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Heinrich Schoenberg: Modernist Architect in Interwar Bucharest

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Abstract: Bucharest multiculturalism was a feature of its cultural life throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. It contributed to the interwar architectural development and creative output of Bucharest. This development envolved some lesser known jewish architects such as: Emanuel Arnet, Leon Silion, Jean Krakauer, Iacob Rosinthal, Harry Schoenberg. The opinions expressed by interwar architects concerning modern architecture was facing the opposition of traditionalist architects. The modernisation of Bucharest was a matter of architecture and identity. Therefore the article also makes a hypothesis concerning the anonimity of a magazine report about the modern architecture of Bucharest published in "Romanian ilustration" of 24.08.1932. This magazine report was published in the antisemitic atmosphere in interwar Bucharest. Based on some clues the article attempts to identify the authors of the report, both the interviewed architect and the journalist. The article will give a general outline concerning the life and activity of the presumed author, the architect and artist Heinrich Schoenberg. The Sionist interests of Henry Shoenberg's siblings and family will also be discussed.

Keywords: *interwar Bucharest; modern architecture; antisemitism; media exposure; jewish architect.*

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1. Introduction

According to the biography of Isaac Jacob Schoenberg (who became an important mathematician after emigrating to the United States in 1930), he was the younger brother of Heinrich (Harry) and sisters Elsa and Irma, and the son of Jacob Schoenberg (1864-1930), an Austrian citizen, accountant by profession but fascinated by mathematics, and of Rachel Segal, who wrote poetry. Between these two interests we can see the future evolution of the firstborn, Harry, who oscillated between painting and architecture. We also learn that Jacob and Rachel were active in the Zionist community in Iasi. Only towards the end of the first war will the parents acquire Romanian citizenship (O'Connor & Robertson, 2016).

The family moved to Iaşi in 1910. The future architect grew up on Păcurari Street in Iaşi, at no. 97, in the house that had belonged to Avram Beniaminovici, the last owner of the Brewery in Iaşi (Ussishkin, 2012, p. 61). The house was demolished in 1980.

Harry graduated from the Technische Hochschule (now Technische Universität) in Munich in 1921. It seems that until 1925 he continued to live and work in Munich (Ussishkin, 2012, p. 158).

In 1925 he received a medical certificate of reform for lower grades by which he was declared unfit (CHNAR).

In 1926, together with the architect Walter, Heinrich Schoenberg participated in the competition for the Bucharest City Hall, some of his drawings being published in the magazine Arhitectura (1926, pp. 72-73).

In the Monitorul Oficial of March 23, 1927, Harry Schoenberg was granted a patent for: Locker for tubes with paste and creams (File No. 13,714) (Monitorul Oficial, 1927).

On March 14, 1929, Harry Schoenberg was asked to present the equivalent diploma at the School of Architecture because he had applied for the right to draw up building projects in the capital (Monitorul Oficial al Municipiului Bucureşti, 1929, p. 4)

Architect Schoenberg organized an exhibition in the Mozart Hall on Calea Victoriei called My Home, which was opened between May 5-22, 1929. It presented a modern 2-room house, hall and outbuildings (bathroom, closet, pantry, kitchen) on an area of only 50 sqm. The problem of small and comfortable housing is solved abroad but not in the country, remarked the author of the exhibition. At the same time, he had exhibited a project for the League of Nations Palace at the Athenaeum designed with architect Wallter. The exhibition stood out with ingeniously built furniture to make housewives' life easy: a sideboard whose drawers could be opened from both the living

room and the kitchen, a kitchen chair with two overlapping planks, one for ironing and one for cutting, etc. (Marghita, 1929, p. 2).

In 1929 he became a graduate architect of the Bucharest Academy of Architecture, with diploma number 231/1934. Soon, he started to practice architecture and commercial design, having his own architecture office in Bucharest, on Sf. Stefan Street no. 14. In 1934 he was enrolled in the Romanian Body of Architects (CHNAR).

Architect Harry Schoenberg, domiciled in Bucharest, Popa Soare Street Nr. 68, was the creditor of the building in Iași, Muzelor street, former Nr. 32 today 46, through an assignment of the Bank of Moldova (Monitorul Oficial, 1932).

On November 20, 1932, the architect Schoenberg published an article on the acoustics of the Athenaeum, in which he set out ideas related to the science of acoustics in response to an article by Alex F. Mihail on the same subject (Schoenberg, 1932, pp. 3-4).

In the Monitorul Oficial (Official Gazette) of July 2, 1936, Harry Schoenberg was granted a patent for: Educational and entertaining device (File No. 24,932).

According to the Monitorul Oficial (Official Gazette) of May 16, 1941, architect Heinrich Schoenberg was removed from the Body of Architects (along with Focsanu Aurel, Goldenzweig Leopold, Rossin Paul, Stern Leon, Suciu Adrian, Mingopol Nicolae, Stefănescu Victor), because it contravened the provisions of art. 32 of the law of the Body of Architects.

Architect Schoenberg designed villas, collective housing buildings and public buildings in Bucharest. Of these, only the block from Bul Ferdinand no. 24 (where he also lived), the block from Schitu Darvari no. 1, the property of M. Reschowsky (September 1932) (The archive of arch. Tiberiu Niga[1]), and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Embassy in Bucharest are known (Marinache, 2021, p. 28).

Two building permits in his name were found, but we do not known if they have been completed:

- No. 11381/33 I. Irimescu, Grivitei, no. 71, H. Scoemberg [sic] (Urbanismul, no. 05-06, May-June 1933, p. 402)

- No. 18500/33 Rasela Catz, Bd. Dacia no. 42, H. Schemberg [sic] (Urbanismul, no. 7-8, July-August 1933, p. 501)

Harry Schoenberg emigrated to the US in 1939 and was naturalized in 1954 under the name Henry Ray. He died June 7, 1959, in New York.

[1] Archive of arch. Tiberiu Niga, plate no. 91NB-PL, the Library of the "Ion Mincu"

2. Literature review

Researchers studying interwar and postwar Romanian architecture emphasize the existence of a double continuity: one between the western Modern Movement and Romanian architects (Machedon & Scoffham, 1999) and one between interwar modernist Romanian architects and postwar communist architecture (Tulbure, 2016).

The study of jewish Romanian architects of the interwar period is pivotal in establishing the degree of continuity and change. The social agenda of the Modern Movement was more popular among jewish architects (Marcel Iancu, for example) and their clients (very often jewish), due to their unbiased judgement and sometimes to socialist and even communist beliefs. But the social agenda wasn't visible in the interwar era and wasn't too important in the first years of communism, also. It seems that the legionary and later the communist dictature were unsympathetical towards this agenda.

The few social and cheap housing projects of the interwar period were rather concerned by a national expression than by efficiency (Voinea, 2018). The social agenda of interwar Bucharest modernism was largely absent due to its affinity to both jewish architects and communism.

The memorandum of the Systematization Master Plan of Bucharest associates blocks with communism. (Marcu et al., 1935, pp. 20-21). It is ironic that among the authors of this plan was Duiliu Marcu who campaigned for the construction of blocks of flats, considering that "Romanian housing is […] a luxury solution, applied to poor people" (Marcu, 2015).

The career of H. Schoenberg offers and interesting case study of the social ideas and political turmoil in interwar Romania.

The year 1932 definitively consecrated the modern architecture in Bucharest. It was also a response to the economic crisis, because an investment in the future required efficient buildings, faster to build and with a modern look. (Argetoianu, 1934, p. 11).

Projects such as the Dalles Foundation Hall, architect Horia Teodoru (Bucharest 1932); the rest home for the Gaz-Electra enterprise (1932) or competitions such as the one in 1932 for the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Bucharest, prove the assertion of the new style (Popescu, 2010).

But modern architecture was not only a materialization of the success story of the industrial society, it was also a guide for the new norms of behavior. It was responsible for the growth of cities, it had to create many cheap homes, adapted to the new industrial and urban context. And its assertion depended crucially on the creation of a compelling story (Sachs, 2016) and of a new vocabulary. In order to persuade his clients the modern

architect had to be also very good with words, despite his natural preference for the language of images and drawings. (Forty, 2000, pp. 17-18)

In the interwar press of Bucharest the traditional architects such as Petre Antonescu (Popescu, 2010) were more present than the modernist ones. A leader of the modernist movement, Horia Creangă, only wrote two articles, one of which was a conference and also a part of the book: Towards an Architecture of Bucharest (Iancu et al., 1935).

One of the first articles about the modern architecture of Bucharest, written in 1932, was unfortunately anonymous: (S. E., 1932, pp. 16-17). There are reasons to belive that that its author was Harry Schoenberg.

3. Arguments to support the thesis

The main argument in favor of Schoenberg's paternity is the presence of two images with his projects as illustrations of the article, next to projects signed by well-known architects of the time such as: Horia Creangă, Marcel Iancu, Octav Doicescu or Jean Berindey.

Another argument is his hearing at the prestigious Criterion Association in 1932.

"An invitation for a meeting to take place on Saturday, July 16, at 9.30 pm at Mr. Schonberg's house on Blvd. Ferdinand #24 states that the following topics would be discussed (1) what constituted the section of architecture (2) how the sections will work, (3) choosing two conferences that will be presented in the series 'Current Romanian Culture' that will be organized by the Association in the fall, (4) professional questions, exhibitions, international exchange of exhibitions and so on. On July 19, Comarnescu commented on how things with Criterion were going much better and Maxy offered to present his art in the fall." (Bejan, 2019, p. 84)

On this occasion, the architect was visited in his apartment, which perfectly illustrated the architecture he was promoting. An image of the interior of this apartment was present in the article.

Despite his numerous patents, his participation in competitions in 1926, 1929, and articles on the acoustics of the Athenaeum, the architect Schoenberg chose anonymity in his 1932 article.

But why did he make this choice? The answer seems to be provided by the architect himself in this article: "Introduced into the country by a handful of brave architects, who took on the *ungrateful* task of forerunners, it is now almost exclusively applied". The ungrateful task and his jewish origins both cotributed to his annonimity. He was able however to make his

projects known through this article. He received an order immediately after this item, in September 1932 (a block for M. Reschowsky).

His choice of anonymity can also be seen as a proof of modesty compared to the long efforts of Marcel Iancu, a promoter with more seniority of the new style.

The political events of 1933, including the assasination of the liberal prime minster I. G. Duca (Bejan), prove that he was right in his choice of anonymity.

All four Schoenberg brothers had excellent educations. With famous brothers such as Issac (matemathician) and Irma (pianist), it is surprising that Heinrich's career as an architect was largely unnoticed. His file in the Fund of the College of Architects at the National Archives of Romania was only searched by the undersigned.

Schoenberg's speech, although anonymous at the time, foreshadowed the views expressed in the manifest book: Towards an Architecture of Bucharest. Both the idea of predecessors in cules and that of adapting to the Romanian climate, needs and sensibilities were formulated 3 years before Marcel Iancu, Horia Creangă and Octav Doicescu: "The modern style, of indisputable foreign origin (although it has brilliant local ancestors in our wonderful cule!) Nationalized, rooted in the specific Romanian sensitivity and adapted to our climate and needs, will be the style that will give the appearance of our Capital tomorrow." (S.E., 1932, pp. 16-17).

Several Jewish architects of the time emigrated due to anti-Semitic discrimination, such as Marcel Iancu, Jean Krakauer or Rudolph Fraenkel. Others such as Emanoil Arnet were less well known. Arnet's project Steaua României[2] is attributed to the architect George Negoescu (Dogaru & Criticos, 2018, p. 36).

4. Arguments to argue the thesis

The proof concerning Shoenberg's paternity and choice of anonymity are circumstantial.

Some of Shoenberg's projects (for Bucharest City Hall or the Palace for the League of Nations) suggest that he wasn't actually a promoter of the modern movement in architecture. The identity of the modernist architect may not have been all that important for the magasine were the article was published. A modernist voice was important but not its identity.

[2] *Bucharest Municipal Monitor.* (1932, February 14), p. 4.

5. Dismantling the arguments against

The identity of the voice of modernity wasn't important for the *Ilustrațiunea românească* magasine only if the architect in case wasn't very well known.

In Romania there were modernist architects educated in the country such as Octav Doicescu, Henrietta Delavrancea but also in the West such as Marcel Iancu or Horia Creangă. The influence of the local school of architecture led to the search of the former ones in the direction of an adaptation to local conditions and sensitivity. In this sense, it should be noted that Schoenberg's first known project, the one for Bucharest City Hall, used a simplification of the national style.

The results of the competition for the Palace of the Bucharest City Hall are presented in the magazine Arhitectura from 1926. The only project with a more modern look belonged to the architects Harry Schoenberg and D. Walter (Arhitectura, 1926, p. 72) and was not among those ranked.

This juxtaposition of old and new shapes is reminescent of the competition for the Peace Palace in The Hague in 1906. It opposed the winning project of the French Cordonnier against that of the Dutch Berlage, designed in a more simplified style. Berlage was amond those (along with Otto Wagner, and Adolf Loos) who formulated the new language of the 20th century. (Kostof & Castillo, 1995, p. 686).

The project proposed by Schoenberg and Wallter resembles (although the perspective chosen in the magazine is not a very happy one) the appearance of the City Hall of the Green District, whose construction began in 1928 (Palatul Primăriei de Verde [Green City Hall Palace], 1941, p. 197), if we leave aside the triumphal arch that would have narrowed the traffic on Carol I Boulevard and other historical marks which reduced the value of the project. Here is the critique that Marcel Iancu brings to this project "Urbanism [Schoenberg and Wallter]: an interesting study of the common market of the town hall united with the circular one of IC Brătianu. An urbanistic idea that would replace the "court of honor". Unrealizable due to the "architecture" and to many other reasons - triumphal arch (?), Roman column, obelisks!" (Iancu, 1925).

Providing solutions to the housing crisis will be a central issue in Poland, Hungary and Romania. These solutions determined the political and social relevance of the architects (Kohlrausch, 2019, p. 17).

Despite the need for housing, the Romanian authorities were shy. The construction of cheap housing in Bucharest has taken a traditional form in most cases (Voinea, 2018) and was insufficient (Ionescu, 1965, p. 485).

Projects like Neues Berlin were not possible in Bucharest due to the existing hostility towards socialist ideas (Hvattum & Hermansen, 2004, p. 48).

In the context in which the modern architecture of Bucharest was addressed more to the upper classes, the architect Schoenberg illustrates the preoccupations of the western modernists: Existenzminimum interiors, transformable furniture, "Well thought out economic plan, aiming to achieve maximum comfort on a minimum of surface".

The idea of minimum open and flexible housing (Existenzminimum) was considered by Siegfried Gideon as a way to get rid of high rents and household worries but was not very popular in Bucharest (Heynen, 2000, p. 35).

6. Discussion: Communism and the USSR embassy

Classicizing projects must be seen as adaptations to requirements but also as a manifestation of the architect's desire to assert himself. He intuited that a classicizing project would be favored in the competition for the League of Nations (as it happened). As for the project for the USSR embassy, some biographical circumstances contributed to it: the anti-Semitism more and more manifest at the time and the family friendship with the construction engineer and entrepreneur Emil Calmanovici, financier of the Romanian Communist Party.

Using photos from the Briscoe Center archive, which belonged to mathematician Isaac Schoenberg, we learn that his elder brother, Heinrich, had Sandu Eliad as a friend. (Image 1). He was probably the one behind the initials S.E. of the article from the Romanian Illustration magazine discussed above.

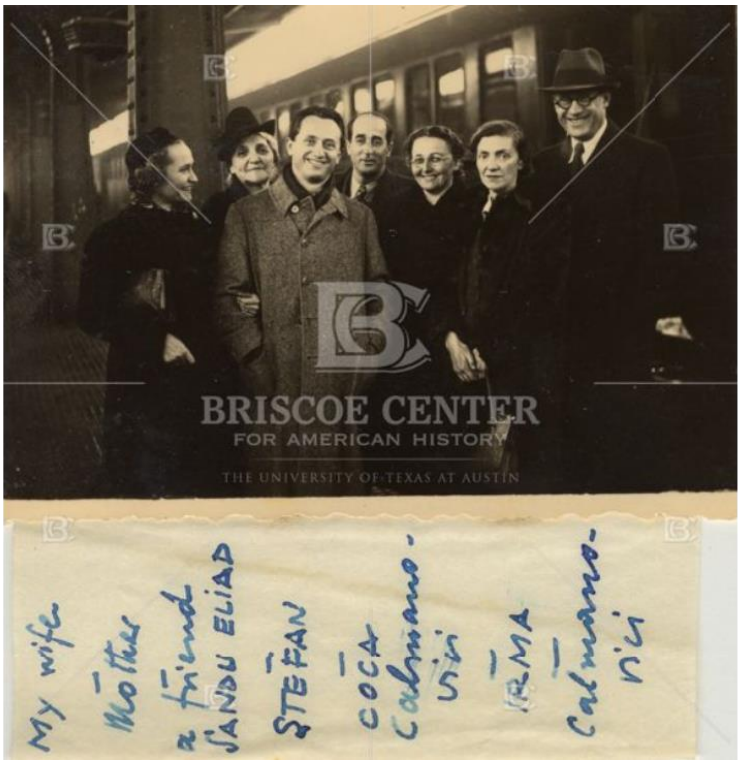


Image 1. Family and friends (1934)[3]

The picture dated in 1934 also include Stefan Wolpe and Irma Schoenberg. The couple had fled Berlin in 1933 and also passed through Bucharest on their way to Palestine, were they reached in 1934 (Cohen, 2012, p. 38).

The picture, taken in the Bucharest North Train Station, also included Coca and Emil Calmanovici. Stefan Wolpe, Sandu Eliad and Emil Calmanovici were all communists.

More information about Calmanovici's activity as a financier of the Romanian Communist Party can be found in the article *Cine-i finanța pe comuniști?* [Who financed the communists?] (Sfera politicii, 1998, pp. 28-29).

From 1937 when he became a party member until 1944, Emil Calmanovici was a member of the Central Financial Commission of the Romanian Communist Party and one of its main donors. The money

[3] Family and friends, 1934 [photograph]. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.briscoecenter.org/item/454332?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=6ff650872c4ff127b8d6&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=15

donated came from construction or the occasional business with building materials. The design of the USSR Embassy was related to the blocks of flats built on the land of the former embassy, on Calea Victoriei.



Image 2. Street in Bucharest[4]

[4] Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.briscoecenter.org/item/454335



Image 3. Street in Bucharest[5]

The two photos show a building under construction and the same finished building, on Calea Victoriei, next to the block designed by the architect Gheorghe Negoescu. This project was related to that of the USSR embassy, the block being built on the site of the old embassy, the new one being moved to Kiseleff Road (Tanase, 2012).

The building from Calea Victoriei no. 25 (Central Palace), a high-rise building with a basement, ground floor and ten storeys, on a reinforced concrete skeleton with the façade pillars removed from the alignment, was also built in 1937, as was its neighbor (Moisescu & Săftoiu, 1964, p. 292).

The embassy was built in 1937-38 and the block in 1937 so one can suspect that they were somehow related.

[5] Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.briscoecenter.org/item/454336

The Soviet ambassador Ostrovsky had given the task of demolishing the former residence of the Russian legation and building the new one on Kiseleff Road to engineer Emil Calmanovici. In 1946, Calmanovici donated his entire fortune to the Communist Party, including the profits from the construction of this block (Tanase, 2012).

It seems that Calmanovici served as an interface for the interests of the USSR, as the deal with the embassy suggests.

Regarding the design of the Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, on Kiseleff Road No. 6, we know a succession of proposals. The first one belonged to the architect Fraenkel, supported by the former ambassador Ostrovski (Pasat, 2017). Then followed the Russian-born architect Alexei Sciusev, author of Lenin's Mausoleum in the Red Square (Ciolacu, 2016). His project for a construction of 1452 sqm, two floors, was rejected by romanian authorities on the grounds that the author did not have the right to sign in our country and the projected height of 17.5 m. exceeded the legal one of 14 m. The project signed by Heinrich Schvenberg [sic], one floor was approved (Marinache, 2021, p. 28).

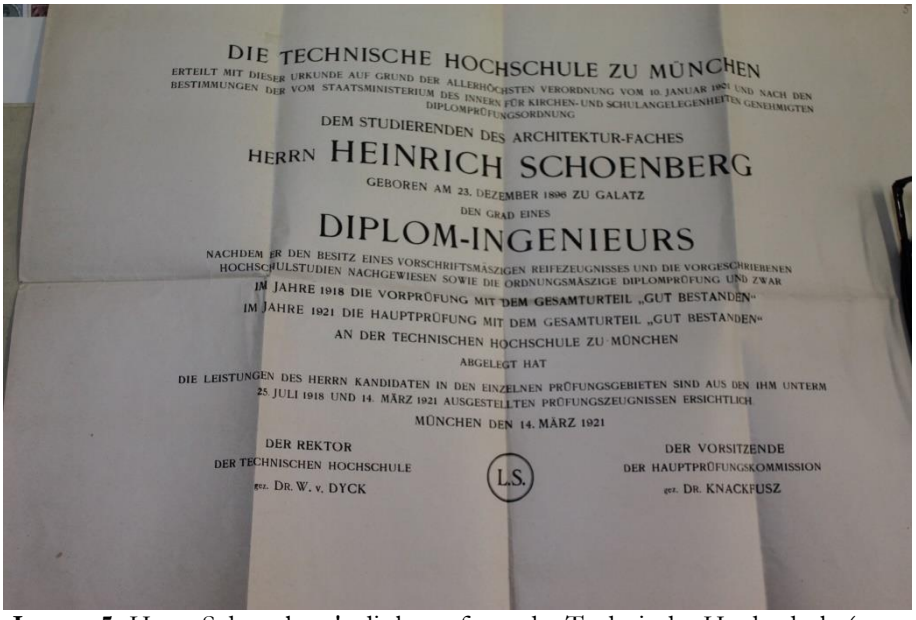
The reluctance of the Romanian authorities as well as the embassy project were related to the possibility of improving the Romanian-Russian relations, a possibility that ends with the dismissal of the diplomat N. Titulescu and of the ambassador Ostrovski.

The memory of the Jewish architects who emigrated has not been preserved. Marcel Iancu's archive has been lost during emigration (Bocanet & Zahariade, 1996, p. 52) and Jean Krakauer's archive in Canada, his country of adoption (Mircea, 2021). This article is a first step in recovering the memory of an architect who went into exile and in understanding his contribution to the constitution of a discourse of modern architecture. The research of Heinrich Schoenberg's activity and political involvement is only at its beginning.

7. Images



Image 4. Walter and Schoenberg project for the Bucharest City Hall Competition
Source: Arhitectura (1926, p. 72)



DIE TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE ZU MÜNCHEN

ERTEILT MIT DIESER URKUNDE AUF GRUND DER ALLERHÖCHSTEN VERORDNUNG VOM 10. JANUAR 1921 UND NACH DEN BESTIMMUNGEN DER VOM STAATSMINISTERIUM DES INNERN FÜR KIRCHEN- UND SCHULANGELEGENHEITEN GENEHMIGTEN DIPLOMPRÜFUNGSORDNUNG

DEM STUDIERENDEN DES ARCHITEKTUR-FACHES

HERRN HEINRICH SCHOENBERG

GEBOREN AM 23. DEZEMBER 1896 ZU GALATZ

DEN GRAD EINES

DIPLOM-INGENIEURS

NACHDEM ER DEN BESITZ EINES VORSCHRIFTSMÄSZIGEN REIFEZEUGNISSES UND DIE VORGESCHRIEBENEN HOCHSCHULSTUDIEN NACHGEWIESEN SOWIE DIE ORDNUNGSMÄSZIGE DIPLOMPRÜFUNG UND ZWAR

IM JAHRE 1918 DIE VORPRÜFUNG MIT DEM GESAMTURTEIL „GUT BESTANDEN"

IM JAHRE 1921 DIE HAUPTPRÜFUNG MIT DEM GESAMTURTEIL „GUT BESTANDEN"

AN DER TECHNISCHEN HOCHSCHULE ZU MÜNCHEN

ABGELEGT HAT

DIE LEISTUNGEN DES HERRN KANDIDATEN IN DEN EINZELNEN PRÜFUNGSGEBIETEN SIND AUS DEN IHM UNTERM 25. JULI 1918 UND 14. MÄRZ 1921 AUSGESTELLTEN PRÜFUNGSZEUGNISSEN ERSICHTLICH

MÜNCHEN DEN 14. MÄRZ 1921

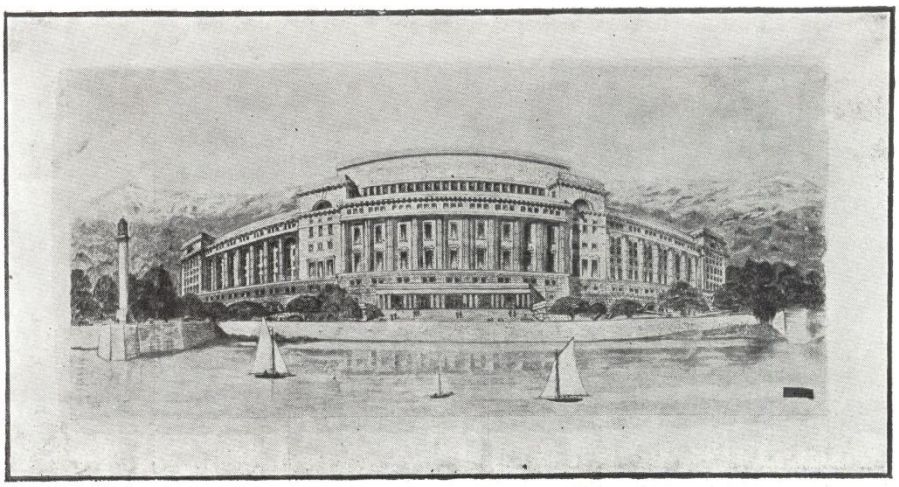
DER REKTOR
DER TECHNISCHEN HOCHSCHULE
gez. DR. W. v. DYCK

L.S.

DER VORSITZENDE
DER HAUPTPRÜFUNGSKOMMISSION
gez. DR. KNACKFUSZ

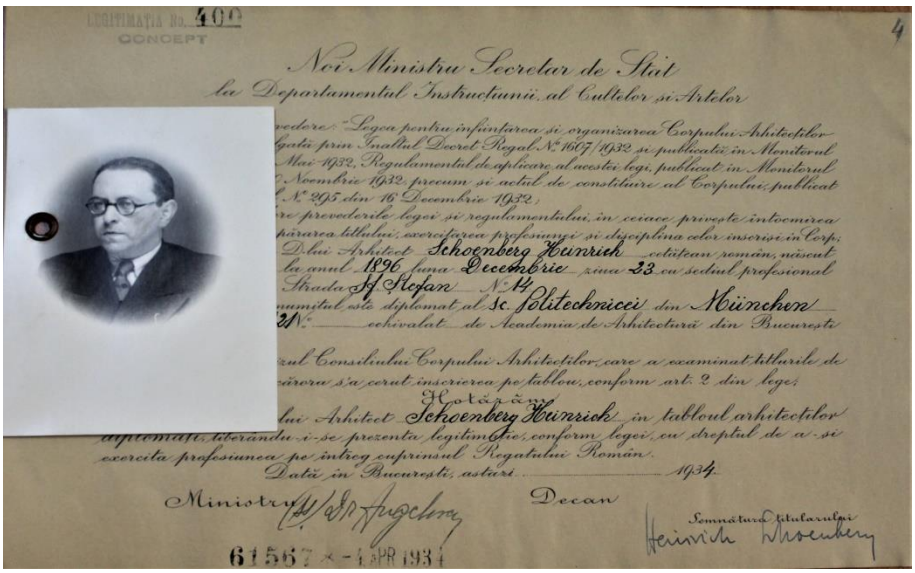
Image 5. Harry Schoenberg's diploma from the Technische Hochschule (now Technische Universität), Munich, 1921 (CHNAR)[6]

[6] Central Historical National Archives of Romania (CHNAR), Fund of the College of Architects, file no. 2098.



Palatul Ligii Națiunilor (proiect) D. Walter și H. Schonberg

Image 6. Schoenberg and Walter project for the Palace of Nations Competition[7]



LEGITIMAȚIA No. 402
CONCEPT

4

Noi Ministru Secretar de Stat
la Departamentul Instrucțiunii al Cultelor și Artelor

vedere Legea pentru înființarea și organizarea Corpului Arhitecților
gată prin Înaltul Decret Regal N. 1607/1932 și publicată în Monitorul
Mai 1932, Regulamentul de aplicare al acestei legi, publicat în Monitorul
Noembrie 1932, precum și actul de constituire al Corpului, publicat
l N. 295 din 16 Decembrie 1932;
re prevederile legei și regulamentului, în ceiace privește întocmirea
părarea tablului, exercitarea profesiunei și disciplina celor înscriși în Corp;
Dlui Arhitect Schoenberg Heinrich cetățean român, născut
la anul 1896 luna Decembrie ziua 23 cu sediul profesional
Strada Ion Ștefan N. 14 absolvent al Sc. Politechnicei din München
cu N. ____ echivalat de Academia de Arhitectură din București
rul Consiliului Corpului Arhitecților care a examinat titlurile de
cerea s'a cerut înscrierea pe tablou, conform art. 2 din legea;
Hotărâm:
lui Arhitect Schoenberg Heinrich în tabloul arhitecților
autorizați, titerându-i-se prezenta legitimație, conform legei, cu dreptul de a-și
exercita profesiunea pe întreg cuprinsul Regatului Român.
Dată în București, astăzi ____ 1934

Ministru [illegible]
Decan
Semnătura titularului
Heinrich Schoenberg

61567 — 4 APR 1934

Image 7. Heinrich Schoenberg badge for the Body of Romanian Architects (CHNAR)

[7] Bucharest Architecture and Decorative Arts Salon, 1929



Image 8. Bulevard Ferdinand no 24, building designed by Hary Schoenberg and the place where he invited members of the Criterion Association

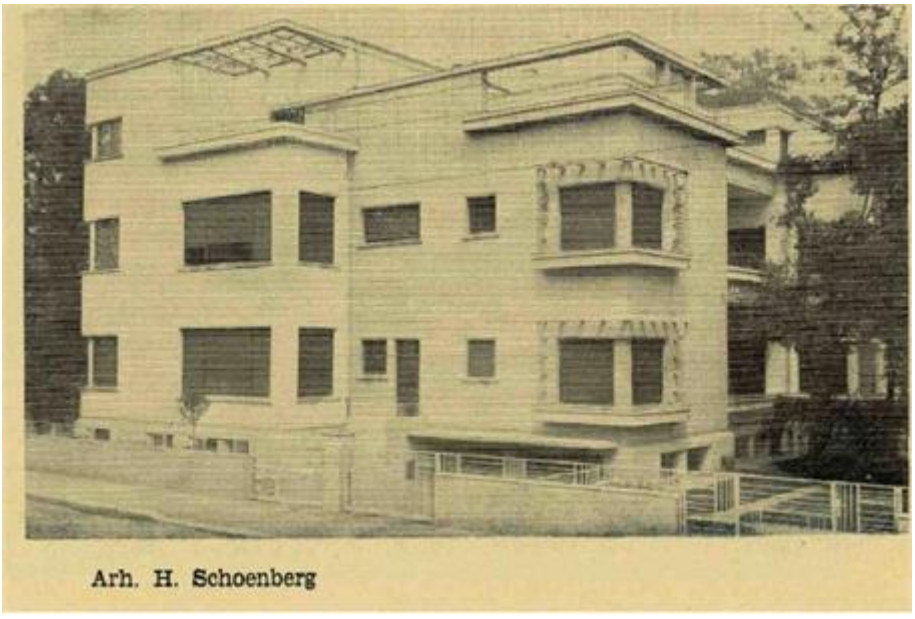


Image 9. Unidentified villa în Bucharest, designed by Harry Schoenberg
Source: S.E. (1932)



Image 10. Blocks of flats built on the land of the former russian embassy, on Calea Victoriei în 1937. Pictures of the block from the right, during construction and finished were found în the Issac Schoenberg archive. It seems that the author of the USSR embassy was also involved in the building erected on the terrain of the former embassy.

Acknowledgement

This article is devoted to the story of a forgotten but important architect of interwar Bucharest. Heinrich Schoenberg was important for his modern discourse, for his minimal housing concerns, and for considering himself a promoter of the new trend of modern architecture.

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