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### **“BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OFTEN DRAMATIC” – CORTICOIDS AND GERMAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

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Cortisone – a crucial element of science-oriented medicine, a key to viewing the human as an organism obeying chemical-physical laws and feedback mechanisms. Hardly a research accomplishment in the field of medicine has received such broad attention.

Essential findings were published in 1949; the “beneficial effects often dramatic” were absolutely celebrated at conferences. The socioeconomic effects in post-war society were tremendous. Thousands of substances were synthesized and tested – using empirically rather than rationally substantiated methods.

Ever since the early 1950s, Merck in Darmstadt was looking to “join the American hormone pool”. Licenses were acquired, yet the agreements were expensive. The Americans were working with biotechnology, with the highly complex technology of modern fermenting methods. Was it possible to manage this on one’s own? The ambition was there – but only few substances were pursued up to market readiness.

The business was complex and risky; the therapy received critical ratings. Unclear combination preparations, undifferentiated indications, contradictory findings – this was all picked up by aggressive media. A conflict developed over the basic concepts of the health care system at the crossroads of state, professional, economic and private interests.