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Dear Professor Lederberg,

I am writing in response to your letter, which has been forwarded to me by Professor Arnold Thackray.

Little has been written about I. G. Farben's links with chemical weapons in World War II. The most detailed account can be found in Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, A Higher Form of Killing (London, 1982). I.G. had discovered the deadly effect of Tabun and Sarin before the war during a research project to develop organophosphorus insecticides (e.g. Parathion). Factories to produce these nerve "gases" were erected for the state by an I. G. Farben construction company during the war. The company preferred not to own the factories itself. I can send you more information, from the post-war intelligence reports, if you would like it.

The episode you mention is an interesting one and I referred to it in a letter about chemical weapons to Chemistry in Britain in 1984. The most commonly cited source is Joseph Borkin, The Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben (New York: Free Press, 1978), 131-2. Borkin, in turn, cites Trials of War Criminals before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals, volume VII, 1044-5. This is an edited transcript of U.S. v. I. G. Farben, tried at Nuernberg in 1947-8. The relevant passage is an extract of the direct examination of Otto Ambros by his advocate, Dr. Hoffmann. I enclose a xerox of these pages. The defense exhibit mentioned on page 1043 has no connection with the meeting between Ambros and Hitler. I have an incomplete microfilm of U.S. v. I. G. Farben, but have not located this extract as yet. Nevertheless, it is clear that the only source for this story is Ambros's unsupported testimony at Nuernberg. I will contact the Imperial War Museum to enquire if any independent record of this meeting exists. As this will take some time, I thought I had better let you know how it stands at present.

Unfortunately, I will be away between April 28 and June 14, so it may be July before I can return to the search. However, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can help you in any way.

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Peter J. T. Morris,
Royal Society-British Academy Postdoctoral
Research Fellow in the History of Science

cc A. Thackray