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L 417
Children's home for boys

Today houses the Ghetto Museum. In 1942, in the building of the former school, a boys' home was established for boys from age 10 to 15. Children were taught secretly in the attic, and cultural events were held in the gymnasium (including a performance of *The Bartered Bride*). In Heim (home) No. 1, at the suggestion of their guardian, the boys formed a self-government, the so-called Republic of Skid. The magazine "Vedem" was published here in secret.

Jiri Franek

When I arrived in Terezin, Valtr Eisinger (a secondary school teacher, head of one of the homes in L 417, initiator of the magazine 'Vedem') told me, 'You have to get into the children's home. As a teacher, not a student, because it's all about life or death here. First, though, I got into this children's home where I was supposed to show if I was capable because it was completely falling apart. In about two months I had it all fixed up, then Ota Klein came to see me, he was a familiar figure, and said: 'All right, from today you're with me.' I went to L417, where a magazine called Vedem was being put out by Petr Ginz. L417 was divided up into classes, each class had a group and that group was also called a 'Heim', a 'home.' So there the word home had two meanings – 'sub-home' and 'home,' you could say. All of L417 was a home and within it there were individual homes. There in L417 I worked with a person that later became well-known, Jiri Kohnig, who after the war was a professor of medicine. He was my supervisor. I was a 'Betreuer' (guardian) which in Hebrew is 'madrich,' a male nurse, but we were teachers, nurses, and friends to those children. Professor Eisinger was in the home next door, I was in constant contact with him, then he left for Auschwitz before I did and died there. A few people that remember him say that he lost all of his spark, that he realized that survival wasn't possible and that he became an embittered pessimist. He was quite a big and important man. In L417 I got to test the knowledge I had from Scouts, how to deal with younger children, even though I myself was still young. I discovered my talent for teaching, which never left me. Only when they later threw me out and I had to work on the railway did I stop working as a teacher. That means that I've been a teacher from Theresienstadt right up to my retirement at the Charles University Faculty of Philosophy in Prague.

browsable version of the Vedem magazines



1a

Petr Ginz and the Vedem magazine

Centropa film on ‚Petr Ginz And The Boys Of Vedem‘



Petr Ginz was put in Heim No.1 in building L 417 of the former Theresienstadt school among boys between 13 and 16 years of age. Valtr Eisinger, their warden and teacher was an initiator of the idea of a self-government system that 'his' boys called 'The Republic of Škid' (Škid or SHKID stands for "Dostoevsky School for Social-Labour Education" which existed in the 1920s in Leningrad). Petr was the editor of a secret magazine Vedem, which he and his friends published in Terezín. Only one copy of each issue exists, since Peter and his friends made everything by themselves: whether they typed it, did its artwork or wrote its poetry and articles by hand. Over 60 boys crammed in one room together started publishing their magazine in 1942, inspired by their teacher Eisinger, and called it Vedem: which in Czech means 'In Lead'. Teaching was officially forbidden in Terezín, Eisinger's official role was that of a 'guard' of the young boys, and studying had to be conducted under strict measures, books had to be hidden, since the revelation of 'teaching' going on would have put the whole building into a transport. In the end, all the boys from the youth home, or school, were deported to the extermination camps except for one, Sydney Taussig, whose father was the only blacksmith in Terezín and managed to take his son off the transport. Sydney, left alone out of all the boys who participated in the creation of Vedem, put all the copies of the magazine in a box, hid it and retrieved it after the war.

Drawing by Petr Ginz



2

L 414
SS-Kommandantur, later post office and youth home

Until August 1942, this was the seat of the SS commandant's office. Later, the post office and other offices were established on the first floor. The remaining premises served as accommodation for young people, especially from the German transports but also from other places. The Czech girls' home published a magazine called 'Bonako'

Cover of Bonako magazine



Browsable version of Bonako magazine issue No.6



3

L 410
Children's home for girls

Home for girls from the Protectorate aged 8 to 16 years. There was a lot of teaching here. Girls deepened their knowledge after returning from work. Reknowned academic painter, Friedel Dicker-Brandeis, taught drawing classes here. Musical works were rehearsed in the basement of the building.

Anna Lorencova

By 1942, all the original inhabitants of Terezin had been moved out and the entire town had opened up. Jews moved in and occupied all the houses, and the transports kept coming. At that time, young peoples' homes were also being set up. The girls' home 'L410' was situated next to the church. It was a three-story building, and the girls were put in separate rooms according to their age. We older children went to work during the day and when we got back we were attended to by a tutor. At first I was in room 29, where the tutor was Rozi Schulhofova. Plenty of interesting people, including professors, writers, and musicians came to see us to give talks or to discuss different topics.

Anna Lorencova and her brother Hanus Hron, photo taken in Prague in 1930



4

Marktplatz (market place)

Until the end of 1943, the area of the marketplace was covered by a three-part circus tent. Theresienstadt prisoners assembled crates here in which they completed and packaged special equipment to prevent military vehicle engines from freezing. At that time, the marketplace was surrounded by a high fence and inaccessible to the prisoners. In the course of the beautification action in 1944 the whole area was arranged as a park, a music pavilion was built in the corner in front of the café.

Jiri Franek

When my work in the children's home ended where I was 'Betreuer' (guardian) I was assigned to war production. In Terezin, the Germans erected a large tent on the Marktplatz and that's where we had to work. We manufactured car motor heaters there. When their vehicles froze up in Russia they had to think of some solution, so they came up with these gas heaters that heated up the motor from below without damaging it, and the vehicles could continue on. Each enterprise, in the wider sense of the word, such as a kitchen or our children's home, was required to assign a couple of people to war production. I was the youngest of the 'Betreuer,' so it fell to me. I worked in the heater plant during my last month in Terezin. People that worked here in that German Wehrmacht factory were automatically exempt from transports. But various tricks and frauds were perpetrated – whoever had the means pulled his friend from the transport and stuck someone else in their place, like perhaps someone working in war production.

Marktplatz before the establishment of the ghetto



5

Q 418
Coffee house

A café with about 100 seats was opened in this house in December 1942. A ticket was valid for two hours, instant coffee and tea were served. Music was played and cabaret artists from among the prisoners performed. In front of the café there was a pavilion in the park where concerts were given. All this served as part of the so-called beautification in preparation of the visit of the Commission of the International Red Cross in June 1944.

Helena Kovanicova

It wasn't until sometime after the war that I found out about the International Red Cross's visit to Terezin. As I worked three shifts, I had practically no means of finding out what was actually happening in Terezin. I only know that at that time they had built a music pavilion and set up a park in the town square.

Ration card for one beverage at the coffee house



6

Q 414 / 416
SS Commandant's headquarters

The headquarters of the camp commander - SS-Lagerkommandantur Theresienstadt - was housed here. In the basement, the SS established so-called bunkers where prisoners who had violated the camp regulations or whom the Gestapo wanted to interrogate were locked up and tortured.

Jan Fischer

One day the SS lined us up in the yard. One of the SS commanders proclaimed: 'We have found several letters that some of you put into mail boxes in the town, even though this is strictly prohibited. Those who committed this offence, take two steps forward.' They knew our names anyway. I was one of the sinners, as I had wanted to send a letter to my mom in Prague. I was about to step forward when the person standing next to me held me back. 'Don't be an idiot,' he said, 'if they know the names, let them call them out.' I thought he was right, so I didn't step out of the line. But nine lads stepped forward. 'Take them away!' Then they disappeared into the bunker.

A few days later we were officially informed that those nine lads had been hanged for gross breach of orders. One of us had to carry out the execution. It was an ambulance man from the pathology section who set about this terrible task. He thought he could get over it better, since he was used to death. He was evidently mistaken. I found him one day in a large empty room, sitting on a straw mattress, crying. It was a brutal psychological trick the Germans had played as a way of ensuring discipline.

Jan Fischer with his future wife Hana Fischer in Prague, 1946



7

L 315
Ghettowache (Ghetto Guard)

Seat of the Ghettowache (Ghetto Guard), whose task was to maintain internal order. Initially, it was composed only of younger men. The Nazi's fear of a militarily organized though unarmed group of young men led to the dissolution of the Ghettowache in June 1943. Almost all of its members were deported to the extermination camps. Later the Ghettowache was renewed with 100 men over the age of 45. The building also had a hall where cultural events were organized. Today the House of Culture is located here.

Jiri Munk

In Terezin there were also Jewish police, called the 'Ghettowache,' which was responsible for keeping order inside the ghetto. They were young guys in uniforms. Before the end of the war, the Germans sent them all into the gas, because they were afraid of the danger of some sort of rebellion or revolution from their ranks.

Inscription saying 'Brána střežena stráží ghetta l.p. 1944' ('The gate is being guarded by the ghetto guard 1944 A.D.').



8

L 318
Infants' home

Home for infants and early school-age youth. Pre-school children attended this facility like a kindergarten, in the evening they returned to their mothers. A children's kitchen and bakery were also set up in the building, which also served other youth homes. There was also a space for theater performances. Today the post office is located here.

Suitcase of Johana Kowanitzova, who was born in Terezín.



9

Block F III
Children's and apprentice home

Home for children and apprentices. Some rooms were used for cultural performances and theater productions. A library for the youth was located in L216.

Jiri Munk's employment book from Terezín

Richtlinien:

1. Jeder Gläubige ist verpflichtet, stets den Arbeitsausweis bei sich zu tragen und auf Verlangen den hierzu berechtigten Organen vorzulegen.
2. Er ist verpflichtet, seinen Arbeitsausweis bei Überstellungen der Evidenz, bei Änderungen des Arbeitsinhalts der Ersatzrolle, bei Erkrankungen der Aufseherkontrolle der Ambulanz, bei Fassung von verschiedenen Medikamenten dem Apotheker, bei Unfallversicherung der Arbeitszentrale zwecks amtlicher Berichtigung vorzulegen.
3. Er hat ferner dafür zu sorgen, dass sein biometrischer Tag von der zuständigen Abteilung in der Arbeitszentrale eingetragen wird.
4. Unterlassung der obengesagten Vorschriften wird geahndet. Ebenfalls wird eine eigenmächtige Änderung der Angaben im Arbeitsausweis bestraft.

AUSGESTELLT am 30. 11. 1944 von
Munk Georg Munk

GHETTO THERESIENSTADT
ARBEITSAUSWEIS Tr. Cmv¹ Nr. 390

Name MUNK
Vorname GEORG
Geburtsdatum 2. 11. 1932
Geburtsort 9. 2. 1937/83
Bestätigungsnummer
UBIKATION:
Dienstort
Berichtigung d. Evidenz
9/11.45. Knapitz, 22/

DIESER ARBEITSAUSWEIS IST IN DEN PERSONLAUSWEIS ENZULEGEN

10

Block H V
Dresden barracks

Dresden barracks, where women, initially also with their small children, were housed since December 6, 1941. In the basement there were cells for prisoners guilty of misdemeanors. Part of the premises was used for theater performances and other cultural events. In the yard of the barracks, prisoners were allowed to play football.

Toman Brod

You know, the teachers in L 417 were always trying to distract us from everyday ghetto life, from the everyday horrors of that prison. They tried, within the realm of possibility, to give us some sort of normal living conditions. We competed in football; each home had its own football team. We played on some sort of field that had been built on the fortress walls. Of course, the grown-ups also played football in the courtyard of the Dresden barracks. That was always a big event. Several hundred, perhaps a thousand people would gather around and cheer for the individual teams.

Football game at the Dresden barracks



Block E VI
Hohenelbe barracks

Hohenelbe barracks (Vrchlabská barracks), constructed as a military hospital, served as a central hospital during the time of the ghetto. The central bath with showers and swimming pool was also used. Food for the sick was cooked in the kitchen.

Michaela Vidlakova

When we arrived in Terezin, I spent the first while in a 'Kinderheim' beside the town hall. Back then my mother was living somewhere in the women's barracks and my father was living at the Sudeten barracks. After not quite two months I fell ill. First I got the standard 'Terezinka,' or dysentery. There wasn't any place to isolate sick children, so I remained in the 'Heim' amongst the children. To this day I remember spending nights sitting on the toilet, lit by a blue light, because it wasn't even any point in getting off it. Not to mention the fact that I didn't even have a bed. There were so many children there that I slept on two benches butted up against each other. Then I got three infectious diseases at once: typhus, scarlet fever and measles. So one starlit night two gentlemen carried me to the hospital, a hospital run by Dr. Schaffy, across from the Magdeburg barracks. When my parents were looking for me at the 'Kinderheim' the next day and they told them that someone had carried me off in the night, they were in shock. It took them a while to find me. Then my mother went to ask Schaffy what was the matter with me, and he asked her, 'Ist sie ein Brustkind?' My mother said, 'Ja, neun Monate.' 'Dann hält sie es wahrscheinlich aus.' ('Was she breastfed?' – 'Yes, nine months.' – 'So she'll most likely survive.')

Karel Rutar's health card

Ausweis Průkaz		Nr. č.	552
Rutar Karel			
T. B. V.		J/495	
Name Jméno		Karel Rutar	
Wohnort Bydliště		4. VII. 1943	
Geb. am Nar. dne	Aufgen. am Přijet dne		
Personalausweis Osobní průkaz		Nr. č.	
3. VII. 1943		hc	
Gesundheitswesen Abt. Entsezung.			
DU/10.6e.S11-V/41-Sim-R. B.			

12

Stadtpark (city park)

A park was created here. As part of the 'beautification' a wooden children's pavilion and other facilities for children were built.

Ludmila Rutarova

Before I left Terezin, there was a Red Cross visit being planned, and we had to do so-called 'Verschönerung,' or beautification. Terezin was to be decorated, for the sake of appearances, to fool the Red Cross delegation. However, I wasn't there to see the Red Cross visit. I was in Terezin from April 1942 until May 1944, when I left with my brother for Auschwitz.

Ludmila Rutarova, picture taken in Prague in 1941



Block B V
Magdeburg barracks

The Magdeburg Barracks was the seat of the Council of Elders and the offices of the Jewish self-government. In addition to the offices, the apartments of the members of the self-government and a hall for cultural events were located here. The children's opera 'Brundibar' by Jewish Czech composer Hans Krása was shown here for the first time in the ghetto on September 23, 1943.

Jiri Franek

Despite everything, in Terezin a person did find a way of life. There was cultural life. Not long ago I was thinking about the fact that Terezin's cultural life has one negative aspect, that it suppresses the horrors that existed there. The cultural life there was so exceptional and such a miracle, that many people are interested only in it. They then don't realize the horrors, the suffering and death. Terezin's cultural life was immense and multifaceted, operas were written, books, but the most significant were events put on for the public. Unfortunately, many people are under the impression that life in Terezin was lived in such a way that people just went from theater to theater. Now in the summer there is a reconstructed theater there, which is completely hopeless, because the sorrow and suffering cannot be reconstructed! Plays were performed on the ground such as it was: filthy, used for, I don't know, fifty years after the construction of those buildings, and in the case of barracks, even longer. For example, 'The Bartered Bride' was performed. You cannot reconstruct that. So that deforms the impression of life in Terezin a bit. But, as I say, life in Terezin was still ideal compared to what awaited us in Auschwitz.

Toman Brod

The paradox of Terezin was that on the one hand people were dying of hunger, desperation, dirt, disease, hopelessness, but on the other hand people played soccer, there were concerts, operas such as Brundibar, The Bartered Bride, and so on. In Terezin people sang, people died. And you have to put that together.

Opera ticket from Terezin



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Block A IV
Bakery and central food storage

The bakery and the central food warehouse were located here.

Herta Coufalova

My last job in the ghetto was helping out in the bakery. It was extremely hard physical work. On the other hand, I have to say, though it may sound stupid, that I always tried to work somewhere where it was possible to steal something. Though the fact that 'Thou shalt not steal' is one of God's commandments, stealing food was a question of life or death. In the ghetto, my friend Janecek was a staff captain. You could say that in his function he was practically on the same level as the Germans. Once he brought his mother five radishes. They found out about it and immediately punished him. In the ghetto, a person did things that he would have condemned in normal daily life. The luckiest, though, were those that managed to get work outside of the Terezin ghetto gates.

Herta Coufalova (*1924), Herta with her brother Harry Glasner



15

Theresienstadt train station

The railway siding built by the prisoners was put into operation on June 1, 1943. From the railroad station in Bohušovice the track led to the Hamburg barracks. The departure and clearance of the transports could thus be accelerated and the transports did not have to be escorted in front of the eyes of the population in the surroundings of the ghetto. All transports leaving for the extermination camps were then concentrated in the so-called 'Shlojse' in the Hamburg Barracks.

Pavel Werner

The trip from Pardubice to Terezin was on the whole good – at that time they were still normal passenger wagons; they weren't some sort of cattle wagons. However at that time there wasn't yet a direct track to Terezin, that they built only later. So we had to get off at Bohusovice, which was still about three or four kilometers from Terezin. That doesn't seem like much, but I was wearing a lot of clothing, I had a winter coat on, so I was sweating a lot, I was dragging a bag – I can't exactly remember what I had in it. It was too much for me; I was sweating and crying that I can't go any further. At that time my father started in on me, told me to look at Lenka, how brave she is, that she's not crying and is walking on, and at the same time she was younger than me. So I have a vivid memory of this experience, that I was this weakling boy. In the end we somehow crawled our way to Terezin.

Train tracks in the Theresienstadt ghetto



PHOTO: TERESIENSTADT 1941-1945
WWW.GHETTOSURVIVORS.CO

Block C III
Hamburg barracks

The Hamburg barracks served primarily as accommodation for women, and from 1943, they were mainly concentrated on deportees from the Netherlands. Part of the building was converted into a 'Shlojse', from which transports departed for the extermination camps.

Jiri Munk

In Terezin we lived in the Hamburg barracks. Families were separated. Children up to about the age of 13 lived together with their mothers, no matter whether they were boys or girls. Older boys lived with their fathers in different barracks. A lot of children, though they had families in Terezin, were placed into youth homes, which were called Kinderheime. To this day, I regret not being in a Kinderheim, because there the children studied. Despite teaching being officially forbidden, the children's caretakers in the Kinderheime secretly organized it, so children were still able to learn all sorts of things. What's more, they were children of my age. I was completely alone in Terezin. I don't know why, but my mother kept me with her, so I was with only women. I felt very lonely in Terezin. I don't remember there being another boy in the Hamburg barracks. Inside the barracks where we lived, there were three-tier bunk beds packed closely together, the aisles between them were so narrow that you could barely walk through them. When we arrived in Terezin, all the bunks were occupied, so we had to sleep on the floor between the bunks in those narrow aisles. I remember that we all had fleas there. That was completely normal, but worse were the bedbugs. When you fell asleep at night, they began dropping down and biting horribly. Getting rid of them was a problem, because when you squashed them, they gave off an awful stench. So we had to burn them with candles. Often at night people would light candles and burn bedbugs. There were also lice there, at the end of the war even ones infected with typhus.

Helena Kovanicova

On the way to Terezin we stopped in Mlada Boleslav. There they gathered us in some school and then we continued on the transport to Bohusovice. From there we went to Terezin on foot, because at that time the tracks didn't yet lead directly into Terezin, those were built later by Terezin prisoners. From Bohusovice to Terezin we were led by our people, Czech policemen. In Terezin we were handed over to German women who were called ladybugs. They rifled through our baggage and took what they liked. First I lived together with my mother and many other people in the so-called Hamburg barracks. Later they emptied the Hamburg barracks and made a so-called 'slojska' out of it. It was a place where they would herd all the people who were called up for the transport, they'd shut them up in there, and directly from there they would get on trains which then headed to Auschwitz and other places.

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Block E I
Sudeten barracks

The Sudeten barracks, where the first transport of men arrived on November 24, 1941; later, several more transports arrived. After two weeks, the women with children were segregated and housed in the Dresden barracks; the families continued to be separated. One of the kitchens was in operation here. In July 1943, the entire facility had to be evacuated because the Nazis had brought in part of the RSHA archives. They wanted to protect it in this way from the Allied air raids.

Anna Lorencova

By 1942, all the original inhabitants of Terezin had been moved out and the entire town had opened up. Jews moved in and occupied all the houses, and the transports kept coming. At that time, young peoples' homes were also being set up. The girls' home 'L410' was situated next to the church. It was a three-story building, and the girls were put in separate rooms according to their age. We older children went to work during the day and when we got back we were attended to by a tutor. At first I was in room 29, where the tutor was Rozi Schulhofova. Plenty of interesting people, including professors, writers, and musicians came to see us to give talks or to discuss different topics. My brother lived in the Sudeten Barracks with the men. At first we weren't at all allowed to go there since we couldn't leave our barracks without a pass. After a certain period of time, it was arranged that girls under 14 could go to the men's barracks once a fortnight, provided they were accompanied, so as to see their dads. I was 14 and actually didn't belong to that group, but my mom somehow always managed to push me through, so I was able to see my brother. Now and again, I would bring him the odd button and such, or I would stroll around the courtyard with my friend Jirka.

Drawing of the "Sudeten Barracks" on the grounds of the Terezin (Theresienstadt) ghetto



18

Dlouha 17
Prayer room & replica of mansard

The prayer room was used for worshipping during the existence of the ghetto. In terms of decoration, namely its professionally rendered murals and texts, this is unique among all the similar premises used as prayer rooms in the former ghetto.

Replica of the attic - there were small rooms in the attics of residential and farm buildings in Terezin converted into emergency housings of a minimum size and providing a small group of prisoners with at least a little of privacy. In this case, it was undoubtedly a dwelling of craftsmen, who were concentrated in the building and worked in the nearby central ghetto workshops. Fortunately, this emergency residential space above the chapel was not rebuilt later on and could be turned back into a space similar to that of the ghetto times. That way visitors can get an idea about another possible accommodation in the overcrowded ghetto.

The prayer room



Replica of a mansard apartment



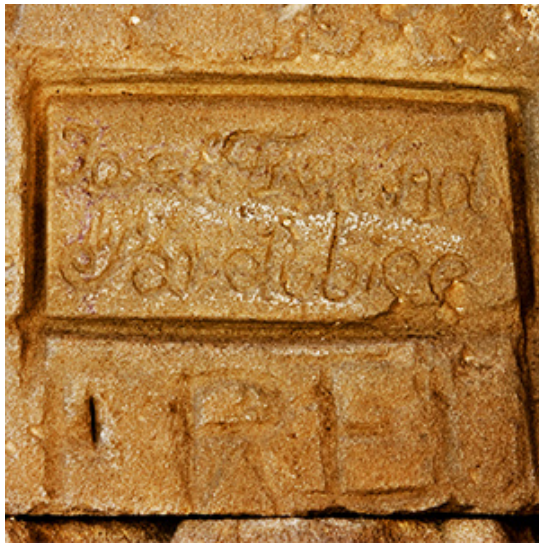
19

Wall of Poterne III

to learn more about the inscriptions and carvings at the wall of Poterne scan QR code below



Framed inscription was carved by Josef Freund from Pardubice (born Nov. 11, 1890).



70-year-old messages written by the prisoners of the Ghetto Theresienstadt have been discovered. In 1944 the prisoners carved the sandstone of the fortress gate walls with their names, birthplaces, years and pictorial depictions in the hope that these messages would survive for posterity and that their stories would be remembered. Their wish has remained unfulfilled: the carvings were forgotten ... until now.

When the fortress gate, Poterne III was opened and made accessible in 2005, after decades of military use, the messages came to light: numerous graffiti were carved into the sandstone, many already difficult to decipher due to wear. The carved years of 1942, 1943, and 1944 could be plainly seen. Upon closer inspection, one could recognize symbols of hope and faith, signatures, transport numbers and dates.

The creators of these carvings were primarily prisoners, mostly members of the Ghattowache, the ghetto guard, who were selected from among the prisoners. For almost seventy years, Poterne III kept its secret.

Centropa biographies with stories on Theresienstadt

Alena Munkova



Anna Lorencova



Antonie Militka



Helena Kovanicova



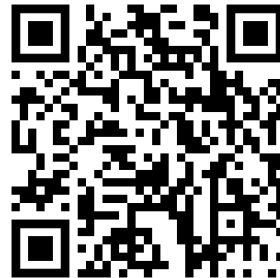
Harry Fink



Eva Meislova



Herta Coufalova



Jan Fischer



Ludmila Rutarova



Michaela Vidlakova



Toman Brod



Jiri Franek

