Penicillin Produced in Germany

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Penicillin, one of the most potent and versatile weapons against disease known to medical science, is expected to become much more widely available in Germany early in 1950, when Farbwerke Hoechst, a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant in Hoechst, near Frankfurt, begins mass production in a new plant designed to turn out billions of units a month.

The new production facilities at the Hoechst plant, which is the first major penicillin producer in Germany, have been made possible by the cooperative efforts of the Joint Export-Import Agency, Merck & Co., Inc., a major penicillin producer in the United States, and Farbwerke Hoechst.

The project, first conceived by Military Government in 1946 with personnel from both the Legal Division of OMGUS and JEIA acting as advisers, is continuing under the sponsorship of the Industry Division, Office of Economic Affairs, HICOG.

Prior to the war penicillin production in Germany lagged far behind the drug’s development in Britain and the United States, and after V-E Day production facilities were extremely limited.

Occupation authorities saw a modern German penicillin plant serving two purposes: first, to help combat a number of serious diseases which were becoming more and more prevalent, and second, to help in strengthening the German economy, thus relieving the Allies of the financial burdens of the occupation.

Various surveys as to the possibility of manufacturing penicillin in Germany with the aid of American manufacturers were made. Despite discouraging preliminary reports, Merck & Co. was invited to send a survey mission to Germany in the spring of 1947 to aid the US Government in appraising the technical and economic problems involved.

An agreement, concluded Nov. 16, 1948 between JEIA, Farbwerke and Merck with bipartite approval, provided for construction of a modern plant capable of producing at least 100,000,000,000 units of pure penicillin G a month at the Hoechst plant. Merck agreed to provide certain basic drawings, special cultures of the penicillin producing microbe, and technical assistance in designing and building the Hoechst plant. Farbwerke was to reimburse Merck on a royalty basis.

During the initial planning stage it was feared that considerable equipment would have to be purchased outside Germany, thus partly defeating one of the purposes of the project. This difficulty was overcome through the assistance of JEIA, and German equipment manufacturers combined with the ingenuity of Hoechst engineers.

Another obstacle was the problem of obtaining in Germany the “foodstuffs,” or media, on which the penicillin mold feeds while producing the antibiotic. However, the German dairies, corn starch manufacturers and chemical plants cooperated in supplying these necessary raw materials in the quantities and purity required. With these supplies on hand it is expected that the product will be entirely “made in Germany” and that the entire project will be completed in scheduled time.

Penicillin combats one of mankind’s bitterest enemies—microbes that cause pneumonia, syphilis, gonorrhea, many other diseases and infections. Before 1942, however, it
was regarded in Germany as just another drug that would soon be supplanted by something better. Limited production had begun at Farbwerke but the German government showed little interest.

The new plant is housed in a building erected in 1939. Although the building is modern, many alterations are being made in order to accommodate the penicillin process, which requires a number of unusual production techniques. For example, part of the process is carried out under conditions of cleanliness and sterility equally as exacting as those of the operating rooms of the best hospitals.

The process uses large quantities of air, all of which must be purified to such an extent that no stray bacteria can be found in it by any test method now available. It also requires large quantities of pure water, and much more drastic treatment than simple distillation is necessary to remove foreign substances from this water. Such requirements demand special equipment and building construction.

Remodeling of the building is well under way. Floors and walls are being covered with tiles, ultraviolet sterilizing lamps installed and huge air filters erected, all of which is to insure mass production of pure penicillin in Germany in the immediate future.

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Patents System

operating in Berlin and Darmstadt for more than a year were discontinued.

The war-damaged library building in Munich has been repaired and most of the 123,000 square feet of floor space is now available. The office opened with a staff of 400 and now has about 800 employees, including more than 300 examiners, most of whom were formerly with the Reich Patent Office in Berlin. The technical library has been moved from the potash mine at Heringen and is again available to the public. The library is equipped with 12 miles of new metal shelves which provide space for about 500,000 volumes.

Dr. Eduard Reimer was appointed president of the German Patent Office by the federal minister of justice. He is a specialist in the field of industrial property rights, has written several commentaries on this subject and was the editor of "Gewerblicher Rechtsschutz und Urheberrecht" (Industrial Property Rights and Copyrights). He has practiced as a lawyer and notary since 1924 and has taught at Humboldt University and at the new Free University in Berlin.

Dr. Johannes Eylau, who was president of the Reich Patent Office until 1933, is now serving as special adviser to the president. Dr. Friedrich Reich, formerly a high official in the Reich Patent Office, is now vice-president. Several other officials of the former Reich Patent Office now fill responsible positions in the new federal patent office.

The establishment of the German Patent Office made possible the restoration in the Federal Area of Germany of the Allied-owned industrial, literary and artistic property rights which were confiscated, cancelled or otherwise impaired as a result of the war. This is provided for in Allied High Commission Law No. 8 which was promulgated in the Official Gazette of Oct. 27, effective as of Oct. 1.

This law authorizes substantially the same restoration of rights to the Allied nationals as did the peace treaties with Italy, Finland and the Balkan countries. However, complete reciprocity could not be given to German nationals in view of the London Patent Accord of 1946, which disposed of German-owned prewar patent rights in the Allied countries.

The law provides for the restoration of such rights to those 54 foreign nations and their nationals which were at war with or occupied by Germany between Sept. 1, 1939 and May 8, 1945. The restoration is made by the German Patent Office upon request of the Allied owner.

The following restoration of Allied-owned rights may be obtained under the law:

- Restoration of industrial, literary and artistic property rights which were seized or invalidated during the war.
- Reinstatement of patent and trade mark applications which were pending at the start of or during the war.
- Extension of the duration of patents, trade marks and copyrights for a period corresponding to that from the start of the war between Germany and the nation concerned until Oct. 1, 1949.
- Extension of the time to Oct. 3, 1950 for claiming the priority rights accorded by the International Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.
- Preservation of the right of the Allied owner to institute proceedings within two years against persons or firms in Germany which infringed his rights during the war.

The German federal government was recently invited to become a member of the International Patent Institute at The Hague and participation therein was authorized in principle by the Council of the Allied High Commission Nov. 17. The institute was established in 1947 by France and the Benelux countries. Consideration is also being given to the establishment of a European Patent Office in which the German federal government would participate.

Hesse Permits Smoking in Prisons

Hessian prisoners, for the first time in the history of the state, will be permitted to smoke.

The internal prison reform came after a one-year survey by Hessian prison officials. The directive, issued by the Hessian Ministry of Justice, specifically prohibits smoking in the two juvenile institutions in the state and decrees that all other penal institutions establish smoking rooms or separate smokers form non-smokers.

Smoking articles, according to the directive, may not be given to prisoners as gifts. All such wares must be purchased by the prisoners themselves from the allowance given them for work which they perform.