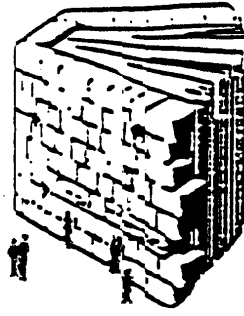


Ваад України

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Vaad of Ukraine

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Outgoing # 01/16

January 14th, 2016

Dear Bukovinians and sympathizers,

Realizing that you are very interested in the theme of the memorialization of the Jews of Bukovina, who perished and suffered during the Holocaust, I would like to make some introductory remarks before proceeding to a discussion of a project of creation of a memorial center in the building of "Beit Kadishin" at the Chernivtsi Jewish cemetery.

Background:

Restoration of Jewish life in Ukraine began in late 1987 and early 1988 in Chernivtsi. In the spring of 1988 after a series of discussions in Jewish circle, an idea finally appeared that there is a need to go out of apartments and kitchens and put the city Jewish cemetery in order. From April to autumn, almost every Sunday a group of Jewish youth came to the cemetery to do some clearing work. Sometimes, the number of volunteers simultaneously working at the cemetery reached over 500 people. Even then, in the late 80s - early 90s emerged the idea of restoring the building at the main entrance to the Jewish cemetery.

In June 1988, activists of cemetery clearing organized Chernivtsi Jewish Socio-Cultural fund - the first legal Jewish organization in Ukraine that operates to this day. It is located in the building of the Jewish community house at the Theatre Square, and is currently a co-founder of Chernivtsi museum of Jewish History and Culture of Bukovina jointly with the Vaad of Ukraine

In the 90s, the Chernivtsi Jewish Fund found and allocated funds for the manufacture and installation the memorial stone at the site of a mass grave in the suburb of Chernivtsi (Bila village) on the high bank of the Prut River.

During the 90s Austrian journalist Helmut Kuzdat visited Chernivtsi a number of times and interviewed many Chernivtsi residents, including Jews. During one of his visits, Helmut expressed the idea of repair and restoration of the ritual building at the main entrance to the Jewish cemetery "Beit Kadishin". He went back to Austria to write a book about Chernivtsi and Jews in Chernivtsi, as well as to raise funds for repairing the "Beit Kadishin" building. During an interview with me Helmut told about his idea of restoration of the "Beit Kadishin" building. On my question what is supposed to be placed in that building, Helmut had no answer. Then for the first time I offered to organize a memorial center dedicated to the memory of the Jews of Bukovina, who perished during the Holocaust. Helmut agreed and returned to Austria, where in the year 2002 he wrote and published a book about Chernivtsi and Jews in Chernivtsi ("An der Zeiten Rander"), but he did not manage to raise funds for building restoration.

The reason for my proposal was the important fact that two mass graves of Holocaust victims are located at this cemetery, and there was no other suitable location in the city for a

memorial center. The building was a ritual one, built in a synagogue-like shape and hence a sacred one. It is not accidental that there is a remainder of an old inscription "Tzedek ha-Din" (Substantiation of Ordeal) on the building. There is no denying that the creation of the memorial center of Bukovina Jews in this place is a very relevant idea, worthy of attention and discussion. Since then, this idea was repeated from time to time in various discussions, but there were no financial possibilities for its implementation.

In 2005, Austrian architect Marcus Tsehner together with Helmut Kuzdat visited Chernivtsi. He examined the "Beit Kadishin" building; had a meeting with the city mayor Mykola Fedoruk and Sergei Osatchuk. During the meeting, it was suggested to place a museum in the renovated building at the Jewish cemetery. However, at that time the idea again was not realized due to lack of funds.

In 2015, Vaad of Ukraine under the agreement with the Adenauer Fund, who was authorized by the German government, launched a pilot project of renovation of Jewish cemeteries in Ukraine. For this purpose, German government in 2015 allocated 1 million euros, thanks what during that year we were able to repair 27 Jewish cemeteries in Ukraine, mostly the small ones, and a few more in various countries of Eastern Europe.

In the fall of 2015, Ambassador of Germany in Ukraine Christof Weil and I had a meeting, where His Excellency announced that German government highly appreciates the cooperation with Vaad of Ukraine on the project of restoration of Jewish cemeteries in Ukraine, and is ready to allocate 1 million euro to continue the project in 2016. Part of these funds, namely 100,000 euros, is allocated by the German government to repair the "Beit Kadishin" building at the Chernivtsi Jewish cemetery. By the way, in our preliminary plans for 2016 we are planning to spend part of the funds of the program for repairing Jewish cemeteries to the overall renovation of Chernivtsi Jewish cemetery.

The main activist in the city of Chernivtsi, who put a lot of effort to the project of renovation of "Beit Kadishin" is the Honorary Consul of Austria, Mr. Sergiy Osatchuk. Mayor Oleksiy Kaspruk and city community, including the Jewish community, mainly appreciate the idea of creating a memorial center in the "Beit Kadishin."

Now we have two projects of building renovation: the Austrian project (author - Markus Zechner) and the Ukrainian project (author - Vyacheslav Kishlyaruk). The cost estimates are respectively 540,000 and 400,000 euros. Vaad of Ukraine considers that the building renovation will not require more than 350,000 euros. Creation of memorial center will require approximately 150,000 euros, for the total amount of 500,000 euros. Thus, after appropriate discussion, in the late spring - early summer of 2016 it will be possible to start the external renovation of the building, and in the fall to move inside the building for the interior works. By the fall of 2017 completion of internal works is assumed and preparation of the exhibition space for the installation of the memorial center must commence. In the spring of 2018, we can expect the opening of the memorial center.

Memorial center, by our assumption, can become a branch of the current Museum of Jewish History and Culture of Bukovina in Chernivtsi. It is planned to sign relevant contracts with travel agencies and education institutions of Bukovina for regular educational tours for tourists, students and pupils to the cemetery and to the memorial center. By the way, for nearly 20 years Vaad of Ukraine runs the program "Tolerance - Lessons of the Holocaust" in various countries, and within it we have trained hundreds of teachers and guides.

We assume that members of world Bukovina community might have different outlooks on the project, but nevertheless we hope for your support.

In this regard, we consider it necessary to draw your attention to several circumstances. We consider real capabilities of the Jewish community of Ukraine and Chernivtsi to get the building

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at their disposal, to conduct repairs and maintenance of the memorial center later. We cannot expect that in the near future the Jewish community will be able to reclaim the Temple synagogue, or the entire Jewish House, or the Old Synagogue building at Sinagogensasse str. via procedure of restitution. The real opportunity lies in the fact that city authorities are ready to return "Beit Kadishin" building to the Jewish community and they are ready to assist in renovations.

Vaad of Ukraine is planning to invest in the project of creation of the memorial center at least 50 thousand euros.

Sergiy Osatchuk helped attract a private sponsor, who gave a written guarantee letter on the sum of 100,000 euros, but requested to stay anonymous for the time being. We continue to look for sponsors. We had meetings with the Ambassador of Austria to Ukraine; applied for a grant from US fund on restoration of cultural heritage, continue the search for other sponsors. During negotiations with President of World Organization of Bukovina Jews Mr. Johanan Ron Singer in autumn 2015 in Jerusalem, in the presence of Dan Mariana we have achieved mutual understanding and received a verbal promise of allocation of 50,000 euros for the project.

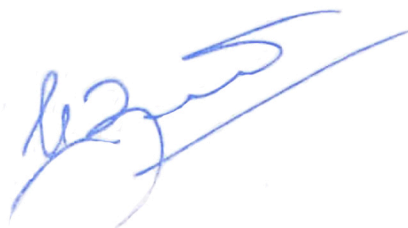
At the end of last year, I consulted with the Chief Rabbi of Bukovina Menachem Mendel on the matter of creation of the memorial center as a branch of the museum in the "Beit Kadishin" building. Rabbi supported the proposed idea and found nothing in it that would be contrary to religious rules.

Earlier, we discussed with Rabbi the issue of existence of a large cross of the Romanian community near the side entrance to the Jewish cemetery. City officials were powerless to solve this problem at the time. Rabbi suggested a wise decision: to build a section cemetery fence around the cross and thus put the cross beyond the Jewish cemetery. In 2016, in the program of renovation of Jewish cemeteries, which I mentioned above, Vaad of Ukraine is also planning the restoration of Chernivtsi Jewish cemetery. It is planned to allocate the sum of 50,000 euros from the "European Initiative for renovation of Jewish cemeteries" (leader Rabbi Shapiro, a native from Bukovina) to repair the cemetery this year. During the said repairs we will be able not only to solve the problem of the Romanian cross, but also, if necessary, to build around the "Beit Kadishin" a new fence. Thus, the building will be placed beyond the fence of the Jewish cemetery.

We believe that there is a rare opportunity to save a beautiful building of the "Beit Kadishin" from destruction and obtain the place for the organization of the memorial center of the Jews of Bukovina. It would be a pity to lose such an opportunity without getting anything in return.

We express our sincere gratitude to the members of the Bukovina community and other interested people who are willing to give us help and advice in implementing the project.

Sincerely,
Josef Zissels
Co-President of Vaad of Ukraine



For reference:

We have a drawing of the building of the "Beit Kadishin" dated 1922. Although its name in German is "Leyhenhalle" (the morgue), but a Jewish version of the title - "House of the memorial prayer" - accurately conveys its purpose.

It can be seen at the drawing that "Leyhenhalle" occupies only in a part of one of the side parts of the building. The main central part used to be a ceremonial hall, and this is the supposed place to create a memorial exhibition. In addition, an office and a shop were part of the building that is the facilities that bore no sacred character.

On the Jewish cemetery Near the "Beit Kadishin" there are two mass graves of Jews killed in Chernivtsi during the Holocaust. These burials will be included in the overall complex of the memorial center.

It should also be noted that should there be no memorial exhibition in "Beit Kadishin" building after renovation, the building itself will remain empty. It will need protection that implies funds for maintaining the technical condition. The Jewish community will have to bear this financial burden, while struggling with fundraising for their own projects. An important fact is that raising funds only for the renovation of the building without the creation of memorial center there does not seem possible to us.

