Berthold and Else Beitz in Borysław: Saving Hundreds of Jews from Borysław

Berthold Beitz was born in Zemmin, Germany in 1913. Beitz was only 27 years old when he was dispatched in 1941 to take over the commercial management of the Beskiden Oil Company in Borysław, an enterprise with more than 10,000 workers. Upon his arrival he witnessed the pogrom in Borysław, which left hundreds of Jewish victims dead. His wife, Else, and daughter, Barbara followed him to Borysław, where they resided through most of the war.

At Beitz’s home... Mrs. Beitz said plain and simply to give us additional food... each evening for a week a man on a cart would bring us food, which wasn’t attainable at any price.

In their actions, Else and Berthold Beitz risked their and their daughter’s lives. Together they hid Jewish children, and at times entire families in their home and company buildings. Berthold Beitz used his position in Borysław to improve and save Jewish lives. Following the initial dismissal of all Jews working in the oil industry, he rehired Jewish staff. During the Aktionen he often intervened, freeing Jews from detention, deportation and execution. He regularly alerted Jewish employees of impending roundups and let them stay overnight at the company’s headquarters to avoid arrest. In April 1944, Beitz was inducted into the Wehrmacht. Before leaving Borysław, he warned his Jewish workers of the plan to liquidate Mraznica and advised them to go into hiding.

Artur Birman: They locked me in a warehouse at the train station together with my mother... for two days without food or water... Then Beitz came to release Beskiden workers locked up as well. At one point he noticed me and immediately told the Gestapo that I was essential to him.

In all, Beitz hid between 200 and 300 people from the Nazis. He was killed by the Nazis in 1943. His daughter, Barbara, wrote a book about their experiences, which was published in 1996.

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