Book reviews

Multilingual dictionary of concrete

A compilation of terms in English, French, German, Spanish, Dutch and Russian

compiled under the auspices of the Fédération Internationale de la Précontrainte

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The FIP, which exists to promote international co-operation and understanding in the field of prestressed concrete, has taken another step in furthering this aim by sponsoring this dictionary. In fact, the work was initiated by certain engineers in STUVO, the Dutch member group of FIP, who compiled a list of terms in Dutch and English. Co-operation was then sought and obtained from the member groups in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, Spain, the USA and the USSR.

The arrangement is as follows. There is a 'Basic Table' of 1416 numbered terms in English (with a number of cross-references), each accompanied by its translation into French, German, Spanish and Dutch. This is followed by separate alphabetical indexes in French, German, Spanish and Dutch, each entry quoting its number in the Basic Table. Finally there are separate numerical and alphabetical indexes in Russian. (The Russian numerical index is the Russian part of the Basic Table kept separate, reasonably enough in view of the expense that would have been involved in marrying the two different kinds of printed characters.)

Is it truly a dictionary of concrete, not just of prestressed concrete as one might expect in view of its origin? The Preface, by the Special Commission appointed by STUVO to compile the Basic Table,

explains that reinforced concrete has been included because the two are so often used together. Many terms common to both and therefore useful to someone interested either in concrete the material or in site practice are included: for example, creep, heat of hydration, microcrack and strain gauge, or air-entraining agent, measuring cylinder, tamp and weigh-batching.

There are no separate English and American sections, but the dictionary was vetted on both sides of the Atlantic and alternative terms are sometimes included with cross-reference. In the general sense, there could be a little more cross-reference: cover (to reinforcement), for example, occurs only under 'concrete cover' even though there are entries for cover as a verb. Each reader will think of words that might have been included. Perhaps the existence of mild steel is no longer admitted. With several other entries under 'mix', it would have been useful to have mix design.

However, although perfection is not achieved, to have brought the enterprise to a successful conclusion is no mean achievement. The result is well worth having on — and off — the shelves of all who try to keep abreast of foreign literature on concrete subjects.

ANTHONY E. BROOKS