

The History of the CIAV

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The International Conference for the Conservation of Vernacular Architecture, held in 1975 in Plovdiv (Bulgaria), required in a resolution the creation of an "International Committee on Vernacular Architecture" (Comité International d'Architecture Vernaculaire" - CIAV). The requirement being accepted by the Executive Committee of ICOMOS the committee was created in 1976 and started working in 1977. The permanent seat was installed in Plovdiv/Bulgaria. As the first President, Mrs. Prof. Dr. Rachele Anguelova, made a significant contribution to the successful work of the committee, assisted by Mr George Delchev as Administrative Secretary. In November 1977 the Executive Committee elected the 12 permanent members, completed by 10 associate members following the recommendations of the National Committees.

The founding members were Prof. Dr. Rachele Anguelova (President, Bulgaria), Dr. Boris Gnedovský (USSR), Dr. Max Gschwend (Switzerland), Panu Kaila (Finland), Jan Kantar (CSSR), Marc Laenen (Belgium), Dr. Eric Mercier (UK), Prof. Dr. Nicolas Moutsopoulos (Greece), Dr. D.St. Pavlovich (Yugoslavia), Dr. Georgeta Stoica (Romania), Andras Roman (Hungary), Prof. Haluk Sezgin (Turkey), Dr. J.M.G. Valcarcel (Spain), associate members coming from the Federal

Republic of Germany, Denmark, the Democratic Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Canada and Australia in addition to the permanent members, from Bulgaria, CSR, Turkey.

The regular annual sessions of the CIAV have been held in different places and countries (1977, 1978, 1979, 1985, 1989 in Plovdiv, 1980 in Smoljan, 1981 in Lovetch, 1984 in Sandanski and Melnik - all in Bulgaria, 1982 in Istanbul and Izmir, 1986 in Istanbul and Ankara, - Turkey, 1983 in Helsinki and Seinäjoki, Finland, 1987 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1988 in Petrosavodsk, Karelia, Russia, 1990 in Austria and Switzerland and 1992 in Brauweiler, Germany). There is no doubt that all the activities of CIAV would not have been as successful without the very important financial support given by the Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS and the Bulgarian Government until 1992, for the permanent seat in Plovdiv with administration, secretary and library (founded by the contributions of all the committee members), for the travel expenses of the President and the organizations of 7 regular sessions in Bulgaria (including the subsistence expenses for the permanent members). At the same time the regular budget of the Executive Committee of ICOMOS was essentially released by this indirect contribution of Bulgaria. It should be

mentioned that all the other sessions have been organized and financed by the ICOMOS National Committees of the hosting country.

Besides these sessions usually combined with scientific colloquies or conferences the members of CIAV attended in 1979 a national conference in Plovdiv on "Complex Preservation Methods for Historic Cities", in 1980 a joint conference and excursion with the Wood Committee of ICOMOS in and through Switzerland and a conference of the Czechoslovakian National Committee of ICOMOS in Bratislava on the Protection and Conservation of Vernacular Architecture in Slovakia. Under the auspices of the Greek Minister of Culture the Technical University of Saloniki and the IBI organized in 1981 in Santorini a symposium on "Vernacular Architecture on the Islands of the Aegean Sea" with active participation of CIAV members. In the same year during the annual session of CIAV the National Institute for Cultural Monuments of Bulgaria held a congress on the "Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of the Popular Republic of Bulgaria" as a celebration of the 1300 anniversary of the Bulgarian State. Many other events followed over the years and every session, conference or symposium offered the possibility to study and learn different methods and problems of restoration and conservation in situ or in open air museums.

After the session in Finland 1983 a part of the committee members paid a visit to colleagues of the International Wood Committee of ICOMOS in Norway. In this way after the first joint session of the two specialized committees in 1980 active contacts have been established between them - a very remarkable fact considering that wood is the most important building material for

both committees. As a consequence the international conference on "Conservation of Wooden Vernacular Architecture", organized by the USSR ICOMOS National Committee in September 1988 in Petrozavodsk, Karelia was at the same time the joint annual session of both committees, one of the main subjects being The Preservation Philosophy for the "Kishi Pogost", an ensemble of two wooden churches, bell tower and surrounding fence (18th century) in bad condition due to wood alteration and structural problems. (Since 1990 on the UNESCO World Heritage List, ICOMOS in collaboration with the Wood Committee, CIAV and ICCROM continue to make all the efforts necessary to document and investigate the different deterioration and deformation factors and work out as soon as possible the conservation philosophy for the Kishi Pogost and implement it.)

Beside these prolific contacts the CIAV from the very beginning tried to collaborate with other international scientific organizations, part of the CIAV delegates working as link members to the ICOMOS Committee for Cultural Tourism (D. Pavlovich, Yugoslavia), the ICOMOS Wood Committee (B. Gnedovski, USSR, later Panu Kaila, Finland), the European Association of Open Air Museums (M. Gschwend, Switzerland, M. Laenen, Belgium), ICOM (G. Stoica, Romania, M. Laenen, Belgium) or the ICOMOS Committee for Historic Towns CIVIH (A. Roman, Hungary) and recently ICCROM (Marc Laenen being the Director) and the Council of Europe, Cultural Heritage Division (C. Machat).

With the Committee for Historic Towns the CIAV organized in 1989 a joint session in Plovdiv/Bulgaria under the main topic "Historic Towns and rural

Vernacular Sites and the Process of Urbanization". Focussing on the rapid ongoing changes within contemporary life and society and with the architectural heritage, the final resolution of the session pointed out both the necessity to sensitize and involve the communities in recognition, maintenance and continuance of their cultural values and to reorganize, restructure and improve the work of the two committees, studying new methods of assessment and conservation strategies and policies, to establish an international multidisciplinary network including specialists in sociology, ecology, economy, ethnography, town and landscape planning, to co-ordinate regional and local initiatives, to participate in development projects and to organize educational and training programmes.

Connected to these ideas and tasks M. Laenen, Secretary-General of the CIAV and O. Sevan from the Research Institute for Culture in Moscow drafted the international project "Regional Architecture and Cultural Development in Europe", considering the regional character of the vernacular architecture, the preservation and development problems of the historical milieu of cities and villages in contemporary society and the formation of contemporary regional architecture in the context of regional culture in Europe. Presented at the international conference on the same topic "Historic Towns and Villages and the Process of Urbanization", organized by the Union of Architects of the USSR and the Research Institute for Culture attached to the Russian Ministry of Culture during a cruise on the Wolga river in June 1990, the project was adopted. For its implementation an International Organization Committee was formed, the members coming from the CIAV (M.

Laenen, C. Machat), the Europea Association of Open air Museums (C. Zeuner), the University of Leuven/Belgium (L. Verpoest) and the Research Institute for Culture/Moscow (K. Razlogov, O. Sevan). The regular CIAV meeting held in autumn 1990 in Austria and Switzerland adopted the project and put it on its agenda. In March 1991 a meeting of the Organization Committee followed in Belgium, where the participants discussed the main tasks and adopted an agenda for the future work, organizing international colloquies on the three main topics: conservation in situ - open air museums - new vernacular architecture, the active contribution to the Skansen Centenary organized by the European Association of Open Air Museums and the Skansen Museum Stockholm in September 1991 being part of it.

The conservation in situ as a part of the international project was the main topic of the international conference on "Preservation of the Rural Heritage. Cultural Landscapes and Sites in Europe", organized by the CIAV (the XIVth session) and hosted by the German National Committee of ICOMOS in May 1992 at Brauweiler Abbey, Germany in cooperation with the Council of Europe. Part of the Brauweiler conference was a joint session of the CIAV and the group of specialists on "Heritage Landscape and Sites", created in 1991 by the Cultural Heritage Department of the Council of Europe, the link being made by C. Machat as a member of both committees. As a result of the Brauweiler conference the Council of Europe in cooperation with different European Universities, ICCROM and ICOMOS/CIAV will organize conservation management training programmes on Cultural Landscapes, the first to be held in 1993 at Cologne University.

All these ideas, discussions, meetings and projects are in fact the result of continuous scientific work of committee members with an agenda including primarily the definition of "Vernacular Architecture", a dictionary on special vernacular terminology in architecture, a "State of the Art" of vernacular architecture, later the Charter of Vernacular Architecture as well as scientific publications or public relations activities. In 1980 a questionnaire on the preservation and valorification of Vernacular Architecture was sent to all European National Committees of ICOMOS, the results being reported at the VIIth General Assembly of ICOMOS in Rostock and Dresden 1984. (Looking at that report worked out by M. Gschwend and G. Stoica most of the ideas and recommendations included anticipate those of the final resolution of Plovdiv 1989). A recent State of the Art of Vernacular Architecture worked out by M. Laenen was adopted by the CIAV at the annual session in 1990 in Switzerland. The first draft for a Charter of Vernacular Architecture prepared by R. Anguelova/ Bulgaria has been presented and discussed at the regular session in Bulgaria (named "Charta of Plovdiv") in 1984. A larger fundamental version prepared by N. Moutsopoulos (Greece) followed in 1986, a short concise draft worked out by M. Laenen, H. Stovel, P. Kaila (named the "Bokrijk project") in the same year. After discussing these three different versions during the annual sessions without final results, M. Laenen, the Secretary-General at that time, presented at the Brauweiler session in Germany 1992 a new version, "Recommendations for the Conservation and Renovation of Vernacular Architecture", collecting all the thoughts and experiences from the last years of international

activities in the preservation of the "Vernacular". The committee members decided to organize a commission "ad hoc" for the final revision of the charter, which has been convoked by the President, N. Moutsopoulos in December 1992 to Saloniki and prepared the final version of the Charter.

Since its start, the CIAV has given special attention to the educational aspect of the CIAV work - exhibitions, public relations, publications etc. - to inform a larger public, especially the communities living within the vernacular heritage, on the different aspects of preservation work. A special number of the Romanian "Revista muzeelor si monumentelor" (Museums and monuments revue, No. 1, Bucharest 1979) was dedicated to the CIAV activities, with a large number of the committee members contributing papers. In "Monumentum", vol. XV-XVI, 1977, most of the papers held at the first colloquy on "The Vernacular Architecture" 1976 in Plovdiv have been published.

A first exhibition prepared by the CIAV (M. Gschwend, with H. Hiltbrand) on "Rural Architecture in Switzerland", sponsored by the foundation Pro. Helvetia, in 1980 in Romania (Bucharest, Village Museum and Sibiu), in the same year in the open air museum of Ballenberg, Switzerland and in 1991 in Sofia, Bulgaria. In exchange, in 1982 the exhibition "Romanian Rural Architecture", organized by G. Stoica, was presented in Switzerland, at Zürich (Museum for Ethnology) and Ballenberg and in the year after was included in the programme of the "Romanian-Romanche Weeks" of the Romanche League in Laax-Flims. Other smaller exhibitions accompanying different sessions or colloquies followed.

Even if the efforts made to publish the

most important results of all the CIAV sessions or meetings failed, there are good chances to have the papers held on the international river cruise on the Wolga 1990 on Historic Towns and Villages and the Process of Urbanization" published recently, as well as the "Preservation of the Rural Heritage. Cultural Landscapes and Sites in Europe", and the Brauweiler Papers will be printed in 1993 (ICOMOS Journals of the German National Committee).

Thanks to the efforts made by N. Moutsopoulos and other CIAV members from the Balkan countries, UNESCO published the volume "L'architecture vernaculaire dans les Balkans" (The Vernacular Architecture on the Balkans, No 10 in the series Etudes et documents sur le patrimoine culturel, CLT-85/WS/48), including contributions on the Greek Popular House (N. Moutsopoulos), Vernacular Architecture in Yugoslavia (D. Pavlovich), in Bulgaria (R. Anguelova) and Romania (G. Stoica). Last winter the volume "Traditional Architecture of the Balkans" has been edited by the Melissa Publishing House in Athens, Greece. A project on a collaborative work on vernacular architecture covering several countries has been prepared and presented at the annual session 1990 by P. Smith (UK). Following the proposal of the Canadian Committee on Vernacular Architecture the committee accepted at the last annual session in Germany to publish an "International Newsletter on Vernacular Architecture", a bulletin which could be published twice a year and would be an excellent vehicle to promote the activities of the CIAV and those of each country on that matter.

The CIAV has realised since its start important results in the field of study and conservation of vernacular architecture, in collaboration with international

scientific committees or organizations, trying at the same time to improve cooperation with National Committees, to coopt specialists outside CIAV or ICOMOS to the scientific work or to support the creation of National Committees on Vernacular Architecture (e.g. in Turkey). Considering the results of all the scientific achievements of its work, all the aims and tasks included in the resolution of Plovdiv 1989 and the "State of Art" of Vernacular Architecture adopted in 1990, the committee is conscious of the main task for future work and have already started to rewrite its content, its working methods, its international coordinating or cooperative task and restructure, its composition in order to become a real worldwide committee. At the moment the International Committee on Vernacular Architecture has 33 members, (one honorary and one coopted), among them three from Canada, one from U.S.A. two from Turkey, one from Australia and one from Tonga, the others being Europeans. The committee is headed since 1992 by Prof. Dr. Nicolas Moutsopoulos (Greece) as President, Prof Dr Rachele Anguelova (Bulgaria) and Marc Laenen (Belgium) as Vice Presidents and Dr Christoph Machat (Germany) as Secretary - General, the secretariat being installed in Brauweiler, Germany.