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Meeting Notes

November 10, 2003

Oradea, Romania

Meeting with Mr. Adrian Luncan, Chief Architect of Oradea, in City Hall

The discussions with Mr. Luncan focused on three topics: the site of the future memorial, the design contest and the need for approvals from municipal authorities.

Memorial site

The site for the Memorial approved by the city council is a public land, close to the Balcescu (Rhedey) Park. Mr. Luncan said that city will provide this land free of charge, that it will be cleaned and restored to the standard of Balcescu and that the Memorial can be erected anywhere within this fairly large area. (See map.) One of the maps indicates where inside this area the Memorial might be built, but this is a suggestion only. Mr. Luncan asked that we preserve certain existing significant trees as much as possible. The city will take care of the area once the monument is erected but there won't be guards stationed specifically for the monument. (Mayor Filip made it clear later that there was a night guard in Balcescu park and that looking after the memorial could be included in that guard's duties).

Design contest

Organizing the design contest is the responsibility of the funder of the Memorial, Mr. Luncan said. The contest could be local, national or international, with the city preferring an international contest. Specific groups or individuals could be invited to participate in the contest, e.g. artists, architects, professional associations of architects, students, etc. The jury could consist of 5-9 members, or even 11, and could include the Mayor of the city; the President of the Architects Association (Bihor County); Mr. Aurel Chiriac, Director of the Museum; the Dean of the architectural school; the Director of the Library; an expert in urban development; one in landscape

design; as well as international jury members. Mr. Benedek (Federation of Jewish Communities in Bucharest) might also could make suggestions. Mr. Luncan himself might serve on the jury

Approvals

Once the design contest has taken place and the winner chosen, certain steps need to be followed to actually start the construction of the Memorial. Monuments can be erected only after an approval is obtained from the Ministry of Culture, which will provide guidelines and indication of laws and statutes for us to be aware of. The local council will also have to approve the construction. Mr. Luncan suggested that a partnership should be signed with the municipality for the 1st phase of the project, that is the design contest. For the 2nd phase, the construction of the Memorial, another partnership could be formed. (In subsequent meeting with Mayor Filip, below, we were advised that such formal partnerships are not needed.)

Meeting with Mr. Petru Filip, Mayor of Oradea, City Hall

At the outset, Mr. Filip said "Funds can be raised", but did not indicate who would raise them or from what sources. Mr. Filip also emphasized that the main decisions regarding the project will be taken by the funder. He emphasized the need for clearly articulating the goals and expectations for the project and suggested that the design contest could preceded by a contest of ideas about what the Memorial might look like, what it might communicate, etc.

Toward the end of the process, the urbanism commission of the city will have to approve the specifications of the construction itself. The Bihor County Cultural Inspector will be involved in the process. The city can help find contractors to do the work. The jury of the design contest could include people from the museum, the Jewish Community, and someone from the city council, including Mr. Horj, the head of the Cultural Inspectorate. Mr Filip turned down the invitation to serve on the jury. He said he would have a very busy period ahead with the local elections taking place next spring. Mr. Filip made it clear that a formal partnership with the Municipality was not needed for the design contest phase of the project. The point at which the city will be formally involved will be at the submission of the project to the urbanism commission.

Meeting with Dr. Aurel Chiriac, Director of Muzeul Tarii Crisurilor

The discussion with Mr.Chiriac focused on two aspects of the project: the design contest and the learning center.

The design contest

Mr. Chiriac said that there are two alternatives for the design contest. One is to invite certain groups of artists, architects, or ones that include both artists and architects, to prepare Memorial designs and then ask a jury to select a winner. In some areas of the world, such as France and Israel, there are artists who are particularly sensitive about memorials like the one we have in mind. These groups could be contacted and the circle of artists can be expanded.

The second option is to conduct an open design contest. Such a contest could be announced through specific channels (e.g. publications of the Artists' Association), web sites, etc. Mr. Chiriac pointed out that such an open design contest bore the risk of being left with designs that do not meet the requirements or expectations. There was discussion of the experience with the Belzec memorial.

Mr. Chiriac suggested that the Museum might serve as a center for collecting and making accessible to the public the documents and designs generated through the course of the contest, and that the Museum might set aside a hall for this purpose. The Museum could take on responsibility for announcing the contest, receiving the designs and displaying them at the Museum (including possible models as well). They could welcome artists coming to Oradea to see the site, learn about the city, its history and Jewish population.

Mr. Chiriac suggested that the jury should consist of perhaps seven people, and that he will be pleased to represent the Museum on the panel.

The Learning Center

Mr. Chiriac was very open to this suggestion that a learning center and museum be established in the Teleki Utca synagogue. He said that three or four years ago the Museum prepared documentation about converting this synagogue into a museum. The documents were sent to Bucharest (Jewish Federation and Ministry of Culture) but the process did not go forward. Pertinent documents will be sent to us so that we can begin the process of accessing the feasibility of getting involving in such a project.