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978-1-107-02480-9 - Solvay: History of a Multinational Family Firm

Kenneth Bertrams, Nicolas Coupain and Ernst Homburg

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Solvay

History of a Multinational Family Firm

Ernest Solvay, philanthropist and organizer of the world-famous Solvay conferences on physics, discovered a profitable way of making soda ash in 1861. Together with a handful of associates, he laid the foundations of the Solvay company, which successfully branched out to other chemicals, plastics, and pharmaceuticals. Since its emergence in 1863, Solvay has maintained its world leadership in the production of soda ash. This is the first scholarly book on the history of the Solvay company, which was one of the earliest chemical multinationals and today is among the world's twenty largest chemical and petrochemical companies, and among the ten largest chemical players from developed markets. It is also one of the largest companies in the field to preserve its family character. The authors analyze the company's 150-year history (1863–2013) from economic, political, and social perspectives, showing the enormous impact of geopolitical events and the consequences of global competition.

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History of a Multinational Family Firm

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Coordinated by Ginette Kurgan-van Hentenryk,
with the partnership of Philippe Mioche



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Contents

<i>Tables</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Charts</i>	xi
<i>Figures and Maps</i>	xiii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xv
Introduction	I
 PART I THE PIONEERING YEARS (1863–1914): THE QUEST FOR LEADERSHIP AND THE FIRST STAGES OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION <i>Nicolas Coupain</i>	
1 First Steps: When Vision and Reality Meet	9
1.1 <i>Inspiration and Implementation</i>	10
1.2 <i>A Difficult Start for the Couillet Plant</i>	24
2 A Multinational Pioneer	33
2.1 <i>Experimenting with Three Strategies of Internationalization (1870s)</i>	34
2.2 <i>Emergence of a Transatlantic Group of Solvay Companies (1880s)</i>	42
2.3 <i>A Company of Engineers</i>	55
3 Reaching a Dominant Position	65
3.1 <i>War and Peace in Soda Ash International Trade</i>	66
3.2 <i>Evolution of Management Structures</i>	85
4 Labor Organization, Social Policy, and Societal Vision	97
4.1 <i>Elaboration of an Industrial Relations Strategy</i>	97
4.2 <i>The Multiple Facets of Solvay’s Social Relations</i>	101
5 The Consolidation of Power	119
5.1 <i>Opportunistic Diversifications: Potash and Coke Oven By-Products</i>	119
5.2 <i>Being a Part of the Electrochemical Revolution</i>	123
5.3 <i>A New Round of Geographical Expansion</i>	127
5.4 <i>Ensuring Continuity: The Rise of the Second Generation</i>	131

5.5	<i>The Nonindustrial Life of Ernest Solvay: Scientia Vincere Tenebras</i>	135
6	Conclusion of Part 1	143
6.1	<i>Capitalizing on a Technological Breakthrough</i>	143
6.2	<i>A Hybrid Multinational Organization</i>	144
6.3	<i>An Unshakable Leadership</i>	145
6.4	<i>The Life of a Family Business</i>	146
 PART 2 THE YEARS OF CRISIS (1914–1950): THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES <i>Kenneth Bertrams</i>		
7	The Multiple Fronts of World War I	151
7.1	<i>Facing the Occupation, Organizing the Relief Effort</i>	152
7.2	<i>The Conduct of Business in Occupied Territory</i>	155
7.3	<i>Europe at War: The Western Side</i>	159
7.4	<i>Europe at War: The Eastern Side</i>	164
7.5	<i>The Declaration of Independence of Solvay Process Company</i>	169
8	From the Ashes, 1918–1922	175
8.1	<i>The Reordering of Europe</i>	176
8.2	<i>Facing Social Upheaval</i>	188
8.3	<i>Death of the Founding Father</i>	190
9	The Making of International Alliances	193
9.1	<i>IG and Allied: Coping with Giants</i>	194
9.2	<i>The Twists and Turns of Industrial Diplomacy</i>	206
9.3	<i>Exploring Alternatives in America</i>	219
10	Family and Finance through the Crisis	229
10.1	<i>Managerial Legacies</i>	230
10.2	<i>The Collapse and Rebirth of the Mutuelle</i>	239
11	The Electrolytic Industry	251
11.1	<i>Missing the Electrolytic Momentum</i>	252
11.2	<i>The Transnational Cartelization of the Chlorine Industry</i>	255
11.3	<i>From Caustic Soda to Chlorine Derivatives</i>	261
11.4	<i>Electrolysis and Politics: The Rise of Authoritarian Regimes in Italy and Spain</i>	267
12	Facing War Again	277
12.1	<i>Social Policy and the New Order</i>	278
12.2	<i>The National-Socialist Takeover</i>	285
12.3	<i>Solvay at War: Within Occupied Territories</i>	290
12.4	<i>Solvay at War: In Great Britain and the Americas</i>	298
13	Solvay’s Second Postwar Period	305
13.1	<i>A Difficult Transition</i>	306
13.2	<i>Farewell to Bernburg</i>	309
13.3	<i>The Liquidation of IG Farben and Its Consequences</i>	315

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02480-9 - Solvay: History of a Multinational Family Firm

Kenneth Bertrams, Nicolas Coupain and Ernst Homburg

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

vii

13.4	<i>Nationalizations in Eastern Europe: Long-Fought Battles, Modest Results</i>	320
14	Conclusion of Part 2	325
14.1	<i>Business and Politics in the Age of Instability</i>	325
14.2	<i>Recasting International Industrial Relations</i>	327
14.3	<i>Diversification Interrupted</i>	328
PART 3 THE ERA OF DIVERSIFICATION AND GLOBALIZATION (1950–2012)		
Ernst Homburg		
15	Growth through Diversification: The Successful Entry into Plastics and Peroxides	333
15.1	<i>Solvay's International Comeback</i>	334
15.2	<i>Research and Diversification</i>	338
15.3	<i>The Workhorse of the Plastics Industry: PVC</i>	340
15.4	<i>Broadening in Plastics: The Production of Polyethylene</i>	349
15.5	<i>Becoming a Key Player in Peroxides</i>	355
15.6	<i>Change and Continuity</i>	357
16	Enlarging Scale and Scope: Backward and Forward Integration in the 1960s and 1970s	361
16.1	<i>Solvay's Increased Dependence on Oil</i>	363
16.2	<i>Clean Autoclaves but an Injured Image</i>	369
16.3	<i>Forward Integration into Making Plastic Products</i>	373
16.4	<i>Growth in Plastics and Its Consequences</i>	381
17	Solvay Goes Public: Financial and Organizational Limits of a Family Firm	383
17.1	<i>Diversification and Its Financial Consequences</i>	384
17.2	<i>The Transformation into a Joint-Stock Company (1967)</i>	388
17.3	<i>Modernizing Management and Accounting</i>	399
18	The Long and Winding Road to Deer Park: Solvay's Return to the United States	407
18.1	<i>Operation Wyandotte</i>	408
18.2	<i>Opposing Views</i>	411
18.3	<i>Making a New Start</i>	414
18.4	<i>The Acquisition of Deer Park</i>	416
18.5	<i>Producing Polyolefins in America</i>	419
18.6	<i>Toward a Diversified Solvay America</i>	424
19	From Bulk to Brains: Solvay's Entry into Pharmacy and the Life Sciences	431
19.1	<i>The First Oil Shock and the Crisis of the 1970s</i>	432
19.2	<i>Kali-Chemie and Its Pharmaceutical Activities</i>	435
19.3	<i>The Great Leap Forward (1979–1980)</i>	440
19.4	<i>Consolidating New Businesses in Times of Crisis</i>	444
19.5	<i>Veterinary Medicines and Other Specialties</i>	446
19.6	<i>Growing in Pharmaceuticals</i>	454

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
20	Solvay in the Age of Globalization	459
20.1	<i>Shaken by the Oil Shock</i>	460
20.2	<i>Reducing Exposure in Plastics</i>	465
20.3	<i>Solvay Goes to Asia</i>	467
20.4	<i>Reorganizing Solvay Germany and Going East</i>	479
21	Toward Sustainable Product Leadership	489
21.1	<i>Improving Competitiveness in Difficult Times</i>	490
21.2	<i>From Matrix Organization to Business Units</i>	494
21.3	<i>Chlorine Chemistry under Attack</i>	501
21.4	<i>Sustaining Leadership</i>	505
22	Chemicals and Plastics of the Future: Major Turning Points at the Start of a New Century	529
22.1	<i>The Role of the Founding Families</i>	530
22.2	<i>From Bulk Plastics to Special Polymers</i>	535
22.3	<i>Innovating in New Directions</i>	541
22.4	<i>Solvay Pharma: From Priority Business to Divestment</i>	544
22.5	<i>Moving Forward in Times of Crisis: The Friendly Takeover of Rhodia</i>	551
23	Conclusion of Part 3	559
23.1	<i>Growing in Plastics</i>	559
23.2	<i>A Period of Diversification and Transition</i>	562
23.3	<i>Reaping the Fruits of Focusing on Leadership and Profitability</i>	563
	<i>Appendix A</i>	565
	<i>Appendix B</i>	570
	<i>Appendix C</i>	573
	<i>Sources and Bibliography</i>	577
	<i>Index</i>	601

Tables

1.1.	Worldwide Leblanc soda ash tonnages and prices (1810–1863)	<i>page 13</i>
3.1.	Partnership shares (with voting rights) held by the family groups (1863–1966)	86
3.2.	Profits and self-financing mechanisms of Solvay & Cie: Equity, debts, earnings (including dividend received from foreign subsidiaries), and paid dividend (1863–1913)	92
3.3.	Conversion of currencies before 1914	93
4.1.	Qualifications, salaries, and schedules of blue-collar workers (1908–1912)	105
5.1.	Development of Semet-Solvay coke ovens in 1913	122
5.2.	Sales quotas within the German syndicates in 1913	131
7.1.	Production and deliveries of soda ash at Couillet, 1915–1918	157
7.2.	Production of soda ash at Dombasle and Giraud: Deliveries in France by Solvay & Cie, Saint-Gobain, and Marchéville-Daguin, 1913–1919	161
7.3.	Production of soda ash and caustic soda – Dombasle, Giraud, Torrelavega, 1912–1919	162
7.4.	Production of soda ash – DSW, 1912–1919	165
7.5.	Production of soda ash – SW, 1912–1919	167
7.6.	Production of caustic soda – SW, 1912–1919	168
7.7.	Production of picric acid, chlorine, and phosgene at Donetz, 1915–1917	169
10.1.	Repartition of responsibilities among <i>gérants</i> (November 1931)	238
11.1.	Evolution of sales of Solvay in the 1930s	252
11.2.	Production of caustic soda in Germany, 1913–1937 (in 1,000 tons)	259
11.3.	Overview of the development of electrolytic units in the Solvay group (1928–1942)	264
13.1.	Nationalized properties of Solvay and compensation schemes in postwar Central and Eastern Europe	322
15.1.	The international development of Solvay’s PVC business, 1949–1959	345
15.2.	PVC production and sales of Solvay’s subsidiaries, 1950–1960	348

15.3.	HDPE production by Solvay, 1959–1969	354
15.4.	Sales of different product groups, as percentages of total sales of the Solvay group	358
16.1.	Start of plastics processing by Solvay in different countries, 1958–1970	376
17.1.	Investments, profits, and sales at Solvay, 1955–1967	384
17.2.	Shares of Solvay & Cie held by the different family groups (1 July 1967)	394
18.1.	Production and sales of high-density polyethylene and of polypropylene by Soltex Polymer Corporation, 1975–1999	421
18.2.	Solvay America’s organization and product mix in 1992	428
19.1.	Business development of the Solvay Group and the Belgian chemical industry, 1969–1980	434
19.2.	Solvay’s life sciences and special chemicals portfolio after the acquisition of Salsbury and Duphar	444
19.3.	Market shares of Kali-Chemie and Duphar-Pharma in 1980	455
19.4.	Product synergy between Kali-Chemie and Duphar (1980)	456
20.1.	Performance of the Solvay Group, 1980–1989	463
20.2.	Solvay’s financial results in plastics, 1981–1983	465
21.1.	Performance of the Solvay Group, 1989–1997	493
21.2.	Product leadership ranking of Solvay, 1994	506
22.1.	Sales of five major Solvay pharmaceutical products (1995–2004)	545
22.2.	Sales of five major Solvay pharmaceutical products (2000–2009)	547
22.3.	Division of sales and Rebit across different product groups, 1999–2010	548
23.1.	Development of Solvay, 1950–2010	560
A.1.	Solvay Leadership (1863–2012)	565
B.1(a).	Financial perimeter and performance of Solvay & Cie (1865–1966)	570
B.1(b).	Financial perimeter and performance of the Solvay Group (consolidated) (1967–2010)	572
C.1.	Production of major products of the Solvay Group, in kilotons per year (1866–2011)	573

Charts

2.1.	Production of the Solvay group’s plants (1866–1892)	<i>page</i> 53
2.2.	Earnings from Solvay direct activities, dividends received from foreign subsidiaries, and dividend paid by Solvay & Cie to its shareholders (1866–1913)	54
3.1.	Worldwide soda ash production (1865–1913)	68
10.1.	Overview of the portfolio of the Mutuelle Solvay (November 1930)	245
11.1.	Production of caustic soda in Continental Europe (except Russia), 1921–1937	256

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-02480-9 - Solvay: History of a Multinational Family Firm
Kenneth Bertrams, Nicolas Coupain and Ernst Homburg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Figures and Maps

I.1.	Four generations of Solvay leaders	<i>page</i> xviii
1.1.	Successive carbonation apparatus tested at the Couillet plant	8
1.2.	Solvay & Cie main initiators	19
2.1.	Syracuse works of the Solvay Process Company, United States	32
2.2.	Share of the Lubimoff, Solvay & Cie (1888)	47
3.1.	Offices of Syndikat Deutscher Sodafabriken and Syndikat Deutscher Aetznatronfabriken, at Bernburg, in 1907	64
3.2.	Garden party at Ernest Solvay’s house in Ixelles, Belgium	88
4.1.	Children of workers playing in the streets of a colony of the Deutsche Solvay Werke, around 1920	96
4.2.	Employees doing gymnastics at the facilities of the Lukavac plant in Bosnia	111
5.1.	The “soda ash tree” displayed by Solvay at industrial exhibitions	118
5.2.	The first Solvay Conference of Physics of 1911	140
6.1.	Map of the Solvay group plants in 1913	142
7.1.	Results of the bombing of the Château-Salins soda ash plant on 24 July 1917	150
7.2.	Solvay Process Company’s top executives and board members a few years before World War I	170
8.1.	Solvay executives visiting the Wieliczka salt mine, near Krakow, Poland (1921)	174
8.2.	A workers’ colony of Zakłady Solvay at Montwy, Poland	189
9.1.	One of the rare pictures of Orlando Weber, taken in 1935, after his retirement as chairman of Allied Chemical & Dye Corp.	192
9.2.	Some of the Solvay <i>gérants</i> visiting salt mines at Borth (1926)	195
10.1.	Building of the Mutuelle Solvay, on the northern side of the prestigious Avenue Louise of Brussels	228
10.2.	Organizational chart drafted by Louis Solvay in 1925	236
11.1.	Casks of caustic soda, increasingly produced through salt electrolysis in the 1930s	250
11.2.	Balila’s parade at Rosignano-Solvay under the fascist regime (1930s)	268
12.1.	The DSW company magazine, April 1935	276
12.2.	Rosignano, destroyed by American bombing in June 1940	299
13.1.	The Solvay trial at Bernburg, 14 December 1950	304

13.2. The Rheinberg plant of DSW was partly enlarged with help of Marshall Plan aid	317
14.1. Map of the Solvay group plants in 1938	324
15.1. Autoclaves for producing PVC at Jemeppe, Belgium, Solvay’s first industrial PVC plant	332
15.2. Special trucks for the transport of liquid ethylene used at Rosignano, Italy, at the end of the 1950s	352
16.1. Cracker constructed at Rosignano for the production of ethylene (for HDPE) and acetylene (for PVC)	360
16.2. Solvic’s PVC bottles, produced by Solvay’s processing sector	378
17.1. A share of the new public company Solvay & Cie SA (1967)	382
17.2. The Solvay <i>gérants</i> at the opening of a new company restaurant, at the company’s headquarters (1960)	391
18.1. The polyolefins plant at Deer Park, Texas	406
18.2. A transport vehicle in the trona (natural soda ash) mines in Wyoming, United States	427
19.1. Research on fermentation in the Solvay laboratories in the 1980s	430
19.2. Aerial view of the site of Duphar at Weesp, the Netherlands	443
20.1. Construction of the peroxides plant at Map Tha Put in Thailand, 1980s	458
20.2. Daniel Janssen and H. E. Patrick Nothomb, visiting the king of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej, in 1989	472
21.1. The Executive Committee, with general product managers, as of 1 January 1995	488
21.2. Double-decker bus, with the slogan “Greenpeace is fooling itself – Greenpeace is fooling you – Solvay informs you”	504
21.3. The Devnya plant displayed on a Bulgarian banknote	509
22.1. Since 2004 Solvay has sponsored Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg’s Solar Impulse project	528
22.2. Solvay and BP executives, in August 2001, after concluding a crucial deal	538
23.1. Solvay leaders at the ceremony to introduce Solvay shares to the Paris Stock Exchange, 23 January 2012	558

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02480-9 - Solvay: History of a Multinational Family Firm

Kenneth Bertrams, Nicolas Coupain and Ernst Homburg

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Abbreviations

2,4-D	sodium salt of 2,4-dichloro-phenoxy acetic acid
ADL	Arthur D. Little
AEI	American Enterprise Institute
AG	Aktiengesellschaft (joint-stock company)
AIP	Application Integrity Programs
ARG	Aethylen Rohrleitungs-Gesellschaft
BAP	Société Bourguignonne d'Applications Plastiques
BEF	Belgian franc
BGB	Banque Générale Belge
BOI	Board of Investment (Thailand)
BPCC	By-Products Coke Corporation
CCPC	Corpus Christi Petrochemical Company
CEFIC	Conseil Européen des Fédérations de l'Industrie Chimique
CEO	chief executive officer
CFC	chlorofluorocarbons
CH	Swiss franc
CKA	Castner-Kellner Alkali Company
CKV	Chlor-Konventionsvertrag
CNSA	Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation
COIG	IG Farben Control Committee
COO	chief operations officer
CPC	Chemical Products Corporation
CRB	American Commission for Relief in Belgium
CRT	cathode-ray tubes
DCE	dichloroethane
DCSI	Direction Centrale des Systèmes Informatiques
DCT	Direction Centrale Technique
DGC	Direction Générale Commerciale
DGT	Direction Générale Technique
DM	Deutschmark
DMP	Direction des Matières Plastiques
DNF	Direction Nationale pour la France
DPC	Division des Produits Chimiques
DSA	Département Santé Animale (animal health)
DSC	Daehan Specialty Chemicals Co. Ltd.
DSW	Deutsche Solvay Werke
EBIT	earnings before interest and tax
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Community

Cambridge University Press

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Kenneth Bertrams, Nicolas Coupain and Ernst Homburg

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ECTFE	copolymer of ethylene and chlorotrifluoroethylene
EDC	ethylene dichloride
EEC	European Economic Community
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (United States)
ERT	European Round Table of Industrialists
ESW	Ebenseer Solvay Werke
EVC	European Vinyl Corporation
EVOH	(poly)ethylene vinylalcohol
FCF	Filatura Corti Fratelli
FDA	Food and Drug Administration (United States)
FEX	fabrication expérimentale
FF	French franc
FFC	Federal Furnace Corporation
FMC	Food Machinery and Chemical Corporation
FNRS	Fonds National pour la Recherche Scientifique (Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research)
GBU	global business unit
GmbH	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung (limited-liability company)
HCCH	hexachlorocyclohexane
HCFC	hydrochlorofluorocarbons
HDPE	high-density polyethylene
HFC	hydrofluorocarbons
IACS	International Association of Chemical Societies
ICI	Imperial Chemical Industries
IG	Interessengemeinschaft
KC	Kali-Chemie
KPIC	Korea Plastics Industry Corp.
LDPE	low-density polyethylene
LTM	Latéma
MCPA	sodium salt of 2-methyl 4-chloro phenoxy acetic acid
MEA	membrane-electrode assemblies
MES	Maison d'Ernest Solvay
MFA	copolymer trifluoroethylene and perfluoromethylvinyl ether
MHRA	Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (UK)
MSD	Merck, Sharp & Dohme
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement (United States, Canada, Mexico)
NAS	North American Solvay Inc.
NBD	New Business Development
NKF	Nederlandse Kabelfabriek
NoH	Neder-over-Heembeek
NSW	Nestomitzer Solvay Werke
NYSE	New York Stock Exchange
OLED	organic light-emitting diodes
OMV	Oesterreichische Mineralölverwaltung
OPV	organic photovoltaic
OSW	Oesterreichische Solvay-Werke Betriebsgesellschaft
OTC	over-the-counter (pharmaceuticals)
PAN	polyacrylonitril
PE	polyethylene
PET	polyethylene terephthalate

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations*

xvii

PFA	perfluoroalcoxy
PO	propylene oxide
PP	polypropylene
PPS	polyphenylen sulfide
PS	polystyrene
PTFE	polytetrafluoroethylene
PUR	polyurethane resin
PVC	polyvinyl chloride
PVDC	polyvinylidene chloride
PVDF	polyvinylidene fluoride
RAF	Red Army Faction
RBU	regional business unit
REBIT	recurrent earnings before interest and tax
RM	Reichsmark
ROE	return on equity
ROI	return on investment
RWM	Reichswirtschaftsministerium
SA	Société Anonyme (joint-stock company)
Sabed	Società Bario et Derivati
SAC	Solvay American Corporation, successor to SAIC
SAIC	Solvay American Investment Corporation, predecessor of SAC
SAIGS	Società Anonima Industriale Gomma Sintetica
SBA	Société Belge de l'Azote (et des Produits Chimiques du Marly)
SBB	Société Belge de Banque
SBE	Société Belge d'Electrochimie
SBU	strategic business unit
SEA	Solvay (South East Asia) Pte, Ltd.
SGB	Société Générale de Banque
SIR	Système d'Information Rapide
SPC	Solvay Process Company (United States)
SSC	Semet-Solvay Company (United States)
STMP	Société de Transformation des Matières Plastiques
TEL	tetraethyl lead
THAN	Thompson-Hayward Agriculture & Nutrition Company
TNT	trinitrotoluene
TQM	total quality management
TrB	Direction (Transformation) Bâtiments
TrC	Direction (Transformation) Calandrage
TrE	Direction (Transformation) Emballage
TSAC	The Solvay American Corporation
UAC	United Alkali Company
UCB	Union Chimique Belge
ULB	Université Libre de Bruxelles
VC	vinyl chloride
VC ₂	vinylidene chloride
VCM	vinyl chloride monomer
VF ₂	vinylidene fluoride
VUB	Vrije Universiteit Brussel
WCC	Wyandotte Chemicals Corporation

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FIGURE I.I. Four generations of Solvay leaders: Ernest (1838–1922), Armand (1865–1930), Ernest-John (1895–1972), and Jacques (1920–2010). (Solvay Archives.)