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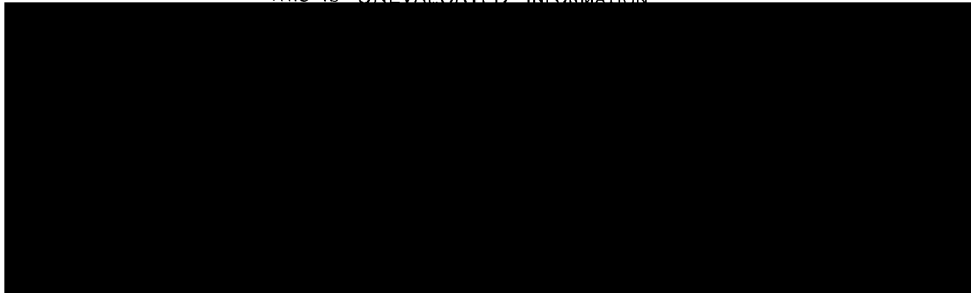
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PREPARED AND DISSEMINATED BY CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY		REPORT NO. [REDACTED]	
COUNTRY Germany (Federal Republic)		DATE DISTRIBUTED 10 MAY 55	
SUBJECT Karl Freudenberg, GmbH		NO. OF PAGES 2	NO. OF ENCLS.
		SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT #	
PLACE ACQUIRED (By source) Weinheim		RESPONSIVE TO	
DATE ACQUIRED (By source) Mar 55	DATE OF INFORMATION (Date or dates, on or between which, events or conditions described in report existed) Mar 55	OO/C Gunde 43	RT - T. 101

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SOURCE



During March 1955 I visited Karl Freudenberg GmbH in Weinheim near Heidelberg Germany (Federal Republic) which I can describe as follows:

Address: Hönerweg 4. A number of buildings throughout the small town, grouped with at least three to an area.

History: Founded in 1849 as a leather tannery. Developed manufacture of leather finishes and then substitutes for artificial leather. More recently the firm has turned to metal stamping and plastics although it still makes leather products.

Owners: Started by Karl Freudenberg and now wholly owned by three sons. Karl, Jr., while retaining an ownership interest, is not active in the business, preferring his professorship at the University of Heidelberg. His brother, Hans, is the firm's technical man while the other brother, Richard, handles the firm's finances. A nephew, Hermann Freudenberg, has been brought in to learn the business with the goal of replacing Hans when he retires. The owners are progressive in philosophy and are modernizing the equipment as fast as possible.

Products: Leather and artificial soles, heels and inserts. Grommets, metal stampings, gaskets and clutch faces for all types of Western European autos. Volkollan-type rubber soles for Army-type boots and resin-impregnated unweoven fabrics.

Buildings: I visited only three of the many plant buildings. They were one-story brick buildings, while others in the town were one and two stories. Housekeeping everywhere was excellent. None of the firm's plants suffered any World War II damage. Owners are modernizing equipment and

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have a very modern Bamberg ^{sic}/mixer mill set-up. Compared to finest in the US the mixer is not too impressive but compared to German standards it is the best. It is at least a 60-inch mill requiring two operators. All other equipment is adequate.

Water and Fuel: No shortages

Power: Firm gets power from town supply and possibly has a standby power plant. However I did not have any opportunity to examine this possibility.

Source of raw material: I do not know.

Production: Firm does US \$75 million business per year. I have no other figures on production.

Sales: Most sales are in European markets although currently (March 1955) the firm is selling a lot of Valcolan rubber soles for Army boots to Brazil or Argentina. Firm has granted a license to a US firm for manufacture of impregnated unwoven fabric and plans to establish a US laboratory to expand use of the product. I have been asked to find a competent laboratory director but actually the firm plans to direct the laboratory's activities from Germany. The firm plans to use US materials combined with Germany's know-how.

Employees: About four thousand - - - average pay about US \$.45 an hour for 48 hour week. One shift. Owners visualize employment shortage when country rearms. This is partly responsible for their desire to get modern labor-saving machines. Employees live in and around Weinheim.

- end -

July
Leather plant
50-54.5
51-54.5
51-46.6

Area
Germany
140
Weinheim
37.1

TYPE ACT-DATE INFO-TFN-DATE AREA

85 55 - 55

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