

## GERMANY – HERITAGE @ RISK!

The protection and conservation of monuments in the 16 German *Länder* (States) are laid down in separate laws. Each State has its own State Conservation Office which looks after historic buildings and archaeological sites. Generally speaking, the conservation of cultural heritage is a political matter which is taken very seriously.

After decades of neglect in the old parts of the East German towns the German reunification confronted the new States with the task of having to keep up and repair an enormous number of historic monuments. In the meantime not only many public buildings but also a considerable amount of private historic houses, ranging from medieval half-timbered houses to 19<sup>th</sup> century districts, have been saved from dilapidation – the latter group profiting from *Städtebauförderung* (a city building fund) as well as from tax exemptions for owners of cultural heritage places. However, many buildings are still at risk and need to be restored.

An example of the particular problems that East Germany is facing is Quedlinburg, a town founded in the early Middle Ages, which is now on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Before Reunification the majority of the large number of half-timbered houses were to be demolished and consequently were no longer maintained. In the meantime considerable effort has been made to restore these houses with funds from the city building fund, however, a great number are still empty. This is often the case where the right of possession is in doubt. Therefore, it is necessary to continue the effort to protect the historic fabric of the buildings.

Many of the historic centres in the new States are also at risk because of bad planning during the last few years. New overly generous out-of-town business parks and shopping malls (two or three times larger than required!), together with a general reduction in diversity are threatening traditional retail trade and small commercial enterprises. This leads to the desolation of town centres, with even fewer houses being used for living – a development which is dangerous for heritage.

Costly reconstruction, for example of the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) and the Palace in Dresden, cannot hide the fact that numerous churches, castles and manor houses in the former German Democratic Republic, which were neglected for decades – sometimes for ideological reasons – are still threatened to fall into ruin. Hundreds of village churches in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, particularly in villages where the Protestant church has lost most of its members, are still very much at risk. The Association of German Conservators has already provided information on these churches and the damage caused by years of insufficient upkeep. There is hope of finding private sponsors to save these most charming buildings, sometimes dating from the Middle Ages. Very often they are the only historical focus in a rural area that has otherwise totally changed.

In a number of States, particularly those which were at the heart of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial development, heritage of the In-

dustrial Age is endangered. Even in the case of the Völklinger Hütte (an iron foundry from 1873, shut down in 1986, and now on UNESCO's World Heritage List), a vast industrial complex slowly rusting away, the authorities in charge have not yet presented a conservation plan for the most urgent measures, despite all efforts made by ICOMOS (see also p. 236/237).

Opinion polls have proved that at present the German public strongly supports the conservation of our cultural heritage. The public media, too, pay great attention to conservation matters and sponsor them. This has helped to protect even many small and inconspicuous heritage places in rural areas, which were at a much greater risk in past decades. Our archaeological heritage hidden below ground, however, is still threatened to a large extent by major ground disturbance in the course of road and railway track construction (such as the ICE high-speed railway track between Ingolstadt and Nuremberg presently under construction).



Quedlinburg, district of medieval half-timbered houses ▶



Wilhelmshöhe Palace in Kassel, situated in the main axis of a spectacular park, was defaced by a newly built glass roof for the picture gallery instead of reconstructing the cupola destroyed in World War II.

There are occasional situations when conservators meet with failure, even if famous buildings and assemblages of monuments are involved. For instance, in spite of a large action group supported by ICOMOS the aim to reconstruct the dome of Wilhelmshöhe Palace in Kassel, which was destroyed during World War II, was not achieved. Instead, the palace, built into the main axis of a famous park, is now defaced by a glass structure.

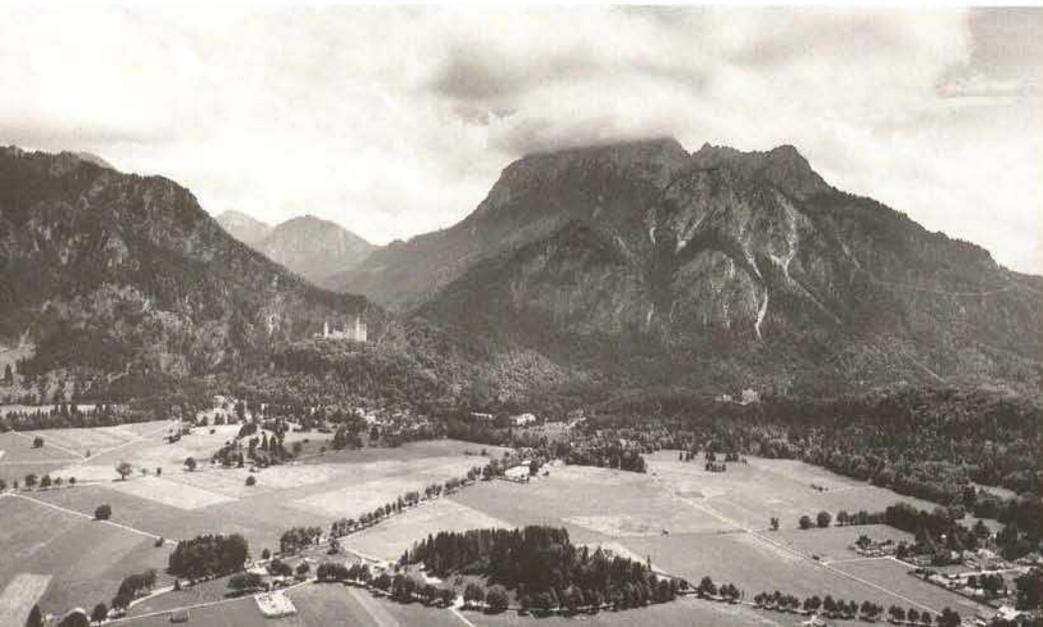
Finally, some examples of heritage at risk in Bavaria: one of the main tourist attractions is Neuschwanstein Castle (c. 1.5 million visitors every year), a world-famous example of late 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture, erected by King Ludwig II at the foot of the mountains. Two years ago, the development project of a huge hotel complex on Bullachberg (a hill below the castle), which would have spoiled the spectacular surrounding countryside, failed thanks to the protests of many people as well as conservationists. However, the local authorities are now planning to build a luxury hotel on the same spot. If it is not possible to prevent this latest attack on the world of the Bavarian “Dream King”, it is very likely that further building activities at the foot of Neuschwanstein Castle will take place. In Regensburg the highly significant built complex of the former St Emmeram

Monastery (Castle Thurn and Taxis) is threatened by plans for a conference centre and luxury hotel. Another castle at risk is Höllrich Castle in Lower Franconia, a 16<sup>th</sup> century building with excellent stucco work inside, that has been abandoned for decades and is still only partly protected from dilapidation. The Leuchtenberg villa in Lindau, which is a historically important Neo-Gothic building with a park by the shore of Lake Constance, is also in danger. After a fire and years of neglect by the owners it could only be saved from falling into ruins by enforced measures, such as bricking up the windows and doors.

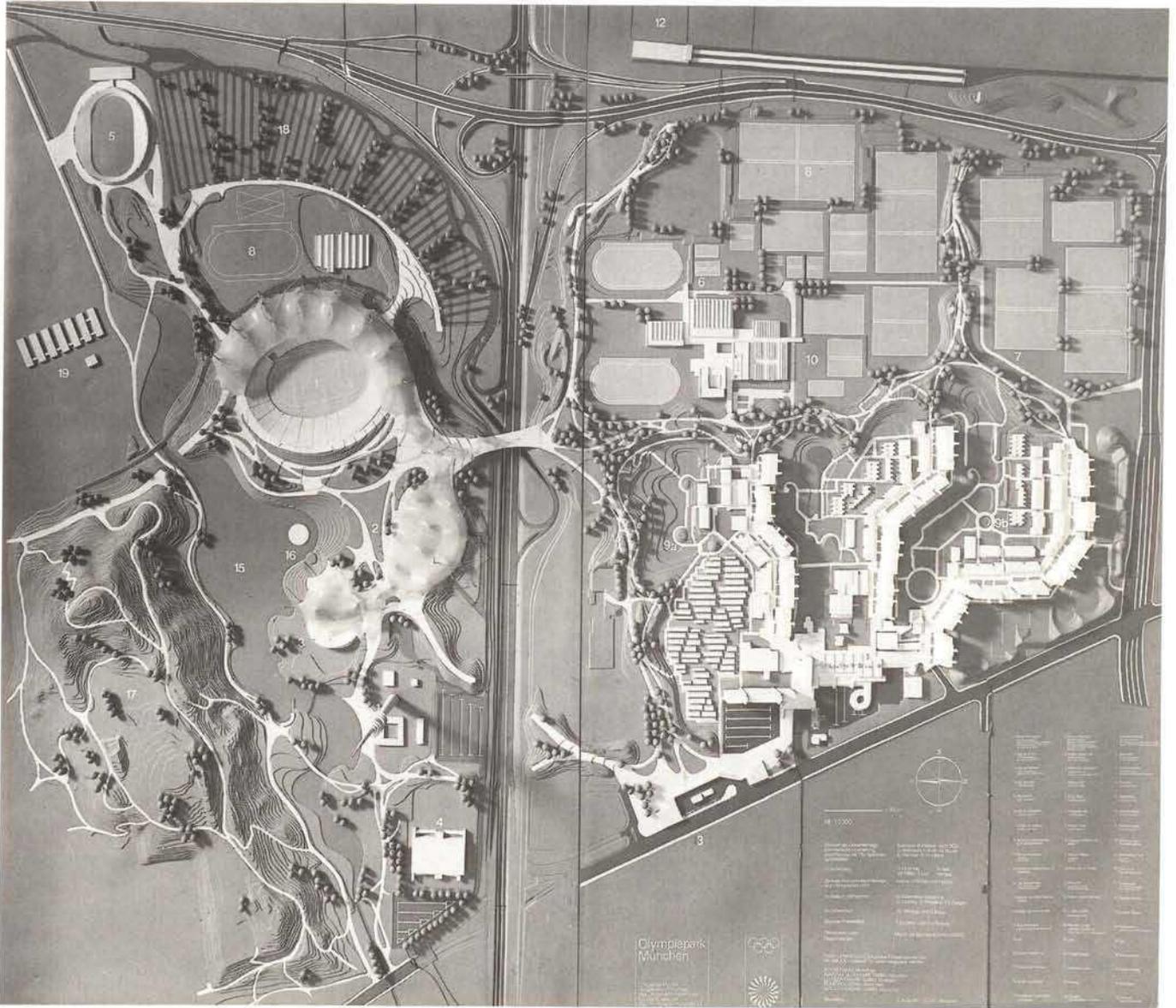
## Case Study – The Olympic Stadium in Munich

The Olympic Stadium in Munich, an architectural masterpiece of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is an essential part of the Olympic area created since 1968 for the 1972 Olympic Games and has been put on the list of Historic Monuments in Bavaria. The decisive design principle is the embedding of the sport grounds with their tent-shaped roofs into the artificially designed surrounding landscape. The open and transparent outer appearance of the sport stadiums belongs to the few examples of modern architecture in the Federal Republic of Germany, in which part of the identity of a free and democratic post war Germany finds expression. At present the rebuilding of the Olympic Stadium, originally also made for track-and-field events, into a straight soccer stadium under the directions of the FIFA is a real threat. The planning variations proposed up to now – with an additional hanging roof installed underneath the original tent roof – would definitely lead to a more or less extensive demolition of the spectator terraces, and give way to a soccer arena, steep, basin-shaped, as well as possibly closed. Of course, even from the point of view of heritage conservation, improvements for a wide-ranging multifunctional use – not exclusively restricted to soccer – may not be excluded, but the currently hotly debated radical rebuilding would definitely destroy the authentic character of this monument.

ICOMOS Germany



The cultural landscape around Neuschwanstein Castle, a world-famous tourist attraction, is still threatened by a project for a hotel (near the wooded hill in the foreground).



The Olympic Park in Munich, model of 1972



The Olympic stadium in Munich is planned to be converted into a soccer arena.



Ruinous village church in Zernin (Mecklenburg)



Höllich Castle (Lower Franconia): this building, deserted for decades, is still in the process of decay despite some emergency measures.

Total view of the Völklingen Ironworks: so far there is no conservation concept for this industrial complex which is slowly rusting away.

