

Report on the Activities of the Anne Frank House in the Czech Republic (2000/2001)

1. Introduction

Within the framework of the International Task Force (ITF) liaison project with the Czech Republic, for which the Netherlands is the lead country, the Dutch government requested in 2000 that the Anne Frank House develop and implement a series of activities in the Czech Republic in the field of Holocaust education. The Czech Republic already has a strong commitment towards the implementation of education about the Shoah. In a joint effort, the Czech government and local nongovernmental organizations have initiated a number of very successful activities over the last few years.

It was agreed that the activities created within the framework of the ITF liaison project should support the existing activities and focus on training teachers and developing teaching materials in order to help Czech teachers and students gain new insights about the history of the Holocaust. Regarding the current situation in central and eastern Europe, the Dutch government, the Anne Frank House, and the Czech partners also agreed that the liaison project activities should focus strongly on the persecution of Roma in the Czech lands during the Nazi occupation. The Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport kindly agreed to finance the preparatory stage of the project.

2. Evaluation of Teacher Training Seminars in Terezín

As a first step, in September 2000 the Anne Frank House brought together 25 highly motivated teachers from all over the Czech Republic who had participated in the teacher training seminars at the Terezín Memorial Museum during the first half of 2000. The goal of the activity was to assess how these teachers had perceived the content and the methods that had been presented to them in Terezín. Other goals were to become familiar with the needs of the Czech teachers and to make a start on creating a network of local educators who would be willing to assist in the later stages of the project.

The teachers expressed their appreciation for the training sessions in Terezín. They recommended that the program develop more ready-to-use materials in Czech and demonstrate new teaching methods for them to use in their daily practice in schools. The results of this meeting have been included in the general report made by the Anne Frank House regarding the seminars at Terezín, which can be found on the Task Force Web site at <http://taskforce.ushmm.org/liaison.html>.

3. Tour of the Anne Frank Exhibition

Several teachers who took part in the September 2000 meeting demonstrated considerable interest in using some of the standard materials that have been

developed by the Anne Frank House for international use. As a result, the Czech version of the travelling exhibition *Anne Frank—A History for Today* was presented between April and September 2001 in three Moravian schools that are located south of Brno: the Videnska Secondary School in Znojmo, the Masaryk Primary School in Moravské Budejovice, and the Masaryk Gymnasium in Hustopece. Teachers used the exhibition as part of their history lessons.

Students played an important role in the implementation of this project: they helped promote the exhibition within the school and to the local community, and they participated actively in the opening ceremony. In each city, a group of students was responsible for guiding their peers through the exhibition. A staff member of the Anne Frank House helped prepare the guides for their task.

In Znojmo, extra panels were presented alongside the *Anne Frank* exhibition that showed the works of students who had participated in the nationwide project *Lost Neighbours* (initiated and co-ordinated by the Jewish Museum in Prague). This project enables students to research the history of the local Jewish community. See also the English pages of the Web site at www.zmizeli.sousedecz.

4. Supplemental Exhibition in Zlín

On May 30, 2001, a major presentation of the Czech version of the Anne Frank exhibition took place in the municipal theatre in Zlín, 30 km from the Slovak border. The presentation lasted for three weeks and—invited by the local school authorities—a large number of schools came to take part in a guided tour. On the initiative of the Anne Frank House, two local historians who had contributed to the conference “Fenomén Holocaust” (organised by the Office of the President in October 1999), presented a supplemental exhibition with texts, photos, and documents related to two individuals from the Zlín region who became victims of the Holocaust: Desider Ornstein and Jaroslav Herak. Ornstein was a Jewish dentist from Zlín who committed suicide in 1939 to escape the Nazi terror; Herak was a Roma man from the nearby village of Luhacovice. He was one of the 6,000 Roma who were killed by the Nazis in Auschwitz after they were deported from the Czech lands. Another small local exhibition, compiled by the Jewish Museum in Prague, showed the results of the project *Lost Neighbours* (see above) from the Zlín region. All these local panels were shown for the first time and they generated considerable media attention.

5. Co-operation with the Imperial War Museum

In June 2001, a staff member of the Anne Frank House took part as an observer in the training of Czech teachers at the Imperial War Museum in

London. An extensive written report about this seminar is currently being used for the development of future seminars by the Imperial War Museum.

6. International Teachers Seminar in Terezín

From 15 to 20 November 2001, a group of 70 teachers from the Czech Republic participated in a seminar in Terezín, which was supported by the ITF Fund. The Anne Frank House assisted in the organisation of this event. Experts from several ITF countries came to Terezín to introduce certain aspects of their educational work, such as the use of co-operative learning methods and modern multimedia applications. In spring 2002, the Terezin Memorial Museum will publish an extensive report about the seminar.

7. Project 2002–2004

Parallel to the implementation of the activities mentioned previously, a series of meetings in Prague and in Amsterdam took place during 2001 in order to define a programme of activities within the framework of the ITF liaison project for 2002 through 2004. The participants in these discussions were representatives from the Anne Frank House, the Terezín Memorial Museum, the Jewish Museum, the New School Foundation, the Terezín Initiative, and the Romany Museum in Brno. The Netherlands Foreign Ministry indicated that it would be willing to sponsor the activities.

During the process of defining the activities to take place within the context of the co-operation between the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, the Czech partners presented many possible projects, many of which were integrated into the final version of the grant proposal. The liaison partners decided to focus on the further development of teacher training seminars and the creation of teaching materials for use in classrooms. The Anne Frank House will share its expertise in the implementation of similar projects in other countries of central and eastern Europe. A major component of the project will be training teachers in the use of innovative teaching methods such as drama in education, co-operative learning, and information and communications technologies. Also, a Dutch-Czech team of historians and educators will create a new travelling exhibition about the history of the Czech lands as a multiethnic state (which is scheduled to be ready at the end of 2003). Within the new project, several of the successful concepts that have been developed in the past years by Czech institutions (such as the project Lost Neighbours, the portal Web site on Holocaust education www.holocaust.cz, and the teacher trainings at Terezín) will also be supported and expanded.

In March 2001, the project that had been agreed upon by the various liaison partners was submitted by the Anne Frank House to the *Matra Programme* at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands. This programme has been established by the Dutch government to support the new democracies in central and eastern Europe. In October 2001, the Ministry decided to support

the project. The Czech partners will be responsible for a major part of the implementation of the project. The activities will be implemented in different stages through at least May 2004.

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