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TRIP REPORT

TO

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

REVIEW OF SANITATION OPERATIONS

**BY: Frank Landers
Ralph Uzzi**

MAY 25 - 30, 1992

**WORLD ENVIRONMENT CENTER
419 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, SUITE 1800
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016**

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The opinions expressed herein are the professional opinions of the authors and do not represent the official position of the Government of the United States or the World Environment Center.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Between May 25 through May 30, 1992, members of the New York City Department of Sanitation (DOS) visited the City of Bucharest in Romania, on a activity sponsored by the World Environment Center. The DOS team members were Mr. Frank Landers, Chief Bureau of Operations and Mr. Ralph Uzzi, Director of Administration for Waste Management and Facilities Development. The purpose of the trip was to assess and make recommendations for improvements on the municipal solid waste facilities and management practices in the City of Bucharest.

Sponsorship of technical activities, which is funded through the United States Agency for International Development, is one of many activities carried out by the World Environment Center within the framework of its Technical Assistance Program for Central and Eastern Europe.

The World Environment Center acknowledges Mr. Frank Landers and Mr. Ralph Uzzi who freely gave their time and expertise in assisting us in this activity in Bucharest, Romania.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our review of sanitation operations in Bucharest, Romania was enlightening and informative.

The municipality is organized differently than New York City. Our review and perspectives focused on segments needing improvements, identifying areas of obsolescence, streamlining where possible, and highlighting environmentally unacceptable conditions/operations. Naturally, on-site review engenders on-site comments and recommendations. Accordingly, many of the field observations and ensuing dialogue are not contained in this report. Also, statistics and other numerical data have been omitted. Such information is readily available and does not align with the purposes of our visit. However, major issues were identified, recorded, and are contained in this report.

We found that the municipality was anxious to improve and modernize its operations on a wide scale. They displayed an eagerness to be environmentally responsive and desirous of any and all assistance to be so. Further, they sought both monetary and professional assistance in achieving a modern waste disposal system which included waste-to-energy incineration and recycling. Additionally, they requested legislation, rules, guidelines, procedures, etc. relative to sanitation and health issues. The municipality believes that these items are needed as the foundation and framework from which to build a modern, up-to-date waste disposal system. With limitation we agree, but also counsel that over-legislation may lead to onerous regulations and result in barriers to goal attainment.

We recognize the municipality's urgent need for assistance in obtaining long-term funding and technical support. A short-term visit by volunteer experts addressing specific areas of operations can help with the glaring and obvious issues. Also, technical, legal, planning, and administrative resources need to be pooled, improved, and set in place for the long-term.

III. MEETINGS

The municipality of Bucharest employs quasi-public, private enterprises for sanitation and other municipal services. Sanitation is a primary mission of these enterprises with emphasis placed upon garbage collection and clean streets. The enterprises also maintain green areas, streets and highways. There is good cooperation between firms as one firm will provide assistance to another firm in the area of trucks and equipment when needed: a firm we visited lent sweeper vehicles to all others.

In Bucharest, we found the streets swept, flushed, and kept generally clean. The green areas, parks and malls, were maintained well and streets and highways were in good shape. Given the number and expansiveness of the parks in Bucharest, keeping them green and clean was no small task.

The independence of the districts and the enterprises did result in some disorganization, lack of coordination, and unevenness in the delivery of services. While these had not resulted in major disruption of service delivery, it was clear that some enterprises performed better than others and some districts received better services in one area (e.g., sanitation) and satisfactory services in another (e.g., street maintenance). For clarity, we did not detect major problems due to the independence, but our hosts were quite clear in pointing out that sub-surface issues were mounting.

Our discussions with municipal officials gave us the insight needed to assess their overall operations. It was evident that personnel problems were the major priority. While the municipality provided the operating capital, it exerted no influence over the workers of the enterprises. The workers continually sought higher wages, citing hard work that was too degrading and too hazardous. We were surprised by the fact that sanitation truck drivers were earning more than the operators (garbage can collectors) although not required to perform any of the laborious tasks. At the time of our visit, sanitation workers were earning twice the salary of the national average and in addition received three bonuses per year. Notwithstanding the salary differentials, sanitation workers were still disgruntled and suffered high turn-over of personnel.

Inspection of field facilities disclosed that new equipment, specifically collection trucks, were being added to aging fleets, but the conditions of the support shops were 20-30 years old. Yet, the trucks were in operating condition. The new trucks were copies of the existing trucks and, therefore, the years of working on the same type of equipment facilitated repair and kept new training of service personnel to a minimum.

Our hosts prepared us for our visit to their landfill by advising us that it did not

resemble our operation at Fresh Kills. Also, there were unauthorized people at the site which presented a problem. It was evident that this landfill would not be classified as a landfill in the U.S. It had many existing environmental problems. It did not have a liner or a gas/leachate collection/removal system. The landfill had mixed dumping of municipal solid waste, industrial, toxic, and hazardous wastes without any control or monitoring. The lack of separate dumping areas for these substances caused on-site fires and extremely noxious smoke. The situation was exacerbated by uncovered garbage and foul smelling atmosphere. In addition, there are unauthorized civilians roaming the site, going through the garbage for any salvageable item. Many of the civilians were young children who could not possibly know or understand how dangerous it is to go through hazardous, toxic, and poisonous substances. This entire situation must be addressed and abated immediately. We recommended that the landfill be closed. However, there are no alternative disposal facilities.

To the credit of our hosts, they were frank and honest about the landfill. They stated that they could have cleaned up the site and made it more appealing for our visit. However, they wanted us to see it as it actually was so that we would provide real solutions and worthwhile recommendations.

At the closing meeting with the municipal officials, we discussed our observations and recommendations. Deputy Mayor Radu stressed, and we discussed at length, the issues of laws and regulations. Apparently, there is a urgent need for legislation that would provide a method to arrive at current, modern day waste disposal systems. Without new legislation, they have no direction to go, nor a defined objective to focus on. Without legal tools, they are unable to properly employ their energies and limited resources. Their interest in recycling was also voiced and the issue of legislation again came to the forefront. Bucharest needs legislation similar to New York City's *Local Law 19* which prescribes levels of recycling for targeted goods and milestones of achievement by certain dates. We were informed that this type of legislation does not exist anywhere in Europe, and that most countries were using a German plan as a model (no details provided). However, this type of legislation is beneficial and workable only if it is part of an overall masterplan dealing with wastes.

At the meeting, we submitted the following recommendations which were well received:

- 1) Develop a comprehensive solid waste management plan to address all solid waste matters. New York City could provide theirs as a source and reference document.
- 2) Enact enabling, implementing legislation.

- 3) Centralize and direct city-wide municipal services. This will allow for better control, flexibility, and equal distribution of services.
- 4) Consolidate sanitation services under the municipal agency. Collection, cleaning, snow removal, and disposal should be under one, central administration. This will ensure better delivery of services, improved management, and cost savings.
- 5) Address health and safety matters:

Create a police agency to enforce the laws;

Build fences or construct other devices to secure and limit entry and access to the landfill;

Prohibit all unauthorized personnel from entering the landfill;

If the landfill is to continue accepting all materials, i.e., municipal solid waste, industrial, commercial, etc., segregate the materials into separate areas. The more volatile and toxic material can then be properly controlled, managed, and disposed.

- 6) Cover the garbage on a daily basis.
- 7) Allow free dumping of excavated material and building rubble. This will prevent "short dumping" along roads and the riverside and provide a continuous source of cover material. (On the way to the landfill, we observed long stretches of short dumping, i.e., dumping loads of materials on the roadside, short of reaching the landfill). Carters, truckers, homeowners must pay a dumping fee at the landfill to dispose of this material. The short dumping indicated that they do not comply with that regulation. Since the landfill was unable to obtain material to cover the garbage daily, we suggested that the short dumped material be collected and brought to the landfill to be used as cover. Further, since the public was unwilling to pay for the dumping and the municipality needed the material, it makes sense to allow free dumping of the material. While it appeared that revenue would be lost, the reality was that most people were short dumping, the municipality needed the material, and costs were being incurred in picking up the material and transporting it to the landfill.

Our hosts in Bucharest were extremely warm, congenial, and friendly. They seek our help in anyway possible.

IV. BUSINESS CARDS OF CONTACTS

R.A.S.U.B.

Regia Autonomă de Salubritate Urbană

BUCUREȘTI

dipl. eng.

Pârșan Nicolae

Production Manager

ADDRESS:

BUCUREȘTI, Str. Tudor Vladimirescu Nr. 35, Sector 5

PHONE:

81.23.45 / 81.59.85

*Municipality of Bucharest
Department of Commercial Sanitation*

*Inspector General
Specialized Inspection*

*1, Șosea Dunării, Sector
5, Nr. 101, Etaj 2
Poșta nr. 1165, Bucharest
Romania*

MUNICIPALITY OF BUCHAREST

Dipl. eng. Constantin Boiangiu

General Director

RASUD
35, Bd. T. Vladimirescu
Bucharest - ROMANIA

Phone 81 23 45
Telex 11832

LIVIU IONESCU, Dipl. Eng.
HEAD OF MARKETING DEPT.

Home phone: 272004

CAST - S.A.
48 FABRICII ST.
77541 - BUCHAREST
ROMANIA

PHONE 31 56 56
31 53 43
31 40 06
TELEX 10.297
FAX 31 57 29

PRIMĂRIA MUNICIPIULUI BUCUREȘTI
DIRECȚIA GENERALĂ A DEZVOLTĂRII ECONOMICO-SOCIALE

Dipl. ing. **CORNEL ILINCA**
Director General Adjunct

Bd. M. Kogălniceanu, 27
Sector 1, București - România

Tel. 90-14 04 91
Tel. 90-15 67 06
Telex 11832 comur



RADU LIVIU
Consilier al Primarului General
al Municipiului București

Fax: 12.00.30
Tlx: 11832

Tel: 14 86.60.395
15.01.10.395
15.48.13