Monday, 14.09.2009:
1. Greeting by Dr. Jan Munk and Dr. Vojtěch Blodig (director and deputy director of the Terezín Memorial).

2. Dr. Vojtěch Blodig gave a brief historical account of the Nazi concentration camp and the Ghetto of Terezín. On 10 June 1940, the German occupying forces established a Gestapo prison inside the Small Fortress of Terezín, where some 32,000 political opponents, members of the resistance to the occupation and prisoners of war from what was then the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia as well as from several other countries were held until the end of the war in 1945. In November 1941, the town of Terezín was transformed into an assembly and transit camp for the Jewish population of Bohemia and Moravia – the "Terezín Ghetto" – while the inhabitants were forced to leave the town. In the years that followed, Jews from Germany and other European countries were also deported to the Ghetto, which following the notorious Wannsee Conference also served as a so called Reichsaltersghetto – a ghetto for the aged population from the territories of the Reich. From time to time Terezín was also used in Nazi propaganda as a "showcase ghetto" in order to deceive the international community about the regime's true intentions, as decided in the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. On 5 May 1945 the SS withdrew from Terezín and three days later the Red Army liberated the prisoners. In all, nearly 155,000 inmates passed through the Terezín camps by May 1945. About 35,000 of them died there, while nearly 87,000 were transported onward to extermination and labour camps. Dr. Blodig concluded with the observation that historical justice had not been done since none of the SS personnel from Terezín had ever been held to account for their actions in a court of law. The website of the Terezín Memorial http://www.pamatnik-terezin.cz.
Dr. Munk described the development of the Terezín Memorial from the end of the Second World War, pointing out that the revolution of November 1989 had swept away the ideological restrictions of the former CSSR and led to a broadening of commemorative policy. As a result, museums developed which had not existed before, in particular museums focussing on the fate of the Jewish people in the Czech lands. The expansion of activities of the Memorial was not, he said, limited to Terezín but took account also of the former camp at Leitmeritz (Litoměřice), a subsidiary of Flossenbürg concentration camp. The Memorial was now firmly embedded in the state commemorative culture of the Czech Republic, as attested by the acts of commemoration which are attended by the highest state representatives. Post-war injustices, such as the political persecution by the CSSR of individuals persecuted before 1945, were no longer ignored or excluded from remembrance practice. Dr. Munk noted that the Memorial today maintains bilateral contacts with many foreign partner institutions, an illustration of which is the creation of a Czech exhibition at the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau at Oswiecim (Poland).

In his contribution to the conference, Dr. Norbert Haase from the Saxon Ministry of Science in Dresden (Germany), spoke of the increasing importance of cultural heritage associated with actual sites of persecution in the communication of history in view of the diminishing number of surviving witnesses. Referring to several, primarily German memorials, he stated that memorials, as contemporary history museums and cultural institutions of a special type, were taking on an ever more important role in the context of cultural education. This could be seen particularly, he said, in the overlap between memorial education and art education in various ways and different art forms (the fine arts, theatre, film, music, literature) – and it was moreover a point of departure for the further developmental potential of memorials.

Dr. Pnina Rosenberg, curator of the Ghetto Fighters’ Museum in Lohamei HaGeta’ot (Israel) (http://gfh.org.il/Eng/) and an art historian specializing in forms of artistic expression in Nazi concentration camps, drew attention in her speech to the importance of humour, satire and irony for survival in the camps, taking as her example caricatures made by German artists of Jewish origin or left-wing persuasion in internment camps in southern France such as Les Milles and Gurs (cf. Viktor Frankl, Man’s Search For Meaning, New York 1984). As a case study she discussed
the two Mickey Mouse cartoon booklets created by the Breslau (Wroclaw) born illustrator Horst Rosenthal in the camp at Gurs. The comic figure helped the artist process and come to terms, in a humoristic and ironic way, with his own experience of being persecuted: "Mickey au Camp de Gurs - Publiée sans l'authorisation de Walt Disney" and "La Journée d'un hébergé: Camp de Gurs 1942". (http://www.scribd.com/doc/21860527/Horst-Rosenthal-Mickey-Mouse-in-Gurs).

The subsequent tour of the former Terezín Ghetto, led by Dr. Blodig, enabled participants to visit various sites of significance in the history of the Jewish Ghetto and the modern-day Memorial:

- a Jewish prayer room, rediscovered in the late 1990s, its walls decorated with paintings and Hebrew lettering;
- the Columbarium, Ceremonial halls and Central mortuary of the Ghetto, renovated in 2001 and opened to the public. It is noteworthy that mostly German cities have installed plaques in the Columbarium to commemorate their Jewish residents deported to Terezín;
- the Military Riding School, converted by the SS into a workshop employing forced labour, and today the venue for a performance of Verdi's Requiem, which was performed at various locations in the Ghetto in the years 1943–1945 in a version made by Rafael Schächter;
- the modern Ghetto Museum with its permanent exhibition;
- the depositories of the Department of Collections, where diverse, irreplaceable materials are stored;
- the permanent exhibitions on art as a means of self-affirmation in the Terezín Ghetto, situated in the buildings formerly known as the Magdeburg Barracks.

Tuesday 15.09.2009:
Dr. Jens-Christian Wagner, director of the Dora-Mittelbau Concentration Camp Memorial (Germany) gave an overview of the reception history of the forced labour camp complex of the Dora-Mittelbau concentration camps, first in the GDR and then in the period since German reunification. Dr. Wagner said that the education departments of memorials these days were faced with new challenges as a result of visitors' understanding of history having been moulded by "histotainment". Clichés and stereotypes, coupled with certain myths about Nazi Germany's ballistic missile
programme, made necessary the deconstruction of false notions of history. What is
of particular interest about the memorial, he said, is the fact that it incorporates
authentic sites in the form of tunnels in a mountain in the Harz with a modern
museum building (http://www.dora.de/).

Astrid Wolfes and Bastian Fleermann from the Düsseldorf Memorial Centre
(Germany) presented plans for the overhaul of the memorial in the Stadthaus
Düsseldorf. The history of this building reaches from Jesuit seminary to police
headquarters, and later it was used by the SA and the Gestapo as a House of Terror,
an administrative centre for anti-Semitic policy and political repression in the Nazi
period. Since 1986, the Stadthaus has housed a memorial which is scheduled to be
newly installed in 2010 with a permanent exhibition (http://www.nsgedenkstaetten.net/nrw/).

Karel Fracapane from the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris (France) provided a detailed
overview of the memorials and museums relating to the Nazi occupation in France. It
is an involved story of remembrance practice and history presentation consisting of
several elements and dealing in various periods with, for example, the Resistance
whether Gaullist or Communist, the persecution of the Jews, and collaboration. Since
the 1990s new commemoration days and events have been instituted in France. In
his talk, Fracapane looked in particular at the history of the memorial projects in the
recent past, most of them initiated during the presidency of Jacques Chirac: Gurs,
Drancy, Les Milles, Rivesaltes – the long-forgotten internment camps. An important
role in the process of collective commemoration and memorialization has been paid,
in France, by federations (“amicales”) like the Fédération Nationale des Déportés et
Internés Résistants et Patriotes (FNDIRP) and by the Ministry of Defence.

Dr. Karen Franklin, former director of the Judaica Museum in Riverdale (New York,
USA) and director of the Family Research Program of the Leo Baeck Institute in New
York City, who is currently preparing an exhibition in the Museum of Jewish Heritage
in New York as guest-curator, presented the largely forgotten history of the role
played in US policy on Jewish refugees by former US finance minister Henry
Morgenthau, Jr. The US politician, who believed strongly in serving the community,
an ethos developed in his Jewish family tradition, was extraordinarily successful in
raising funds for Jewish refugees during and after the Holocaust and in particular for settlements in Palestine, later Israel.

Luisa de Peña, director of the Museo Memorial de la Resistencia Dominicana (Dominican Republic), presented a brief comparative analysis of the history of dictatorship in Latin American states in the 20th century. In addition to reviewing the history of virtually all states of Latin America and periodizing the characteristic developments of tyranny in the region, she gave detailed figures of the tens of thousands of victims of tyranny, and discussed its consequences – whether dictatorship lasted years or decades – in terms of collective traumatization and emigration. The states considered were Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Cuba (before the revolution), Haiti, Venezuela, Columbia, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay. In spite of the geographical and chronological similarities and the partial interrelatedness of the regimes, it became clear from Luisa de Peña's talk that each country had specific memories and ways of remembering. In many Latin American countries, particularly those where the rule of law is now more firmly established, museums and memorials have been set up in recent years, for example in Chile, Costa Rica, Peru and Nicaragua. A recent example is the Dominican Resistance Museum (http://www.museodelaresistencia.org/).

A second excursion conducted participants to the memorial in the Small Fortress of Terezín, which the Prague-based Gestapo used from 1940 to 1945 as a prison for political detainees, especially for members of the Czech resistance movement. The programme of the visit included an inspection of the special exhibition devoted to the Jewish painter and author Franz Peter Kien.

On Tuesday evening, as part of the conference, the members' session of the IC MEMO took place.

**Wednesday 16.09.2009:**
In the morning, Mr. Huang Chungfeng, having arrived later, supplied information material about the museum he represents, the Chinese memorial to the Chinese
resistance against Japanese aggression, which is applying for membership of the IC MEMO (http://www.1937china.org.cn – Chinese Homepage).

The three-day conference ended with a visit to the permanent exhibitions about music and the fine arts, literature and theatre in the Terezín Ghetto, housed in the former Magdeburg Barracks. Photographs, music scores and musical excerpts are intended to give visitors an impression of the musical culture that existed in the Ghetto. The main focus is on the biographies of the composers Hans Krása (who wrote among other works the children's opera Brundibár), Pavel Haas, Gideon Klein and Viktor Ullmann, the musician Rafael Schächter (e.g. performances of Verdi’s Requiem) and the Weiss Jazz Quintet.

In the area of the fine arts, the exhibition concentrates on the work of the artists Bedřich Fritta, Leo Haas, Franz Peter Kien, Jo Spier, Otto Ungar, Karel Fleischmann and Charlotta Burešová. The sections of the exhibition "Literary work in the Terezín Ghetto" and "Theatre in the Terezín Ghetto" shed light on cultural life in the Ghetto by focussing on Czech and German-language authors, providing biographies and samples of their work. In the former Magdeburg Barracks there is a reconstruction of a typical prison dormitory in the Ghetto, based on drawings and inmates' recollections.

October 30, 2009

Dr. Norbert Haase
Secretary/Treasurer
IC MEMO