

KREMENETS JEWISH CEMETERY PROJECT (KJCP)
TRIP REPORT
22 SEPTEMBER - 30 SEPTEMBER 2006

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As most of you know, in August we received notification that our grant application to document and restore the Jewish Cemeteries of Kremenets and Vishnevets was successful. To get the project started, I scheduled a trip to Kremenets. This document is a report of what we accomplished on that trip. It is divided into 7 major sections:

- The Landscape Architect, Professor Volodimir Panasovich Kucheryaviy
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The primary objective for this trip was to take the steps necessary to get the KJCP underway. This involved making initial contact with the various people who will be involved in the project to inform them that work on Phase 1 of the project has been funded and to discuss their roles in the project. It also involved interviewing Professor Volodimir Kucheryaviy with regard to his potential landscape architecture role, a major task of Phase 1. Throughout this trip, Alex Dunai served as my driver and translator as well as Liaison between me and our Ukrainian partners.

Our plans were complicated a bit by news that Andriy Andriyevich Guslavskiy no longer is Mayor of Kremenets, and that Larisa Klyuch, our primary contact with the Jews of Kremenets, had died suddenly in June. Fortunately, we were able to establish new contacts to replace them. During the trip, we paid our respects to Larisa by saying the Mourners Prayer for the Dead (*El Maley Rachamim*) and placing flowers at her grave.

The Landscape Architect, Professor Volodimir Panasovich Kucheryaviy

On short notice, Alex put aside a week for my visit. We began Monday morning meeting with Professor Volodimir Panasovich Kucheryaviy. Dr. Kucheryaviy is Department Director of the School of Landscape Architecture at Ukrainian Technical University in Lviv. His personal expertise is in erosion control. Although he has no direct experience with cemeteries, or with Jewish institutions, in our meeting, he seemed to understand the problems we face in rehabilitating the cemetery. We ended the meeting by arranging for him and some of his colleagues to visit Kremenets and walk the cemetery with us on Thursday, 28 September.

Prof. Kucheryaviy arrived Thursday noon in Ternopil by train. He was accompanied by Taras Levus, Assistant Chair of Landscape Architecture at the University, and Sergiy Kucheryaviy, Sciences Chair in Landscape Architecture at the University. We then drove to Kremenets where we spent the afternoon walking through the Cemetery. In Kremenets, Valeriy Rozenblit, our photographer, and Oleksandr Purdy (Puroly?), the town land use expert joined us. Prof. Kucheryaviy and his team took soil and botanical samples, tried to discern how the rows of gravestones are laid out, and examined the erosion problem alongside the ravine. They recommend building a wall there to help control future erosion. They also suggested a step-by-process to rehabilitate the cemetery.

Walk-about ... we find an entrance gate and an empty tomb. During our walk-about, we noticed that there seem to be as many downed tombstones as upright ones, but at this time, we can't estimate the total number of stones nor their condition because there is too much brush and other vegetation covering the downed stones. Oleksandr Purdy found the remnants of the entrance gates to the new section of the Cemetery. Nearby we also found the black marble remnants of Dr. Hochberg's gravestone. (In 2004, we met with Mr. & Mrs. Sasha Shtuka who had rescued part of the marble column from Dr. Hokhberg's grave. They are storing it until we can return it to the cemetery. Now we know where it belongs in the cemetery.) During his exploration of the cemetery, Taras Levus found an empty above-ground tomb, an Ohel of sorts, in the new part of the cemetery. This is the same tomb that Sol Sylvan photographed in 2004.

Work Tasks. The step-by-step process Prof. Kucheryaviy suggested for Phase 1 conforms to our project plan.

1. **Clear the covering vegetation so that all of the stones are exposed and can be evaluated.** This may involve removal of some trees and larger shrubs, which would require Halachic oversight. Kucheryaviy suggested that either chemicals or "mechanical equipment" could be used, but he recommended against chemicals. The

"mechanical equipment" would be purchased by the Project and probably would be "weed whackers" or something similar. He also said that a team of his students could be brought in to do this work. They could be housed at the University's branch in Kremenets.

Although we didn't discuss other options, it also may be possible to use volunteers from the Jewish community, paid workers from the city, and/or students from the town. These other options may reduce costs.

2. **Identify each stone with a unique number.** Kucheryaviy proposes painting the number on the side or back of the stone. Conservationists will blanch at that suggestion. Another alternative is to plant numbered flags at each stone, but those flags could be easily lost in winter storms. We'll have to come up with an alternative for physically numbering the stones.
3. **Create a map and inventory of the stones.** The inventory would show the location of each stone on a map and would indicate its condition (down, partially buried, broken, slanted, in need of moss/lichen removal etc.). Such a map and inventory is necessary to enable us to estimate the cost of repairing and resetting the stones and to design a landscape plan. It also would give us an indication of how many stones are missing from the cemetery.
4. **Mark significant landscape features on the map.** To enable creation of a proper landscape plan the map would show the location of all trees and major bushes and would indicate which should be removed or pruned.
5. **Create a landscape plan.** The plan would include pathways, gates, resting areas with benches, viewsites etc. Prof. Kucheryaviy located an area of flat land near the top of the hill that offers an exceptional view of Kremenets in the valley below. This land is just outside the cemetery boundary and is "owned" by the town. Olesander Purdy, the town's land use person, expressed the opinion that the Mayor would be interested in creating a viewpoint there with benches.

Kucheryaviy said Tasks 1-4 can be completed in about a week during October.

Cost Proposal. The following week (after I left), Professor Kucheryaviy sent us a cost proposal for doing this work:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
1. Removing extraneous vegetation (trees, bushes)	\$2,900 US
2. Tools, instruments, gas, and oil for equipment	1,450
3. Transportation (13 persons)	140
4. Accomodation and meals (10 persons, abt 10 days)	1,800
5. Inventory, identification and marking on map (gravestones, walls, trees, etc.)	3,700
6. Create a landscape plan that includes erosion control	<u>7,000</u>
	\$ 16,990

This cost proposal exceeds our budget by about \$10,000. After a round of negotiations with Alex Dunai, Prof. Kucheryaviy agreed to reduce the cost for Items 1-5 to \$8,600 to \$9,000 and for Task 6 to \$6,000. This still exceeds our budget by \$8,000. We will continue negotiations for a lower cost for this work, but, to get the job done, we will have to raise additional funds to supplement the grant.

The New Mayor, Leonid Svyatoslavovich Kichatiy

Mayor Kichatiy was Deputy Mayor under former Mayor Andriy Andriyevich Guslavskiy. We met with him Monday afternoon in Kremenets. He is favorable toward the Project, as was Guslavskiy. However, he strongly recommended that we obtain approval from the Town Council for the Project. To this end, he dictated a petition to be presented to the Council at its upcoming meeting on Thursday. We had the petition typed in Ukrainian. I signed it and we gave it to the Mayor on Tuesday. Mayor Kichatiy also said that he would need to present to the Council a letter from the Commission authorizing me to act on behalf of the Commission. The letter would have to be translated to Ukrainian by a certified translator. Katrina Krzysztofiak from the Commission staff arranged for the letter. It arrived in time for the Thursday meeting and the Town Council approved the project.

Gravestones under the parking lots. We discussed the possibility that there are Jewish gravestones under the asphalt-paved parking lot of the former Gestapo HQ (which now is a Youth Center) on a hill overlooking the high school. On Thursday, Mayor Kichatiy asked us to take him to the lot. We did and he subsequently agreed to have city staff tear up a half dozen small sections of the asphalt to determine whether or not there are gravestones there. The work was to be done the following week, after my departure. I am

waiting for a report on this work. (Note: While at the Youth Center, I looked for the matzeva fragment that I had photographed in the small parking lot during my 2004 trip. It was no longer there.)

We also discussed sharing costs for the project. The Mayor agreed that the City would help with costs. The first instance of this will be testing the Gestapo parking lot, which will be done at the City's expense. Most cost sharing will occur in Phase 2 of the project, although it may be possible to use city workers to help clear vegetation and to help with the Inventory during Phase 1.

Land ownership records. While at the municipal building, we met with Oleksander Purdy and asked him to do additional research in the town's land use records. We were trying to determine ownership of the cemetery land and the land parcels that border the cemetery during the Interwar years. This would help to ensure that the Survey we had done accurately depicts the historic cemetery boundaries. Purdy determined that no land records exist for the "Polish Period". He did find a map showing the cemetery boundaries, but resolution of the map is too low to be useful.

Mayor Kichatiy will manage contacts with the local newspaper and with the Church. He prefers that those contacts should be made through his office, rather than by us directly. Alex will follow up with him about these contacts.

The former Mayor, Andriy Andriyovich Guslavs'kiy

Guslavskiy now is Director of the Kremenets-Pochayev Historical-Architectural Reserve. He has a staff of at least 4 people. He has contacts with USAID and offered to try to obtain funds for the Cemetery Project. We also discussed the possibility of including the Cemetery in the Kremenets-Pochayev Historical-Architectural Reserve. Director Guslavskiy believes this will help in obtaining funds, but he cautioned that it could be up to a year before any funds are forthcoming. Alex will follow up about these possibilities.

Valeriy Rozenblit - Photographic Documentation and Project Oversight

Valeriy Rozenblit is the young man who photographed individual matzevot for us following my 2004 visit. He has agreed to maintain a photographic record (before, during, and after photographs) as the project proceeds. Mayor Kichatiy has agreed to keep Valeriy informed of any city activities.

In addition, Valeriy will photograph the Jewish gravestones that are in the Monastery Cemetery (Ukrainian Orthodox Church). We learned of these stones from Tamara Senina and from Larisa Klyuch's sister, Tamara Fedorovna Klyuch. Apparently most of these

graves are from the Soviet era and many of them are marked by crosses. The only way to identify which ones are Jewish is by the names on the stones. Valeriy will check with the Monastery as to whether or not a burial register exists.

Valeriy also agreed to be our on-site representative. He will watch all work that is done during the project and will report to Alex any problems that arise and any significant deviations from the project plan.

I drafted an Agreement specifying these tasks. Alex will translate it into Ukrainian and will get Valeriy's signature.

Meeting with the Jews of Kremenets

We met with Polina Vasil'evna Mel'nik who now is nominal "leader" of the Jews of Kremenets. She arranged a meeting for us with some of the members of the Jewish community. She also provided me with a list of the 17 people in the town who identify as Jews. These 17 are distributed among 9 family groups. They are:

1. Ol'ga Iosifovna Kosenko, born 1923
her son, Yakov Userovich Tsimerman, born 1953
ul. Kozubskovo, 9
tel.: 2-33-29
2. Larisa Efimovna Potel'nitskaya (Kaspler), born 1947
ul. Dragomanova, 20
tel.: 2-29-37
3. Vasiliy M. Rozenblit, born 1950
ul. Shevchenka, 57
tel.: 2-35-18
his son: Valeriy Rozenblit, born 1973
ul. Kreydyanaya, 12
his daughter: Alla Rozenblit, born 1986
his daughter: Tat'yana Rozenblit, born 1977
ul. Lipovaya, 2
4. Polina Vasil'evna Mel'nik, born 1947
her daughter: Larisa Fursik, born 1972
per. Krasnogorka, 1
tel.: 2-24-50

5. Tamara Fedorovna Klyuch
ul. S. Petlyury, 14/27
tel.: 2-64-10
her daughter: Lyudmila Borisovna Kondratyuk
ul. Mikrorayon 3, 1/2
tel.: 3-14-03
her granddaughter: Viktoriya Chervinskaya
6. Valentina Zakharovna Kuchmak (Shapinko)
ul. Zamkovaya, 26/1
tel.: 2-20-96
her son: Sergey Temchenko
7. Viktoriya Evgen'evna Tatarskaya, born 1946
ul. Kozubskovo, 3/2
tel.: 2-26-28
8. Tamara Velichko
ul. Yubileynaya, 2/17
tel.: 3-17-46
9. Aleksandr Viktorovich Shapinko, born 1970
ul. Letchikov - Vyzvoliteley, 49/60
tel.: 3-19-32

The Tsimerman, Rozenblit, Shapinko and Klyuch families have deep roots in Kremenets. I extracted the vital records for these families from our cd-roms and presented the records to Valeriy who will share them with the others. Valeriy was very happy to find his grandparents and great-grandparents in the records. The other families are more recent arrivals in Kremenets. There are fewer Jews in Kremenets today than there were in 2002. This is because of Larisa's death and because of emigration. Two of Polina's sons are in Israel.

Polina arranged a meeting with some of the local Jews. Because of short notice half of them could not attend. At the Friday morning meeting I described the project and the promised cooperation of the Mayor and Town Council. Those in attendance were uniformly enthusiastic, especially the young people. They volunteered to help on the Project in any way they could ... clearing brush, cleaning gravestones, etc. When told that Valeriy would be working on the project as photographer and overseer, Polina announced that all of the others would help Valeriy keep an eye on the work to ensure that it is done properly. They

were interested in identifying the Rabbi who would provide Halachic oversight. When told that we haven't designated that Rabbi yet, they suggested the Rabbi in Zhitomir. It turns out the Jews of Kremenets consider themselves part of the Zhitomir Jewish community rather than the Ternopil community.

While discussing the possibility of gravestones in the former Gestapo HQ parking lot, Vasiliy Rozenblit (Valeriy's father) told us that there also are gravestones under the parking lot of the Lyceum (the high school). The others agreed with him. They also said that there are gravestones all around town. I told them about our desire to retrieve these stones and place them in a special area of the Cemetery. They agreed this is important and they all volunteered to create a list of all places where matzevot are known to be.

Survey Maps of the Vishnevets Cemeteries

During my 2004 trip, we had arranged for formal surveys to be done of the two Vishnevets Jewish Cemeteries. For one reason or another, completion of the surveys was delayed. Oleksandr Purdy, serving as a representative of the survey company completed the surveys and gave us the survey maps while we were in Kremenets on this trip. I will scan them and post them on our website, along with the survey documents for the Kremenets Cemetery. Oleksandr informed us that there was some official interest in what he was doing at the cemeteries, but no one tried to stop him. The new survey of the Old Vishnevets Cemetery clearly shows a road and two garbage dumps within the Cemetery. I expect negotiations with the town to remedy this situation will be difficult. We did not have time to begin this effort on this trip. It will have to wait until my next visit, probably in early Spring.

Summary

While this visit to Kremenets was arranged on short notice, we managed to accomplish most of our goals, and all of the most critical goals.

- We met and initiated negotiations with an in-country landscape architect, who happens to be expert in soil erosion and is eager to work on the project. Professor Volodimir Panasovich Kucheryaviy has a team of faculty and students who can do much of the Phase 1 work before Winter sets in. This would put us significantly ahead of schedule ... if we can negotiate an affordable fee for his work.
- We met with the new Mayor of Kremenets, Leonid Svyatoslavovich Kichatiy, and confirmed his support for the Project. Through him we obtained official approval

of the Project by the Town Council. Mayor Kichatiy has committed the town to sharing some of the costs of this project, beginning with testing the former Gestapo HQ parking lot for the presence of Jewish gravestones.

- The small community of Kremenets Jews continues to be enthusiastic about the Project. They will help with work in the Cemetery and they will help us identify and retrieve matzevot and matzeva fragments that previously were removed from the Cemetery.
- We negotiated an agreement with Valeriy Rozenblit to create a photographic record of progress on the Project and to be our on-site overseer of work on the Project.
- Former Mayor Andriy Andriyevich Guslavskiy now is Director of the Kremenets-Pochayev Historical Reserve. He will work with us to include the Cemetery in the Reserve so that it can become eligible for USAID funds. He will help us seek those funds, which could be an important component of funding for Phases 2, 3 & 4.
- We obtained formal survey maps for the two Vishnevets Jewish Cemeteries, and now must design a strategy for rehabilitating them.

The most critical task remaining is to complete negotiations with Prof. Kucheryaviy. This will be done through Alex Dunai. Hopefully, this agreement will be successfully negotiated and in-place in time for the work to be done during October, before the winter snows begin.

In the meantime, we need your financial contribution. Will you please take a few minutes write out a check for this project? Complete instructions for contributing to the Project are in the e-mail that accompanies this trip report

Best wishes to each of you, and thank you in advance for helping,

Ron Doctor
Co-Coordinator, Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP and
Kremenets Jewish Cemeteries Project