



Belgrade, April 2nd, 2018

Dear Ms. Tostões,

Docomomo Serbia is asking for your support in another flagrant case of endangering cultural property in the capital town of Serbia, Belgrade. This time our efforts are pointed towards one of the earliest buildings at the New Belgrade municipality, generally seen as a renowned global masterpiece of the modern urbanism and architecture after Second World War. However, the object itself – Headquarters of the plane and later bus factory “Ikarus” – was built in the dawn of marking New Belgrade a modern pearl. Designed by the architect Franjo Jenc a year before Second War burst all over Europe, Ikarus building is now lonely, solemn witness of the industrial development of our country between two world wars, which never, even during the war and under communist regime afterwards, stopped its production, until the final dissolution of the Yugoslav state, late in the 20th century.

New Belgrade before Second World War only existed in the minds and plans of then visionary architects. As largely influenced by the flows of two huge, overwhelming rivers surrounding it (Danube and Sava), the soil of New Belgrade was largely filled and levelled after 1945, marking existing Ikarus’ ground level actually the only surviving represent of the original state, around three to four meters lower than today. Its architectural design was conceived with a clear concept of being a building with industrial purpose and value, adorned with art deco elements and remarkable relief of first human flyer in the history – Icarus, as a clear symbol of its representation and meaning. Icarus is still suspended in the air behind the elegant entrance into the building. For how long – we can’t be certain.

Real challenges for the company started to appear in the nineties and in the early 21st century when, due to poor management and wrong decisions, the process culminated by forced sale of the property in 2010. New owner didn’t announce any plans for the reconstruction / demolition at first, yet since 2015 it is confirmed from few sources that the actual agenda includes serious “adaptation” with a provisional preservation of the main facade and the construction of additional three storeys, which is now visible at the nearby panel. All that information suggest that the real plan of the investor is to completely destroy existing building and to eventually re-design new main facade resembling the existing one.

Since the announcements, several initiatives arose, and more than 3,000 inhabitants of the surrounding area signed the petition for the preservation of the Ikarus building in its original form. Belgrade’s city government supported it with a public proclamation, yet in the meantime it is obvious that this will not be realistic since the property is now completely fenced and few heavy machines appeared in the yard, which recently inspired new campaign against the demolition, in January 2018.

In this regard, we are asking for your support with suggestion to address relevant stakeholders and authorities:

- Belgrade City Council,
- Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the City of Belgrade
- Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia,
- Investor "Neimar V" Company.

As the sad case of the factory's history boldly represents – and this was the first national plane factory in former Kingdom of Yugoslavia – everything else was destroyed in the past decades and now this single piece solemnly stays at the zero-ground level.

The members of Docomomo Serbia are afraid that without the support of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia, Ikarus building will no longer exist. Therefore, we ask Docomomo International for support in this respect and also for the procedure for including the building into the list of heritage in danger. Please find several pictures of the building herewith attached.

Sincerely,

Dobrivoje Lale Eric,
President
Docomomo Serbia