
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