March, 2009

Care, Conservation and Maintenance of Historic Jewish Property

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Care, Conservation and Maintenance of Historic Jewish Property

An International Seminar
Bratislava, Slovakia
March 17-19, 2009

Final Report
The international seminar on *Care, Conservation and Maintenance of Historic Jewish Property* was held in Bratislava, Slovakia, on March 17-19, 2009

**Organized**

The seminar was convened by the World Monuments Fund, the Rothschild Foundation Europe, the Cahnman Foundation, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, in cooperation with the Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia (UZZNO), the Jewish Community of Bratislava, Jewish Heritage Foundation - Menorah, and the Slovak Jewish Heritage Center.

Planning and logistics for the Seminar was carried out by Samuel D. Gruber of the Jewish Heritage Research Center (Syracuse, NY) and Maros Borsky of the Slovak Jewish heritage Center (Bratislava). Drs. Gruber and Borsky received ongoing and active guidance and assistance from Mr. Herbert Block of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The organizers also conferred regularly with the seminar sponsors.

**Attendees**

The seminar was attended by representatives of Jewish communities and organizations from 15 Central and Eastern European countries with additional experts attending from France, Germany, The UK, Israel and the United States. Most attendees responded to invitations sent to the leadership of Jewish communities. A few additional individuals known for their ongoing work were also invited directly. Ten experts, some also representing Jewish Communities, were invited to chair sessions and to provide information about specific issues or projects. A list of all participants is part of this report.
Purpose

The Seminar was designed for Jewish Community leaders and professionals who are faced with practical problems involving the care, conservation, management and use of Jewish buildings erected before the Second World War. This seminar was held to identify common problems faced by Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe concerning the care, conservation, management and use of historic Jewish properties. The seminar was arranged to assist communities to address these challenges using the best and most appropriate methods available.

The ongoing struggle for property and resource restitution has often overshadowed the practical issues of how to manage community properties already held, or those returned. Proper care of these properties; often involving substantial costs, difficult planning and use issues, and demanding historical and architectural preservation concerns, have preoccupied many Jewish communities for years. In many cases, and especially for smaller communities, the needs of these properties continue to stretch professional and financial resources. Everyday community needs often delay or prevent the attention that properties require.

Each Jewish community faces its own specific situations, and has unique needs, but there are many shared problems and needs that can be addressed collectively. Importantly, there are also solutions - many of which have been pioneered by Communities themselves - that can be shared, too.

The seminar organizers encouraged the participation of individuals directly involved in the decision making process of the Jewish community that affects property, as well as those directly involved in the care, conservation, management and use of historic buildings, including synagogues, yeshivot, and all other original pre-Shoah Jewish buildings, which are still standing today, regardless of whether or not they are now owned by the community or may be restituted in the future.
Location and Format

Bratislava was chosen as the location for the seminar as it is centrally located, affordable and because of the generous hospitality offered by the Jewish Community of Bratislava and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Slovakia. The Bratislava JCC proved an ideal location for a seminar of this size (about 50 participants). Especially important is the existence of the Slovak Jewish Heritage Center directed by Dr. Maros Borsky, which was an essential partner in all aspects of the organization of the seminar.

Accommodations were at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, located close to the train station and also within easy walking distance of the JCC and the historic center of Bratislava. Hotel staff was very helpful, and the kitchen staff was very accommodating in providing kosher breakfast for those who requested. Hotel arrangements and other travel and logistical arrangement were ably handled by Enjoy Slovakia.

All main sessions of the seminar were held in the newly renovated meeting room of the Jewish Community Center of Bratislava. The seminar was the first event to be held in this space. Group meals were prepared in the JCC’s kosher kitchen and served in the spacious dining hall.
The seminar included workshop sessions with experts and allowed participants from many countries to share advice, techniques and "best practices" that can benefit others. Questions and discussion from the floor was encouraged.

Topics covered

The main topics covered at the seminar were those affecting individual properties and groups of properties after restitution – that is after Jewish community ownership has been established and legally confirmed. These topics concern documentation, management, planning, care, conservation and protection of Jewish sites. Most of the discussion focused on situations where communities were already owners of the sites, but were facing difficulties in finding use, obtaining legal permissions and funding, and in publicizing and marketing their properties – either for cultural or commercial purpose.

Those countries facing the most difficult challenges in all these areas are Belarus, Romania, and Ukraine. Even when there have been notable successes, these tend to be isolated incidents and not easily duplicated as part of a sustained effort. Somewhat better situations were reported the Czech Republic, Poland and Latvia, though even in those courtiers there is much to be done. There has been more limited success in Slovakia, Slovenia and Lithuania.

The entire seminar was recorded on video.
Excursion & On Site Sessions

The first part of the second day of the seminar was organized as half day excursion to three important Jewish heritage sites that illustrate different problems and solutions to maintenance and conservation issues. These include the remains of the Jewish cemetery and Hatam Sofer memorial, and the former synagogues in the towns Samorin and Stupava, both of which have been the recipient of support from Seminar sponsors. Each of these site visits allowed discussion of specific conservation and preservation issues, and allowed an opportunity for the group to further interact socially to better create a sense of international community – one of the non-specific goals fostered by the seminar.
Conclusions

While it was not possible to fully explore every topic that was raised at the seminar, and it was certainly not possible to solve every problem, in general participants were very positive in their post-seminar comments about the organization and content. In the words of one participant, “I was happy with everything - it was very interesting, good organized, useful, etc. Hotel, meal, everything was just perfect and I would like to participate such seminars in the future.” Several participants commented that even more than the seminar sessions themselves, the appreciated the opportunity to meet people engaged in similar work, and to trade information and ideas during the many scheduled breaks for coffee, meals, etc. Indeed, the noise level during these periods was quite high as participants eagerly conversed with their new-found colleagues.

Many of the Bratislava participants felt strongly that follow up seminars should be held continuing the themes of Bratislava, but perhaps focusing in on even smaller number topics. The sense of the group was that small gathering could be organized at any time given the willingness of the host city, but that seminars the size of Bratislava would be best held every two years. Romania and Lithuania were mentioned as possible venues for future meetings.

In the final session of the seminar, participants adopted a Final Statement that summarized a consensus position on many of the most important concerns of the group. A section of the statement dealing with cemeteries and all burial grounds was not included because there were sharp differences of opinion on several topics. It was decided that since the care of cemeteries was not an agenda item and was not specifically discussed during the seminar, that it was acceptable to not include details in the statement. Some participants urged that an entirely separate meeting about cemeteries be organized.

Information presented at the seminar and experiences shared were incorporated into documents presented at the International Conference on Holocaust-Era assets held in Prague in June, 2009.
Participants were eager to meet new people and share ideas, experiences and information.
Jewish Heritage Seminar:
Care, Conservation and Management and Use of Historic Jewish Properties
Jewish Community Center, Bratislava, Slovakia
March 17 – 19, 2009

Seminar Schedule

(ALL SESSIONS AT JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER)

Tuesday, March 17

15:00–16:30  (I)  Opening Session

Welcome & Introduction to Seminar

Maros Borsky, Peter Salner

Overview of Jewish Heritage Issues for the Seminar

Session leaders:
Herbert Block, Ruth Ellen Gruber, Samuel D. Gruber

16:30-17:00  Coffee break

17:00-19:00  (II)  Session

Knowing What you Have: Documentation and Protection of Judaica Collections and Documentation, Condition reviews, and Preservation Planning of Building and Sites

Session leaders:
Eleonora Bergman, Ivan Ceresnjes

19:00 – 20:00  Break

20:00-21:00  Dinner at Jewish Community Center

Welcome by Pavol Traubner

Introduction of Distinguished Guests and Seminar Participants

21:00-22:00  (III)  Session over coffee & desert

Case Study: Jewish Heritage in Slovakia (some Problems and Solutions)

Session leader: Maros Borsky
Wednesday, March 18

Breakfast at hotel (kosher breakfast must be ordered in advance)

8:30 (IV) Departure from Bratislava

_Morning Theme: Restoration & Reuse of Synagogues_

   Excursion leader: Maros Borsky, with local conservators

_Hatam Sofer Memorial_

_Samorin Synagogue_

_Stupava Synagogue_

13:30 Return to Bratislava / Lunch at Jewish Community Center

14:30-16:30 (V) Session

_Building conservation, project conception, organization and administration_,

   Session Leaders: Michael Beizer, Eleonora Bergman, Mark Weber

16:30-17:00 Coffee break

17:00-18:00 (VI) Session

_Funding Strategies for Conservation and Use_

   Session leader: Samuel D. Gruber

18:00 -19:00 Break

19:00-20:00 Dinner at Jewish Community Center

20:00-22:00 (VII) Session over coffee and desert

_Before and after property restitution: economic, legal, religious issues_

Session leaders:

   Herbert Block, Monika Krawczyk, Michael Schudrich

Thursday, March 19

Breakfast at hotel (kosher breakfast must be ordered in advance)

7:30 Morning Minyan at Heydukova Street Synagogue (optional)
8:00 Visit to Heydukova Street Synagogue (5 minute walk from hotel)

9:00-10:45 (VIII) Session

*Jewish properties and cultural heritage: education, tourism and economic development*

Session leaders:

Ruth Ellen Gruber, Max Polonovski, Monika Krawczyk

10:45-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-13:00 (IX) Closing session

*Wrap-up: Present-day predicaments and follow up strategies*

13:00-14:00 Lunch at Jewish Community Center

14:00 End of seminar and individual departure of participants
APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANTS

Participant List Bratislava Seminar on Jewish Heritage Properties
March 17-19, 2009

Dr. František Alexander
Executive Chairman,
Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities
in Slovakia
Bratislava, Slovakia

Lucia Apostol
Chief of Development Sector
Center of Administration of the Patrimony
Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania

Dr. Eleonora Bergman
Director, The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish
Historical Institute
Warsaw, Poland

Andreas Becker
Research Co-ordinator, European Jewish
Cemeteries Initiative
Lo Tischkach Foundation

Michael Beizer
Jewish historian
Hebrew University Jerusalem

Sally Berkovic
Director of Programmes
Rothschild Foundation (Europe)

Herbert Block
Assistant Executive Vice President
Joint Distribution Committee
New York, NY USA

Dr. Maroš Borský
Director, Slovak Jewish Heritage Center
Bratislava, Slovakia

Vyacheslav Brez
Director, Jewish Community of Dnepropetrovsk
Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine

Philip Carmel
Executive Director, Lo Tischkach Foundation

Ivan Ceresnjes
Researcher, Center for Jewish Art
Hebrew University in Jerusalem

Livia Chereches
Member, Jewish Community of Oradea
Oradea, Romania

Ljubica Dajč
Federation of Jewish communities of Serbia

Sonja Elazar
Project Manager for the Restitution of Jewish
Communal Property in B/H
Jewish Community of Sarajevo, Bosnia &
Herzegovina

Tomáš Fárber
Member of Board / Controller of the JC , Jewish
Community of Bratislava
Bratislava, Slovakia

Dr Viera Farkašová
Executive Director, Jewish Heritage Foundation
– Menorah
Bratislava, Slovakia

Pavel Frankl
Chairman, Jewish community of Žilina
Žilina, Slovakia

Dean Friedrich
Secretary General, Jewish Community Zagreb
Zagreb, Croatia

Rabbi Boruch (Boris) Gorin
Moscow, Russia

Gannadi Gramberg
Board Member, Jewish Community of Estonia
Tallin, Estonia

Ruth Ellen Gruber
Author, journalist

Samuel D. Gruber
President, International Survey of Jewish
Monuments
& Director, Jewish Heritage Research Center
Syracuse NY USA
Attila Eitan Horvath  
Director, Strategic European Loan Fund and Property Management Programs  
Joint Distribution Committee  
Budapest, Hungary

Inna Ioffe  
Union of Jewish Religious Organizations Of Ukraine  
Kiev, Ukraine

Samuel Izsak  
General Manager, Fundatia Caritatea  
Bucharest, Romania

Michael J. Jordan  
Journalist  
Bratislava, Slovakia

Mario Kabilo  
Educator, Jewish Museum of Sarajevo  
Jewish Community of Sarajevo  
Bosnia & Herzegovina

Marek Karnafel  
Property Manager, Jewish Religious Community of Warsaw  
Warsaw, Poland

Ing. Jan Kindermann  
Project Coordinator, Revitalization of Jewish Monuments in the Czech Rep.  
Matana a.s., Praha, Czech Republic

Jaroslav Klenovský  
Architect, Matana, a.s., Brno, Czech Republic

Monika Krawczyk  
Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Preservation of Jewish Properties in Poland  
Warsaw, Poland

Faina Kukliansky  
Vice Chairman, Jewish Community of Lithuania  
Vilnius, Lithuania

Ms. Beata Leichtová  
Secretary General, Jewish Community of Bratislava  
Bratislava, Slovakia

Mojmir Maly  
Head of the Department, Matana a.s., Jewish Community in Prague, Czech Republic

Rudy Marcovici  
Director, Center of Administration of the Patrimony  
Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania  
Bucharest, Romania

Rabbi Baruch Myers  
Director, Chabad of Bratislava  
Bratislava, Slovakia

Dr. Arno Pařík  
Curator of Art, Jewish Museum of Prague  
Prague, Czech Republic

Tamás Pasternák  
Program Coordinator, Jewish community of Komárno  
Komárno, Slovakia

Michael Petráš  
Chairman of Board, Jewish Heritage Foundation – Menorah  
Bratislava, Slovakia

Dr. Max Polonovski  
Conservateur en Chef du Patrimoine, Chargé de mission pour la protection du patrimoine juif  
Direction de l’architecture du patrimoine  
Hôtel national des Invalides

Dr. Janez Premk  
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Robert Sabatos  
Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia  
Subotica, Serbia

Dr. Peter Salner  
Chairman, Jewish Community of Bratislava  
Bratislava, Slovakia

Eva Salnerová  
Political Specialist, US Embassy  
Bratislava, Slovakia

Rabbi Michael Schudrich  
Chief Rabbi, Jewish Community of Poland  
Warsaw, Poland
Meylakh G. Sheykhet
UCSJ: Union of Councils for the Jews in the FSU
Jewish Revival (Ukraine) & Faina Petriakova Center for the Jewish Collections in the Museums of Ukraine.
Lviv, Ukraine

Dr. Tomáš Stern
Member of Board, Jewish Community of Bratislava
Bratislava, Slovakia

Radovan Strapko
Member of Board / Controller of the JC Jewish Community of Bratislava
Bratislava, Slovakia

Jana Švantnerová
Judaica Curator, Slovak Jewish Heritage Center
Bratislava, Slovakia

Zsuzsanna Toronyi
Head of the Archive, Hungarian Jewish Archives
Budapest, Hungary

Prof. Pavel Traubner
Honorary chairman, Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia
Bratislava, Slovakia

Juraj Turčan
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Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

Gita Umanovska
Executive Director, Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia
Riga, Latvia
APPENDIX II: FINAL STATEMENT

Seminar on Care, Conservation and Maintenance of Historic Jewish Property
Bratislava March 17-19, 2009
Final Statement Adopted By Participants

The participants in the Seminar “Care, Conservation and Maintenance of Historic Jewish Property,” meeting in Bratislava March 17-19, 2009, agree on the following principles and procedures which guide their work.

Introduction

The ongoing struggle for property and resource restitution has often overshadowed the practical issues of how to manage community properties already held, or those returned. Proper care of these properties; often involving substantial costs, difficult planning and use issues, and demanding historical and architectural preservation concerns, have preoccupied many Jewish communities for years. In many cases, and especially for smaller Communities, the needs of these properties continue to stretch professional and financial resources. Everyday community needs often delay or prevent the attention that properties require.

Each Jewish community faces its own specific situations, and has unique needs, but there are many shared problems and needs that can be addressed collectively. Importantly, there are also solutions - many of which have been pioneered by Communities themselves - that can be shared, too.

Jewish Properties and Jewish Heritage

Jewish heritage is the legacy of all aspects of Jewish history – religious and secular.

Jewish history and art is part of every nation’s history and art. Jewish heritage is part of national heritage, too.

Documentation, planning and development of sites benefit and enrich society at large as well as Jews and Jewish communities.

Jewish historic sites and properties should also be developed where possible within the context of diverse histories – Jewish, local, national, art, etc.

Jewish tourism and tourism to Jewish sites should be part of every country’s tourism strategy.
Inventories and Documentation

All past and present Jewish communal properties, and all Jewish properties and sites deemed to have historic, religious and/or artistic significance, should be documented to the fullest extent possible.

Inventories must be made and maintained of all properties in each country, and more substantial documentation should be made of historically and architecturally significant properties, especially all synagogues, institutional buildings, cemeteries, monuments, and Judaica and archival materials.

Jewish communities and institutions should cooperate and collaborate in this process to the fullest extent possible, and should welcome the assistance of other public and private institutions and individuals in pursuing these documentation goals.

Information on Jewish sites is most useful when it is most widely available. Efforts should continue and expand to make documentation available in publicly accessible research centers and through publications and on-line presentation, all the while considering safety, security and privacy concerns.

Materials relevant to Jewish history and properties in public, state archives and Jewish community archives should be open for everyone for historical and legal research.

Good documentation must be accurate and complete in its description, and it must be historically informed so that it presents something of the significance of what is recorded.

Synagogues and Former Synagogues.

Synagogue and former synagogues should retain a Jewish identity and or use whenever possible, though each one does not necessarily need to be restored or fully renovated.

Former synagogues, no matter what their present ownership or use, should be sensitively marked to identify their past history.

As part of the effort to restitute communal and religious property, when a property of historic value - such as a synagogue - in disrepair or otherwise in a ruined condition (while in the government's possession) is returned, States should help either by modifying laws which impose penalties for not maintaining properties in reasonable condition, or by providing financial and material assistance to undertake necessary repairs and restoration.

Cooperation and Trust

Honesty and transparency are Jewish values and should be especially apparent in the handling of all matters concerning Jewish property, which is held as a communal trust.
Jewish communities should manage their properties to maximize their use for present and future generations.

Jewish communities and institutions should work together as much as possible to share existing information, methodologies and technologies, and they should work together to develop new and compatible goals and strategies to optimize the care and management of historic Jewish properties.

Regular meetings of Jewish community leaders, members, staff and expert professionals to discuss property issues is encouraged within single communities, and between communities. Regional, national and trans-border meeting are useful for the exchange of information and ideas, and for effective planning purposes.

Any sale or development of communal property must be to meet identified community needs.

Wherever possible, proceeds from the sale or development of some properties should be allocated to the care and maintenance of other properties including, but not exclusively, cemeteries.

Jewish communities and museums should work together to develop historic, descriptive and exhibition materials that can be shared.

Jewish communities and local heritage, cultural and tourist bodies should work together to develop regional, national and trans-border heritage routes.