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Time of suffering in Geislingen concentration camp Event recalls fate of female forced laborers at WMF

Over 800 Jewish women were forced labourers for the armaments production at WMF from July 1944 to April 1945.

An event organized by the Evangelical Alliance commemorated their fate.

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Geislingen. The interest in the information evening about the Geislingen concentration camp was great. About 250 people crowded into the Kapellmuehlsaal to learn more about this terrible chapter in the history of their town.

For many of the Jewish women and girls who were imprisoned in the concentration camp at Heidenheimer Strasse Geislingen was only a terrible station on their journey.

In a video interview which was shown at the beginning of the event one of these women spoke about their fate. The interview was recorded in 2006 for the - Witnesses archive of the memorial at Yad Vashem.



View of the former camp on Heidenheimer Street. Some barracks are still recognisable.
Photo: Stadtarchiv Geislingen

Edith Esther Leah Lebovic-Einhorn was born in 1926 in Kalnik in what was then Czechoslovakia. After her escape to Budapest and forced labor in a brick factory, Esther

Einhorn was deported to Auschwitz. She recounts how the women who were to be sent to Germany for forced labor were selected in the extermination camp. Naked they had to walk in circles in front of the inspectors until they had selected the required number of people. Those who were classified as sick or remained were not returned to the barracks but immediately murdered in the gas chambers.

Together with her aunt and hundreds of other women Edith Einhorn was taken by train to the Geislinger concentration camp. The prisoners had to work at WMF, which had been converted into an armaments factory. Among other things they had to manufacture parts for airplanes. Edith Einhorn speaks of torturous 12 hour night shifts, of malnutrition - the main meal for the women of the night shift were cold unpeeled potatoes - and of her despair. Her aunt had to prevent her from taking her own life with a knife. As the war front approached in April 1945 the camp was closed and the prisoners loaded into a cattle wagon which was to take them to an extermination camp. Close to Allensbach the train was stopped by allied troops. The women were freed.

City archivist Hartmut Gruber explained that from 1940 in all of Germany and also in the „Fuenftaelerstadt“ (town of five valleys) Geislingen camps had been built for "foreign workers" and prisoners of war in order to meet the demand of the industry for labor. The town took care of providing accommodation and partly also the furnishings. More and more buildings were converted into prison camps. Among these was the barrack „Gutehoffnungshuette“ (hut of good hope), an iron ore mine on Ueberkinger Street. This was occupied by Russian prisoner of war of MAG.

However was not fit for forced labor was killed immediately.

In July 1944 699 Jewish women from Hungary, between 15 and 45 years old, arrived in Geislingen. They had been selected as "fit for work" in Auschwitz. Under the supervision of the camp leaders these women were led on a different route each day to their workplace at WMF. There they were strictly separated from the German workers who were forbidden to talk to the prisoners or give them food. Due to malnutrition, fatigue and the generally bad condition of the women, who were subject to partly severe abuse in the camp, terrible work accidents happened again and again.