Robert August Bosch Biography

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Biography

Robert August Bosch was born near Ulm (Württemberg), Germany on September 23, 1861. Bosch gained experience and honed his technical ingenuity in the United States, where he worked in Thomas Edison's laboratories.

In 1886, Bosch and German electrical engineer Siegmund Bergmann founded the Bosch GmbH in Stuttgart, Germany. This company manufactured Bosch's most significant invention, the electrical magneto. Bosch's magneto was first used only on stationary internal combustion engines, but when his co-worker Gottlieb Honold invented the high-tension spark plug in 1902 to complement Bosch's high-tension magneto, the Bosch magneto-spark plug combination became the standard for the world's automobile industry.

By 1920, the Bosch company had sold over a million magnetos. Bosch's United States operation was taken over by the Alien Property Custodian in 1918 as a consequence of the U.S. government's declaration of war against Germany. After the war, Bosch reentered the U.S. market under his own name, and a ten-year legal battle ensued. In 1930, Bosch entered into an agreement with the U.S. Bosch company, which would market the products of the German Bosch company in the United States.

After the war, Bosch also expanded his electrical ignition manufacturing empire by adding brake components and his famed horn. At this time he was already involved in manufacturing his best-selling magnetos and spark plugs, starters, generators, wiper motors, and radios, as well as diesel engine accessories and gas appliances. As an industrialist, Robert Bosch was considered to hold rather advanced social views for his time. He introduced an eight-hour day in 1906 and advocated industrial arbitration and free trade. He remained active in his industrial enterprises well into his 70s; he died in Stuttgart on March 9, 1942.