

## NATIONAL REPORT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC FOR THE TICCIH 2006 CONGRESS

In the years since 2000 the situation of industrial heritage in the Czech Republic has been affected by other occurrences in society, for example, the radical restructuring of industry, the closure of many factories and mines, the introduction of programmes aimed at scaling back industry in order to make the economy more efficient, and even by the effects of the “wild” privatisation process, which owing to the absence of requisite legislation and the break in the continuity of development led to the emergence of property speculations and not rarely to the destruction of the site.

These issues have been reflected in a series of events and conferences that have been organised, culminating in the 3rd International Biennial – “Vestiges of Industry” in the autumn of 2005.

The first meeting ever held under the title “Vestiges of Industry” took place in the old sewage treatment plant in Prague – Bubeneč in the spring of 2001; it was organised by the Division for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage at the National Technical Museum and the Technical Monuments Committee of the Czech Chamber of Certified Engineers and Technicians and the Czech Union of Civil Engineers. An acceleration of activity led in 2002 to the founding of a new, specialised institution, the Research Centre for Industrial Heritage, founded with the support of a grant as part of the Czech Technical University in Prague. In subsequent years the Research Centre for Industrial Heritage became an interdisciplinary contact point, a platform for the exchange of information and for cooperation inside the country and out, and the Czech Republic’s local representative for cooperation with TICCIH.

The objective of the centre is to contribute to the systemic and rapid identification and evaluation of industrial heritage in the Czech Republic, at the levels of industrial zones, and sites and buildings (including the machinery and technology), to construct a database of assessed industrial heritage sites, which can be used by decision-making institutions in the fields of zoning and regional planning – municipal authorities, building authorities, heritage conservation institutes – and, in connection with teaching activities and post-graduate programmes, to work on specific projects directed at the conservation of industrial heritage, while also pursuing activities aimed at the dissemination of knowledge and publishing information about industrial heritage. Alongside these activities the centre also works on documenting and assessing buildings at risk in the country’s heritage stock within specific selected sectors of industry (the project to map “endangered species”): *Buildings in decline in the sugar refining industry, Mapping and identifying breweries in decline, At-risk Czechoslovak interwar industrial architecture, etc.* The data that are gathered are published as comprehensive thematic blocks in the form of surveys or as guides to “industrial” trails and areas (see the list of publications). However, the centre’s work is directed primarily at completing the Register of Industrial Heritage; the completion of this database is the main objective and outcome of the centre’s activities. (By the middle of 2006 the register will contain over 7000 entries on buildings and sites and the database is gradually being made accessible through the website of the Czech Technical University.) The data from the database have already been used by experts in consultations and in connection with the proposal procedure in the process of declaring a site a cultural monument.

The Research Centre for Industrial Heritage has relatively limited financial resources, but the scope of its activities is able to benefit from the fact that the centre fulfils its natural role as an interdisciplinary platform, bringing together the activities on industrial heritage organised by various professional bodies – both of specialised institutions, such as the National Heritage Institute, the Faculty of Architecture and the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Czech Technical University and other universities, and of other interest and

professional organisations, such as the Division for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage at the National Technical Museum, and the Technical Monuments Committee of the Czech Chamber of Certified Engineers and Technicians and the Czech Union of Civil Engineers.

In 2003, by which time a substantial response to and interest in industrial heritage had emerged in the professional community and the general public, the 2nd International Biennial “Vestiges of Industry” was held, accompanied by an exhibition of alternative projects by students of architecture at universities in the Czech Republic. That same year technical monuments and industrial heritage were proposed and successfully accepted as topics for the European days of culture by the Association of Historical Towns and Settlements of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. 1/

The following year an international seminar was held at the Michal Mine in Ostrava (5-7 September 2004) on the topic *Re-animating Industrial Heritage* and sub-titled *Revival and Renewal of Technical and Industrial Monuments*, involving the participation of Czech and foreign experts. Ostrava, a town that is one of the most typical and strongest examples of a locality affected by policies aimed at winding down industry in the Czech Republic, became the site of “Techné Ostrava”, an international meeting that has taken place several years in a row and focuses on documentary film work about technical heritage.

The culmination of numerous activities, presentations, studies and publication work during these years was the 3rd International Biennial – “Vestiges of Industry” 2005, which was organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic by the Research Centre for Industrial Heritage, the Technical Monuments Committee of the Czech Chamber of Certified Engineers and Technicians, and the Czech Union of Civil Engineers, with the support of the Visegrad fund and in cooperation with the National Heritage Institute and the Czech National Committee of ICOMOS. The possibilities, significance, and difficulties involved in the conversion of industrial buildings and sites was the theme of an international conference organised as the central event of the 3rd International Biennial, and it was held in the old sewage treatment plant in Prague – Bubeneč. 2/ A number of exhibitions and accompanying events were organised on the topic of the Biennial, some of which were held directly within the space of the plant, such as the exhibition of posters of interwar industrial architecture. Other exhibitions and events related to the theme of the conference and activities set up by the organisers over the previous five years were organised and held in other new spaces in Prague and in the nearby industrial town of Kladno. (An exhibition on the Architecture of Conversion was held in an industrial hall recently revived for new use, located in the former industrial outskirts of Prague, and another exhibition, the Working Heritage exhibition, was developed as part of the European Culture 2000 project, in which the Research Centre for Industrial Heritage became involved through examples of the transformation of Prague industrial sites.)

Since 2000 numerous publications have also been prepared and issued, including a four-volume encyclopaedia of technical monuments in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, which was the first such publication of its kind in the Czech Republic. Many of the authors involved in the work on its preparation were professionals who had also taken part in the seminar in Ostrava or the meeting in the old sewage treatment plant in Prague – Bubeneč. 3/

The past six years, and especially the organisation of the Biennial in the old sewage treatment plant and in Kladno, have signified a reaction to the radical transformation of value criteria. This also explains the emphasis put on interdisciplinary approaches to industrial heritage, including the involvement of alternative art forms in uncovering new meanings and discovering and exploring the forgotten spaces of industrial zones and buildings, which was the main focus of the events and programme primarily organised in nearby Kladno. Such approaches represent an alternative stream of perspectives on the future of industrial heritage,

oriented towards the theory of art and communication, approaches that are growing in strength in the Czech Republic.

In conclusion it warrants mentioning the declaration that emerged spontaneously on the final day of the Biennial, in the Ecotechnical Museum (the old sewage treatment plant) in Prague – Bubeneč in September 2005. The declaration addresses issues that have been discussed but nonetheless continue to be relevant: understanding industrial heritage in the context of European development and using industrial heritage as a positive cultural force for the revitalisation of towns and regions in decline. 4/

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#### Notes:

1/ For comparison, in a general inventory in 1987 around 1500 buildings and sites were documented. In subsequent years, and especially after 1989, the focus was placed on surviving heritage from the industrial revolution and now also encompasses examples of modern architecture. At present over 2 800 sites have heritage status as technical and industrial monuments.

2/ The conference was organised with three thematic sessions: Reflecting on European Experiences, “Working Heritage and Us”, Integrating European Industrial Heritage (Petr Urlich, Keith Falconer, Paul Smith, Axel Föhl, Györgyi Németh, Julian Kołodziej, Eva Dvořáková), Interdisciplinarity – Industrial Heritage and Contemporary Culture (Miloš Vojtěchovský, Giep Hagoort, Rolf Dennemann, Hans D. Christ, Corinne Pontier, Marek Adamov), Architects of Conversion in the Czech Republic (Benjamin Fragner, Josef Pleskot, Alberto di Stefano, Martin A. Tomáš, Tomáš Šenberger, Šimon Caban, Antonín Novák).

#### *3/ A selection of recent publications:*

Hlušíčková H. (ed.), *Technické památky v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku. Příruční encyklopedie, I-IV. díl*, (Technical Monuments in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, Vols. I-IV). Prague 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004

Valchářová V. (ed.), *Industriální stopy: Dvanáct ohrožených*. (Vestiges of Industry. Twelve at Risk) VCPD ČVUT, Prague 2003.

Beran L. - Valchářová V. (ed.), *Pražský industriál. Technické stavby a průmyslová architektura Prahy*. (Industrial Prague. Technical Works and Industrial Architecture in Prague) VCPD ČVUT, Prague 2005.

Dvořáková E. – Šenberger T. (eds.), *Industriální cesty Českým středozápadem, průvodce vybranými industriálními objekty a technickými památkami*. (Industrial Trails through the Bohemian Mid-West) Kladno 2005.

Valchářová V. (Ed.) – Beran L. – Fragner B. – Popelová L. – Vorlík P., *Stavební kniha 2005, Meziválečná průmyslová architektura*. (Book of Construction 2005. Interwar Industrial Architecture) Brno 2005.

Fragner B. – Hanzlová A., *Industriální stopy / Vestiges of Industry*. Exhibition volume. Prague 2005.

*Kladno + - Záporno*. Proceedings from the international workshop. Published by mamapapa civic association in cooperation with the Kladno City Council and the Research Centre for Industrial Heritage at the Czech Technical University in Prague. Prague 2005.

4/ The Declaration emerged spontaneously out of the atmosphere at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Biennial – “Vestiges of Industry” in the Ecotechnical museum in Prague – Bubeneč in September 2005, organised with the direct support of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF). Thus far it has been signed by the national representatives of TICCIH and the organisational representatives from the Czech Technical University in Prague, the Czech Chamber of Certified Engineers and Technicians, the Czech Union of Civil Engineer, and the Hungarian Chamber of Engineers. See the attachment: