

## Krupp

The three rings were the symbol for Krupp and are currently part of the ThyssenKrupp logotype. For the U.S. town, see Krupp, Washington.

The Krupp family, a prominent 400-year-old German dynasty from Essen, have become famous for their steel production and for their manufacture of ammunition and armaments. The family business, known as Friedrich Krupp AG Hoesch-Krupp in modern times, merged with Thyssen AG in 1999 to form ThyssenKrupp AG, a large industrial conglomerate.

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## Overview

Friedrich Krupp (1787 – 1826) launched the family's metal-based activities, building a small steel-foundry in Essen in 1811. His son, Alfred (1812 – 1887), known as "the Cannon King" or as "Alfred the Great", invested heavily in new technology to become a significant manufacturer of railway material and locomotives. He also invested in fluidized hotbed technologies (notably the Bessemer process) and acquired many mines in Germany and France. He invested in subsidized housing for his workers and started a program of health and retirement benefits. The company began to make steel cannons in the 1840s - especially for the Russian, Turkish, and Prussian armies. Low non-military demand and government subsidy meant that the company specialized more and more in weapons: by the late 1880s the manufacture of armaments represented around 50% of Krupp's total output. When Alfred started with the firm, it had five employees. At his death twenty thousand people worked for Krupp - making it the world's largest industrial company.

During World War I some criticized Krupp's policy of selling cannons to the Entente as well as to the Central Powers, a policy which generated high profits. (Ford and GM allegedly acted similarly during World War II - however, the American parent companies did not control the German GM and Ford subsidiaries during hostilities.)

After Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the Krupp works became the center for German rearmament. In 1943, by a special order from Hitler, the company reverted into a family holding, and Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach (1907 - 67), son of Gustav Krupp, took over the management. After Germany's defeat, when Gustav proved incapable of going on trial, the U.S. Nuremberg Military Tribunal convicted Alfred as a war criminal (in the so-called "Krupp Trial") for his company's use of slave labor. It sentenced him to 12 years imprisonment and ordered him to sell 75% of his holdings. In 1951, as the Cold War developed and no buyer came forward, the authorities released him, and in 1953 he resumed control of the firm.

In 1999 the Krupp Group merged with its largest competitor, Thyssen AG; the combined company — ThyssenKrupp AG, became Germany's fifth-largest firm and one of the largest steel-producers in the world.

## History of the family

### Early history

The Krupp family first appeared in the historical record in 1587 when Arndt Krupp joined the merchants' guild in Essen. Arndt, a trader, arrived in town just before an epidemic of plague and became one of the city's wealthiest men by purchasing the property of families who fled the epidemic. He died in 1624. His son Anton took over the family business; he oversaw an extensive gunsmithing operation during the Thirty Years' War (1618 - 1648), beginning the family's long association with weapon manufacturing.

For the next century the Krupps continued to prosper, generation after generation, becoming Essen's most powerful family and accumulating more and more property in the city. By the mid-eighteenth-century, Friedrich Jodocus Krupp, Arndt's great-great-grandson, headed the Krupp family. In 1751 he married Helene Amalie Ascherfeld (another of Arndt's great-great-grandchildren); Jodocus died 6 years later, which left his widow to run the business - a family first. The Widow Krupp greatly expanded the family's holdings over the decades, acquiring a mill, shares in 4 coal mines, and (in 1800) an iron forge located on a stream near Essen.

### Friedrich's era

In 1807 the progenitor of the modern Krupp firm, Friedrich Krupp, began his commercial career at age 19 when the Widow Krupp appointed him manager of the forge. Friedrich's father, the widow's son, had died 11 years previously; since that time, the widow had tutored the boy in the ways of commerce, as he seemed the logical family heir. Unfortunately, Friedrich proved too ambitious for his own good, and quickly ran the formerly profitable forge into the ground. The widow soon had to sell it away.

Friedrich continued to squander the family's money. In 1810, the widow died, and in what would prove a disastrous move, left virtually all the Krupp fortune and property to

Friedrich. Newly enriched, Friedrich decided to discover the secret of cast (crucible) steel. Benjamin Huntsman, a clockmaker from Sheffield, had pioneered a process to make crucible steel in 1740, but the British had managed to keep it secret since then, forcing others to import the material. But after the Royal Navy began its blockade of Napoleon's empire, British steel became unavailable, and so Napoleon offered a prize of four thousand francs to anyone who could replicate the British process. And this prize piqued Friedrich's interest.

Thus, in 1811 Friedrich founded the Krupp Gusstahlfabrik (Cast Steel Works). He soon discovered, however, that he would need a large facility with a power source for success, and so he built a mill and foundry on an Essen stream. Soon Friedrich started pouring huge sums of time and money into the small, waterwheel-powered facility, neglecting all other Krupp business. After much work, Friedrich produced his first smelt steel in 1816.

### Alfred's era

Alfred Krupp Alfred Krupp (Alfried Felix Alwyn Krupp April 26, 1812 - July 14, 1887), son of Friedrich Carl, was born in Essen. Friedrich's death in 1826 left his widow as owner of the works. Alfred had to leave school at the age of fourteen and take on the direction of the works. The prospect seemed a cheerless one. His father had spent a considerable fortune in the attempt to cast steel in large blocks: in order to keep the works going at all, the family had to live in extreme frugality, while the youthful director laboured alongside the workmen by day, and carried on his father's experiments at night. For the next fifteen years, the works made barely enough money to cover the workmen's wages.

In 1841, his invention of the spoon-roller brought in enough money for Alfred to enlarge the factory and spend money on casting steel blocks. In 1847 he made his first cannon of cast steel. At the Great Exhibition of 1851 he exhibited a 6 pounder (2.7 kg) cannon made entirely from cast steel, and a solid flawless ingot of steel weighing 2000 pounds (907 kg), more than twice as much as any previously cast. It was called the "Big Bertha" cannon.

Krupp's exhibit caused a sensation in the engineering world, and the Essen works at once became famous. In 1851, another successful invention, one for the making of railway tyres, made a profit, which Alfred Krupp devoted partly to enlarging and equipping the factory, and partly to his long-cherished scheme - the construction of a breech-loading cannon of cast steel. Krupp himself strongly believed in the superiority of breech-loaders over muzzle-loaders, on account of the greater accuracy of firing and the saving of time, but this view did not win general acceptance in Germany till after the Franco-Prussian war, Krupp supplied his perfected field-pieces throughout Europe and wished to fulfill an order of guns to the Habsburg empire on the eve of the Prusso-Austrian war, much to Bismarck's fury. His greatest grievance against the French was that the French high command had refused to purchase his guns despite Napoleon's support. Following the French defeat he did sell them his guns. Once the quality of this product gained

recognition, the factory developed very rapidly. At the time of Alfred Krupp's death in 1887 he employed 20,200 men; and including those in works outside Essen, his rule extended over 75,000 people.

A curious incident took place before the Franco-German war. At the time that war was approaching Alfred was in the process of building his palatial new home, for which he needed French granite. Bowing to his demand, both the French and the Prussian monarchs agreed to have a special shipment of granite delivered to him from France despite the mutual trade embargo.

Krupp constructed special "colonies" for the employees and their families - with parks, schools and recreation grounds - while the widows' and orphans' and other benefit schemes insured the men and their families against anxiety in case of illness or death. He tried to control most aspects of his worker's lives: he demanded loyalty oaths, required workers to obtain written permission from their foremen when they needed to stop working to use the toilet, and issued proclamations explicitly telling his workers not to concern themselves with national politics.

A furious reactionary, Alfred frequently proclaimed he wished to have "a man come and start a counter-revolution" against Jews, socialists and liberals. In some of his odder moods, he considered taking the role himself. According to William Manchester, his great grandson Alfred would interpret these outbursts as a prophecy fulfilled by the coming of Hitler.

#### Friedrich Alfred's Era

Friedrich Alfred Krupp, 1900. After Alfred's death in 1887 his only son, Friedrich Alfred (born February 17, 1854, died November 22, 1902), carried on the work. His father had been a hard man, known as "Herr Krupp" since his early teens. His son was "Fritz" all his life, and was strikingly dissimilar to his father in terms of personality. He was a philanthropist, a rare commodity amongst the Ruhr industrial leaders; though part of his philanthropy went towards supporting the study of eugenics.

He did, however, possess an industrial genius, though of a different sort from his father. Fritz was a master of the subtle sell, and cultivated a close rapport with the Kaiser, Wilhelm II. Under Fritz's management, the firm's business blossomed further and further afield, spreading across the globe. It was under him as well that many new products that would do much to change history were authorized. Hiram Maxim peddled his machine gun, and Rudolf Diesel brought his new engine to Krupp to construct. Fritz was, therefore, the first to bring Europe diesel engines. The program that eventually resulted in the German U-Boat fleet was also begun during his tenure.

During his lifetime, Fritz married and had two daughters. He also enjoyed living on the island of Capri, where he built a villa and did biological research. In 1902 he, and also the painter Christian Wilhelm Allers, were caught up in a pederastic scandal involving

youths Fritz had "procured" in Capri and transported to the Bristol hotel in Berlin (after even the corrupt Capri authorities had had enough of his pederacy). A tumultuous few weeks ensued, which ended in the death of Fritz, ostensibly of a stroke, though suicide is a more probable answer.

Upon his death, his daughter Bertha became the inheritor of his empire.

#### Gustav's Era

Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, born August 7, 1870, died in Austria on January 16, 1950. A minor career diplomat, Gustav was not born a Krupp. He was, however, selected by Kaiser Wilhelm II to marry Bertha Krupp, daughter of Friedrich Alfred. In such a way, the company could continue on under male leadership, and also heirs could be produced. With the Kaiser as matchmaker, the couple were married, and eventually would have many children, including the final Krupp to bear the title of "Sole Proprietor", Alfred. Gustav was initially skeptical towards Nazism and Hitler; bitterly criticising his son Alfred, his future successor for taking up with them. Gustav soon experienced a conversion and became enamoured with the party, to a degree his wife and subordinates found bizarre. Gustav was nonetheless alarmed at Hitler's aggressive foreign policy after the Munich accord but by then he was fast succumbing to senility and was effectively displaced by Alfred. He was indicted at the Nuremberg Trials but never tried, due to his advanced dementia.

#### Alfried's Era

Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Born August 13, 1907, died West Germany, on July 30, 1967. He, like his father Gustav, helped rearm Nazi Germany and was tried at the Krupp Trial held after World War II in Nuremberg in parallel to the main Nuremberg trials. He was convicted for the use and murderous abuse of forced labor, marked by brutality, which the judges found to be exceptional even under Nazism. His conviction was overturned along with that of his co-defendants by John J. McCloy, High Commissioner of the American zone of occupation, who, today, is bitterly criticised for his wholesale quashing of verdicts and sentences of Nazi offenders.

#### Roles played in important historical events

##### World War I

The Krupp Gun Works during World War I In 1917 and 1918, Krupp produced seven Paris Guns.

## World War II

Krupp produced tanks, artillery guns, munitions and armaments for the German army. The company was also responsible for moving the factories from allied occupied territory to German territory towards the end of the war.

In the 1930s, Krupp developed two 80 cm railway guns, the *Schwerer Gustav* and the *Dora*. These guns were the largest artillery pieces ever fielded by an army during wartime, and weighed almost 1,344 tons. They could fire a 7-ton shell over a distance of 37 kilometers. However, they proved extremely inaccurate in Sevastopol during the prolonged shelling, and were more a massive logistical liability than an artillery asset, sharply condemned by the troops.

More crucial to the operations of the German military was Krupp's development of the famed 88 mm anti-aircraft cannon, a famously effective weapon that also became a deadly anti-tank weapon and tank gun.

The cannon *Aron*. One of the two guns in the main battery that took part in the sinking of *Blücher*. In April 1940, two obsolete 280 mm Krupp guns, installed in the Oscarsborg Fortress in the 19th century, were responsible for heavily damaging the German cruiser *Blücher*, leading to her sinking by torpedo. The *Blücher* was involved in Operation *Weserübung*, the German invasion of Denmark and Norway, and was leading the attack on Oslo. 830 German sailors and soldiers lost their lives in the sinking.

In 1940-41, Krupp's acquired a controlling shareholding in the Bremen-based shipbuilders, *Deutsche Schiff- und Maschinenbau AG (Deschimag)*.

Tens of thousands of civilians from occupied countries and allied prisoners of war were employed as slave laborers by Krupp during the war. Thousands of these prisoners were worked to death intentionally, or died of starvation and disease in overcrowded work camps used to house them. During the war, Krupp opened a factory in the notorious *Auschwitz-Birkenau* concentration camp for the production of artillery shell fuses, in which slave laborers, primarily Jews, were worked to exhaustion and then gassed in the nearby extermination camp.

A Quote from Adolf Hitler to the Hitler Youth, Hitler uses a simile "as hard as Krupp Steel" :

"In our eyes, the German boy of the future must be slim and slender, as fast as a greyhound, tough as leather and hard as Krupp steel."