

## **The Conference is going to precede an architectural competition**

*At the recently concluded Brno Meetings, the writer and publisher Martin Reiner presented to the wider public for the first time an ambitious project to build a Holocaust Documentation Centre in Moray. During an intense yearlong negotiation, he was able to conclude a memorandum with Brno City Council committing the city to provide the land where the Documentation Center should stand. What we were interested in was what was coming up in the project soon.*

## **Has the coronaviral crisis somehow been signed on the project of the Moravian Holocaust Documentation Center?**

She did, of course. We had a press conference set up for the end of March with our entire representative board. That fell through, as did my subsequent trips to Israel and Germany, and the dozens of important meetings I would have had in the spring. Worst of all, though, we have had to push back a major international conference from the autumn to the spring of next year.

## **What kind of conference is this, what do you want to talk about?**

For us, some fundamental issues. After a year and a quarter of activity, we were able to sign a memorandum with the city that provides the most important thing for the project, the land, we wanted to bring together all the experts on the Holocaust and the historical presence of Jews in Moravia and open up a debate on exactly what the museum should look like. But our concern is that these people not only tell us something, but also - if not above all - get to know each other better. And an ideal side effect of such a conference could be the creation of a seed team that will later be directly involved in the implementation of the contents of the Documentation Center.

## **You don't count on foreign experts?**

Of course we want them to come. We will be inviting the directors of the Jewish museums in Jerusalem, Berlin, Warsaw, Washington, Amsterdam ... We want them to tell us how the

museums were created with them and especially where they made mistakes that we could then avoid.

**Experts are expecting a second wave of coronavirus. Such an event must be organized well in advance. Do you feel that by now people from all over the world can guarantee that they will even be able to arrive next spring?**

We don't have a guarantee; you can see that even now, after the most dramatic phase of the epidemic has passed (at least here in Europe), it's still pretty wall-to-wall. But we cannot put it off any longer, so I am already working with the idea of a conference that will be partly virtual. At least for domestic experts, I would like to organise a real meeting, where Brno would become a place of face-to-face meetings, and we would implement the input of people who cannot come by video-conference.

**So the possibility that the whole event might be moved up to next fall isn't in play?**

It's not, for a simple reason. Until we have a clear answer as to what exactly the contents of the Documentation Centre should consist of, we cannot announce an international architectural competition. And until we have some attractive result from the architectural competition, we're going to have a hard time raising money to build the centre. Those things follow one another logically, and it's already a long shot. Any further delay is wrong.

**Will "normal" people make it to the conference?**

When I talked about the experts on the subjects, I was referring to the leading Czech Judaism, historians who deal with the subject of the Holocaust or older Jewish history. In addition, however, it is important that representatives of Jewish municipalities also appear at the conference, and especially those from the regions who have been concerned for three decades about the legacy of Jewish culture and historical presence in places such as Mikulov, Třebíč, Boskovice, Rousínov, Lomnice, Pohořelice and others. We will definitely invite the director of the Prague Jewish Museum, Leo Pavláta. The people from Pink Productions who can do fascinating virtual expositions should arrive. We're counting on journalists, city officials, students, potential sponsors...

**This looks like quite a big deal...**

But it's not about doing a flashy PR event at all. I want and need people to meet here, on one occasion and in one place, who have something to say about the project, or something to give it professionally. To show who wants and can help the project in the future to what extent. So that all those who are interested can have their say, because at some point - on the basis of the broadest possible consensus, of course - it will be necessary to put an end to this expert debate and head for the next horizon.