

OBITUARY

AUGUST WERNER HUGO VON HEIDENSTAM, who was born on 29 April, 1884, died on 27 July, 1966.

Educated at Karlskrona, Sweden (his birthplace), he studied in Stockholm at the College of Technology, graduating in road and hydraulic engineering in 1905.

Early experience was in Stockholm, where his two years with a firm of consultants in hydraulics, Vattenbyggnadsbyrån, prefaced a long association. On their behalf he was sent in 1908 to America and a year later to China, where he worked for a subsidiary company of the firm in Shanghai: the Swedish Asiatic Consulting Engineering Company. In 1910 he was appointed Chief Engineer to the internationally controlled Shanghai Port & River Commission, and for the next 16 years continued in this capacity. The weight of experience gained as head of river regulation and port works on the great Yangtze waterway, plus his own outstanding ability led to his becoming a member of various river commissions, including one controlling traffic on the Yangtze: from 1915–28 he was also Consulting Engineer to the Min River Commission, Foochow, and to the Kwantung Conservancy Board, Canton. In 1921 he was made Chairman of an international committee of experts formed to develop the Port of Shanghai, and three years later came to London to liaise his own firm, Vattenbyggnadsbyrån, with the consulting engineers Rendel, Palmer and Tritton, in the field of hydraulics. One result of this co-operation was the Perak River hydro-electric power scheme in Chendoroh, Malaya—a project completed in 1930, when Von Heidenstam returned to Stockholm after his six years in London. He became a partner of Vattenbyggnadsbyrån and so continued until his appointment in 1936 as Swedish Ambassador to Iran and Iraq (resident in Teheran), a position he held until 1942, when he returned to Stockholm to embark on a third career—as a civil engineering contractor. Here he spent the remainder of his life.

Between the two world wars, Von Heidenstam served in the Reserve of the Royal Swedish Corps of Engineers, from 1936 with the rank of Lt Colonel.

His career as a diplomat gathered momentum from 1930 onwards: on the Oder Commission he represented Sweden (1930–37) and was a member of the League of Nations Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs from 1933–36. He was on the Board of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in London from 1928–32.

He presented several papers to the Swedish Society of Engineers and to the American Society of Civil Engineers, of both of which he was a member. Other publications included one on the Huang Poo River Improvement (Shanghai) and on the Yangtze–Kiang Estuary.

A man of unfailing charm and striking figure, Von Heidenstam combined success in three careers—as civil engineer, ambassador, and engineering contractor—surely an unique achievement.

He was elected direct to membership in 1921.

He is survived by his widow and four children.