

Summaries of the company's history

1862

The company "Gebrüder Simson"(Simson brothers) was registered in the Suhl commercial register as bayonet- and ramrod company. The owners were Löb and Moses Simson.

1863

Founding of the rifle factory "Simson & Luck". Karl Luck received a partnership contract as a specialized gun specialist. Moses Simson bought a house in Suhl, in order to start a gun production. In Hirschbach the Simson company founded a bayonet factory.

1868

Moses Simson died on December 11. His wife, Luise Simson, together with Karl Luck managed the company.

1869

In July the Northern German Guild conceded to the Jewish population all civic rights.

1872

The factory "Simson & Luck" received government orders for the manufacturing of Mauser guns, mod. 71. During the so called "Mauser times", 1872-1876, the Suhl Weapons Industry manufactured 150,000 of those military guns.

1880

Start of the hunting gun production.

1882

At the beginning of the year, the "Simson & Luck" company applied for a license to set up a traction-engine and to build a shed for the engine. In March of 1882 it was applied for a second floor building. The plan for this building consisted of apartments and offices, annexed to the existing factory building called Hammerwerk. According to historical data, a few coal sheds, a coach house, a shed for char coals and some insignificant structures set on that factory's court yard.

1884

Karl Luck left the "Simson & Luck" company.

1887

The Simsons transferred the gun manufacturing to the expanded Hammerwerk in Heinrichs. In 1887 another building with work shops, offices, revision- and warehouses, was annexed to the in 1882 built residential building.

1893

The production of precision tools for the artillery began. This manufacturing was done in cooperation with the Zeiss company in Jena and the Goetz Company in Berlin. The main buyer was the Krupp company.

1896

The beginning of manufacturing bicycles with pneumatic tires.

1899

From July 3rd on the company is called "Simson & Company". The name Luck was taken off. During this time the Simsons founded a subsidiary in Berlin, Mohrenstrasse (from 1925 on named: Unter den Linden 75/76). It was a commercial office, that was meant to keep contacts with the departments of the army and the foreign trade representatives.

1904

Gerson Simson, son of Moses and Luise Simson died. Under his excellent management, the Simson company became the largest employer in Suhl and area. They employed 1,200 people. Gersons widow, Jeanette Simson, born Heller, passed on the company management to her educated sons. The oldest son Max, born in Suhl in 1871, took over the subsidiary in Berlin. Leonhardt, born in 1878 in Suhl, became manager and commercial director. Arthur, born 1882 in Suhl, studied engineering and became technical director. Julius, the youngest son, born in 1884, studied law. After his promotion, he became manager of the entire firm, including the subsidiary in Berlin.

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1906

In August was the dedication of the Synagoge in Suh. The consecration speech was given by the superintendant of the Jewish community: "May the prayer for the best of the town and the entire fatherland be heard."

1907

Auctioning off a furniture company in Suhl. During the later years an automobile factory was built on this property. Limbers and ammunition wagons were built there.

1908

In January a strike broke out at the Simson Company. The employees insisted on hiring back 12 dismissed colleagues. They also demanded to equip some departments with ovens and ventilators. The strike, with approximately 300 participants, ended partially successful for the employees.

1909

After the first unseccessful years in manufacturing cars, the automobile expert Paul Henze could be hired for a few months. According to his disigner plans for a new Simson automobile, a prototype was built. This was done with very much help from the still young engineer Fritz Huttler.

1911

The beginning of manufacturing a Simson motor car, type "A", with a performance of 12 HP. The vehicle was safe in operating, but under motorized. Only a few were sold.

1912

The Simson Villa was built. The building plans were designed by an architect from Berlin, by the name of Muthesius.

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1914

Because of the breakout of World War I in August of 1914, the production for civil cars was suppressed. That brought lots of dismissals with it. Finally in the late fall, the manufacturing was switched over to the war productions. In order to handle the requested amounts of carbines, sling mounted rifles, wire cutters, illuminating pistols for the artillery, they had to establish a shift system. For the first time women and girls worked in the factory.

1917

The production climax was reached in 1917. The amount of employees grew to 3,500. In order to have more living quarters for the out of town laborers, they had to erect a "home for single laborers." The gun production grew to over 4 times more since 1915. Now they also produced selfloading pistols, type 08, bullets, field telegraph devices, ammunition wagens, field kitchens, ambulances and machine guns. During the last phase of the world war Simson also produced light anti-aircraft guns and airplane motors. Simson became one of the most important weapons producers of the German "Kaiserreich."

1918

At the end of the war, it was clear, that the Simson Companies had tripled since 1914. The machine park was productive and the scientific technical arrangements (raw material examination, arrangements for technicalshooting, laboratories, fundamental science) were exemplary with a promising future. They had their own energy supply, ran by two traction engines and a water turbine. 592kw were produced.

1919

The war productions were stopped. The automobile production was transferred over to the manufacturing halls in Heinrichs. Employees took war materials apart. These were melted down to nonferrous metals. This created a secure crisis resistant backup for the company. The automobile constructor, Fritz Hattler, rejoins the company. He worked heavily on the improvement of car motors. In 1919 the improved types "CO" and BO" (and in 1920 the "DO") entered the market.

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1920

After the suppression of the Krupp rebellion, supported by Simson laborers, the Simson company sent to the city of Suhl a claim for damages in the amount of 284,393,05 RM. This was for the plundering of cars, bicycles, tools, guns, fuel, a.s.o.

1922

Automobile designer Henze came back to the Simson company. Within a short time he developed a brilliant new design. This new idea revolutionized the car construction at the Simson company two years later. Besides that, the Simson company's palette was widened by small caliber sports guns and a 6,35mm selfloading pistol.

1924

The production of the very popular children's scooter "Simson Sauser" (Simson fast wind) began.

1925

With the mass production of their sportly and elegant touring car "Simson Supra SO" and "Simson Supra S", Simson made themselves a name among the motor vehicle manufacturers. Until 1928, 780 of those vehicles were produced. Including 1934, approximately 1,530 "Simson Supra" were manufactured. Simson cars won many street-car races. They were unbeatable when it came to mountain car races.

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1925 ??

On May 25th a contract between the Simson Company and the Reich's department of defense was finalized. With that contract the Simson company was the only German weapons manufacturer, who received the right, to produce hand fire weapons (carabines, pistols, machine pistols and sighting instruments), for the defense department. This contract was for 10 years. From April 1, 1924 through March 3, 1934. Later the contract was extended for another 5 years, until March 31, 1939. The intention of the Reichs defense department was, to create at Simson the most modern research-, construction- and manufacturing capacities. To start that, the Reichs defense department made 8,5 million Reichsmark available. This was for military weapons producing machines. Expenses for special tool machines, tools, devices, gauges, a.s.o. were not redeemed. Loans for building expansions, energy producing devices, or similar, had to be paid without interest. Within a very short time, until 1926, modern multi floor high buildings, over 12,000qm, for machines were established. On the manufacturers grounds a drop forge and a heating plant with a 2,500hp steam turbine were built. The number of employees raised to 2,600.

1928

On April 20th the Reichs railroad station "Simson and Company" for the personal- luggage- and express goods traffic was handed over. The private railroad connection for the company was financed in advance by the Reichs defense department. The amount was 220,000 RM. Two thirds of that had to be paid back by the Simsons.

1930

After Leonhardt Simson drowned on August 2nd, 1929, swimming in the Chiemsee, the open trade company was changed into a limited partnership in January of 1930. The limited partners were Dr. Julius Simson and Julius Simson senior. Arthur Simson was recorded as a complementary. The manufacturing of baby strollers was added to the production program. The number of employees shrunk to 1,800.

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1933

The national socialists took over the power. Uniformed SA columns marched into the company grounds and hoisted the Swastika flag onto the administration building. Fritz Sauckel, Reichs Governor and Nsdap District Leader of Thuringia, intensified his troubles, to gain possession of the Simson Enterprises. The fate of the Jewish Company was changed in 1933/34 by the Military Weapons Office, as well as the Prussian and Thuringia Governments. They formed new company structures, where the Simsons have been entitled to their money, but they no longer had the right, of being involved regarding decisions for the company. The weapons production, with a yearly turnover of 7,24mill. RM, guaranteed the security of the company. The 7,24mill. RM were 71% of the entire turnover of 10,2mill. RM. The so called "private areas" (baby strollers, automobiles, hunting guns and railroad parts), received shares of 2 to 3%. The bicycle production brought 18% of the entire income. With 2,050 employees, the employee situation recuperated quickly. The worth of the company was appraised for 20 to 25 million Reichsmark. Out of these sums, 4,505 machines represented the sum of 9,000mill. RM. The union of the Zella-Mehliser weapons manufacturers insisted, in a letter to Hitler, the abolition of the monopoly contract with the Simson Company.

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1933 ??

In March the election for the city of Suhl ordinance took place. Seat distribution: NSDAP 13 seats, KPD 6 seats, SPD 5 seats, middle class election organisation 3 seats.

1934

On February 1st, the limited partnership company, "Berlin-Suhl weapons- and automobile Simson & Company" was founded. The Simson family, as a limited partner of the "Simson & company administration's company, Berlin" had a share of 3,000,000 RM. The "Berlin-Suhl GMBH, Berlin" functioned as a personal responsible partner. This company transferred her shares in the amount of 500,000 RM, to the trustee, Dr. Herbert Hoffmann, who, as an Arien business manager, released the Simsons of their duties of leading the company. The same day Karl Beckurts was put in action, as the company's production manager. The new rulers laid the foundation for the community building. That was done, to show, that only the national socialits do good things for their followers. The number of employees rose to 3,460.

1935

Since April 14, Arthur Simson and his nephew, Dr. Ewald Mayer (he should have become the follower of the unmarried and childless Arthur Simson), were in coercive detention in Berlin. It was intended, to prove "that the Jews during the "System's time" of the Republic of Weimar, have damaged the Reich for millions...". In an agreement of October 24th, 1935, the Reichs Defense Secretary, General Field Marshall von Blomberg, carried over all powers of attorney to District Leader Sauckel, for: "to enforce all rightful claims of the Army Defence Office..." In the notariel contracts from November 23rd – 28th, 1935, the administration of the company acknowledged..." Arthur Simson, who belonged to this Company was allowed, after signing those contracts, to leave prison. Dr. Ewald Mayer was, escorted by the Gestapo, brought directly from prison to the place of signing the contracts. After that he again was imprisoned. Dr. Hilde Mayer, Julius Simson from Gotha and Dr. Julius Simson, Zürich, also had to sign the contracts."to owe to the Reichs Defense Ministry, according to the umbrella contract from May 25th, 1925, 9,750,000.—RM for the gain surpluses from the years 1924 to 1933...." The hand over of all the companies in Heinrichs and Suhl with all the components, accessories and the land.....". Of the above mentioned claim, 8,000,000.—RM were considered as "paid back". The remaining 1,75mill. Should be paid by December 31st, 1935. On November 29th, 1935 Sauckel let himself register as limited partner of the enterprise. On December 10th, 1935, the firm was renamed to: Berlin-Suhl Weapons and Automobil Company, GMBH (Abbr. BSW). The name Simson was deleted. The number of employees was 4,430.

1936

At the beginning of January, the Gestapo released Ewald Mayer, after his sister paid 10,000 RM as security. On February 9th, he, his brother Georg, his sister Hilde and Arthur Simson, went, over various German borders, to meet in Switzerland. Dipl. Engineer Werner Heynen was promoted to business manager. He managed the Weapons Company in Suhl until the end of the war. Under the leadership of Sauckel, the foundation "Wilhelm-Gustloff-Stiftung" was agreed on. The following companies belonged to this foundation: The Simson company in Suhl (belonging first of all to the "Fritz Sauckel company" in Weimar), a former subsidiary of the "Railroad cars- and machine company AG. Busch in Bautzen, the Heymer & Pflz AG in Meuselwitz (iron foundry, tool machines, devices for mines)." At the end of the year, a program for expansions and the procurement of machines for the Weapons Company in Suhl was put together. The new building "A" (bldg. Vm) was handed over for the production. The number of employees climbed to 4,480.

1938

Since the barrel manufacturing in Suhl reached it's limit, the newly built "Rennsteig company" in Schmiedefeld, took over the manufacturing of barrels and locking mechanisms in May. The "Rennsteig Company" belonged to the Suhl weapons company. On grounds of the Weapons Company in Suhl several new buildings were built by the architectural offices of Flakowski, Berlin. His modern industrial building architecture included the use of clincer delutions. Still today, at the former house of cultural interest, this clincer delution can be seen. The steel warehouse, including the cutting department, was handed over to the weapons manufacturing at the beginning of the year. In March the technical- and office building (Ub) was constructed for the departments "defence devices", "army deliveries" and

“technical inspections”. A third of this building spans over the “Dreisbach” (creek) and still can be seen today. It is called the “skeleton building.” A multi floor high building (Uc) for tool manufacturing and for machine maintenance and a small department for the defense production, was finished in fall. After German troops marched into Austria, Sauckel succeeded in taking over the “cartridge, sparkheads and hardware manufacturing factory” in Hirtenberg, Niederdonau. This company was a former Jewish enterprise, that Sauckel took over and integrated it into the Gustloff's Companies. The company in Hirtenberg occupied 3,500 employees and showed a yearly turnover of 20 million Reichsmark.

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1939

The civil production at the Gustloff companies was shut down, but later on that year, the production partially started again. Air raid protection ditches were dug up for a part of the Employees, which could not be accommodated in air raid bunkers. Gas masks were handed out. Because of heavy demands of the machine gun manufacturing, the production for the carabiner “98k” had to be stopped. Buildings for the following departments were handed over: “receiving”, “vocational”(the later house of “cultures”, bldg. Uh), “special shop for the production of conical barrels” and a “trial shooting stand with 500m”. The cost was 1,3 million RM.

1940

A newly build subsidiary, that originally was meant to being built in Heinrichs, housed the production of tank sleeves, Pz.B 39. This was a development of the Weapons Company in Suhl. 4,605 pieces were manufactured in 1940.

1940/41

To build production places and for the purchase of modern machines, the Army weapons office almost always made millions of Reichsmarks available. An example for that is Schmiedefeld. The special barrel manufacturing was transferred to Greiz. The constructors, Karl Barnitzke, Hans Kandler and Alfred Albrecht, began with their development of the 8,8cm hand launched rockets 43 (called: little dolls), which were in tank combats. At the Weapon Company Suhl, buildings for offices, a shop for experiments and a production hall (a shop for apprentices) were annexed. The “shop for experiments” and the “shop for apprentices” could not be occupied until 1941. Besides the exported goods from civil manufacturers, weapons were exported to Portugal, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Greece and Finland. Until March of that year 162 pieces of 2cm anti-aircraft guns were exported to Bulgaria. During the 2nd half of this year, foreign laborers were acquired, because more and more young men were recruited for the war. “Italians, Poles, Danish, Flemish, French and French prisoners of war” were hired.

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1942

Because of the acute shortage of the labor force, the Suhl weapons company was forced, to build a place for production in Locz (Litzmannstadt). With the help of Polish laborers weapon parts for the MG34 were built. All together 700 laborers were employed by that company. During the summer of 44 the production had to be moved back to Suhl, because of the closer coming east front. In the construction office in Suhl a light metal folding bicycle for air landing units was developed. The weapons of the Gustloff Companies were praised in the company's news paper. Also the great victories on the east front

were emphasized and on every page of this news paper it could be read: "The following persons gave their lives for the Führer and for Great Germany...." From March until November 99 lives of the Suhl Company were claimed. No mentioning of the Schmiedefeld-, Meiningen- and Greiz fallen soldiers.

1943

The Weapons Company Suhl took over the technological very demanding production of the commando predictor BMW 801, licensed to the BMW company. The production of the housing was done in a strictly protected place. This commando predictor was an automat to maximize the steering of air plane motors. It helped less experienced pilots. More and more of those pilots were recruited. By the end of the war, 2,739 of this device were produced. The Suhl Company had the responsibility, to finish the production of the 3,7cm Flak 43. Director Hynen was promoted to Special Representative by the Reichs Secretary for weapons and ammunition, Speer. In the entire Reich the weapons industry came more and more to a head, due to the situation of the war. Situations of emergency and special programs inhibited the production of important products for the war and for high technology weapons.

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1944

The war productions at the weapons company in Suhl ran on the highest levels. The number of forced laborers climbed to 2,731. During the first quarter 23,888 machine guns were manufactured. The factory in Meiningen was bombed on March 2nd. The damage was 300,000 RM. The subsidiaries in Suhl, Schmiedefeld and Greitz remained unharmed.

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1945

On March 26th, American air planes bombed the "Fröhlicher Mann" (merry man) subdivision in Suhl. On April 3rd, the occupation of the company by American soldiers, unter General Patton, began. During the 3 months occupation the production rested. Only a few employees were kept busy with cleanup work, due to the demolitions and looting of factories during the past weeks. On June 27th the police had to stop Italians, who purposely demolished installations of the company in Meiningen. The Americans had packed all the valuable devices of the research department, photo aparatuses and measuring instruments. Of course, the newest construction plans with the attached weapon samples and devices, also found their way to the U.S.A. So did all finished hunting guns, typewriters, calculators and the company's kitchen. After that, they destroyed construction offices, administration departments, laboratories, the ballistic department, photo department, the warehouse and the municipal car fleet. A bunker with ammunition was exploded. Director Max Fischer, Fritz Hattler and Eduard Naujocks were put in charge as trustees for the Suhl-, Meiningen- and Greiz companies on June 18th. On July 1st, the Americans left Thuringia. On July 3rd, the former county Schleusingen was occupied by the soviets. The Commander in charge of Schleusingen and Suhl was Senior Lieutenant Iwanow. The trustees sent an inquiry to the Sowiet administration to restart the production. On August 1st the company employed 284 people. They mostly were busy with inventory, cleanup work or as security. 10% of them worked in manufacturing. The production lines were: frying pans, hoes, bone grinders, sharpening appliances, tools and some hunting guns (only BB guns; bullets were forbidden). From September on, the company produced car parts (motor hoods, fenders, running boards), horseshoes and hunting guns for the Russian Military for 1,2 million Reichsmark. On order of the chief of the Sowiet administration (SMA) of

Thuringia, the Gustloff Companies, as a former armaments company, were subject to the rules for demontage and repair services. From November 27th, the weapons company in Suhl was placed under major Andresikow and his substitute Klenos. Unless there were important orders, the production stood still. Machines and plants were selected and marked by Russian officers. German laborers had to conserve and pack the machines. The company's joinery had to produce 4,200 wooden boxes. In order to do that, they had to bring in on some days, 2 freight cars filled with wood. Heavy machines were transported on cradles. They were pulled by traction engines to the train station.