Several comments to the presentation of Anna and Eliška

I think the presentation is very good, maybe the best of the existing in our course.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to add, that Oskar Schindler ‘s character is idealized, in comparison to real facts. Some historians, for example Jitka Gruntová, claimed the real Schindler was rather a ruthless and pragmatic guy.

Spielberg’s film is good, however there are various stereotypes connected with war and Holocaust topics. Candles, violine and Yiddish song, killing of an innocent child (girl, it is more impressive), the sadistic German commander on the one side, the „good German“ on the other side…

Is it possible that the commander (Amin Göth) could have his house direct in the space of the concentration camp? I don’t think so. See his shooting of prisoners from the balcony.

The Czech director and former Nazi prizoner Juraj Herz (his film Cremator was one of our topics) stated that Spielberg imitated one scene from Herz’s film The Night Overtakes Me (1986). This scene was placed in Ravensbrück but was filmed in Majdanek. The main character, Czech prisoner Jožka, takes a group of new arrivals to the showers. When the women see the showerheads, they begin to scream and panic. Jožka assures them that they are not in Auschwitz or Treblinka, that they are real showers.

It is avaliable at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whsEFjQxne8>

1:35 – 1:39

I think, the Polish survivor, designer and writer Roma Ligocka (cousin of Roman Polanski) used the popularity of Schindler’s List writing her book Dziewczynka w czerwonym płaszczyku (The Girl in the Red Coat). She identified herself with the little girl in this film, even though she had previously no memories of the time.

In the introduction to the book „Visual Culture and the Holocaust“ Barbie Zelizer quotes Yosepha Loshitzky: „When Schindler’s List was released in 1993, we asked ourselves whether Stephen Spielberg had matured sufficiently as a filmmaker to leave behind E.T. and Jaws and do the Holocaust justice (Loshitzky, Spielberg’s Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler’s List (1997)). In the Zelizer‘s book the article “Schindler’s List is not Shoah” written by Miriam Bratu Hansen, Hansen outlined critical points towards the film. “Schindler’s List is and remains a Hollywood product.” The supreme values are to entertain. Hansen sees a trivialization and crossing the threshold of what should be represented. An example is when the women are taken to what they believe is a gas chamber. Schindler’s List has been compared to Lanzmann’s film Shoah. Instead of developing a representation of the unprecented mass killing, it concentrates on the extraordinary rescue of a group of individuals. Hansen concluded however that Schindler’s List points out the significance of the Shoah in the present.[[1]](#footnote-1)

During collection of archival material for the movie Schindler’s List Spielberg started a collection of wittness accounts. Later the Spielberg foundation continued as USC Shoah Foundation. Capturing witness accounts on videos. In 2006 the foundation was relocated to the University of L.A. in California. In each country there are access points with usually witness accounts connected to country. In Prague it is available at the Maths and Physics Faculty and it is called the Center of the Visual History Malach Project. They provide access to some amount of the wittness accounts, some of them are also available online. You can read more about it on <https://sfi.usc.edu/what-we-do/collections>.

1. Hansen, Miriam Bratu. “‘Schindler's List’ Is Not ‘Shoah’: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory.” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1996, pp. 292–312. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1343973. Accessed 5 Apr. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)