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Innovative and customer-oriented

However skepticism quickly gave way to the realization that the people from Mainz meant it when they gave assurances that they wanted to keep the Jena company. New product areas, such as ampoule production, were transferred to Jena, as was in due course the world’s first and only production plant for the manufacture of borosilicate float glass. Investment ran over the hundred million (DM) mark. Still it took years for the company to reach the profit zone.

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### Radical cuts

Refurbishment of the original factory in Jena started with Schott’s support in 1990. The first stage was the demolition of much of the structural fabric. Very little of it could be saved, since 40 years of socialism with virtually no investment in the factory buildings had left their mark. 225,000 cubic meters of rubble had to be removed from the site. This took 5060 truckloads. Laid out in a line, that would have stretched 32 miles (51 kilometers). That marked the start of the long journey from “glass museum to modern factory”, remarked Meyer. After the demolition of the buildings came the layoffs. 3,700 employees took early retirement or were made redundant. This was not the only attempt to run the business economically.

However, it still ended up operating in the red and suffering an unexpected slump in sales. “With monetary union our traditional markets in the east disappeared completely,” says Meyer. Overnight the monopoly the factory had formerly enjoyed in the eastern bloc was replaced by a total lack of buyers. In spite of economic misgivings and obvious uncertainties, Schott decided to return to Jena. In 1991, Schott took over 51 percent of the company’s shares and the management of the business.

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respond to our customers’ wishes”, says Wolfgang Meyer. All the different stove manufacturers could ask us to make “Ceran” cooktop panels using their own particular design. “We could even put a passport photograph of the cook’s spouse on it, if desired”, says Meyer with a grin. For the employees in Jena it is clear that the only way they can survive in the face of competition is to continually produce new products that meet the market’s requirements. They put their trust in Schott’s research and development and see themselves as fully integrated in the group. Schott Jenaer Glas is the world’s only manufacturer using the Microfloat process to produce heat and chemical resistant borosilicate glass for such applications as biotechnology, space exploration, microsystems engineering and high-grade fire-resistant glass.