

Our trip to Terezin Holocaust Museum

Granite Menorah next to the Crematorium



On Tuesday 7th October we visited Terezin with a Jewish survivor, Pavel Stransky. We met at the Intercontinental Hotel at 10 am, an American couple joined us and we had a driver.

There is a very good article here: [Terezin Concentration Camp](#)
Also: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

Terezin was built in 1780 by the Czechs against the Prussians but was never used, as the Prussians came a different route. It was a perfect fort, French in style, with two massive earth walls separated by a moat. Within the wall is a tunnel with pot holes into the moat providing good cover. In 1939 Hitler wanted a town in which to place the Jews while extermination camps were built - this large town was perfect.

It also appeared to be a normal town by the allies and in fact a Red Cross visit confirmed it. However the place had been 'set up' with shops and 'happy' Jews for the visit. A movie (propaganda) was made to also show how well they were treated - we were shown a portion of it.

Pavel was placed there aged 20. He survived, as he was a teacher, therefore useful, and his natural stamina. They survived on a herb tea, morning and night, plus a slice of bread and weak vegetable soup. Czech police helped them as they found opportunity, food, paint for the artists, etc. Some escaped, but there was nowhere to hide, so they came back. They organised Opera', composed, painted & wrote.

Initially matters were fair, but once Auschwitz was ready, the dreaded 'transport' started

- 1000 at a time were railed for the gas chambers. About 2% survived the operation. Pavel was taken there; he met Mengel. He related the story of a mother who bore a child but was forbidden to feed it, so she killed it. Mengel wanted to see how long it could survive!

Pavel pushed us along for 4 hours to see the movie (in which a very moving song was a background) to a 'hidden' prayer hall, the site of the station for transport, his 'room' building, a vegetable garden now kept by other people and a small cemetery. Also a small Russian one (since they liberated the country). The crematorium is also there, with an autopsy room.

Next was the building to store urns, across the road is a building to prepare bodies for burial, a wagon pulled by men to carry bodies and food (no cleaning between), a tunnel for escaping in a siege, and a few documents that we could photo.

Then a museum (no photos allowed) with a lot of documentation:

On to the cemetery for Christians (mixed marriage, political) & Jews. Most Jewish graves have no names; most contain several remains.

A huge cross defines Christians & the star of David defines the Jews. We entered the adjacent small fortress, from which even fewer emerged. Prisoners were kept in small dark rooms for most of the day, some in isolation, chained to the wall.

Other rooms were crowded - no beds. Some rooms had 'reasonable' bunk beds or platforms. We saw the laundry where steam was used to kill the bugs, mostly for the guard's sake. One room has a wall of basins & mirrors, created for show.

We then walked 500 metres within the walls to the execution area - a wall for target practice & killing, and gallows. Adjacent is a 'park' where the Czech commander would shoot them as they ran across it. Finally we saw the homes of the SS (and the swimming pool where the Jews would fight like gladiators).

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## Arriving at Terezin

We buy tickets at the museum, where we see an historical movie, with a very moving song in the background, and get the gist of the awful conditions Jewish inmates had to endure.

Terezin was not a typical concentration or extermination camp. It was used by the Nazis as a "*demonstration camp*" to show neutral organisations that the Jews were not being mistreated in the camps, but it was the only camp ever to be opened to inspection by the Red Cross. People that did not die there of "*natural causes*" were shipped out of Terezin to one of the notorious extermination camps.

Heydrich noted bluntly and cynically that the role Theresienstadt would play for official explanations of Final Solution policy inside the Reich: this "*practical solution*" would "*eliminate at one stroke the many interventions [on behalf of these Jews].*" Heydrich later ordered that Terezin was not to accommodate the so-called Mischlinge (Jewish spouses of German non-Jews and the offspring or descendants of such marriages).

After Heydrich's death, a third category of Jews was added to the eligibility list for Theresienstadt: prominent Jews, especially artists, musicians, and other cultural figures whose disappearance in a killing center might provoke inquiry from their communities or even from abroad.

## The Ghetto Museum

The Ghetto Museum opened in 1991 in the building of the former Terezín School. The exhibitions have been arranged with the assistance of former prisoners of the Terezín Ghetto.

It familiarizes tourists with the horrific daily life of prisoners. It also exhibits art work of children inmates. Visitors find out about the ghetto's cultural activities and spiritual life as well as about the hunger, illness, fear of transports and death that permeated the camp until its liberation by the Soviets on May 8, 1945. The exhibition is a memorial to the 86,934 people deported from Terezin to other locations; only 3,586 survived.

Arriving in Terezin



Terezin Memorial - Ghetto Museum



Star of David at Terezen Museum



On our way to the Prayer Room



## Prayer Hall

Attics, former garages, cellars, storage rooms and rooms in civilian houses hosted secret prayer rooms during the Nazi regime. This particular prayer room was discovered in the early 1990s. Fifty three-year old Rabbi Artur Berlinger, a German-Jewish professor imprisoned in Terezin, found an empty room measuring five by four meters in a small shed in the yard of today's 17 Dlouha Street and transformed the space into a prayer room, bringing with him his own liturgical objects.

The walls are decorated with Hebrew script, and the Star of David adorns the ceiling, though the decor has been ravaged by time. Unfortunately, the floods of 2002 washed away most of the lower wall ornamentation. Berlinger sent his two daughters to England, but he and his wife were not so lucky - they died in Auschwitz.

Courtyard entry to Berlinger's prayer room



Entrance to Berlinger's prayer room



Inside Berlinger's prayer room  
five by four metres



Star of David adorns the ceiling





## Pavel's building and Railway siding

Pavel was on the top floor, and would have seen and heard when jewish prisoners were exported to extermination camps, like [Auschwitz](#).

Building at railway siding



Platform with seat under memorial plaque at Railway siding



Pavel's room in that building



Standing outside the bus  
Looking at memorial plaque



Railway siding



Close up of memorial plaque to holocaust victims



## Vegetable garden

The council assigned women to work in the kitchen, clean the barracks and common rooms, work in camp-ghetto's vegetable gardens, and serve as nurses or orderlies in the so-called sick rooms. Young people also worked in the vegetable garden and the produce went to the SS.

The vegetable garden is now kept by other people





## Crematorium and Russian Cemetary

Since typhus epidemics occurrence after 1942, all corpses had to be cremated as part of necessary prophylactic measures, and crematoriums had to pass a mandatory basic installation.

The Nazis decided to create a crematorium at Terezan, which came into service on September 7th 1942. It was used to cremate the dead from the ghetto, the Gestapo police prison in the Small Fortress, and also from the forced labour camp at Litomerice. Some 30,000 victims were cremated here. Urns containing ashes were stored in the columbarium located in the fortress ramparts, but the Nazis were able to destroy the majority before the end of the War.

On the way to Crematorium



Cemetery grove



Looking at previous cemetery



Russian Cemetery



Russian Cemetery



Christian Memorial



Cemetery - Crematorium



Guys have to wear a Kippah



Plaque next to Crematorium



Crematorium



Looking back to Memorial



Way back



## A building to store urns

A convenient place to store urns, next to a railway line!

Urns stored in this building



Urns stored in this building



Storage area for urns



Storage area for urns



Storage area for urns



Storage area for urns





## A building to prepare bodies for burial

For those lucky enough to escape cremation, then put into mass graves.

Building opposite urn storage



Courtyard to prep area

Entry building to prep area



Courtyard to prep area

Passage to courtyard



Looking back to entry building



Looking back at entry building



Looking back at entry building



Passage to the prep area



Wagon pulled by man power to carry bodies and food  
**no cleaning between**



Very plain coffins only for single graves for those not incinerated



Tables and Stools



Drawings by Terezin inmates



Drawings by Terezin inmates



Drawings by Terezin inmates



Pre-war escape tunnel



Menorah with 7 branches



Soil containers





### *The Menorah*

The Menorah in the Temple had 7 branches. Menorah is a Hebrew word for candelabra, regardless of how many branches it has. The first Jewish menorah was the one with 7 branches that was lit by Kohanim (priests) at the Holy Temple during Biblical times in Jerusalem. It is the symbol of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

Exodus 25:

- 31 "And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it.
- 32 And there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof: three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candle-stick out of the other side thereof..."

Memorial headstone



Cell Like room



Exit from prep  
Urn store opposite



### *Memorial headstone depicting transportation destinations*

Engraving says "Destinations to which transports of Jewish prisoners from the Terezin Ghetto were sent"

[Raasiku in Estonia](#)   [Rejowiec in Poland](#)   [Riga in Latvia](#)   [Trawniki in Poland](#)  
[Treblinka in Poland](#)   [Warsaw in Poland](#)  
[Full list of Nazi concentration camps](#)



## Cemetery for Christians (mixed marriage, political) and Jews

Moat and entry bridge to Terezin Fort



River next to Terezin Fort



Entrance to mixed graves



Cross with crown of thorns



Mixed cemetery in front of fort



Graves named and dated



Star of David



Grave named and dated 1945



### *Star of David*

The Zohar (3:73a) states, "There are three knots connecting [three entities] one to another: the Holy One, blessed be He; Torah; and Israel". The Jewish soul connects to its Creator through the study and observance of Torah. The triangle represents the connection between these three entities.

The essence of the soul connects with God's essence through the study of the teachings of Kabbalah

These three entities are each comprised of a pnimiyut (inner dimension) and a chitzoniyut (external dimension). The Torah is comprised of both exoteric teachings (the Talmud, Jewish law, etc.) as well as esoteric teachings (the Kabbalah). God's "revealed" energy permeates and provides existence to all worlds, but His essence is completely hidden, transcending all of creation. Similarly, the soul (which is a reflection of God) has a revealed element, that level that expresses itself within and vivifies the body, as well as an essence that transcends the body.

The double triangle of the Star of David (Magen David) symbolizes the connection of both dimensions of God, Torah and Israel: the external level of the soul connects to the external expression of God via studying the exoteric parts of Torah; the essence of the soul connects with God's essence through the study and application of the teachings of Kabbalah.

### *Stones on the graves*

The superstitious rationale for stones is that they keep the soul down. There is a belief, with roots in the Talmud, that souls continue to dwell for a while in the graves in which they are placed. The grave, called a beit olam (a permanent home), was thought to retain some aspect of the departed soul.

Stones are more than a marker of one's visit; they are the means by which the living help the dead to "stay put". Even souls that were benign in life can, in the folk imagination, take on a certain terror in death. The "barrier" on the grave prevents the kind of haunting that formed such an important part of East European Jewish lore. The stories of I. B. Singer and the plays of the Yiddish theater are rich in the mythology of East European Jewry: souls that return, for whatever reason, to the world of the living. One explanation for placing stones on the grave is to insure that souls remain where they belong.



## Entering Terezin Fort

Moat and entry bridge



Entrance to Terezin Fort



Entrance boulevard



Inside Terezin Fort



Administration block



Office entrance



Garage 1 and Office signs



Office



Guard room sign



Other admin offices



Entrance to Ghetto



Work makes (you) free



Entering Ghetto



Notice the barbed wire



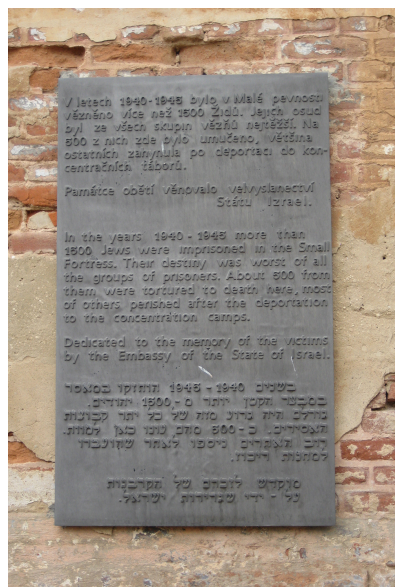


## Memorial Plaque

From 1940-1945, more than 1500 Jews were imprisoned. About 500 of them were tortured to death, most others perished after deportation to concentration camps.

Dedicated to the memory of the victims by the Embassy of the State of Israel.

Memorial plaque



Ghetto



Ghetto



Ghetto



Ghetto



Communal room



Communal room



Cell



Cell basin



Heading to laundry



Laundry



Laundry



Laundry



Sick bay



Doctors were also inmates, looked after their patients in this rather dingy sick bay.



## Heading for execution yard

The otters must have been a welcome sight before a prisoner was either shot or hanged.

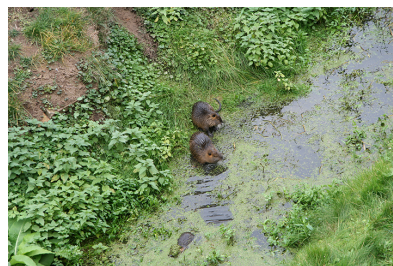
Moat to death



Otters frolicking



Otters frolicking



Death tunnel



"Model barbershop", adjusted in this way in 1944, was meant to show the level of hygiene maintained in the prison.



Enter death tunnel



Way to execution yard



No eascape



The execution courtyard was a former shooting range. While some prisoners were hanged, most were shot by a firing squad. Some 250 to 300 people were executed at the small fortress.

Execution yard



Shooting position



Standing position





## To Officer's Quarters

Execution yard



Way to officer quarters



To hanging platform



Hanging platform



Memorial at hanging platform



Through gate



Pleasant surroundings



Komandants swimming pool



The swimming pool is where the Jews would be forced to fight like gladiators

## Sayng goodbye to Pavel

Jim, James, Pavel, Peigi, Hilary and Kimberley with [Pavel Stransky's book](#). - As Messengers of the Victims. From Theresienstadt to Theresienstadt. With a stop in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Schwarzheide





Some of my references come from <http://www.private-prague-guide.com/article/terezin-concentration-camp/>

Also look at [THERESIENSTADT](#) and [Kelsey's blog](#) for even more pictures! We obviously did not see everything.

It was a heart wrenching experience to see first hand what our brethren have been put through, by one madman, with the aid of the church, the Red Cross, and every other person who sanctioned ghetto living as some sort of solution to the 'Jewish problem'.

The Bible tells us through Paul (Galatians 3) we are all sons through faith in Christ:

27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

This means that Jew, Gentile, slave, free, male, and female (through faith in the Messiah) are one with each other. Male and female are one; Jews, Gentiles slaves or free men are brothers and coheirs in the Lord's promises. God is no respecter of persons. His Grace and assurance are free for anyone who hears His message and believes in his heart.

The church has not replaced Israel, it has been joined (grafted) with Israel, but instead of treating the Jews as brethren, this anti-Semitic teaching has brought about horrendous hardship and terror on God's people. I believe that the church should apologise for the wrong they have done to the Jews down through centuries, before it's too late, and support them in their hazardous task of restoring their birthright.

## History - Terezin (Terezienstadt)

As **Hitler** transported tens of thousands of communal objects to Prague, their owners were rounded up and shipped first to a city built Northwest of Prague in 1780 by Joseph II. Ironically, this city served as a fortress to protect Prague from invaders to the North. Joseph II named this village after his mother, Maria Teresia, calling it Terezin.

**Hitler**, the world was to be told, had built a city for the Jews, to protect them from the vagaries and stresses of the war. A film was made to show this mythic, idyllic city to which his henchmen were taking the Jews from the Czech Lands and eight other countries. Notable musicians, writers, artists, and leaders were sent there for 'safer' keeping than was to be afforded elsewhere in **Hitler's** quest to stave off any uprisings or objections around the so-called civilized world. This ruse worked for a very long time, to the great detriment of the nearly two hundred thousand men, women and children who passed through its gates as a way station to the East and probable death.

Of the vast majority of Czech Jews who were taken to Terezin (or Terezienstadt in German), 97,297 died among whom were 15,000 children. Only 132 of those children were known to have survived!

The Red Cross was allowed to visit Terezin once. The village of Terezin was spruced up for the occasion. Certain inmates were dressed up and told to stand at strategic places along the specially designated route through Terezin. Shop windows along that carefully guarded path were filled with goods for the day. One young mother remembers seeing the bakery window and shelves suddenly filled with baked goods the inmates had never seen during their time at Terezin. Even the candy shop window overflowed with bon bon's creating a fantastic illusion she would never forget.

When the Red Cross representative appeared before this young mother, she remembers being asked how it was to live in Terezin during those days. Her reply implored the questioner to look around. Be sure and look around, as she herself rolled her own widely opened eyes around in an exaggerated manner. The Red Cross reported dryly that while war time conditions made all life difficult, life at Terezin was acceptable given all of the pressures. The Red Cross concluded that the Jews were being treated all right.

There were so many musicians in Terezin, there could have been two full symphony orchestras performing simultaneously daily. In addition, there were a number of chamber orchestras playing at various times. A number of distinguished composers created works at Terezin including Brundibar or the Bumble Bee, a children' operetta and a number of chamber compositions which only now are being resurrected and played in Europe and the United States.

Terezin developed a deep feeling of family according to many of the survivors. As larger numbers of people were crammed into smaller spaces, a sense of community deepened. In the town of Terezin, the population had normally been around 5,000 people before the war. At the height of the war, the Ghetto/Concentration Camp Terezin held over 55,000 Jews. As a consequence, starvation and disease proved rampant. Thousands died of malnutrition and exposure. Their bodies were cremated at the small crematorium with its four gas ovens.



This was not a death camp, by the usual definition. There is no way to compare Terezin to Auschwitz-Birkenau or Treblinka or any of the other death camps where hundreds of thousands were gassed or murdered in other ways each year. Terezin, by comparison was a place to which people would apply so as to avoid a worse fate.

The elderly and families were brought in large numbers to Terezin. Then, in large groups, they were transported to the East, to Auschwitz-Birkenau, when it was fully operational in late 1942. There, the elderly were sent immediately to the gas chambers while the younger inmates who still could work, were temporarily spared. Terezin families were, in some instances, kept together at Birkenau, in family barracks, until their fate was met.

The Little Fortress at Terezin, a star-shaped thick-walled fortress, had long served as a prison. Few people were incarcerated here from the time it was opened in 1780 to **Hitler**, the one exception being the assassins of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in 1914. The Nazis brought political prisoners and others to this hellish place never to emerge again. It was here that the Jewish artists were sent after having been caught stealing paper and other supplies with which they produced writings that recorded daily life in Terezin. It was their work which allowed the outside world to know dramatically about life in Terezin.

These artists also stole materials so the children could surreptitiously create their works of art. Six thousand drawings were hidden and later successfully retrieved to be displayed telling their poignant stories to thousands of viewers in Prague, Israel and at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

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