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THE COMMITTEE FOR THE ERECTION OF A MONUMENT TO BISHOP JOSIP JURAJ STROSSMAYER

Abstract

A civil association with an initiative to raise monuments was organized in Osijek in 1905. The committee organizes a wide variety of collecting resources, creating appropriate medals made of precious metals with the character of the bishop, throws fund-raisers etc. A relatively high capital created by fund-raising is deteriorating by the fall of the Austro-Hungarian crown so the entire initiative ultimately failed. The creation of the monument was disturbed by World War I.

Key words: Strossmayer, bishop, Committee, medal, plaque, monument

Committee organization, raising funds

“The Committee for the Erection of a Monument to Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer” (in the rest of the text – Committee) was created for the purpose of raising funds to create a monument in the name of “eternal mention and gratitude of his fellow citizens for everything that he (the bishop) did in his lifetime for his hometown and the entire nation of Croatia”. The members were important political and social people of Osijek, and in the presidentship there were mayors Konstantin Graff and then Ante Pinterović. Vjekoslav Hengl showed great initiative for the functioning of this society, first as a member and then as mayor.¹

Among some of Strossmayer’s activities, his active involvement in the political and cultural life of “the Monarchy, Croatia and the Slav south” are to be mentioned here. He developed a wide patronage activity in the cultural and educational life, he was a pioneer of bringing together the Christian churches and he brought back the cult and the heirloom of the Slav apostles Cyril and Methodius. He also played a significant role in the economic life, primarily on his own possessions, but also wider. He was born in Osijek, to which he held a special connection, and honored his affection through many spiritual and material goods: by raising the grammar school to the status of a grand grammar school which he funded as well (from school inventory to student aid). He was also responsible for raising funds to build a hospital in the Lower city of Osijek, an orphanage in the Upper city, the arrival of nuns to Osijek and other things. Under his leadership, a parish church is built in Osijek in the Upper city, a seminary is built in Tvrđa (Šuljak, 1989).²

The fund-raising “started extraordinarily, precisely in line with the role and significance of Strossmayer in our people.” The funds to build a monument and the actions of the “Committee” came from all over Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. Considering the intellectual values of the bishop, as well as the fact that he inspired admiration in many as a man from Osijek, there were always the representatives of Serbs and Jews in the Committee, as well as members of all parties and ideologies of Croats.³

1 “Committee” members were Konstantin Graff, Dragutin Neuman, Josip Horvat, Ivan Sauter, Ante Bedenić, Vladimir Kovačević, Stjepan Piller, Vaso Muičević, Oskar Weismayer and Vjekoslav Hengl. Sršan (2009: 101-111)

2 See also: Stančić (2002), Hranić (2002), Krišto (1994).

3 State archive in Osijek (hrv. DAOS) fond 436. Committee for the erection of a monument to J. Strossmayer, Book „Istraživački zahtjevi“.

The association created a pamphlet by which it explained their task, printed at the beginning of July 1905, with the following content:

“Our grand bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer is no more! His noble heart, bearing within it all the people of Croatia and all the care for its better future has ceased to beat forever. Those golden lips which spoke that love towards God and the faith should be bound with the love for your country and your people with a voice that penetrated the heart and soul are silent forever. Never more in our midst will be that ideal character, that diamond man who steeled us, encouraged us, fortified, comforted, emboldened us and incited us to every noble deed. He will never again come to his hometown, our white, young Osijek!

He is no more, but instead of him there will be his glorious works, dedicated to the advancement of our entire people, which will transfer within the cultural history of the entire world throughout the ages the glory of the Croatian people along with the glory of his name, and especially the glory of his hometown, our dear Osijek.

And that is why his memory should be recorded in our Osijek by a monument to prove to the entire world that, along with the people of Croatia, the people of Osijek painfully express a gift of eternal gratitude in front of the memory of the greatest and most famous man from Osijek, with a worthy reminder of his glory for the world.

In order to fulfil this sacred duty as soon as possible, a committee was created in Osijek, which will take care that the famous and undying bishop J.J. Strossmayer will receive a worthy monument by its fund raising and all other means.

Fellow citizens! Friends and worshipers of the bishop! Let us remember our duty to the great deceased man. Let us contribute, what each of us may, at least the minimum, for the monument which will stand for the glory of our great bishop, but also to the pride of Osijek.

Let us strive for that so long until the character of our great, famous, and unforgettable bishop shines...the character that will say to our progeny that we knew how to worship and appreciate the most deserving and famous Croat.

Contributions are sent to the committee treasurer, mister Josip Horvat, prelate, dean, and pastor of the Upper city of Osijek.⁴

4 DAOS 436. Committee for the erection of a monument of J. J. Strossmayer, Pamphlet of the Committee; see also Smičiklas (1906: 8), Šuljak (1989).

The first meeting of the Committee took place in 1905 in the rooms of the "Rajal" inn in Osijek. The meeting was started by dr. Dragutin Neumann (Kušen, 2011: 290). He informed the gathered on the organizing of the committee in Osijek in March of 1904 with the goal of forging a memorial for the 90 year anniversary of the bishop's birth. The medal was supposed to be specially made from gold, silver, and bronze. The artwork was entrusted to the royal medal maker of Vienna, prof. Rudolfu Marschallu, who failed to finish the medal in time, and given the fact that the bishop died soon afterwards, the task remained incomplete. Due to the new circumstances, on April 27th 1905, the society for the creation of medals sent a circular letter to all those who contributed for the making of the medal that the contributions will be used to raise a monument in Osijek "if a contributor does not object to this within 8 days". At the meeting in May, the Committee for the creation of the medal expanded itself with new members and brought a conclusion that the money should be used to raise a monument "The Committee spoke to all the societies of Osijek and a larger number of gentlemen who contributed something to the memorial, but also the monument, to personally, and as emissaries of their societies, join the expanded committee." The purpose for the expansion with the people "of all the social circles, regardless of their political and religious beliefs", was that every member should be active in the raising of "capital needed to raise the monument". The committee for the creation of the medal raised 5.069 Crowns until the meeting in May 1905.⁵

At the meeting of June 2nd 1905 it was concluded that 2000 decrees would be printed due to a higher quality of raising funds in order to "as the government for a permit to raise funds, print the Mark with Strossmayer's face, as well as raising blocks". The government approved Konstantin Graff and Ivan Sauter, at the end of August, "that they may raise funds in the territory of the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia for the purpose of raising the monument for the bishop". Vjekoslav Hengl and Josip Horvat were "authorized to receive the incoming contributions and vouch for them." That same month, the president of the association, Neumann, suggested to raise funds during plays and dances in Osijek, to organize lotteries, raffles etc. The "corporations which throw parties" were to be asked to separate a portion of their profits for the monument to the bishop. At that same meeting, he informed that the medal maker Marschall is working on a plaque "to memorize the death of our great bishop". Because of

⁵ DAOS 436., 436/1 Report of the Committee for the erection of a monument of J. J. Strossmayer from 24 May 1905. Executive Committee for erecting the statue of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek.

the fact that a foreign artist was entrusted to make the plaque, the journalist Većeslav Widler protested to the president of the CASA, Tadija Smičiklas, and the academic sculptor Rudolf Valdec.⁶ Neumann responded that the Committee was unaware that Croatian artists also made medals, and the Vienna artist continued his already agreed-upon work for the plaque.⁷

The committee concluded to suggest to Marschall that the plaques should have a 12 cm² „or larger, at the behest of the committee” surface. Based on this estimate, the artist was to give his pricing according to various sizes and material (bronze, silver or gold). “For every piece sold, the artist will be paid 4 Crowns” and the sale price will not be more than 10 Crowns for the bronze edition. From the correspondence with Marchall, we find that the artist accepted the offer and suggested the following pricing: „that 12 cm² for bronze would be 4 Crowns, silver 8, and gold 150-200; a bronze medal of 19,50 cm² would be 5, silver 12, and 250-300 Crowns in gold; a bronze medal of 25.08 cm² would be 6, silver 16, and 350-400 Crowns in gold. When the order goes over 1000 pieces, then each bronze piece in the smallest format will be 2 Crowns, middle 2.5, and the largest 3 Crowns.” After a lengthier meeting, a unanimous conclusion was reached that the plaque will be made in the middle format of 19.5 cm² and that 500 pieces of bronze plaques will immediately be ordered. The Committee demanded the artist to send the first 500 until February 20th 1906, but the artist asked for an extension of the deadline in his letter dated March 1906 because he would be unable to finish by April 1st.⁸

The committee raised 11.017,15 Crowns by the end of 1905, and 4000 Crowns came from Rudolf Normann alone. The count Normann would be the prime contributor, as he gave several large sums in the following years, 1.195 Crowns, and 1500 Crowns in 1908. The following contributor by the amount of contributions was the city of Osijek, which gave 6000 Crowns for this cause in increments of 1000 Crowns starting in 1906. On the other hand, the city council of Slavonski Brod, in a letter dated November 9th 1905, signaled that it “did not take into consideration the request of the association for the contribution for

6 Rudolf Valdec (1872.-1929.) was one of the founders of modern sculpturing and medal creation in Croatia. An author of a series of public monuments and tombstone plastic. He marked the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb buildings with his decorative work, as well as the Arts pavilion and other public buildings. An esteemed cultural and public officer, as well as a visual arts pedagogue. (Hrvatska opća enciklopedija, vol. 11., Zagreb 2009., unit Rudolf Valdec, 260.)

7 DAOS 436., 436/1 Report of the Committee for the erection of a monument of J. J. Strossmayer from 24 May 1905 and 1 August 1905.

8 DAOS 436., Meetings of society 1 August, 2 October, 6 November 1905, 13 March 1906.

the monument in Osijek because it donated a sum which is to be raised for the bishop in Zagreb.”⁹

Gold plaques were ordered in October 1906. The count Rudolf Normann ordered one for himself and another for the “Academy in Zagreb”. The nobleman from Valpovo suggested that the city council of Osijek should order a gold plaque as well, but also the “royal government’s department for internal affairs”. Due to great enthusiasm, 50 silver plaques were ordered from the artist, and the association suggested a selling price of 50 Crowns for them. According to later data, it can be concluded that the artist managed to turn in 451 pieces of bronze plaques (paid by the society with 2225 Crowns) by the end of November 1906, as well as three gold and 37 silver plaques by the beginning of December that same year, for which there was a receipt of 1404 Crowns. According to that, the gold plaques were supposed to be in the possession of the count, the Academy, and the city of Osijek.¹⁰

The committee close to realizing the monument

The data does not speak of the precise people and dates when the separation in ideas came about between the members of the Committee, but it was definitely the consequence of a greater number of people entering the committee to raise funds. At the beginning of 1911, the representatives of Hrvatski sokol were included in the work of the association and they express their critique that “however noble is the purpose of the committee and the effort and sacrifice of it, the monument still is not standing and will not for some time.” The committee “despite all unfavorable circumstances” raised a sum of 27.763,88 Crowns. On top of that, the association had at its disposal a “good supply of undistributed plaques of the bishop”, but it was all too little for the “erection of any kind of, let alone a worthy, monument to the great bishop”. According to the data on the state of contributions, as well as the sale of brass and silver plaques, it is clear that the association “gathered what was possible”. Given that we are “a small and poor people”, the representatives of the Hrvatski sokol suggest that the capital of the Committee for the erection of a monument to Strossmayer be combined with the capital that this society gathered for the purpose of building “The Croatian Home” in the sum of 12 thousand Crowns. This building was to

9 DAOS 436, Yields for the statute 436/2; Report of meeting of society December 1905.

10 DAOS 436/1 Report of the Committee for the erection of a monument of J. J. Strossmayer, Meetings of society 12 October, 20 November, 4 December 1906.

be built in the Upper city and it would be called “Strossmayer’s Croatian Home” as a place for all the Croatian cultural societies in the city of Osijek. The building was constructed only in the 1930s.¹¹

At a meeting dated March 20th 1914, the mayor of the time, Ante Pinterović, was elected for the new president of the association, dr. Iso Cepelić was elected for the secretary, and Rudolf Knežević for the treasurer. The mayor came into contact with the sculptor from Zagreb, prof. Valdec, at the beginning of 1915, and suggested that he make a draft of a contract to build the monument for the bishop which the mayor would suggest to the Committee. Valdec was to make a model monument “a fifth in nature...which would contain all the details of the future monument”. The model monument was to be examined by the Committee in Valdec’s atelier in Zagreb and “approve it to be constructed in full size: with the right of minor adjustments which the committee would be able to commission, but without it falling to the detriment of the original concept of the artist.” The monument was to be done in bronze, 3.3 meters in height. It was to stand on a marble pedestal 1.98 meters in height, ornamented with writing and insignias. For the pedestal, the artist was supposed to draw a detailed sketch for the sculptor “and the gypsum models for the marble stone base insignias”, detailed drawings for the base and the back, and to supervise the entire project around the stone base and back, as well as to determine, along with the city council, the placement of the square around the monument. “From the architectural base where the steps are placed, 0.66 meters in height with a semicircular back in the shape of a bench, 1.32 meters in height, the base and back are to be made from permanent artificial stone. The diameter of the semicircle would be 5.28 meters. The architectural part of the monument was to be made according to the golden ratio in accordance with (3:5=8 modulus 0,66m) the statue of the bishop.” The plan foresaw that the city council would give “that portion of the square towards the Strossmayer street to be decorated and trees planted and as soon as possible, if they may, in order for the finished monument to have an already prepared green background when it will be revealed.”¹²

The cost of making a model one fifth that size, the detailed drawings of the architectural portion of the monument, as well as the bronze statue of Strossmayer, would cost 30000 Crowns, according to the contract text. The

11 DAOS 436, File of Committee for erecting the statue.... 16 May 1905.-7 March 1922, Hrvatski sokol 1911; see also Ivanković (2006: 64-64).

12 DAOS 436., 436/1 Report of the Committee for the erection of a monument of J. J. Strossmayer, meetings of society, Draft of contract prof. Valdec;

marble base, the plinth, and the back made in artificial stone, was to be made by the Committee, according to the prices of the department of construction of Osijek. The placement and the planting of the square around the monument was to be paid for by the city council. The entire project was supposed to be finalized within two years (counting from the day the contract was signed with prof. Valdec). In order to realize this plan, a new meeting of the Committee was held to “create the conclusion for the ordering of the monument.” At the meeting on July 23rd 1915, the members expressed their opinion that they are only a part of the “extended committee” and had no right to decide on whether the monument is to be built and who will build it. According to the opinion of the majority of the time, the Committee had a function of raising funds. They felt that “during the order itself, a public competition should not be excluded and that the proposition of the Hrvatski sokol in Osijek to build the statue of Strossmayer from the money gathered for the statue and home, as well as future contribution should be accepted within the expanded committee.”¹³

The ideas within the Committee will would turn out to be a good portion of the reason why the monument for the bishop never got made. By the end of 1913, the capital was 30.670,88 Crowns, and only 30 Crowns were raised by gifts during the entire year, while the profit from interests were an additional 1190.84 Crowns. The association had 441 pieces of bronze plaques in storage at 5 Crowns apiece (or 2205 Crowns in total) and 12 silver plaques at 16,20 Crowns apiece (194,40 Crowns). The total property was 33.070,28 Crowns. Medals sold slowly, probably due to a reduction in the initial enthusiasm. Perhaps it could have been expected that they would sell out after the monument was built. In March 1914, the stores counted 433 piece of bronze and 12 piece of silver plaques, and by mid-1915, one silver and one bronze plaque were sold. The capital grew to 32.842,98 by mid-1915.¹⁴

After the war, the city council brought a conclusion in September of 1919 that the monument was to be built and that jobs around it should be entrusted to new Committee members: dr. Ante Pinterović, the city leader was set for president and Vaso Muačević was the vice president. Other members of the Committee were: prelate Josip Horvat, dr. F. Papratović, Dinko Šulentić, dr. Vjekoslav Hengl, Ivan Heštera, Radoslav Bačić, Franjo Sudarević, Milan Vaniček, dr. Josip

13 DAOS 436/1 Report of the Committee for the erection of a monument of J. J. Strossmayer, meetings of society, report from 23 July 1915.

14 DAOS 436., 436/1 Report of the Committee for the erection of a monument of J. J. Strossmayer, meetings of society 31 December 1913, 20 March 1914, 31 June 1915.

Bösendorfer, dr. Iso Cepelić, Ivan Dončević, Lazar Bogdanović protojerej, dr. Hinko Plachte, Viktor Axmann, Leonard Fichtner, Mirko Hermann, Vladimir Malin, and Rudolf Knežević. They were all notified of this, with an addition that they “should constitute and gather in agreement with the previous committee due to further functions by way of the previous president, the retired city mayor Konstantin Graff.” The last meeting of the abovementioned committee with minutes was held on January 31st 1921. A decision was brought to “grant the plaques for sale to the Teachers Society ‘Unity’ considering their celebration of the birth of the bishop, the silver ones at 50 Dinar apiece, and 10 Dinar for the bronze.” When the treasurer Josip Horvat died, among his possessions were “5 silver and 380 bronze plaques of Strossmayer, in a locker”, which were in the property of the association. In March 1922, at the meeting of the city council, the membership of the committee and the construction of the monument were once again under discussion. The executive board for the “erection of the monument to the bishop” was supposed to be filled with new faces because some members from September 1919 died, and some moved out of Osijek. The last piece of data created during the work of this association is the confirmation of Vladimir Mrljak dated June 8th 1927 that he “received 390 pieces of bronze plaques at 10 Dinar apiece to be distributed”. There is no record on whether this distribution ended or where the social property ended up. The capital, which was gathered with a lot of effort and was relatively large, lost its value with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. According to the report of the First Croatian Savings Bank, on July 30th 1920 it was 38.492 Crowns.¹⁵

The contemporary initiative to build a monument

The contemporary initiative to build a monument to bishop Strossmayer came from the Rotary club in Osijek on February 20th 1996. This association wrote a proposal to the City Council to build a Memorial to J.J. Strossmayer in Osijek. An expert discussion was held on this subject as well. The interested parties from the Diocese Đakovačko-srijemska, University of J.J. Strossmayer in Osijek, CASA – Department for Scientific Work in Osijek, the Historical Archive in Osijek, the Department of Management of Social Affairs, The Department of

15 Also File of Committee... 16 May 1905 -7 March 1922, Osijek town council no. 12.267-1919. 25 September 1919. Decision under number 348.; Also Conclusion of towns municipality 7 March 1922; also Report of the inheritance, case of deceased Josip Horvat in Upper town of Osijek, no. 393. gr. Os. 6-1922.;

Management for Urbanism, Construction, and Environment Protection, Matica Hrvatska – Osijek branch all took part.

According to the suggestion of the Rotary club, an “appropriate memorial” should be built in light of the 800 year anniversary of the first mention of the city of Osijek where the house of birth¹⁶ of bishop Strossmayer was in order to raise “a memorial to our famous fellow citizen in our city.” The mayor, Zlatko Kramarić, called upon esteemed cultural, religious, and political representatives to make an arrangement, and a committee to raise a memorial to bishop Strossmayer was created. However, the 800 year anniversary passed, and the work of the Committee died down.¹⁷

„On May 8th 1999, during the celebration of the city of Đakovo, a statue of J.J. Strossmayer was revealed. It was the result of an idea of the citizens of Osijek, lead by the Committee headed by the mayor of Osijek. Along with it came many questions on why the city council stole the idea and failed the vow of the citizens of Osijek?”¹⁸

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16 The birth house of Josip Juraj Strossmayer was „blizu ukraj Drave: „Bila je prva u ulici Šamcu, s desne strane, kad se od Tvrde u Gornji grad ide”, where the Šamačka street is today, in front and near Hotel Osijek (Cepelić, Pavić, 1900).

17 DAOS 436., File „Istraživači zahtjevi“, Writings of the Rotary Club from 20 February 1996 to City council and Towns municipality, Proposal for the erection of a monument of J.J. Strossmayer in Osijek.; also Professional debate on filed proposition on 27 February 1996 in Town's municipality, Kuhačeva 9 in Osijek.

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ODBOR ZA PODIGNUĆE SPOMENIKA BISKUPU JOSIPU JURJU STROSSMAYERU

Sažetak

Društvo građana s inicijativom za podizanje spomen obilježja organizirano je u Osijeku 1905. godine. Odbor organizira široku akciju prikupljanja sredstava, daje izraditi prigodne medalje od plemenitih metala s biskupovim likom, priređuje dobrotvorne zabave i slično. Relativno visoka glavica nastala prikupljanjem sredstava propada propadanjem austro-ugarske krune pa je čitava akcija konačno i propala. Akciju podizanja spomenika omeo je Prvi svjetski rat.

Ključne riječi: Strossmayer, biskup, Odbor, medalja, plaketa, spomenik