



Veliki Kalnik – ruševine vlastelinskog grada  
*Veliki Kalnik – Ruins of the castle*

## Angus Fowler

Förderkreis Alte Kirchen  
Marburg / Lahn

# ECOVAST and Its Development in Central, South-eastern and Eastern Europe

The first ideas regarding the foundation of an organization concerned with villages, small towns and rural life in general were developed at a conference of Europa Nostra (the European association of conservation organizations) in Hamburg in 1978. Various members of Europa Nostra and participants of the conference realised that up to then the work of Europa Nostra and other organizations had almost wholly concentrated on major historic monuments and large towns. The first impetus for a new organization was given by a talk of Francis Noel-Baker on roof landscapes in Greece. The idea was maintained and pursued by Noel-Baker together with the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen in Marburg at a further meeting in Brussels in 1980 and then by a visit of Francis Noel-Baker and his wife Barbara to the village of Bellnhausen near Marburg in 1983 where the Förderkreis had saved and restored the 16th century timber-framed chapel which had been threatened by decay and demolition. The Förderkreis then organized the foundation meeting of ECOVAST in March 1984 in Bellnhausen.

The foundation meeting was already attended by representatives from Yugoslavia; Professor B. Kristić from Belgrade and by a representative of the Yugoslav Review from Motovun. Prof. Kristić also attended a second meeting of ECOVAST and its working committee in September 1984 in Graz where Angus Fowler got to know Miljenka Fischer and her colleagues from the Institute of Historical studies University of Zagreb – Department of the History of Art at the congress of the Internationales Städteforum. From the beginning ECOVAST's Founder-President Francis Noel-Baker with much foresight stressed the importance of contacts with central and eastern European countries and – despite the many difficulties – of gaining members there. (For instance we correspond with Dr. Karl Baumgarten the well-known expert on vernacular architecture in Mecklenburg in East Germany, who because of the known political difficulties was not able to attend meetings.) ECOVAST's founder marks were at first mainly concerned with rural architecture and its preservation but gradually also realised the importance of the whole complex of problems of life in the countryside. ECOVAST soon also had members in Hungary: Professor Dr. Andras Roman, Director of the National Inspectorate of Historic Monuments at the Hungarian State Conservation Office in Budapest and Chairman of the Committee on Historic Towns of ICOMOS, whom Angus Fowler also got to know at the Graz meeting in 1984 and R. Baross, a member of the Hungarian Esperanto organization who is much concerned with ecological problems and environmental matters and was much involved in the protests against the proposed dams and power stations on the Danube.

At the first major General Assembly of ECOVAST held in Strasbourg in November 1986 Miljenka Fischer from Zagreb was elected Committee member (she was reelected in 1988) and has been a very important link for ECOVAST with Yugoslavia and south-eastern Europe. The links with Yugoslavia (and there especially Zagreb) and with Hungary were strengthened by a study tour of Angus Fowler in the summer of 1988 in connection with the preparation of his report on »Redundant Religious Buildings« for the Council of Europe.

ECOVAST's conference in Lübeck – Travemünde in October 1988 (at the end of the European Campaign for the Countryside organized by the Council of Europe) was attended by Miljenka Fischer (Zagreb), Rudolf Klein and his wife (Subotica) from Yugoslavia; from Budapest, Hungary Andras Roman and the Hungarian expert on vernacular architecture and synagogues, Anikó Gazda (she also attended the meeting in Križevci and died sadly after a long illness in September 1990) and

### Summary

*Since its foundation in 1984 ECOVAST has been concerned to develop contacts with interested persons and experts in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe. It has gained members in Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, Greece and Cyprus and now also in Romania. These include experts on the conservation of historic buildings and rural vernacular or traditional architecture, architects, historians, ethnographers, sociologists, experts on agriculture and rural economies etc. ECOVAST national sections or groups have already been formed in Poland, Hungary, East Germany and now also in Czechoslovakia. There are now almost 100 members in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe, including some large organizations. In future years ECOVAST will strengthen and consolidate this membership, develop the work of its sections and activities and will also start developing contacts in Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and Albania.*

also our first members in Poland Andrzej Kaleta (Torun) and Pawel Starosta (Łodz). From then on ECOVAST's membership in Poland developed rapidly. At the meeting of ECOVAST's General Assembly Andras Roman (Hungary) was elected Vice-President, Miljenka Fischer (Yugoslavia) and Andrzej Kaleta (Poland) Committee members.

At the Travemunde conference one of ECOVAST's main concerns was the alarming destruction of villages and towns in Romania. Andras Roman gave an excellent slide talk on the historical and architectural heritage of Transylvania in particular. ECOVAST's General Assembly passed a resolution urging President Ceaucescu to change his policy. ECOVAST together with Europa Nostra and the »Operation Villages Remains« (based in Brussels) gave much moral support with their campaign for the preservation of Romanian villages and condemnation of Ceaucescu's régime. The recent international conference on Village Tourism held in October 1990 in Galosfa in southern Hungary, supported by ECOVAST, was attended by 5 representatives from Romania and ECOVAST now has its first member there who may attend the coming General Assembly in Georgenthal in eastern Germany. A conference on rural architecture is now being organized by Romanians in Bucharest in mid November 1990 and it will be possible for future members of ECOVAST to visit Romania, take part in events there and make a contribution to the preservation of the architectural heritage and to the solution of the problems of the countryside in general there.

ECOVAST's working group on rural traditional/vernacular architecture soon developed strong links with central and eastern Europe. In March 1989 it held its third meeting in Reckeve (in Prince Eugen's summer palace) on the Danube in Hungary. The meeting was organized by Andras Roman and his colleagues at the Hungarian State Conservation Office in Budapest. The meeting was attended not only by many Hungarian representatives but also by members and guest participants from Yugoslavia, our first representative from Czechoslovakia, Dr. Vera Voderova, by members and guests from Austria, West Germany, France and by our President, Michael Dower, and John Sell and Jane Wade from the U.K. The event was combined with the presentation by Angus Fowler of a Europa Nostra diploma for the restoration and cultural use of the former synagogue in the village of Apostag (in 1989/90 a Europa Nostra medal was awarded for the restoration of the remaining part of the Serbian settlement in Szekesfehervar). Dr. Thea Altaras (Gießen, formerly Zagreb) gave a talk with slides on synagogues in Hessen/West Germany and Anikó Gazda illustrated the problems of synagogues in Hungary with pictures, diagrams and slides. A small working-group was established for Jewish places of worship (Synagogues, prayer-houses) and graveyards, particularly in the countryside. In April 1990 the Hungarian section of ECOVAST was formally founded at a meeting in the Hungarian State Conservation Office attended by A. Fowler as Vice-President of Ecovast which now has about 20 members in Hungary. Reference has already been made to the conference on Village Tourism held in Galosta in October 1990 organized by Dr. Cseba Csaky and supported by ECOVAST and EUROTER.

In October 1989 Michael Dower, Edmund Neville-Rolfe, Jean Chanel and Angus Fowler were invited by the University of Torun on the initiative of Andrzej Kaleta of the Department of Rural sociology to visit the town and University, talk to students and visit local institutions and villages and activities. At a meeting in the Senate Room of the university the Polish section was formally founded, attended by a considerable

number of interested persons and the foreign guests. After a detailed introductory talk with slides the ECOVAST representatives then also visited the village of Lucim (near Bydgoszcz) which will be a centre for a future Telecottage and a Polish House of Rural Europe. E. Neville-Rolfe visited ECOVAST member Pawel Starosta in Łodz. A. Fowler and J. Chanel visited Krakow at the invitation of Professors Marian Kornecki and Janusz Bogdanowski of the Polytechnical University there. A. Fowler gave a talk on timber-framed and wooden churches in western Europe particularly in England, France and Hessen at a seminar of the Architectural Department of the Polytechnical University attended by a considerable number of Polish experts on vernacular architecture. Subsequently many of those attending became members of ECOVAST which now has about 30 members in Poland.

From 1989 onwards A. Fowler has been active in developing contacts with experts on rural architecture, conservation and also environmental problems in eastern Germany. Reimar Gilgenbach (Brodowin), the East German expert on Gipsies (Sinti and Roma), now also much concerned with environmental problems, visited Marburg in May 1989 and became ECOVAST's first member in East Germany. Contact was also established with Dr. Peter Lange (Orlamünde/Jena), chairman of the »Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege« (Society for Conservation) in the district of Gera (he is now deputy chairman for Thüringen) – he is now organizing ECOVAST's coming General Assembly in Georgenthal near Gotha. At a meeting in East Berlin at the end of January 1990 further contacts were established with Armin Niemeyer, an expert on timber-framed churches in the Mark Brandenburg and also with Bernd Maetner, Secretary-General of the Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege. On 17th of June 1990 the East German section of ECOVAST was founded at a meeting in Burg Kapellendorf near Jena, attended by about 30 persons including our President Michael Dower, Jean Chanel, Ralf-Folke Schwinge, Professor Detlev Simons and Angus Fowler. There are now about 20 members of ECOVAST in eastern Germany. As already mentioned the General Assembly of ECOVAST will be held at Georgenthal near Gotha together with meetings of the German sections from 23rd to 25th November 1990 and we hope that this will be a good opportunity for representatives and members from central and eastern Europe countries to attend.

As reported elsewhere in this publication ECOVAST's working group on rural architecture held its fifth meeting in Križevci in north-eastern Croatia in Yugoslavia at the end of May 1990. The meeting was attended by about 70 persons including many members of ECOVAST with representatives from Poland (Prof. Kornecki, Krakow), Czechoslovakia (Ewa Kralova, Bratislava), Hungary (Aniko Gazda and Vera Muszik, Budapest), East Germany (Prof. Bauer, Gera and A. Niemeyer, Berlin-Buch/Waren-Müritz), many from Yugoslavia, and other members and guests from Austria, West Germany, Luxembourg and the U.K. The meeting was especially important for strengthening our membership in Yugoslavia. Michael Dower subsequently visited Motovun, Rijeka and the Triglav National Park in Bled. Later in summer 1990 a further meeting of Yugoslav ECOVAST members was held in Rijeka and there are now some 20 members in Yugoslavia.

Immediately after the meeting in Križevci a further ECOVAST conference on integrated rural development, supported by the European Community, took place in Vytina in the Peloponnese in Greece, attended also by about 70 ECOVAST members and guests from 17 countries, particularly Mediterranean countries, especially Greece and Cyprus but also Turkey and