

REMEMBERING AND REBUILDING: Saving Oskar Schindler's Ark

A Multi-Media Travelling Memorial Exhibit



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Under the Auspices of the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations in Geneva

www.arksfoundation.net



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THE STORY OF SCHINDLER'S ARK

Schindler's Ark was where Jews on Schindler's list were saved instead of going to Auschwitz and certain death.

In the central scene of the Oscar-winning film "Schindler's List" (1993) by Steven Spielberg, if you were on the list, Jews were sent to this Ark in the home region of Oskar and Emilie Schindler. The buildings form the only concentration camp, which saved rather than exterminated Jews.

Who were Oskar and Emilie Schindler, why did they do what they did to save the Jews?

Would you respond like them now?

The buildings of Schindler's Ark are in disrepair and danger of collapse. The Löw-Beer family owned the factory before they had to flee from the Nazis in 1938.

In 2018, after eighty years, the Löw-Beers have reunited with locals to create the Foundation Arks to help save and rebuild Schindler's Ark for future school children and visitors. They are committed to save and make history together again.



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AIMS AND PRIORITIES

The foundation has two main aims:

Save and develop a memorial to Schindler's Ark, Shoah and the Löw-Beer factory for school children and visitors to experience the history and film where it occurred, and engage personally with present issues of discrimination

Promote activities which benefit the people of Brnenec and the wider Moravian region and its promotion at the heart of Europe

In addition, the Foundation will work

In an independent, open and apolitical manner reflecting the spirit and continuing contribution of the Löw-Beer family to the region

Go to www.arksfoundation.net for the full consultation document and more.

WHO WILL VISIT THE MUSEUM

Schindler's Ark is one of the two or three most recognized stories and sites of the Second World War. As a factory it was built with excellent access at the heart of Europe, two hours to Prague and Vienna airports and 45 minutes to Brno. Similar sites attract hundreds of thousands of visitors per year.

The focus will be:

School children: school classes from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Germany and across Europe to watch the film and personally engage with witness interviews in the place where it occurred. Additional activities in making short interviews, youtube films, sports and nature trials, with limited, good value accommodation where the Schindler Jews stayed

Half day core visit for tourist on the main Prague, Brno and Vienna routes and global tourists visiting history and Jewish sites.

Seminars and events: to tackle present day issues in this special context, for Jewish, European, business, musical and cultural events which reflect on the present and future.

Daniel Löw-Beer
Chairman of Arks Foundation and grandson of Walter Löw-Beer who ran the textile factory with his brothers August and Felix.

REMEMBERING PEOPLE IN THESE PLACES: Schindler Jew testimonies



In Autumn 1944, Schindler came to Brnenec and found our family factory. The Nazi leadership insisted his Jewish workers were transferred to Auschwitz and death.

Schindler had seen the murder of the Krakow ghetto liquidation and recalled "No thinking person could fail to see what would happen, I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system".

Spielberg made the same point "the Holocaust was as obvious as a little girl wearing a red coat, walking down the street, and yet nothing was done to bomb the German rail lines. Nothing was being done to slow down ... the annihilation of European Jewry.

So that was my message in letting that scene be in colour (in an otherwise black and white film)".

For every three people, there are four opinions on who Schindler was, and why he and his wife acted to save the Jews. This debate is important, and keeps the question alive of whether you would act as they did now?

Here are some of the Schindler Jews' words:



Rena Finder – TEACH CHILDREN NOT TO STAND BY



“Most Holocaust survivors don’t like to talk about their experiences... we are all afraid that the Holocaust will be forgotten when we survivors die.

The warning signs

We must understand the worrying signs that precede these calamities - the racial, cultural and religious arrogance of those who seek to persecute others. We have to make sure it doesn’t happen in our own community.

I watched the German Army march down the street. They looked human, but they considered us inhuman. They stripped us of our citizenship, confiscated our homes, businesses and bank accounts. We couldn’t walk on the sidewalk or use public transport.

We were herded into a ghetto by soldiers and dogs, while other people lived normally across the street. Nobody saw, or heard, or cared. And no-one said goodbye to us. We were invisible.

Schindler looked at us as people

Oskar Schindler was a member of the Nazi party. But his workers became his friends – he looked at us as people.

Germany was losing the war against the Allies, but was determined to win against the Jews. When Schindler moved his factory to Brnenec, we were trans-

ported to Auschwitz and it was a nightmare. Not all victims were Jewish, but all the Jews were victims.

Not snow but ashes

At Auschwitz, we tried to catch the snowflakes to drink and then we realized it wasn’t snow but ashes. Three and a half weeks in Auschwitz was a lifetime. And then Oskar sent his secretary with diamonds to get 300 women workers back. We were the only ones ever let out of Auschwitz alive. And when the train doors opened, Oskar was on the platform offering us soup. I will never forget that. He gave us life.

Forget about hate, but don’t be afraid to speak up for what is right... In this world of bullying and hate crimes, it’s important to teach children not to stand by – you have to go and get help. Don’t stand by and do nothing.”

Eva Lavi – LOST CHILDHOOD



“There was no childhood for children my age. Regularly, we saw, heard and understood everything the Nazis were doing to us. They liked their work. They stripped the people not only of their clothes, but also of their dignity. The children hid, everywhere: in sewage systems, public toilets, and garbage; not giving in to constant fear. At 6 years old, children were cynical.

People say that I’m a child of miracles. For most of them my

mother is responsible. She prepared the hideouts, but sometimes there was not enough time: she was desperate, so she gambled: one day when the Nazis appeared at our door - she put me outside the window to hold the drain pipe, (in Polish winter of -20C), I didn’t die, I was half frozen, but alive, when the Nazis left.

My father had a store of iron products, which was outside the ghetto. He made the desperate decision to obtain a poison (Cyanide). The 3 of us sat in a small closed room; father poured the poison on a spoon and approached me. He didn’t want me to see them die.

A strong Jewish woman who stood up to the Nazis

Here, for the first time, my mother, who was a fragile and small woman, always admiring her husband and his decisions, revealed her determination and strength: She caught the spoon and threw it, saying: “no, we’ll not kill ourselves, there is a God and he will decide for us”.

My mother was not afraid of the Nazis! And so she told them, in her perfect German. When they started to shout, and ordered her to do something, she answered calmly: “Don’t shout! I’m not afraid of you! You can kill me”.

By a miracle and luck I was on the famous “Schindler List” (The Nazis separated her from her mother, but Schindler saved her by telling the guards he needed her small fingers to operate machinery. Uniquely he saved whole families to work).

Eva now tells her story to school-children “It’s true testimony from someone who was there. The survivors opened their mouths and began to tell the story. It’s not just a story. It’s the worst and cruelest thing that happened in the world.”

REMEMBERING: Eliska Löw-Beer Saved by a Brazilian Diplomat



In September 1938, at 16, Eliška was sent from Czechoslovakia to the new International School set up alongside the League of Nations in Geneva, now Ecolint. The school “opened my eyes to a lot of things, that the world didn’t begin and end with me, and I began to think.”

As the Germans advanced, the school was disbanded in May 1940. Marie-Thérèse Maurette, the school headmistress, took the group of twenty remaining students including Eliška, to southwest France to her holiday villa in Hendaye. Many left, but the Jewish children could not get visas to cross into England. Eliška had no money, only the clothes

on her back and her little dog. She had only a few sporadic, forwarded letters from her family.

She bribed to hide in a train to get to Cannes in Free France, with a letter from her mother Gusti Löw-Beer in a hotel. “I was hungry, had no money, had used it for bribes to get across the border, my dog was hungry, and I found my mother in a luxury hotel in Cannes”. She remembers the scene, her mother pretending to live as she did before the war, believing they would return home after the summer. Eliška realized “I had to take on the role of making the decisions”.

LUIS MARTINS DE SOUZA DANTAS: A REMARKABLE BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR



The Brazilian Ambassador to France was a remarkable man, Luis Martins de Souza Dantas. He has been described as the “Brazilian Schindler”, and alongside Oskar Schindler, he was one of the few recognised at Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. Against Vichy orders and those of his government, he provided visas and saved 800 Jews during the war. Eliška and her mother were two of them.

They set aboard the SS *Alsina*, “At first being aboard the ship was like a vacation, there were 600 people in a boat built for 300. Incredible things happened during that time, unexpected good things and terrible things, it was never, never land.”.

Yet at 90 years old, Eliška’s eyes still sparkled when she talked “I met a boy called Eddie. He was just smart, got around things very easily. We became quite an item. We had our fun. Plenty of it. Yet our lives hung by but meagre threads.”

The British bombed the route, so the ship could not pass further than Dakar, Senegal. After 6 months, the passengers had to leave the boat at Casablanca “and the Germans were all over Casablanca, and most people on the boat except 2 or 3 were sent to camps.” Luckily with the help of Eddie, Eliška and her mother, found a ticket to Rio via Gibraltar and Cadiz.”

Sending Jews back to Europe

When they arrived in Rio, Brazil, they were told their visas were 6 months out of date and they needed to go back unless they converted from Judaism. Eliška spent the summer in quarantine on the Island of Flowers with her mother, and in love with Eddie. Waiting to be sent back to Europe on the next boat.

Luckily, her brother also found his way to Brazil. He spent months raising necessary funds to eventually buy their way in through the “Black Angel” Lieutenant Fortunato, the chief of the President’s personal guards, at huge expense.

In her nineties, Eliška says “You lose perspective of the threat when are you in it. I was able to mature from an unformed kid to a woman”.

Eliška had successful and varied political and professional careers, including periods living in Latin America, India and Thailand, and worked on Demographic and Health surveys. She was very active in voluntary organisations up until her death in May 2014.

REBUILDING: The bridge in Brněnec that split Europe in 1938



Walter Löw-Beer with son Tomas, 1936, Svitávka. In 1938, they escape to England to flee the Nazis.



Friedl Löw-Beer's passport with the name of her brother Tomas disguised as her son

My grandfather Walter Löw-Beer was standing on a line, which had just cut Czechoslovakia in two, Europe in two, and the Jewish world into pieces. The new border, recently drawn at the Munich Agreement in September 1938, cut along the stream in our family factory, which would become Schindler's Ark.

The stream had brought power to our family factory, now it brought politics and war. Here in September 1938 was my short, athletic, strongly built Jewish grandfather armed with his walking stick, facing the oncoming battalion of Nazi soldiers.

Walter stood at the crossing with his stick, a Jew manning the borders of a broken Czechoslovakia. He told the soldiers to phone Prague or Berlin to check their borders and orders, which apparently they did. This was how Walter Löw-Beer held up the Nazi invasion of this part of Czechoslovakia for three, full days.

As Walter Löw-Beer was standing up to the Nazis, Chamberlain the prime minister returned to England waving his signed paper in the air "Peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time". He was greeted by populism and crowds. Only Churchill stood up in parliament to say "You were given the choice between war and dishonour. You chose dishonour. And you will have war".

Our family then fled from this factory, creating their own family arks of escape across the sea of war. The first challenge was to tear away your roots and escape. The second was to find a visa and place to enter. Europe closed its borders to refugees, contributing also directly to the deaths of millions of Jews.

The Evian Conference in July 1938 was called to discuss the Jewish crisis. When countries convened on the calm banks of Lake Geneva, country after country stated their sympathy with the plight of the Jews at the conference,

and closed their borders. Only the Dominican Republic agreed to take a significant number of 100,000 Jews.

As Chaim Weizmann wrote in the Guardian "The world seemed to be divided into two parts - those places where the Jews could not live and those where they could not enter".

My family fled to France, but as the Germans invaded they had nowhere to go. The strain was growing, and my grandfather Walter who had held up the Nazis months earlier, suffered a stroke, which left him paralysed.

My father had no passport, and in the chaos of the German invasion, he was saved by diplomats in the English embassy. They agreed to add my father Thomas, to his sister Friedl's passport. He was 8 and she was 18, and would have been 10 when she gave birth to her brother. Yet these acts of humanity by diplomats saved my father, Thomas.



"Next to what used to be the Löw-Beer family home before 1938, now crumbling, peeling, is the crossing of the stream Svitava where my grandfather Walter held up the Nazis for three days. A Jew with his stick defending his homeland Czechoslovakia. I had watched Steven Spielberg's film "Schindler's List" again a few months earlier, and here were the real buildings of the Ark and my history, derelict and collapsing around me.

The ark of my family history has allowed me to feel the current of the past and of history. I can see and hear in the bubbling current of this stream that history is not just behind us. Like this stream, it also flows past and on.

I can imagine an ark here in these buildings that holds the places, people and stories together to explain what happened in the heart of Europe. At the core, school children would watch the film in the place where it happened. There would then be a circle of real interviews of the Schindler Jews. There would be a third circle which engages present issues of identity and discrimination, would you act now. It would help us shape an easier journey from the past to the present and on into the future"

Daniel Low-Beer
(Walter Löw-Beer's grandson), 2018

REBUILDING: Schindler's Ark: A walkthrough



In April 2018, we invited museum experts, historians and locals to suggest a tour through the rebuilt museum. More importantly we want your ideas, contribute at www.arksfoundation.net

1. Schindler's Ark – is at the centre, intact and with its original features. It is spacious with three floors, a factory floor, a huge cinematic turbine room, and a floor where the Schindler Jews slept (chosen for safety on top of their work so they did not need to pass dangerous SS soldiers). The building is:

To show the film and associated documentaries in the original setting to school children and tourists

Engage personally and through multimedia with the interviews of the Schindler Jews (kept by Spielberg's Shoah Foundation formed with the profits of the film)

Experience the European history of the 20th century through this working factory, and the stories of living here and of escape of the Löw-Beer family

The lower floors will be used for a museum on Arnost Lustig (shown later), the theme of film and documentaries and literature. The upper floor where the Jews slept will be used for simple, good value accommodation

2. The German Building – next to Schindler's Ark at the entrance with its original gate, is the building that housed the German soldiers. Schindler had to fund them, while protecting the Jews from their danger. The most dangerous soldiers he got drunk one evening and got them signed up for the Russian front.

This building would engage with the German and Austrian history with Czechoslovakia, which in the 1920s and 1930s allowed this factory and region to be at the heart of Europe, and one of its wealthiest and a cultural high point of European modernism. It will show the unique partnership and what was lost with the subsequent history and difficult present issues.

The Löw-Beers also built the Tugendhat Home in Brno, paid for by Alfred Löw-Beer for his daughter Greta. It will be linked to the factory, and was built by a German architect Mies van der Rohe for a Jewish family, with Czech artisans, and is widely seen as the finest modern 20th century home in Europe.

3. Oskar and Emilie Schindler building – this is the intact working building of Oskar and Emilie Schindler a challenging partnership that saved over a thousand Jews and took on the Nazi extermination machine. They turned a concentration camp into a place to save Jews.

This building would have the function of housing the Oskar and Emilie Schindler exhibition and archives, in close cooperation and design with the heir to these archives. She has visited the buildings and is committed to shape them as a home or Ark for people to engage with these unique and original materials, videos, interviews and documents.

Additional facilities to rebuild over time:

4. Events and Activities Space – the cluster of buildings is completed with a huge and beautiful, open, factory floor.

It would allow the museum to be interactive with film, textile and other activities, for example of school children making small YouTube documentaries of interviews of their experience.

It would also allow the museum to engage further with the present and future, in seminars (on related issues of European identity, Czechoslovakia, industry, migration, Jewish history), and present day events or concerts.

5. Glass and Reflection Room – behind Schindler's Ark is a large framed building, open to the beautiful, surrounding countryside, which will be used as a resting, reading and meditative space.

6. Restaurant and Facilities building – around the main cluster of buildings, is a building that will be used as a restaurant and facilities building, open to the museum and to the village as a resource.



- 1 Schindler's Ark
- 2 The German Building
- 3 Oskar and Emilie Schindler Building
- 4 Glass and Reflection Room
- 5 Events and Activities Space
- 6 Restaurant and Facilities Building

ABOUT REMEMBERING AND REBUILDING



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"Even for us, our own poor fortune is like a landscape we turn back to see, as it is fading away the further we go. And yet, in the marrow of our bones, we feel that it is part of our life, that we must not betray by forgetting. To forget is a sin. To forget is blasphemy. To forget is sacrilege..."



© Jaroslav Brabec, Brněnec, 2018

Perhaps man is also that which he remembers. And that which he forgets.

Does memory resemble a candle, which illuminates at least that which is nearest? Or does it resemble a wound or a scar of a healed wound? At night, when I am alone, I hear voices of the dead, and think not only about those who were young, good looking and lucky, but also about those who were wretched, ill and powerless, old men and women, who did not have any hope that they would live. They knew that they will perish - worse than animals - yet they behaved with dignity."

Arnošt Lustig, Essays, 2001



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"Defending ourselves is our right and responsibility. Even the powerless must defend themselves. And if there is something that makes man great, then it is precisely that he defends himself."

Arnošt Lustig, *Essays*, 2001



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"In the last few years, most of the buildings have collapsed into rubble. On the ground, there are frozen weaving looms, rolls of thread, and a sea of bricks what seems like 6 million of them. I am walking through the rubble of the factory. The building is one of the last remaining concentration camps in the Czech Republic, and one of the most well known symbols of the war."

Daniel Low-Beer, 2018

"LIFE IS NOT WHAT WE WANT BUT WHAT WE HAVE"

Arnošt Lustig, Dita Saxová, 1962



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"The present is a mountain. The past, a shadow. The future, emptiness. My existence entails two lives, nearly simultaneous, although the first one already elapsed and the second one continues. I speak about the life of a slave sentenced to death, and the life of a survivor who is belatedly mourning the dead."

Arnošt Lustig, "Good day, Mr Lustig," 1999



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"The good in man expresses itself in action."

Arnošt Lustig, "Night and Hope", 1958

ARNOŠT LUSTIG REMEMBERS

Schindler's Ark will bring the literary and film work of Arnošt Lustig to Brněnec

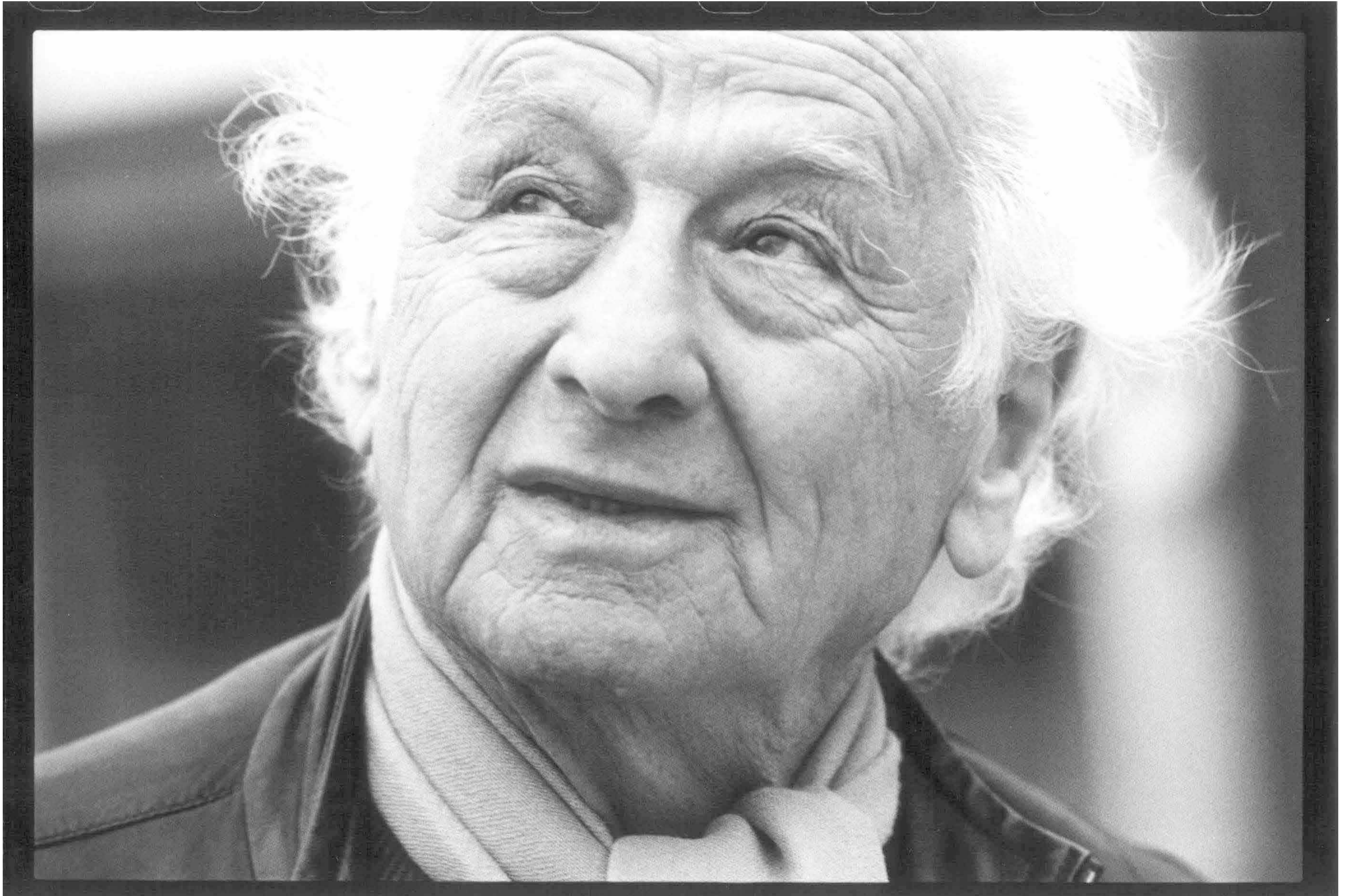
Holocaust witness, survivor of Nazi concentration camps in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz - Birkenau and Buchenwald - Meuselwitz

Fugitive from a death transport to Dachau

Resistance fighter in the Prague Uprising

Acclaimed author of award-winning novels and short stories published in over 25 languages and screenplays based on his work for the Czech New Film Wave. Shortlisted for the NOBEL PRIZE for Literature (2008,2006,2005)

Professor *Emeritus* of literature, creative writing and film



© Jaroslav Brabec

Awards:

Knight of the Order of Mark Twain (short stories *Night and Hope*, 2011), the Franz Kafka Prize (2008), Czech Ministry of Culture Medal ČR ARTIS BOHEMIAE AMICIS for long-term and committed dissemination of the good name of Czech culture at home and abroad (2006), Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2004), Czech Republic Meritorious Medal of the First Order for Outstanding Artistic Achievement (2000, granted by the President), Pen Club Prize for Literary Achievement (top literary award in Czech Republic, 1998), Publishers Weekly Award for the Best Literary Work (1991) shared with Norman Mailer and John Updike, Emmy Award (1986), American Jewish National Awards (1986;1980), B'nai B'rith Award (1974), and other prestigious international and Czechoslovak awards.

Nominations:

Pulitzer Prize (for the novel *Lovely Green Eyes*, 2003), Man Booker Prize for lifetime contribution to literature in the English language (2003)

**“Never again like sheep”
Arnošt Lustig, “Transport from Paradise”
(Czechoslovak Film, 1963)**

A simple line drawing of a smiling face with a heart shape above it. To the right of the drawing is a handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Arnošt Lustig".

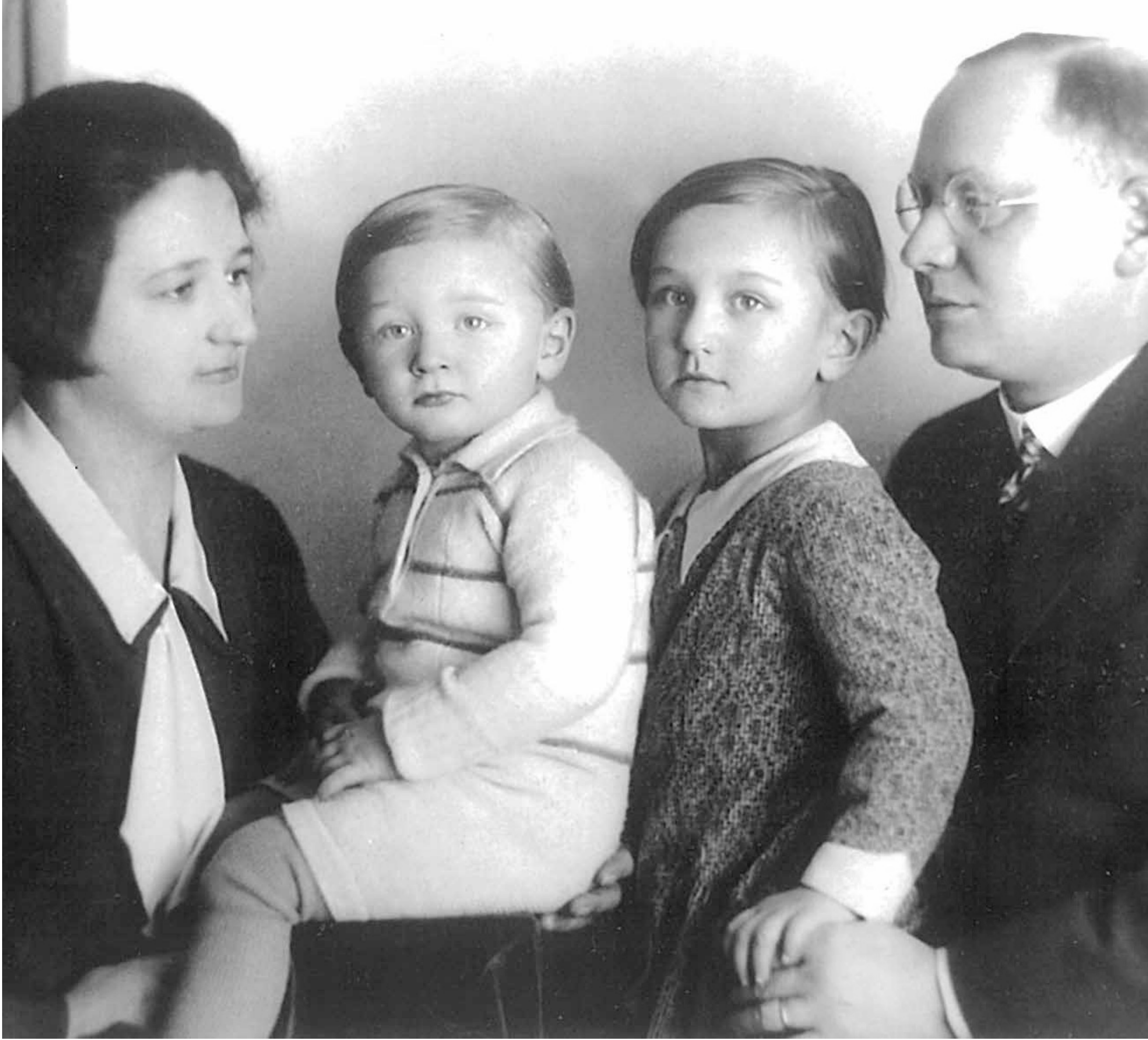
“I have dedicated my work to the victims of the Jewish tragedy, to all those who know how to say no, to all those who know how to distinguish between the good and the bad, those who know how to decide, those for whom the word democracy represents rectifying errors.”

Arnošt Lustig, 1996

THE HOUSE OF RETURNED ECHOES: MY STORY

"The life of every person is unique, irreplaceable and should have meaning. Someone is lucky and goes through life without any big upheavals, someone else has a destiny which foresees hardships which can or cannot be survived."

Arnošt Lustig, "Confession", 2009



"My parents – Terezie Löwy and Emil Lustig - were married in 1923 in Svitavy, fifteen kilometers from Brněnec (Brünnlitz) in Moravia. Not far from my mother's birthplace in Moravská Třebová. My Jewish father was a poor drapery salesman with blond hair, blue eyes and deep roots in Bohemia; my mother a seamstress from a traditional Jewish orthodox family.

I was born on 21. December 1926 in Vysočany, a working-class suburb on the outskirts of Prague, Czechoslovakia. I joined my sister Hana (1924).



I lived my story during World War II. First as a twelve-year old expelled from school because of the Nuremberg Laws. Then, as a fifteen-year old inmate of the Theresienstadt ghetto, a city 'gifted' to the Jews by Hitler. At seventeen, I worked as a slave prisoner in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald-Meuselwitz bei Leipzig. In the last months of the war, I was a fugitive from the death transport train to Dachau, and then, a resistance fighter in the Prague Uprising of May 1945 that liberated Prague from Nazi occupation.

I spent two and a half years growing up in the concentration camps. I learned that which a human can learn about the world, about relationships between people. I got to know the meaning of circumstances, fate, logic, luck, bad fortune. What is responsibility, lack of responsibility, morality. How fate can be more powerful than wisdom, and luck more than merit."

"I survived to bear witness and write about my and many other stories of the Shoah. I will not finish..."

Arnošt Lustig, Essays, 2001

IN LOVE WITH LIFE ...



I WAS GOING ON NINETEEN WHEN I ESCAPED FROM THE DEATH TRANSPORT

"IN APRIL 1945, we were in a death transport carrying us to the concentration camp in Dachau, Bavaria. As the train approached Kraslice (annexed to the Third Reich as part of the Sudeten), the locomotive carrying us was mistakenly destroyed by an American fighter bomber.

With my best friend Jiří Justic, we jumped off the train. The SS guards shot dead those who jumped from the train after us. As we were running, they were shooting left and right, at all that moved. We ran up the hill. We reached a forest. Through this forest, we reached another forest. We wanted to continue going East, because we knew Prague was in the East. For six days and nights, hungry, fatigued, ill and cold, we made a desperate flight toward freedom. We were caught by local militia three times and three times they sentenced us to death in a mock trial. We made it back to Prague, and in May 1945, took part in the Prague Uprising against the German garrison. I was obsessed with living. I loved life...

Selectively, I described this experience in my short story, which I later elaborated into a novel "Darkness Casts No Shadow." If I described everything, no one would ever read it. It would be more brutal than the stories of Jerzy Kosinski.

I also wrote this story as a screenplay for the film "Diamonds of the Night" (1964), together with director Jan Němec." The film won the first prize at Mannheim Film Festival and Pesaro Film Festival. In 2018, the film was digitally restored and showcased at the Cannes Film Festival in the Cannes Classic Section.



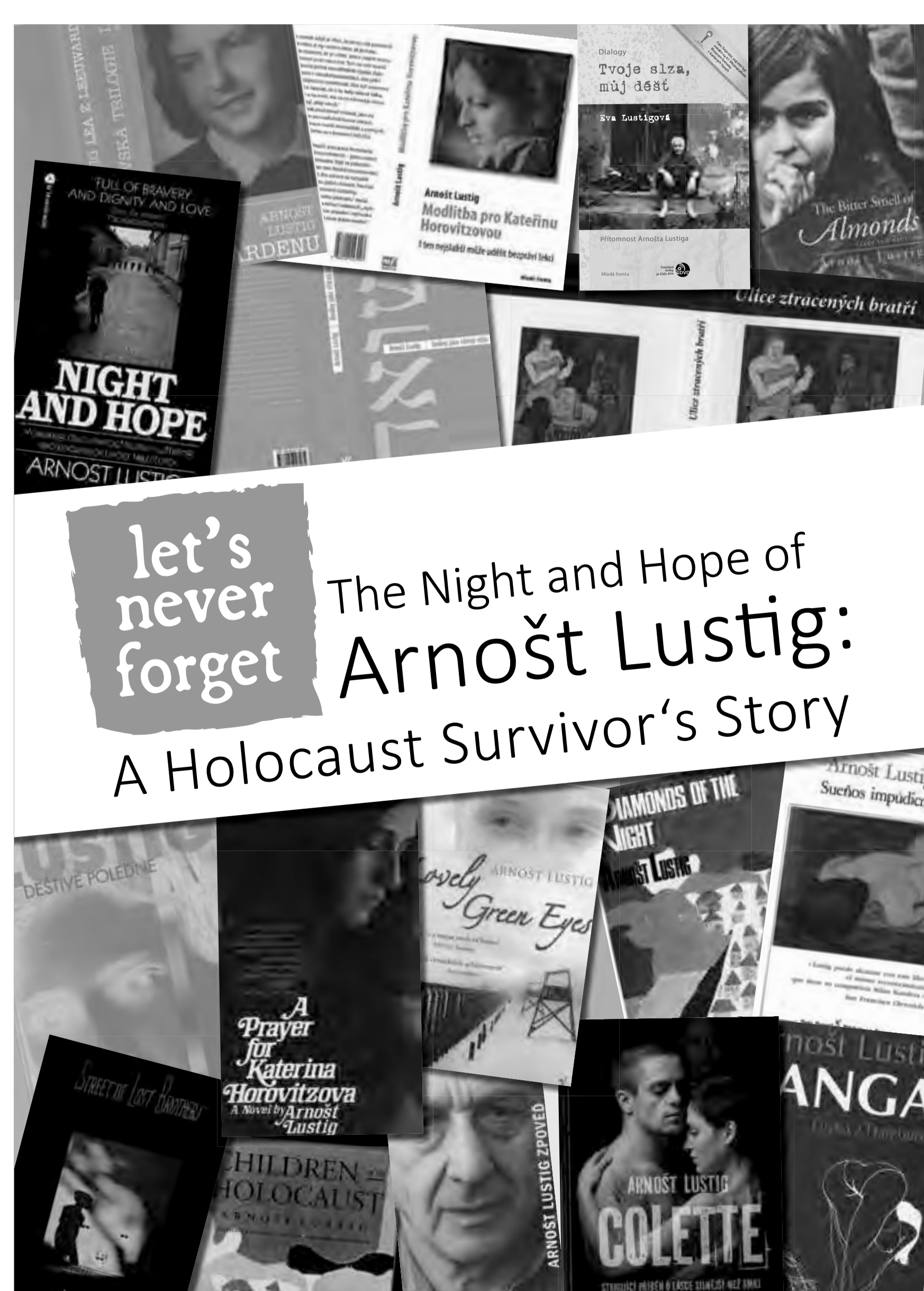
"Diamonds of the Night"
(Czechoslovak Film, 1964)

PEACE TIME, SUCCESS, EXILE AND HOMECOMING

In Czechoslovakia, Lustig became author of many best-sellers and a screenplay writer of successful films. In June 1967, he was one of the major critics of the Communist regime, giving up his Communist Party membership in protest at his government's breaking of relations with Israel after the 1967 Middle East war.

When the Warsaw Pact troops crushed the Prague Spring (1968), Lustig was forced to take up exile, initially to Israel, followed by former Yugoslavia and the USA. During the "normalization" that followed until the Velvet Revolution (1989), Lustig's best-selling novels and short stories, radio plays and films based on his screenplays, were banned by the government.

Lustig taught literature, creative writing and film at The American University in Washington, DC until 2003 when he returned to Prague. There he continued to publish, teach and contribute to many literary and film activities until his last days in 2011.



"An eminent Czech writer, who had an interesting, important and in its own way, a very difficult fate. However, Lustig belongs to the essence of Czech literature and the good embodied in it, and he even carries this across the various periods of history of the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first."

Václav Havel, ex-president, Czech Republic

"Lustig writes starkly and powerfully."

Publishers Weekly

"Wholly unsentimental, and clean of self-pity, Mr Lustig returns in his novels and stories to the harrowing landscape of his youth, discovering within its brutal boundaries the grim but still achingly recognizable panoply of a last, vast, various neighborhood of man. In this murderous realm, he has carved out his turf."

New York Times Book Review

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO DID NOT ESCAPE: Marguerite Löw-Beer and Sister Dora



My grandmother Alice Löw-Beer (1897 Szombathely, Hungary - 1991, Surrey, UK) saves my family and escapes from Czechoslovakia via France to England: Her mother Marguerite, a Red Cross nurse, returns to Hungary in 1940, to get her other daughter Gerta Rosa and Marguerite's sister Dora. Marguerite, Greta and Dora end up in Auschwitz - Birkenau. Marguerite is 68 years old, Dora 65.

When the Nazis invaded France, my grandmother Alice Löw-Beer also got a visa for Marguerite, her mother. Her mother Marguerite tells her that she is returning from France to Hungary to get her other daughter Gerta, an artist and her sister Dora. What remains are two letters from Marguerite, written to Alice on 15. and 19. June 1944, in Szombathely, Hungary. The voice is clear, cogent, seeing, like a jewel or a life about to be shattered, and unforgiving. Soon after, Marguerite and her younger sister Dora were deported to Auschwitz - Birkenau. Gerta was arrested on a tram and sent to Auschwitz. She was on the list of survivors from Auschwitz, but seems to have died in the week immediately afterwards. Gerta had had a son Francis whom she hid in a convent in Hungary and who survived the war.

15. June 1944

"All sorts of rumours are spreading in the ghetto and it is possible, God forbid, that they will come true, as in many towns in Hungary already. For this reason I want to write to you. Before we come to be deported, meaning death."

"Although I like life very much, I look calmly at the future. My thoughts surround you daily and hourly, my dear children and grandchildren."

19 June 1944

"We are due to be deported in a few days. I know that the whole horror of our fate was instigated in Budapest. Nevertheless here in Szombathely we have had faithful collaborators. Their names should be remembered when the day of reckoning arrives and I ask you to hand these names to those who will be called upon to judge them. I will die more peacefully in the knowledge that the guilty collaborators will receive their just dues."

"In order to give you an idea of how we live: the ghetto is separated by a high wooden fence, a policeman stands in front of it. One is only permitted to have one chair, eggs, butter and cream are forbidden, meat is 100g per person per week."

And we all must wear yellow stars: whoever fails to do this is sent to a concentration camp without pity.

That is the Christian culture of loving your neighbour, which they pride themselves on. One is loaded into cattle trucks housing fifty and more persons. May our torturers and murderers be cursed.

My dearest children and grandchildren. How I would have liked to have seen you all. My last thoughts will be for you all."

Translated from German to English