

Trip report E.W.Dijkstra, Netherlands, Austria 23-31 Jan. 1985.

I left Austin on Wednesday morning, but had left UT 24 hours earlier to pay a visit to and give a talk at MCC. Title: "Computing Science's Future". I had been warned that the interview with me that the Austin American-Statesman had published at Dec. 26, 1984, had evoked rather vehement reactions at MCC and was therefore prepared to meet opposition or disagreement. But none of that! Had I convinced them? Had I addressed a bunch of cowards? Or had the opposition thought it more convenient to stay away? I think that at future occasions I shall be more aggressive. I think the time has come to state - politely but with all the bluntness required - that the American computer industry is absolutely sick and that MCC won't cure it by perpetuating all the fashionable mistakes. Public Relations may still suffice to make an actor act as President of the USA but as a basis for digital systems design it is definitely insufficient. (The artificial intelligentsia and the other soft scientists in the world of computing won't love me for this, but they don't do so anyhow.)

The flight via Houston and Amsterdam was without events and at 9:20 Thursday morning I landed in Eindhoven, where I was collected by Ria with the little VW diesel we had rented. During the day I made a number of telephone calls, took a nap, did some shopping and started sorting papers

by way of preparing our departure. I met my sons but not my daughter, who stayed in Groningen. That evening we had a few guests who came to say hello, and that night I slept soundly. On Friday morning, Ria and I completed the preparation of our departure and early in the afternoon we went to Philips Research Laboratories where I was the third speaker at the occasion of Carel S. Scholten's retirement. (I gave a poor speech; I had been upset and was probably too tired as well.) The day ended at midnight after a pleasant farewell dinner that Carel had staged at De Karpendonkse Hoeve. The day left me with very mixed feelings that would stay with me for the next few days. Much more than my poor performance - it was not the first time and it won't be the last - it was the sudden confrontation with the narrow-mindedness of (mainly) the electronic engineer. It roughly reminded me of a number of experiences I would rather have forgotten. (Such confrontations always make me wonder "What are my blind spots?".)

The next morning at 8:15, Wya van Deurzen came with her Scirocco to see us to the Eindhoven railway station (via Son, where we had to return the VW diesel). At Amsterdam CS, I had difficulty carrying our (much too heavy) luggage from the train to the KLM coach. (Later Ria proved to be an expert at finding

little lorries.) We flew to Munich, then by coach to München Hbf., from where we took an excellent train to Innsbruck. Gilbert Helmberg collected us there at 17:30 (in the same old VW station car, still going strong after 13 years).

It was very nice to meet him and his wife again, after so many years. We stayed in Gasthof Koreth - since 1493 - quite near to their house. That evening we had dinner in town with them and Arno, their oldest son; we were again amazed by the quality of their Dutch, which is astounding.

On Sunday morning, Ria and I walked to Innsbruck's old centre (and managed to visit the Hofkirche between two masses). After almost 500 years, Kaiser Maximilian is still very much present; I know of no other place where an otherwise so distant past is so nearby. It was beautiful, and so was the weather and were the mountains surrounding the city. The rest of Sunday we stayed with the Helmbergs.

The next morning, Gilbert collected me after his 8-o'clock lecture and took me to the new building of the Technische Fakultät, where I gave a lecture at 11:00. (I did Yossi Shiloach's algorithm; this time it was a smooth performance.) It was a nice audience, though the whole place - despite its 17.000 students - struck me as rather provincial: most faculty members defi-

nitely preferred to address me in German. We had lunch with a few of them. That afternoon Gilbert and Thea showed us some of the surroundings. (On an icy parking lot I lost my balance but did not break my wrist.) We stayed the rest of the day with them. It was nice and illuminating to discuss the possible futures of mathematics with a very pure mathematician; he was unaware of "Leibniz's Dream" and the degree to which it is coming true.

On Tuesday morning we continued our journey to Vienna. (We were already in the train when Thea Helmberg came by to bid us farewell; we were surprised and touched.) In Salzburg we were joined by Unkel Fritz (= F.L. Bauer from Munich); when he heard we came from Innsbruck, he immediately asked "Do you know Helmberg?". We could reassure him. The train took us through Austria and Southern Germany, and it was again beautiful. In Vienna we were greeted by Heinz Zemanek who had come to the railway station to collect Unkel Fritz; Heinz took us all three to our hotel (in a by definition old and accidentally very dirty Citroen ID, with leather upholstery: I had never seen that before).

The next forty hours we would live in the immediate vicinity of the St. Stephansdom in the heart of Vienna. After having been offered goulash in the "Bierklinik", we spent the evening in the

Zemanek apartment at Blutgasse 3, again beautiful: a lovely mixture of (very) old and (very) new. As the evening went on, we met more and more old acquaintances, among whom Mike and Peggy Woodger, whom we had not seen for quite some time.

On Wednesday we had in the great auditorium of the Austrian Academy of Sciences - yes, complete with baroque paintings all over the ceiling - the festive symposium at the occasion of Heinz Zemanek's retirement (from IBM). Unkel Fritz gave a nice talk on "Whence and whither informatics?". Some talks were purely beatification of Zemanek - I don't think they would have been possible elsewhere - some talks were ridiculous. Academician Prof. B. Sendov (Bulgarian Academy of Science) spoke on "Information and Knowledge"; his main point was that, as all intelligence is based on knowledge, artificial intelligence had to be based on artificial knowledge. Prof. R. Trappl (University of Vienna), while speaking on "Cybernetics and Artificial Intelligence" gave a plea for peaceful use of artificial intelligence (such as equipping the hot line between Washington and Moscow with bi-directional automatic translation between English and Russian "so as to avoid misunderstanding between superpowers at critical moments"). He had founded the Austrian Society for Cybernetics.

later generalized into the Austrian Society for Cybernetics and Artificial Intelligence, but -vide the peaceful use- bandwagons are presumably his true specialty. At the end of all this, Heinz Zemanek gave a very nice closing speech, tempered sarcasm being part of the survival kit of the sensitive.

On Thursday morning we took an early taxi to the Vienna Airport. Via Amsterdam and New York we flew to Austin. (The last flight was so bumpy that even the purser got pale; quite a few passengers clearly got afraid.) With a delay of $1\frac{1}{2}$ hour we arrived in Austin just after midnight. It was bitterly cold. But our luggage had caught all connections.

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