



The Righteous Among the Nations

who transformed the factory of death

Next year will be remembered the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I in 1914. This bloody war entered history as the Great War. The total number of military and civilian casualties in the First World War was over 37 million. There were over 16 million deaths and 20 million wounded ranking it among the deadliest conflicts in human history.

It was the basis and the prelude to WWII with 60 million killed representing 2.5% of world population and introducing industrial murder based on religion and heritage unseen in human history: the Shoah.

Military historians remember the Big Bertha, it was the name of a type of super-heavy howitzer developed by the famous armaments manufacturer Krupp in Germany on the eve of WWI. The howitzer was mainly designed by Krupp's Director of design, Professor Fritz Rausenberger. Bertha is a reference to Bertha Krupp, heiress and owner of the Krupp industrial empire.

The Krupp family is a prominent 400-year-old German dynasty from Essen who has become famous for their steel production and for their manufacture of ammunition and armaments. The family business, known as Friedrich Krupp AG, was the largest company in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century.



The three rings were the symbol for Krupp, based on the Radreifen – the seamless railway wheels patented by Alfred Krupp. The rings are currently part of the ThyssenKrupp logotype.

In the 20th century the company was headed by Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach (1870–1950), who assumed the surname of Krupp when he married the Krupp heiress, Bertha Krupp. After Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the Krupp works became the center for German rearmament. In 1943, by a special order from Hitler, the company reverted to a sole-proprietorship, with Gustav and Bertha's eldest son Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach as proprietor.

After Germany's defeat, Gustav was senile and incapable of standing trial, and the Nuremberg Military Tribunal convicted Alfried as a war criminal in the Krupp Trial for "plunder" and for his company's use of slave labour. It sentenced him to 12 years in prison and ordered him to sell 75% of his holdings. In 1951, as the Cold War developed and no buyer came forward, the U.S. occupation authorities released him, and in 1953 he resumed control of the firm.

Alfried needed to place a clean person to rule the company after the war. So he nominated Berthold Beitz. Beitz became the person who gave honour back to the company.

Berthold Beitz, who was honoured for saving hundreds of Jews in occupied Poland during World War II, has become the new face of the company and one of post-war West Germany's leading industrialists.

Steelmaker ThyssenKrupp AG, where he was the honorary chairman of the supervisory board, announced Beitz's death on July 31.

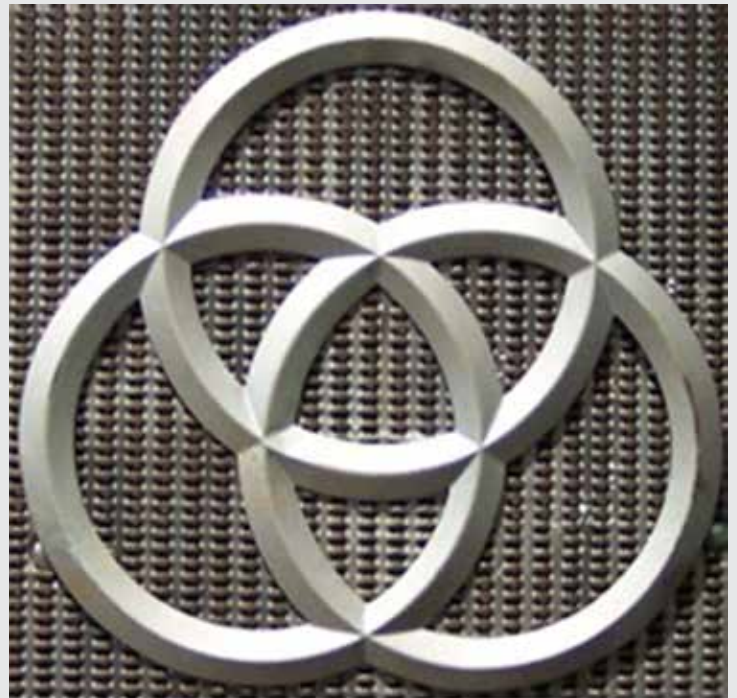
Beitz and his wife, Else, were honoured by Germany's main Jewish group in 2000 for saving hundreds of Jewish workers at an oil field he managed in occupied Poland from deportation to Nazi death camps.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called Beitz one of the country's most distinguished and successful businessmen and stressed his "brave and exemplary support for Jewish workers during World War II."

The President of the German Council of Jews in Germany, Dieter Graumann, said of Beitz: "He was a great man. His humaneness in dark times remains a role model for us today."

"Together with his wife he saved the lives of hundreds of Jews - I wish there had been more people like him," Graumann told The Associated Press. In 2000, the Jewish Council awarded Beitz its highest honour, the Leo-Baeck Award.

In 1973, Beitz was given the Righteous Among the Nations honorific by the Israeli Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum - the highest honour given for saving Jews. He also played a role in world sports as a member of the International Olympic Committee from 1972 to 1988, the last four years as an IOC vice president.



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Berthold Beitz

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He was also a member of the board of directors of the organizing committee for the 1972 Olympics in Munich. Those games were overshadowed by the deaths of 11 members of the Israeli delegation in an attack by Palestinian gunmen.

Beitz was born on September 26, 1913, in Zemmin in eastern Germany. He studied to become a banker and took a position at an oil field in occupied Poland in 1939.

He saved many of the Jewish workers there from the Nazis’ death camps, sometimes by even hiding them together with his wife at his home.

In 1938 he joined the oil company Shell in Hamburg. He was assigned by the Nazis to supervise the Borislav oil fields fallen in German hands after the invasion of Poland. Oil was crucial to the German military. Beitz used his power to convince the SS that he needed Jewish workers.

Survivors stayed with him in contact after the war. They testified how he created unnecessary jobs that saved hundreds of Poles and Jews from death camps, including many unskilled workers in bad physical condition.

His grandson, Robert Ziff, told that he didn’t talk about his experiences. Instead he gave him a letter from survivors and said “let that do the talking”.

Asked after the end of the Third Reich about his personal motivation, Beitz said, according to Yad Vashem, “There was no anti-Fascism, no resistance. We watched from morning to evening as close as you can get what was happening to the Jews. ... When you see a woman with her child in her arms being shot, and you yourself have a child, then your response is bound to be completely different.”

When asked why he risked his and his family lives to save so many Jews, he answered “my parents taught me the difference between right and wrong”.

In the 1950s, Beitz agreed to administer the Krupp steel company, which was heavily involved in armaments production during the war. He headed the company in various positions for around 60 years.

In 1967, he launched a foundation with the late Alfred Krupp’s fortune, supporting projects in Israel among others.

“He worked on reconciling with Israel and put his mark on Germany’s economic history in the years after the war when the country was being rebuilt, during the economic boom, during the Cold War and until far after the fall of the Iron Curtain,” the foundation wrote in a statement.

Until recently, he went to work at his office in Essen in western Germany almost every day, according to German news agency dpa.

He died at the age of 99.■