

Legends of the Past

Legends live from the past and last for centuries without taking any damage. They are carried by the memories of those who made history. That brings us to the theme: The human and its experience. Over 3 epochs of German history of an enterprise, that, like no other one, has stamped the region of southern Thuringia

The following is an anecdote of how the things in 1925 might have happened. That was when the Arthur Simson, the technical director, led the fate of the Suhlen enterprise. He knocked one day on a laborer's shoulder and asked: "Aren't you Ernst Büttner?" Answer: "No, Mr. Simson, that's my cousin." "Well then you must be Fritz?" "No, that's my brother."

Arthur Simson: "O, dear man, the Büttners are getting out of hand here. Hopefully I will find Ernst. I only want to tell him, that we hired his daughter as a maid."

Family clans were nothing unusual in the company. The rule was, where the father worked, the son started as an apprentice. Then the son's son started the same way, and so on. When they returned home, "Härle" (grandfather?) set in front of the entrance door and grumbled: "What you do in our days is all nonsense. You should have seen how things worked during my time" In the evening he will wink with his pocket watch, perhaps for the thousandst time, to let us know, that this watch was given to him for his 30st anniversary personally by Arthur Simson. He proudly proclaimed: "I received the watch from the "Jüd" (Jew). It is stamped and is dedicated to me."

The Simsons were very popular. Every so often they took care of their staff's families. It is not quite unimportant to know, that the Simsons knew their business like their vest's pocket. Later on this popularity was reached only by Lothar Kessel. He grew, like the Simsons, with the company.

Picture 1

Once upon a time he said to me: "When I am visiting a department, no matter which one, I can hear by the noise, if everthing is alright."

People who worked for decades for this Company, are feeling as a part of it. These feelings they take home every day. It is their lived life. It becomes a catastrophe for a person, that suddenly loses this part of it's existence. Somebody, who received in December 1991 the "Blue letter" (notice of cancellation), told me, he suddenly found himself lost during the day. The usual rhythm was missing. He even missed the daily unpleasantness of getting up early (5.30am) in the morning. Then he missed the Soljanka (food or beverage?) during the breakfast brake. His wife said: "If nothing else, Soljanka I can make for you." She made Soljanka for him, but he thought it tasted different than at work. He missed the entire mess hall with it's voices at and undefinable smells and noises. His wife felt very offended.

Younger people part much easier with the past. They don't have such deep roots with Companies.

Picture 2

As far as it comes to the elderly, they are confused and their lives are disturbed. It does not help them, if their financial way of life remains fairly o.k., thanks to Social Securities. Suddenly, when everything was not there anymore, everthing used to be so amiable. The constanly interrupted rhythm of the production suddenly was valued high. A lot of sacrifices, as it was in the past, led to heavy cussing, when improvisation was necessary. It always worked out. This statement to me is heavily stressed.

Being proud of the product and of his own capabilities, Joachim Schreiber, Director of Research and Development, for the IFA-combined units for bicycles said: "29 years at Simson have formed me. With all the bicycles, which once were produced in great numbers at the famous bicycle forge in Suhl, went with a lot of difficulty and enormorous technical knowledge of all collegues...."

In Suhl-Heinrichs in the 1920's a rail road laborer and a "Simson" man started a fight. The reason was, that the rail road laborer claimed: The children's scooter is build so "smartly", that one cannot weigh more

Picture 3

than 10kg before it brakes down. The Simson man ran home, got his grandson's scooter and drove on it to Dietzhausen and back. The rail road laborer had to pay for a case of beer.

It was no problem to drive with a S51 from Suhl to Karlsbad, without taking heavy brakes, in 12 hours and 14 minutes. The two stroke enging could do it. fuel usage was 2 litre mixture for 100 km. "Simson in Suhl was a synonym for quality and economy.

At the beginning it looked like the downfall of this Company will strike soon. The Company in 1856 produced black sheet metal was of such bad quality, that is was not sellable. At that time 20 workers were employed. Finally with the production rearrangements for bayonets, rammers, sling-mounted rifles and later on rifle barrels, the success story began. In 1904 Simson was with 1200 employees the largest employer in the region. At the end of World War in 1918 they employed 3500 people. They produced hunting- and military weapons, railroad parts, sighting instruments (in cooperation with Carl Zeiss, Jena), household objects and bicycles. Simson was for many years one of the largest bicycle producers. This variety of products was smiled at by the competition. They called the Simson Company a "corner store". The times during the economical depression have shown, how clever this variety of productions proved.

13

picture 4

The Simsons had built their company much more crisis-resistant than their competitors. The "corner store" has proven successful.

The specialization of the companies in Suhl was criticized by their local governments in 1932 during the second economic crises. The local director of Suhl-Heinrichs stressed in a report to the district president: "Because of the one-way thinking of the local special industries (weapon production), the economical need is felt expecially hard.

What does still belong to the traditional program? For example, the Simson-Supra, a car. After Simson was "out", it still was remembered, that Simson already had produced cars and tried to come up with an econo-car for the market. This car was named: "Hotzenblitz" (.....lightning) Not only did it sound like the Augsburg "Puppenkiste" (car for dolls?), but it too was not much larger. The idea of the "Puppenkiste" was good, the economical success did not kick in. It was different with the Simson-Supra, which was built from 1925 to 1934. Here certainly was experience with various models involved, starting with the Simson prototype in 1908.

14

picture 5

In the midst of the 1920's business was booming. It was the time of motorization. The middle class gave up horses and buggies and bought cars. Car races came into fashion. Almost every child knew names like Bernd Rosemeier, Rudolf Caraciola and Hans Stuck. The race fans dreamed about Mercedes-Benz and Opel. They too had a crush on the Simson-Supra, which showed especially successful in mountain races. After 10 years the production came to a stop. Arthur Simson explained the reasons for that in the magazine "Motor": "The import of foreign cars showed, since months ago, a decrease in domestic car sales..... The industry hopes, that with patience and duration this crises will be overcome. If not, then the factory will be advised, to close down. On the other hand not all social circles will buy cheap foreign

cars. It is assumed, that the cheap American car will not last very long. The development in America shows, that many people look at a car like they look at a pair of shoes, wallets, pocket knives or ties. All of these items need to be replaced after enough usage.

15

letter

Letter from Simson to the Civil Engineering Department in Kassel in 1917.

Our department for car production lies near the train station in Suhl, Heinrichser Str. 19. Especially during troop movements, and other proceedings, the freight cars arrived at the station very irregularly. In order to unload the freight cars fast, it would be practical, to establish a ware house near the train station. Our main factory lies 3,6 km away from the station. Therefore we apply for a license to a ware house at our factory, Heinrichser Str. 19, accordingly to our enclosed blue prints. We want to point out, that on the daily average we deal with approximately 8 to 10 freight cars. During irregular arrivals, we will have up to 20. We also want to point out, that we employ 5000 to 6000 people, who are working on important war objects: Machine guns, air plane canons, sighting instruments for artillery, telephones, igniters, guns 98 and parts for the artillery.

16

picture 6

At the same time a car in Germany was something to invest in. The German quality-car will absolutely not being used up after 10 years.

In April 1946 the opinion about the quality of American cars had changed in the Simson house. "It is astonishing, how many miles a car can drive, till it becomes useless. My car has 60,000 miles on it's back and looks like new. It was never necessary to repair the engine or any other parts. "In order to understand why American cars are so durable, one must see how these cars are manufactured" states Julius Simson. It is believed, that in the next 4 or 5 years 30 million cars will be produced at a price, which is barely higher than the price before the war. I don't know a family who has no car. I know families who own 2, 3 or more cars. Every laborer owns a car and he finds that very natural.

17

picture 7

Arthur Simson's analysis for 1930 was correct. The hope, for a change of the market was not granted. The consequence was, to stop the car production and start the production of baby carriages, inspite of the competition's mockery. At first this change appeared to be pretty odd. But then, taking a look at the births statistics, it could be seen, that births were rising again. That was after a long year stagnation in Germany. If Arthur and Julius Simson knew that, is not known. As a former housekeeper assumed, the production of baby carriages might have been a compensation for the childless, but children loving Simson brothers. The only sure thing is, that the baby carriage production was an economical success.

The most important line of production was the weapons production. 1863, together with the weapons specialist Karl Luck, the foundation for the production of weapons was established. In 1872 the company received the first big orders from the government, to manufacture Mauser rifles, model 71. The

production of hunting rifles started. On 11.17.1887, the company was registered in the business- and trade register as an open trade company "Simson & Co., former Simson & Luck". The production assortment consists of "Military hunting- and luxury rifles, sabres, sling mounted rifles, sabre blades and lance tips." – 'Everthing top quality', as the Company brochure stated.

The family worried, that after the tragic World War I, the employees might rebel especially against the weapons production. They even feared a sabotage action. Nothing happened. But the worry was not without reason.

18

picture 8

The company employed plenty of prisoners of war, because Simsons traditionally were left (politically) oriented. Some joined the SPD, which was half left, the others the KPD, which was more to the left.

This tendency to the left of the Simson employees was not without consequences for the NSDAP. In 1933 during the last free election of the works council, the NSPAD only could get 3 leaders out of 15. 12 came through the union. Sauckel, a Federal Representative and District Leader, complained about the marxistical-communistical contamination of the Suhl area. He suspected Simson's sympathizing with the left. Accordingly to him, the Simsons removed national thinking employees without any mercy. That was only half of the truth, because Simsons also dismissed left oriented employees, who were for rebellion. Those people had no signs hanging over their sofas, that they were against Bismarck. They sang at party gatherings the "International" and at the club for marksmen they sang "Die Wacht am Rhein". For the Simsons all of that could not have been of very much importance. They were business owners. They manufactured a product and therefore their employees had to be functional, like every where else. Simsons were, like the high German middle class, in its majority liberal-conservative.

19

picture 9

Arthur Simson asked the cabinet maker Kleffel of Dietzhausen, who polished furniture in the Simson villa: Tell me Kleffel, you are an intelligent man, how come you joined the SPD?"

Kleffel: "Because, as you mentioned, I am intelligent. If my name would be Simson, I would not have joint this party." Arthur Simson taken aback: "Yes, when you are right, friend, you are right."

The Simsons were patriotic. In a letter they stressed, that members of their Family already lost their lives in 1813 during the war of liberation and during the war of 1870/71. The readiness to sacrifice was no exception. The Jewish Journalist Erwin Leiser thinks, that the German Jews went over board with their patriotism. The first World War in Germany claimed, percentage wise, more Jewish lives than non Jewish lives. 100,000 Jews took part in the war. That means 17% of all German Jews. 12,000 of them lost their lives. 1,500 received the iron cross I for their bravery. Leiser: "With their love affair with Germany, the German Jews perhaps have loved Germany more than their non Jewish compatriots.

picture 10

The Antisemitism, which occurred in Germany after world war I, did no harm to the Simsons. Suhl was a provence. There the clocks turned differently than in the big cities. The Antisemitism break downs of some newspapers have been of no big interest to the Simsons, living in a villa on the Domberg.

Many upper class Jewish families were rather amused by the defamation of Jews. Regarding Jews, the "Simplizissimus" news paper stated a character, by Wilhelm Busch, of Schmulchen Schiefelbeiner: "Eyes black, the soul grey, hat turned around to the back, facial expression sly, that is Schmulchen Schiefelbeiner. We (upper class), of course, are much better 'people'. What did we have to do with that little ugly Jew?"

Family Photos

A very popular family photo of the Simsons exists. It might have been taken on the terrace of the Simson villa: Merry men and women together in a very trusty atmosphere. Just the usual. When taking a glance at that picture, there is nothing unusual, it soon will be forgotten. But when a historian by chance, gets information in addition to this picture, showing people smiling into the camera, this picture starts getting very interesting to him. Among the seven men in the photo, 4 had a doctor's degree. A fifth one, Dr. Simson, is absent. Out of the six women of the Simsons, two had a doctor's degree. One of them is in the picture. The other three women graduated from higher schools. The management leaders of the Enterprise at the beginning of the 20st century were young. It was a time, when the economy had to fight again and again against drepression. That was an advantage for the Simsons against the competition with other companies in Suhl.

The Simsons were flexible and turned new ideas unconventional into reality. An other advantage: The precise sharing of work loads in the company. Max Simson worked as Lobbyist in an established office in Berlin for this purpose. Leonhard Simson managed the Enterprise as Authorized Representative. Arthur Simson, an engineer, worked as Technical Director and Julius Simson, after his promotion to Dr.jur. (Attorney) was in Charge of the entire Enterprise.

All of that in context with the Simson's abilities for enterprising, has contributed very much to the success of the Company.

What else do we know about the Simsons? Jeanette, the matriarch of the Simson clan, apparently was a very dominating woman. She has, according to a witness of that time, driven away her son's Arthur and Julius brides. The brides were not good enough for her. Finally the sons gave up, looking for brides and remained as bachelors. Dr. Ewald Mayer, the nephew of Arthur and Julius said about himself:

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“I am a Capitalist. Money eases a lot of things. But money must be used wisely. The religious belief doesn't matter to me, I am an Atheist. Everbody can believe what they think is right for them. I am for absolute religious freedom.” His idol was Leonhard Simson, after whom a street was named. “A very pensive person, who always thought thoroughly through, before he made a decision. He was very helpful and had always an open ear for the worries of others. Senior engineer Max Prange, a pensioneer, remembered the attention Leonhardt Simson paid to good work and the rewards he gave for that. Prange, as a journey-man, had built a miniature machine and received the top grade for it. When Arthur Simson heard about that, he ordered Prange in his office: “I have seen your journeymen-work and for that you shall receive a small token from me. Prange: “With that, he pulled a 50 RM note out of his jacket pocket. He stuck the money in my shirt. I was very happy, because at that time this was a lot of money.”

In Suhl the Simsons engagement in charity was known as well as their moderate mannerism at the company. This affected the work climate at the company very pleasantly. I did not know, if it was important to the Company, but it was not completely unimportant either. Perhaps the fact, that the wages at the Simson Company were somewhat higher than in other companies in Suhl, was the reason.

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The Enterprises name has been changed many times. It speaks for the “Simson and the Jüd”, that many laborers remained all those years with them in unbroken line of tradition, regardless of the changes of names. These laborers could have worked for the Berlin-Suhl-weapons company, or for the Gustloff Company, or later for the Awtowelo Company.

There are enough reasons, to not exegerate the proven traditionel solidarity between the Simson laborers and the Company owners. There was a strike in the Simson area, as well as in other companies. But after that strike, all went on again like usual. The Simsons looked at those conflicts evenso pragmatikal as their workers. Well, they depended on each other.

In 1919, a time of very big misery, the laborers demanded one million RM of the enterprise's war profits, which were paid out to them. This occurance was 30 years later by the regional documentation for history, they commented on this with annoyance. These demands have not been pushed through by “class consciouness powers.” One was ashamed, that laborers too participated in the war. That was the moral of the well fed.

There were dismissals and fights for better wages. There were thefts – mostly materials and tools. Reason: “He has plenty!” Later, when the Company became National Property it was said: “Now we have it!” Especially smart acting people misconstrued an alleged saying: “We still can get out much more of the Company.”

Arthur Simson took it with some calmness when a master of craftsmen reported: “Boss, again tools are missing.” The reply in front of authentic witnesses was: “Well, then I will have to buy some again.” But when in 1920, during the Krupp-coups, laborers emptied the company’s entire weapons arsenals, it was over with the tolerance. Where is the German order and discipline and right and law!? This one time occurrence perhaps would have been irritating even to Lenin. He in 1919 was mocking about the German sense of right and order. ‘Before they storm a train station, they would buy a ticket, as it is their mannerism.’

26

advertisement

27

picture 11

The Simsons sent to the City Council a bill for 284,393.05 RM for “the removal of trucks, bicycles, tools, rifles, generell items, a.s.o.” All these items were produced at the Simson & Co. There have not been any antisemetical activities. In the city of Suhl these activities were forbidden.

Dr. Ewald Mayer speaks of running the gauntlet as a result of an unrestrained smear campaign of the Nazis against the Simsons in 1934. An ominous letter of Arien entrepreneurs in the Suhl region, addressed to Hitler in 1933, can not be valued clearly. It was a letter of complaint, regarding the monopoly position of the Jewish Enterprise supplying the Reich’s Military with weapons. That was, to speak of, the first stone hitting Simsons window. If this letter was dictated entirely by antisemantic writers or if it simply was dictated by the jealous competition, is unknown.

From there on the family lived in danger. For Sauckel, Hitler’s Governor of Thuringia, the letter was a welcome opportunity, to openly takes steps against the Simson & Co.

28

picture 12

Sauckel called himself a very hot Antisemist. In 1933 Hitler shyed away from going openly against that very well known Suhl Enterprise, because he was afraid of international protests. There were rumors at that time, that Sauckel wanted to disown the Simsons, in order to take over the Company himself. The thought did not seem to be so outfetched. He came from rather poor families. He was throughout capable of such an ambition. Sauckel was born in 1894 as the son of a mailman in Hassfurth/Franconia. He was in 1910 hired by a merchant sailship in Hamburg. At the begin of World War I he became a prisoner of war to the French. When the ship was driving in the canal, it was discovered by a French marine ship. Dr. Dinter, the District Leader of Thuringia, stepped back in 1927. When Hitler announced Sauckel in 1927 as District Leader for Thuringia, Sauckel owned, besides his attractive uniform, barely

anything. He belonged to the 2nd rate of the NS-elite. He was, like many little "Führer", extremely ambitious. Once he had the idea of destroying the Simsons, he would not let go.

The Simson family did not see the danger. They moved in 1912 into the pompous villa on the Domberg. They had a view down on the roofs of houses in Suhl and down on the competition.

29

2 pictures 13

Arthur Simson liked himself as an equestrian. When one belongs to the enterprising Aristocracy in the region one has to show it. The Company did very well. The Reichs Defense Department offered a contract in 1925. This contract allowed the Simsons the privilege of being the only producer for rifles, pistols and machine guns for the 100,000 men army. The joy about that was limited in the villa. The contract was signed on May 25th, 1925. Only Jeanette Simson, perhaps by instinct, carried on with her rejection to that. She surely was right. This contract became 10 years later the family's fate, when the Nazis accused them of manipulations. It proved absolutely untrue, but they anyway were disowned.

The family lost everything: Company, wealth, real estate, including the Domberg villa.

There are many legends about this above mentioned contract. The most known is: The Simsons had been privileged by an interallied control commission. This privilege was granted by the Commissions Chairman, General Nollet, because he allegedly was married to a Jeanette Simson. The Interallied Control Commission was established, after the Versaille contract, in order to control the German Armourisation. This legend succeeded the Republic of Weimar, the Third Reich and the DDR. Dr. Ewald Mayer, with the help of the Simson-Wiesenthal-Centre in Vienna, found proof that between Nollet and the Simsons have been no family relations.

30

picture 14

Sauckel, who tried to disown the Simsons, thought, that this Jewish Enterprise was not only favored by Nollet, but also by his officers of the Reichs Defense. To be exact, by the Army's Weapons Department.

"I reported again and again to the army's administration. During this time of the Republic of Weimar, I received only avoiding answers. The Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick, pointed out in vain the suspicious behavior of the Simson company, regarding the Reichs Defense. The reproaches were dismissed as alleged competition maneuvers. This opinion lasted beyond the assumption of power for a long time. "When I became Secretary of the Interior in the sommer of 1932, I again approached the Simson case and again it was refused."

31

picture 15

Sauckel tried again, but as in the past, it was refused by the Reichs Defense Department. In his letter from 7/14/1936 to the Secretary von Krossigk he complains: "1933 the Simsons still were respected people. They had this well known Jewish psychological fate, to win over all the personalities they dealt

with. They gained sympathies by opening their hands (giving money, a.s.o.) to subordinates and by high ranking people through a serious social appearance. This proved once again after the assumption of power. The refusal, that Sauckel experienced in Berlin must have been devastating to him. The Simsons were seen, contrary to him, as competent, factual and serious. Many of these officers and army officials, who served for many years, thought like their once Kaiser (emperor): Do not judge race and religion. Like Wilhelm II. one associated with Jewish families of the upper class.

32

picture 16

Well, the so called pleasant Hohenzollern have not always been so pleasant for the Nazis. For example: His Majesty, a short while ago, entered a Jewish Synagoge. He also honored especially Jews in a lot of cases. He had an effect on not only on the officer's corps, but also on Jewish families. They became more self confident. Like the Simsons, they had achieved something and that was recognized.

When the famous fighter-pilot and stunt flyer, Ernst Udet, asked the Jewish ware house owner in 1929 for his daughter's hand in marriage, he was turned down. "That man is not solid enough" was the short and scanty remark. The crying girl was forbidden any contact with him. Udet ruminated for one day and one night, why did it change? Udet later became Air Force General.

33

A process and it's consequences

These changes in the attitude of successful Jewish families have been inexplicable to Sauckel. It was noticed, that inspite of the war like situation, in a letter to von Krossigk, how Sauckel wondered himself. The Simsons allegedly were very bitter and fought back with all their power, after they were forced to leave the management of the Company to an Arien Trustee. "They used all of their private connections in to high offices in 1934. Astonishingly they still had many at their service.... Old Generals, Cabinet Advisers and other high ranking Government Officials. Also unsuspected members of the Party in leading positions had to help with the Simsons personal interests. Well, did those Jews turn completely crazy all of a sudden? Instead to give in, they mobilized. There was only one thing to do: To start a law suit, in order to cure their crazyness. Sauckel had no luck with this law suit, despite his eagerness. The Senior Council Advisor, Hellmuth Gommlich, was in charge of preliminary investigation. 52,000 documents were supposed to have been sighted, which tied the Simons to the alleged crimes. Gommlich was Sauckel's top man. He was a convinced Nazi: shrewed, rigorous and he was one of the best criminalogists in Thuringia. Gommlich graduated after World War I and then became Criminal commissioner. After 1933 he made his carreer in a hurry: SS Senior Artillery Leader, Police Advisory, leader of the police inspection Zella-Mehlis. From 1935 Department Leader of the Thuringia Ministry of the interior and Senior Government Councilor. In a so far unknown letter, written by the Simsons to their attorney on April 25th, 1934, he (Gommlich) is referred to as an abbreviation "G": "I have not found where from the by "G" stated winning numbers came from". "... if G. had deducted the redemptens, then there should be, excluding 1932, lower numbers.

picture 17

I think, that G. intended, to not consider the capital's interest."

This letter came from the estate of the former director of the Simson Company, Max Fischer. There also exists a letter from an unknown origin, which talks about the reasons and the backgrounds of the contract between the Reichs Defense Department and the Simson Company. It states: Among many companies, that were suggested to the Alliance by the Reichs Defense Ministry in 1919 or 1920 for the production of hand fire arms, our Company was mentioned last. We were last, because so far we had not produced machine guns. That's why we were not suitable in the eyes of the Reichs Defense Ministry. The Interallied Control Commission, in order to make it very difficult for Germany to produce weapons, has given our Company permission. The reason for this was: They knew we were not suitable to be the sole producer for hand weapons. They too knew, that the installation for machines to produce machine guns would cost much trouble, money, a.s.o.

picture 18

This representation contains a misinformation. Accordingly to Dr. Ewald Mayer, who knew this sensitive part of the Company's history, it became clear, that "Simson was chosen as the sole producer of hand fired weapons. The reason was: Simson was the smallest company among other applicants and therefore could not satisfy the demands of the Reichs Defense Department. Also the claim "that we so far had not produced machine guns", could lead to irritations, unless the quotation does not refer to the time after 1919. That means until the start of the machine gun productions began in the middle of the 20st century, because Simson produced machine guns for World War I. The Company management applied in a letter of 6/15/1917 for a license to build a ware house. This letter was addressed to the Substitute General Command in Kassel. The letter indicated, that 5,000 to 6,000 are employed to work on important war devices: Machine guns, anti-aircraft canons, a.s.o.

The company could not have had much experience with the M.G. production, since the mass production at Simson, like at other German companies, began in 1917. Till then approximately 5,000 machine guns, of the type 08 and 08/15 have been produced for the army by the Löwe Company in Berlin. From spring 1917 to the fall 1918 approximately 85,000 machine guns were produced in Germany. How many of the 85,000 guns were manufactured by the Simson Company is unknown.

picture 19

The portion was probably small, since the production was improvised and the cost for technic was very high. The progressions for a modern production line for machine guns was established after the contract with the Reichs Defense Department, and that was done very reluctantly. The into details listed doubts of the Company's management, regarding the investments for the installation of a new product line,

speak for themselves. The Army Ordinance Department pressured for those investments. This and the insinuations of price manipulations have been one of the reasons for the law suit. This law suit began in Meiningen in 1934. The Public Prosecutor tried to prove, that the Simson Company's management had misused their monopoly regarding to the weapons production. The law suit lasted two years and ended like the "Hornberg shootout" (a trivial law suit without foundation?!). The investigation against Arthur Simson was dropped. They could not prove any wrong doings regarding the law. The Suhl newspaper commented on the disaster very angrily:

37

news paper clip

"For us (news paper) we strongly feel, that the Jew, Arthur Simson, is throughout guilty."

For the Simson family began the time of emigration. Julius Simson, who wisely knew of what was coming, did flee to Switzerland in 1935. Arthur Simson and Ewald Mayer followed, seperately, in 1936. Mayer, during passing over the boarder, was lucky not being discovered. This is what happened: In Mayer's train compartment set some very well known people. A Princess of Hohenzollern with her son, Reichs Minister of Economics, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht. With those prominent people, the pass control on the German side was very short. The officers, deeply empressed by their Majesties, apologized for the inconveniences they cost the Excellencies. Ewald Mayer was barely paid attention to. Perhaps they thought he was one of the Princess's confidantes or a travel companion of Schacht's. To not being paid attention to, at that time in Germay was the best of what could happen to a Jew. Most of them were not so lucky.

38

<u>Year</u>	<u>Armament Prod.</u>	<u>Civil Production</u>	<u>Total</u>
1934	10,524,000	3,556,000	14,000,000
1935	12,301,000	3,016,000	15,917,000
1936	13,996,000	3,811,000	17,807,000
1937	20,571,000	4,504,000	25,075,000
1938	28,213,000	5,129,000	33,342,000
1939	40,890,000	5,772,000	46,662,000
1940	42,747,000	3,626,000	46,009,000
1941	53,810,000	2,561,000	56,371,000
1942	39,556,000	1,940,000	41,496,000
1943	62,094,000	1,569,000	63,663,000
1944	69,695,000	1,219,000	70,914,000

Production of the BSW-Gustloff company in RM

Mayer made it to Switzerland and then travelled with Arthur and Julius Simson over London to the U.S.A.

How much of their foreign wealth the family could save, is not known. In 1916 Sauckel refused requests, to release foreign bank accounts. The credits, mostly in form of stocks and obligations, came from the export businesses of the Company. The overall wealth of the Simsons, including factory and

real estate, should have been far more than 20,000 RM, since the turnover, and also the profit, steadily rised since 1933.

Sauckel was satisfied with his catch. On January 4, 1936, he informed the Chamber of Commerce in Berlin: ".....that the family Simson, as partners of the Berlin-Suhl Weapons and Automobile, Simson and Company, retired from the Company. All shares are in the hands of the Reichs Governor and District Leader, Sauckel, in Weimar. He has order from the Führer, to turn this Enterprise into a charitable Foundation.

Sauckel put leaders of the Gustloff foundation together: von Rutenberg, Hoffmann, Beckurts, Heynen. All together approximately two dozen people. Not all of them belonged to the Nsdap. They all were experts in their fields. There was something very curious about Sauckel's personal politics. The once sailor, was privilged in his sorrounding.

39

letter of the state police

Erfurt, Nov. 14, 1935

Secret: Reg. Mail

To the Secret State Police, Berlin

Ref.: Wage claims of barrel setters, working for the Berlin-Suhl Weapons and Automobile Company, Simson and Company

The above mentioned Company employs at the time 10 barrel setters. 8 of them are working within the department. The work of those barrel setters is very crucial for the execution of the work on barrels. Approximately 150 laborers are depending on them immediately and many hundreds of laborers intermediately. The barrel setters are very well aware of their importance. Whenever it came to the subject of recruiting people to teach the barrel setting to, the barrel setters provided nothing but difficulties. They asked for pay raise more and more often. The last pay raise they received was August 1, 1935. Since that time they received for setting a barrel seven times:

24,05 Pfg.	for barrel	98
29,05 "	" "	G 13
32,00 "	" "	EMG 34

The barrel setters agreed to those terms.

Last week the barrel setters again asked for pay raises. As before, they asked as a team. They asked for 35 Pfg. for barrel 98 and 40 Pfg. for barrel EMG. This would be a 25% pay raise. That had to be taken under consideration of the wage limit for barrel setters and

Reasurches of the GESTAPO regarding "the barrel setter strike

40

When taking a look at the lives of colleagues of the district leaderships office, as well as the political and economical spectrums in Thuringia in the 1930's, one must come to the following assumption: The German Merrchant Marine was a kind of party forge to the NS elite. In the Gustloff company's there were a few in the leadership, who liked the privilege, that the Christian seafaring brought for Sauckel. Among those was the chairman of the administration council for the Otto Eberhardt Foundation. Like Sauckel, Eberhardt was a seafarer during World War I. When his ship was captured, he was taken by the French as prisoner of war. Helmuth Gommlich, a Criminal Investigation Councilor, was in charge of the Simson lawsuit. He too has been a seafarer. He has been a Commander of a torpedo boat and became Senior Lieutenant.

With that team of true believers in him, the District Leader explained to the Simson laborers: "This company here is the price for a siege of a long, very difficult and stubborn fight. My colleagues, who fought for that siege, can be very proud of themselves." The Reich's Secretary of Finances was informed, that now peace and quietness is established in Suhl. "The former Communistic Company has been converted into a foster place for a National Socialistic Company Community, thanks to the socialistic measurements.

The satisfaction was too premature, since not all laborers at "Simson" were satisfied with Sauckel's blessings. In the summer of 1935 it came to a strike in Suhl. This barrel setter strike kept Sauckel's repression apparatus busy until 1936. The strike was reported to the District Office by the business leadership. The District Office informed the Representative of the Trustee for Work, Dr. Siebert. He then informed the NS Union, District Administrator, Privy Councillor Triebel. The Councillor in turn sent the investigation results to Sauckel. The State Police Headquarters of the Government District Erfurt became very busy and informed on November 14, 1935 the Gestapo in Berlin, Prinz Albrecht Strasse.

41

First there was an irresolution about what to do. But they already considered to get those instigators for sabotage.

"The barrel setters delivered on Friday, November 8, 1935 between 9 a.m. and 3.30 p.m., less barrels than in the days before. This obvious holding back on work led to less work for some of the laborers in the barrel department" The work of 150 laborers depended on immediate help and hundreds of laborers on intermediate help. It was discovered, that the barrel setters just wanted to stretch work. "Therefore it cannot be claimed, that much less barrels were made workable. They were delivered just shortly before the end of the work hours." "A wanted and agreed on stretch of work" could not be

proven. Influence "from the outside" as well could not be proven. 7 laborers received a warning. One of the "Instigators" was taken into custody. No matter what, more than that cannot be done, a police officer stated. That's how a resistance during a dictatorship appeared. It was not adviceable to the ones who wanted to survive, to go any further. All freedom, including the most fundamental freedom to simply leave, was refused. For someone, who was known to be an insecure cantonist, it was very hard to find work in the so called National Community. When on April 21, 1936, a skilled laborer from Hirschbach applied for work, he was refused by the personnel office, because the laborer Z: "...". At that time he was dismissed by the instigation of the SS...." The next day a food parcel, together with a Salamander shoe polish can (inside 20 RM) was set in front of his door. Solidarity at "Simson" always was there, but so was un-solidarity. When someone violated the unwritten codex of honor: XY snuck by the strike posts. He just wanted to get his old shoes from the factory, but he did not return. Then, the next day after the strike, during break, the places left and right to him remained empty, he knew where he stood.

42

picture 20

The National Socialism cancelled all the old proletarian rules and forced the idea of the public party onto the people. Sauckel's propagandists had to swear in the "Laborers working with their brain and their fists", "to be honest and industrious and to know nothing else, but to bring intellectually and bodily the best performances for the people in the name of duty and sacrifice and for the Blood Brotherhood of the Nation."

Nobody understood the above expression, but some people had a hunch, that behind such big words something big was going on and that included them. The "weaving of fate", that led them back to their own stream of blood. This propaganda became very clear to the agitated ones in 1943, when the meaning "for ever" blood stream became very visible and clear to everybody.

In the 1930's, through the fog of propaganda, a very realistic building of homes for the employees could be seen. On June 12, 1935 the ground breaking for the Suhl subdivision took place. One year later 45 families moved into their apartments, which were financed by the Gustloff-Foundation. 35 more homes were built in 1937. They came with a view at the city, hills, and surroundings.

43

The Properties were between 600qm and 1000qm. "Happy people in healthy apartments" was the Company's motto. The houses, of course, came with gardens. Preferred were people with children, but also young couples. Such privileges, plus the Company's newly established pension plan for retirees, tied the employees not only to the Company, but also to the National Socialism. Vacation time was spent on the "Wilhelm Gustloff" ship (for an apple and an egg, meaning for pennies only) going to the mediterranean or to Norway. Food also was provided by the Company: For 30 RPfg. "Kassler ribs", spinach, white beans with smoked meat or beef stew. The front of the Anti-fascistical Resistance started to crumble. That was not only due to the "beef stew for 30 RPfg.", but to the with brutal, agitating power of force of the NS-regime.

Work force totals

1918	3,500	1942	5,844
1930	1,780	1943	6,806
1940	7,443	1944	7,189
1941	6,664	1945	7,003

Total of foreign male laborers

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
	-	-	93	504	926
Belgium	-	-	18	32	101
French	-	-	25	94	424
Dutch	-	-	40	181	151
Italians	-	-	10	31	19
Poles	-	-	-	52	8
Tschechs	-	-	-	99	98
Lab. fr.the East an others	-	-	-	24	125
Prisoners of war:					
French	-	-	58	194	-
Italians	-	-	-	-	286

Totals of foreign female laborers

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
	-	-	25	626	796
Belgiums	-	-	3	6	15
French	-	-	4	46	
Dutch	-	-	12	25	19
Italians	-	-	-	1	13
Polish	-	-	10	21	56
Tschechs	-	-	-	7	7
Lab.fr.East and others	-	-	-	526	640

Development of numbers of the laborers at Simson & co., Berlin-Suhl weapons companies and Gustloff companies.

That started at the Simson Company in 1935, by taking Ferdinand Mäffert into custody. The climax came in June 1944 by taking 150 fashists into custody. 10 of them were executed, 17 died in Concentration Camps do to being tortured.

How many Simson laborers were against the regime is not known. A formed Solidarity between some laborers and forced laborers is very well known. In spite of the forbidden contact, by threatening with punishments, informations regarding the situation on the front were passed on to the forced laborers. Especially the forced laborers from the east were helped with food. This help was given regardless the

shortage of food for the German population. In April of 1945 the rations were: 243gr bread (per day) for adults and 143gr bread for children.

The rations for the forced laborers from Poland and the Udsr until 1942, were so small, that often a few weeks after their arrival in Germany, they were not able to work. The undernurishment was that bad. Many of the German enterprises called the assignment of those laborers as a complete economical nonsense. The Reichs Group Industry informed the Reich's Secretary of Food: "The assignments of the laborers from the east are endangered, if the rations and the treatments are not changed immediately."

45

Sauckel, the General Authorized Representative for Labor, issued in April of 1942 rules regarding nurishment, treatment and housing, which should better the lives of the laborers of the east. He gave the following reasons: "A machine too only can perform well, depending on gas, oil and maintenance." Besides that, the present situation only would contribute to lesser work performance. Perhaps it would become a burden to the German people and might even bring health problems for them.

In October of 1942 new rules of nurishment were established. Laborers from the east (men and women), who were assigned to civil companies as well as to the Armament Industry, shall receive the following rations:

<u>Per week</u>	<u>ordinary laborer</u>	<u>heavy laborer</u>	<u>above heavy laborer</u>
Bread	2,600g	3,400g	4,200g
Meat	250g	400g	500g
Fat	130g	200g	260g
Potatos	5,230g	5,230g	5,230g
Processed food	150g	150g	150g
Sugar	110g	110g	110g
Tea sustitute	14g	14g	14g
Vegetables	depending time of harvest – rutabagas	depending time of harvest – rutabagas	depending time of harvest – rutabagas

For the meat rations mostly horse meat and other cheap meats were used. In order to follow the rules of food distribution, the quality of bread had to be reduced. The norm was: 72% rye bread, 28% sugar cane chips. It was recommended, instead of 500gr bread, to supply 350g rye flour or 380g wholemeal rye for cooking soups. This was for the Russian's nurishing habits. In August of 1944 the rules for the prisoners of war were changed once more. They were supposed to receive the same rations as all the other prisoners. Those new rules never were executed.

46

Inspite the once again changed rules, the camps nurishments consisted of: ½ ltr. carrott soup in the morning. 1ltr. carrott soup at noon at work. The workers from the east were given 300g bread daily, and 50-75g margarine weekly. They also received 25g meat or similar, which was handed out or withheld, depending on the mood of the camp's leader. Large amounts of food were displaced, which should have

been for the laborers from the east. The food was bought up by foreign laborers and then sold to the laborers from the east for an extreme high profit.

This business with poverty took such terrible measures, that the Reichs Security Headquarters had to get involved. The miserable nourishment of the laborers from the east added to the progressing of the black market. Better provided laborers supported an industrious trade with bread, by selling it highly priced to the laborers from the east. Bread was sold on an average of 10 RM. Better off than the laborers from the east, were the forced, obligated or hired French, Dutch and Belgium laborers. They received the same food rations as the German population.

Rations for French prisoners of war

1. Bread

Usual ration card	9,000g	
Additional ration card	3,750g	
Together	12,750g	:28= 455g per day

2. Meat and lunch meats

Usual ration card	1,600g	
Additional ration card	1,050g	
Together	2,650g	:4= 660g weekly

200g weekly were supplied for the lunch and 400g (5x80g) for the dinner and breakfast. The left over 60g were given to the guards and for travel portions.

3. Margarine

Usual ration card	950g
Additional ration card	90g
Together	1.040g

Supplied were 3x250g and 1x 125g = 875g

The leftover 165g were used for salad/cooking oil for the kitchens and for the guards.

47

4. Bacon

Usual ration card	225g	for lunch
Additional ration card	250g	1x weekly 62.5g

5. Special rations of fish, marinades and herrings

Prisoners of war did not receive those fish foods.

6. Nutritions and farinaceous foods

being used entirely by the kitchens.

A forced laborer from Holland, whose living quarters were in camp Suhl, Hohe Feldstrasse, told the regional newspaper 'Free world' on September 4, 1999 during an interview: "It was a good camp. We had plenty to eat and we were treated well. We received the same wages as the German laborers. I even had a savings account at the bank in Heinrichs." Jean Louis Forrest, President of the Organisation for Victims of the Nazi Regime, stated, that he played during his free time soccer in Suhl. They also went to competition games in Schleusingen and Weimar. He pulled the situation at that time together in one citation: "To work out of free will is pleasure, forced work is slavery." For that reason he supported his friend's attempts to escape.

At the Gustloff Companies in Weimar a group of laborers from the east decided, not to flee, but to instigate a fight with their tormentors. The plan was, to burn a barrack during the next "air plane alarm". The barrack was located right next to the Company. The thought was, to mark a target for the Allies and then during the confusion to disarm the guards. One of the leaders, Sulejma Sulejmanow, a laborer from the east, tried to provide a wide basis for rebellion. His helper was a Spaniard by the name of Aurelio Vicente Nieto. They hoped to win over French forced laborers for that plan.

48

Letter to the Reich's SS Main Office in Berlin

Weimar, July 27, 1943

Ref.: Communistical involvement of foreign laborers

Process.: Release of5/27/1942

(foreign laborers)

Encl.: none

At the Armaments Production Company Gustloff a group of foreign laborers was taken into custody. Almost all of them were members of the Communist Party of the Komsomols. They intended, during the next air strike, to give the enemy pilots a target, by burning the barrack standing next to the Company. During the anticipated destruction they wanted to disarm the guards. Their plan was to flee and built up a group of Partisans in Germany. The group of saboteurs was led by the laborer:

Sulejma Sulejmanow
born Mai 19, 1919 in Machsudlu, district Bako

With the help of Aurelio Vicente Nieto
Born August 24, 1914 in Gallegos de Somiron
Province Salamanca, Spain
employed at the Gustloff company in Weimar
living in the Weimar Quarters for foreign laborers

Nieto was a former red Spanish fighter. With his help Sulejmanow tried to make contacts with the French communistical laborers. Vicente came to the German Reich together with French laborers. Sulejmanow and Vicente built their plan to participate in the Partisan Movement upon the hope, that through heavy bombardments of the opposite side, Germany's Armaments would be very weekend. That

would assure the bolcevistical siege. A short while later the opponents of the west would invade Germany and then together with the Soviets strangle Germany.

picture 21

The plan was, to start a partisan war in Germany. The adventurer's plan failed and the Gestapo office in Weimar noted: "When Sulejma and Vicente made the plan for the partisan movement, they assumed, that, through the opposite bombardments, Germany's armaments would be weakend. That then would have led to a bolshevist siege. A short while later, the opponents from the west would invade Germany and then, together with the Soviets, could strangle Germany." It cannot be assumed, that Sulejma and Vicente have survived. It is no comfort to know, that many of their tormentors too did not survive.

After the judgement of the International Military Court, Fritz Sauckel was executed during the night of October 15th to 16th, 1946. His last words: "I am dying innocently. The judgement is 'wrong'." The fate of his "Blue boys" from the District Leadership Office is unknown. The Foundation of the Gustloff companies documentmted very little. Heynen, the Suhl Company's Director, escaped with the moving away Americans to southern Germany. Otto Eberhardt is missing and Helmuth Gommlich took poison.