

BOGGE

A Family Business
from Bielefeld

Boge – the name stands for a family which has lived in Bielefeld for several generations and for the concern founded by Otto Boge in his home town in 1907.

This book traces the development of the family and the firm against the backdrop of German and –above all – Bielefeld's history, from the imperial era right through to the twenty-first century. Starting with the founder's courage and burning desire for independence, it describes the aim of four generations of management to preserve and develop the company for future generations. Technical inventions, business acumen and the adaptation of the company to economic and political changes have shaped the decisions of those involved.

‘The Boge family business is helping to make Germany a winner in terms of globalisation’, writes Federal Minister of Economics and Technology, Michael Glos, in his message of congratulations. Words of praise for the company also come from the Minister of Innovation, Science, Research and Technology of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Dr. Andreas Pinkwart. ‘Boge is a prime example of vibrant and innovative entrepreneurship.’ This book also serves to illustrate the reasons why family-run businesses are often more successful in the marketplace than other types of companies.

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Jürgen Büschenfeld

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**A Family Business
from Bielefeld**

Verlag für Regionalgeschichte
Bielefeld 2007

German National Library, bibliographic information
A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the German National Library;
detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet under <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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ISBN 978-3-89534-707-8

Typeset by ks-grafikdesign, Herford

Printed by Druckerei Tiemann, Bielefeld

Printed on ageing-resistant paper in accordance with ISO 9706

Printed in Germany

Contents

Greetings	8
Foreword	10
I. 100 years of Boge – Four Generations of a Family Business	12
II. Favourable Starting Conditions and Bad Times – Perspectives up to the End of World War I	24
<i>Periods of growth – City and economy around 1900</i>	26
Early days – The Otto Boge commercial enterprise	29
<i>Closing ranks and potential conflict – World War I and ‘revolutionary times’</i>	32
Otto Boge KG – From commercial to industrial concern	36
III. From One Crisis to Another – The Turbulent Years of the Weimar Republic	40
<i>Coup threat and inflation – Political tensions and tests of economic strength</i>	42
Business successes and conflicts – Otto Boge and the Limited Partners	44
<i>The ‘Golden Twenties’ – Reality or illusion?</i>	46
Motorcycle venture – Between boom and depression	48
<i>Optimism and radicalisation – The end of the Weimar Republic in Bielefeld</i>	53
Hanging by a thread – Bankruptcy or consolidation?	56
IV. ‘Gleichschaltung’ and Conformity – Developments during the Nazi Era	62
<i>Political upheaval – National Socialists in power</i>	64
Compressed air, a growth market – Profitable business and strong competition	66
<i>Exclusion and keeping in step – Economy on the upturn</i>	69
Successful growth – Big plans – Strokes of fate	72
<i>Discrimination and persecution – War and destruction</i>	80
The war – Otto Boge KG as an armaments factory	84

V. From Community Spirit in the Ruins to Consumer Society – Developments in the Post-War Era	90
<i>Years of ruin – Politics and economy following total defeat</i>	92
Barter transactions – Otto Boge KG after World War II	96
<i>New beginnings – First elections and currency reform</i>	99
Hard fought-for new start – From bartering to record turnovers	104
<i>Urban planning and economic miracle – Bielefeld in the 1950s</i>	109
Setting the course – Clever investments and fortunate personnel policy	112
VI. ‘Limits to Growth’ – New Development Opportunities	116
<i>A shortage of space – Local-government reorganisation in Bielefeld</i>	118
Success brings growth problems – Boge in the 1960s	120
<i>Energy crisis and structural change – Bielefeld’s economy in the 1970s</i>	126
Successfully bucking the trend – Boge in the 1970s	128
<i>Growth under fire – Controversial issues in local politics</i>	134
An unmistakable profile – Compressors and more	138
<i>Pushing the limits to growth – Bielefeld since the 1990s</i>	141
Worldwide challenges – Regional roots	144
VII. Responsibility for the Family; Family Accountability – Taking Stock	150
VIII. From Bielefeld to the World – An Interview with Wolf D. Meier-Scheuven and Rolf Struppek on Management between 1995 and 2007	156
Sources and Bibliography	172
Picture Credits	174
The Boge Logo through the Years	176

Greetings

Made in Germany: a synonym worldwide for quality and reliability. And the reason why Germany is the world export champion. We owe this, above all, to German mechanical engineering and plant construction – both key industries. These are the motors which drive the German economy. As manufacturers of investment goods, they form the technological backbone of the German national economy.

German manufacturers of compressors, compressed air and vacuum technology play a major role here. They constitute a significant supply industry, not only within the mechanical engineering and plant-construction sector, but also for industry as a whole.

BOGE KOMPRESSOREN, a medium-sized and still family run business is now celebrating its 100th anniversary. As a leading supplier of compressors and compressed air system solutions, based in the region of Bielefeld/East Westphalia/Lippe, the company has made a considerable contribution to the German compressor, compressed air and vacuum technology industry. While doing so, BOGE has focused not only on the domestic market, but on foreign markets, as well.

The high proportion of exports shows that this family recognises globalisation as an opportunity. As a result, BOGE is vigorously developing its world-wide presence via sales subsi-

diaries and trading partners. The BOGE family business is helping to make Germany a winner in terms of globalisation.

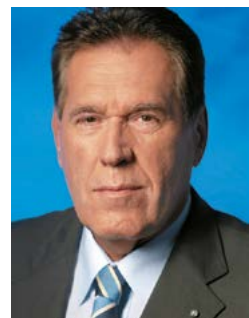
An important factor in the continued economic growth in Germany is that companies focus on their employees. Their knowledge, motivation, hard work and dependability are the most important resource of any company when it comes to adding value. At BOGE, the great value of well-trained, highly motivated staff was recognised early on. Training of young people is therefore considered to be very important. For many years, BOGE has distinguished itself as an excellent company for taking on trainees.

I would like to congratulate the company sincerely on the occasion of its anniversary and hope that in the next 100 years it will continue to make its mark on the mechanical engineering sector and on Germany as a location of industry and commerce.

Yours

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Glos', followed by a stylized flourish.

Michael Glos MdB (Member of the Bundestag),
Federal Minister of Economics and Technology



I would like to congratulate BOGE most warmly on its 100th birthday. The company and its staff can look back with pride at the achievements of the past and take an ambitious view of the future.

On the one hand, BOGE KOMPRESSOREN is one of the traditional companies which is firmly rooted in the mechanical engineering stronghold in East Westphalia/Lippe; on the other hand, the brand BOGE extends far beyond the boundaries of North Rhine-Westphalia. The company has developed into the largest German producer of ultra-modern compressors, whose production is just as demanding as the industries in which it is deployed.

BOGE has now been a family run business for four generations. And the best proof that the innovative region of North Rhine-Westphalia can be confident that it is precisely the medium-sized enterprises which safeguard modern industrial sites and develop them further: because they offer secure jobs; because they perceive globalisation as an opportunity; because they react quickly and flexibly to Industry developments and put technological advances into practice.

This company sets great store by innovation. It seeks to develop the company itself, its products and those who work in it. You could call

that shaping the future! And, as a matter of fact, so is the commitment to supporting up-and-coming engineers; take for example, the way BOGE co-operates with schools to win over pupils for the exciting engineering profession. The fact that this commitment to the next generation is a management matter at BOGE is a good indication of entrepreneurial foresight and willingness to take on responsibility.

BOGE is a prime example of vibrant and innovative entrepreneurship and a true ambassador for the innovative region of North Rhine-Westphalia. I would like to wish the company and its employees good fortune and every success in the future.

Yours



Dr. Andreas Pinkwart,
(Professor of Business Administration)
Minister of Innovation, Science, Research and
Technology of the Federal State of North Rhine-
Westphalia



Foreword

If I have seen further, it was by standing on the shoulders of giants', Sir Isaac Newton wrote in a letter in 1676. In this statement about the reasons for his growing insight, Newton describes graphically the way in which a result develops out of a series of small steps forward, whereby each of these builds on what is already in place – a legacy of its predecessors. This is also true of the development of our family business.

The fact that, in the hundredth year since the founding of the company on 7 November 1907, we will turn over more than one hundred million euros and employ more than 550 people worldwide is due to the efforts of our predecessors.

The achievement of founder Otto Boge, his desire for independence, his ambitious aim to improve life for himself and his children, his courage and initiative at just the right time, his tireless thinking and working for the company, the sacrifices and indeed the fear and insecurity, which he spared neither himself nor his family, are of an exemplary nature and deserve our greatest respect.

Otto Boge was not afraid of failure and, like his successors, was intent on passing on his achievements to those who followed.

Due respect should also be paid to Hermine Boge, Ella and Ernst Thomas, Mathilde and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven.

Hermine Boge was keen to preserve her husband's life's work and, upon his death, made the wise decision of placing the running of the business in the reliable hands of her son-in-law. Ernst Thomas was not only able to preserve the company with which he had been entrusted, but led it highly successfully through economic crises, war, collapse and reconstruction. In over fifty years at the company, he was a trusted partner to his wife Ella and his sister-in-law Mathilde, who kept the family together and, as shareholders, always had the continued existence of the company in mind. Finally, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven was the driving force behind the modernisation of the company. His time in charge saw far-reaching product innovations, as well as the works' extension and the building of a new factory.

The actions of our predecessors have always been shaped by the intention to safeguard the position of the company and to pass it on to the next generation. In the process, each generation was careful in its handling of the assumed task, without losing sight of the need for adjustments.

For, as Gustav Mahler once said, 'Tradition is handing down the fire, not praying to the ashes.'

Each generation of the family has always acted in the knowledge that the company was in fact only on loan from its children and operated on the principle that they should pass on the company in at least as good a state as that in which they themselves had taken it over.

Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel wrote recently 'Family businesses are at the heart of the social market economy. They stand in particular for high motivation, entrepreneurial boldness and perseverance. Owners who think about the long term and who are socially committed are the secret of their success.'

And Harvard economic historian David Landes has established 'that one of the greatest strategic advantages a company can have is its lines of descent'.

We are of the opinion that this is also the case with our family business.

This book is dedicated to Hermine and Otto Boge, Ella and Ernst Thomas, Mathilde, Ernst and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven. We wish to honour them and show our gratitude by telling their story in this book, thereby ensuring that their names and achievements will not be forgotten.

We also realise, however, that the success of the company rests to a large extent upon the work of its loyal and committed employees. We are much obliged to these mostly long-serving employees who have supported the company in such an exceptional way.

These people are the giants on whose shoulders we are able to move the company forwards, before it is our turn to pass it on.

Bielefeld, 7 November 2007

On behalf of the family



Wolf Dietrich Meier-Scheuven



I. 100 Years of Boge – Four Generations of a Family Business



Company headquarters for over 40 years:
Boge in Meller Strasse (1950s photo).

Otto Boge, founder of the company, was born on 27 April 1878 as the youngest of five sons to Florenz Arnold Boge and his wife Hanna Frederike in Bielefeld. One brother died in early childhood, a second as a young man at the age of just 29. Florenz Arnold Boge, a farmer and disabled ex-service man, ran a restaurant in Bielefeld. Perhaps this is what gave sons Karl, Adolf and Otto, by nature endowed with courage and a thirst for action, the desire to build an independent existence.

While Karl Boge was building up a coal dealership in Bielefeld, Adolf and Otto Boge were demonstrating at an early age their interest in technology, in particular metal processing and mechanical engineering. Bielefeld had already taken its first steps towards industrialisation and, following the large factories in the textile industry, the metal sector developed into an important economic factor. Bahnhofstrasse became the "centre of a new industrial district, largely occupied by the metal industry".

Otto learnt the trade of metalworker at Gildemeister in Bielefeld and went on to work for various Bielefeld companies. Adolf completed his training as a lathe operator. Thereafter, he left Bielefeld and worked during the 1890s at the Solingen metal goods factory of

Weyersberg & Kirschbaum.

It was not only an interest in technology which the brothers had in common; they both had ambitious career plans. Following their years as trainees, both had the aim of standing on their own feet by founding their own companies. Solingen was just as good a place to do this as Bielefeld. Here, too, the metal and mechanical engineering industries were among the growth sectors. In 1903, Adolf Boge started out by founding 'Boge & Kasten, Solingen'; to this day, the acronym 'BKS' which can be found on countless cylinder and safety locks relates back to the company. In the beginning he produced door-closers, a product which he had developed with his brother, Otto.

Otto Boge, too, was busily pursuing his goal of self-employment. Through the window of his basement workplace at the Dürkopp factory, he could see the elegant shoes and spats of Nikolaus Dürkopp's customers and business partners – some getting out of carriages – as they entered the building. This experience of difference in status was from then on the motivation which drove him to 'make something out of himself'. The door-closer product was also a step towards independence for Otto. In 1907, he began by starting a small commercial enterprise and mar-

keted the product manufactured in his brother's factory in what was then the region of Minden.



In April 1901, Otto Boge married twenty-year-old seamstress Hermine Puls, who lived a few doors down the road. The young couple moved to

42 Heinrichstrasse. Two daughters, Mathilde and Ella, were born in 1901 and 1903 respectively. Otto Boge was a loving father and devoted husband, despite the hard work which faced him, particularly after the founding of the company in 1907. The children enjoyed a good education. Both daughters went initially to the Luisenschule, set up as a secondary school for girls only in Bielefeld in 1909. The company was doing well. In 1911, Otto Boge bought the house at 89 Ravensberger Strasse, which from then on was also the company headquarters. From 1913 on, Otto Boge also had subagencies in Hamburg and Hanover. Things were improving continuously, when the war put a stop to this trend. The daughters were 11 and 13 years old when World War I broke out, and their father, although already in his late thirties, was called up for duty.

Otto Boge was stationed on the Eastern Front, in Poland, in a workshop for army vehicles. Because of his technical skills, he was made responsible for the repair of motor vehicles.

It was not until 1919 that Otto Boge could pick up the threads of his successful small business, whose activities had been suspended during the war. He continued to trade in the door-closers manufactured in his brother's Solingen factory and, at the same time, even used his car as a taxi. It was his time in the military, however, that had kindled in his mind new business ideas for producing specialised tools for the repair of motor vehicles. Otto Boge was an inventive genius who, thanks to his well-developed manual skills, was able to combine ideas with practical applications and develop workable solutions. Working in close collaboration with his brother Adolf and 'BKS' in Solingen, he was even able to patent some of his ideas for specialised tools.

Within just a few years the purely commercial enterprise at 54 Hermannstrasse in Bielefeld was transformed – once again collaborating with his



Top left: 1912: Otto and Hermine Boge with their daughters Mathilde and Ella.

Top right: Before the outbreak of war: Otto Boge in reservist's uniform.

Around 1916: Otto Boge repairing army vehicles as a soldier.

brother – into a small industrial business with steadily growing staff numbers. In order to meet the young industrialist's need for capital, Adolf Boge and his partner Carl Bremshey joined Otto Boge's rapidly expanding company as Limited Partners. As early as 1921, the fledgling company moved into premises bought on Siechenmarschstrasse, thereby considerably extending its production and office space.

During a visit in 1920 to her uncle, Adolf Boge, in Solingen, Ella Boge met a friend of her cousin, Adolf Boge jr., Ernst Thomas. Ernst Thomas was born in 1895, the son of mechanic Karl Thomas and his wife Lydia. His father ran a small business in Solingen. Ernst Thomas attended school until the end of the seventh year and then began his commercial training at Solingen's cast-iron foundry. Having completed his training, his resourcefulness soon made him indispensable. He represented the company on business trips to customers as far away as Berlin. During World War I, his superior saw to it that Ernst Thomas was discharged from the army after basic training so that he could continue to serve the company until the end of the war.

In 1922 Ella Boge and Ernst Thomas married. Their son, Hans-Eberhard, was born in 1924, followed by a daughter, Helga. Otto Boge was

delighted to have a businessman in the family and urged his son-in-law to move to Bielefeld with his young wife. He, however, felt obliged to his father and his business, and it therefore took some time before the persistent pleadings of his father-in-law were successful in bringing Ernst Thomas and his wife to Bielefeld. Otto Boge KG in the meantime had rented more space and at times employed 120 people.

In the years that followed, Ernst Thomas became the most valuable part of Otto Boge's company. Ingenuity and craftsmanship on the one hand, teamed with commercial and marketing skills on the other complemented each other perfectly – especially when business as a motorcycle manufacturer got off to a good start, but also soon afterwards when times were hard during the crisis which hit the entire motorcycle industry and which led the company to the brink of bankruptcy. From the early 1920s onwards, Otto Boge and his son-in-law experienced all the ups and downs of business together.

In 1924, the eldest daughter Mathilde married a secondary-school teacher, Dr. Ernst Meier, who taught for many years at Bielefeld's Helmholtz Secondary School, later Helmholtz Grammar School. From 1939, the family went under the name Meier-Scheuven. The two children,

1922: Otto Boge's daughter Ella marries Solingen businessman Ernst Thomas. In the centre, 3rd from the left: Otto Boge; back row, 2nd from the left: Adolf Boge.





Wolfgang and Doris, were born in 1925 and 1926 respectively. Ernst Meier (-Scheuven) was not active in the business, but his opinions were highly valued by the company founder, whose thoughts revolved around the enterprise, even in private. And of course, during the time of crisis in the second half of the 1920s, Otto Boge was also able to fall back on his son-in-law's savings, from his salary as a teacher, in the form of a loan.

Even at that time, Otto Boge was providing for the sustained development of the company for the next generation and beyond. For this reason, he gave his daughters a share in the business. A partnership agreement stipulated that both should be entered in the notary's register as silent partners, with a share of 10,000 reichsmark each. This contract made it clear for the first time that the family business was to be of a permanent nature. Otto Boge's daughters committed themselves by contract to allow future profits yielded by their shares to be retained by

the company.

At this point, the company had already withdrawn from the motorcycle business and, aside from the production of tools, had begun building compressors. In economic terms, things were looking up, and Otto Boge had been endeavouring for some time to organise the company in such a way that, if anything should happen, there would be no question that it would pass to his descendents. Otto Boge and Ernst Thomas therefore urged Adolf Boge and his partner Carl Bremshey to relinquish their positions as Limited Partners in the company.

In 1928, Adolf Boge also sold his own business to the American company Jale & Thowne. At 54, he may have thought about retiring. He even moved to the aptly named 'Altglück' near Hennef – an allusion perhaps to the idea of happiness in old age. However, he didn't remain idle for long. In 1929, he took a share in a tool-making factory which he then bought in 1930. One year later Adolf Boge founded 'Boge & Sohn Kommanditgesellschaft'.

As early as 1932, Boge shock absorbers were being built into cars, and a further Boge success story began.

Top: 1936: Otto Boge amongst his family
(from left to right: Ernst Thomas, Hermine Boge,
Otto Boge, daughters Ella and Mathilde, Dr. Ernst Meier).



As before, the brothers discussed their business ideas and activities. Hence, at this time there were references in the Bielefeld company documents to an applica-

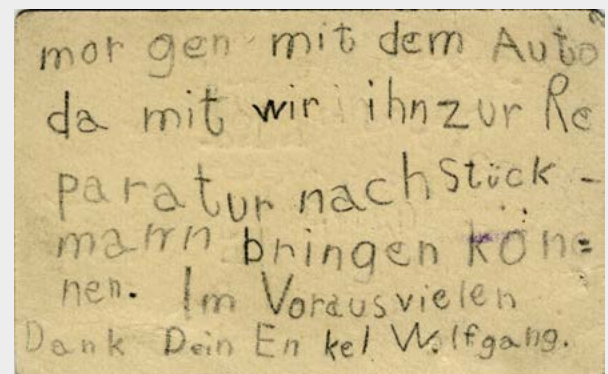
tion made by Otto Boge for a patent on shock absorbers. It can be assumed that his technical know-how and commitment were at least a great help to his brother. After the difficult 1920s, which in economic terms – but for a few exceptions – were anything but ‘golden’ years, the compressor business developed surprisingly well from 1927 onwards. Compared to a number of other larger firms, the company suffered only minor consequences as a result of the world economic crisis. When, some years later, Otto had to expand his flourishing company, Adolf Boge helped him in return with a loan to the value of 40,000 reichsmark to buy the factory site. Construction of the new premises soon got under way. The move there was scheduled for the beginning of 1938, and Otto Boge worked tirelessly on the building site and on plans for

construction of the new works. Pneumonia, contracted while working in the windowless rooms of the building’s shell, thwarted the plans of the restless entrepreneur, who had fought for his business for thirty years, yet had been able to enjoy the fruits of his labours for only a few of them. He did not live to see the move to the new factory. Otto Boge died on Christmas Eve 1937 at the age of only 59.

When, in May 1938, the estate of the company founder was settled, his widow Hermine Boge and the two families – Thomas and Meier[-Scheuven] – agreed upon who should manage the company. The owner was now Hermine Boge; her two daughters would retain their positions in the company as silent partners, and Ernst Thomas would become the ‘procurator and manager with right of single signature’ – to apply the term used to describe the management position during the Nazi era.



Dr. Ernst Meier[-Scheuven] was granted the right ‘to join the company at any time’. However, he made no use of this right. He remained



1920s: Entrepreneur with a sense of family. Otto Boge fulfils a good many of his grandsons' wishes: Eberhard Thomas (above) and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven (below).

a teacher at the Helmholtz Secondary School. For decades Ernst Thomas remained the family's sole representative in the management of the company.

Whereas the second generation had to suddenly take over the management of the company, the third generation was to be carefully prepared for its role in the business. Eberhard Thomas, born in 1924, and his cousin Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven, born in 1925, were destined to run the company one day. The boys, who got on very well, were seen within the family as the ideal team to take over management duties. Both boys had grown up in and around the company. They had a close relationship with their grandfather, who fulfilled many of their wishes and was proud to lead them by the hand around the factory.

After primary school, both attended Helmholtz Secondary School. In September 1940, they began their first holiday jobs in the company. At the suggestion of Ernst Thomas, the boys left school in 1941, without taking their 'Abitur' school-leaving examinations. Ernst Thomas had managed finally to persuade his reluctant brother-in-law. The cousins were to receive the same training, with a more practical and commercial emphasis, to enable them to work for

the company on an equal footing. Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven changed to the Municipal Commercial School in Bielefeld, in the 'one-year commercial college (technical college)' programme. Upon completion, both began apprenticeships in the company as 'machine fitter trainees' in conjunction with courses at the technical college.

Soon, however, the years of preparation for a subsequent management role with Boge came to an abrupt halt. World War II began in 1939. Eberhard Thomas, aged 18 in 1942, was called up initially into the 'Reichsarbeitsdienst' (Reich Labour Service) and, six months later, into the army. His cousin Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven followed him one year after that. While Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven was lucky enough to go through various periods of training which spared him having to go into combat, Eberhard Thomas fell in battle in Russia, on 26 August 1943, at the age of just 19. This was a devastating loss for the family. It is astonishing that despite this, Ernst Thomas was able to lead the company with great vigour through the war, the



Left: 1936: The team of the future: cousins Eberhard Thomas and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven.

Right: around 1942: Eberhard Thomas as a young soldier.

grinding poverty of the post-war years and the long periods of growth in the 1950s and '60s. Quite possibly it was the death of his son which drove him to throw himself so wholeheartedly into his work. In any case, it would have been an only too human reaction.

In January 1945, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven was sent to a British prisoner of war camp, from which he was released in September 1945. After a period of recuperation he worked from November 1945 until the end of March 1947, initially for Boge. After that he studied mechanical engineering at the Engineering College in Lage/Lippe and graduated as a 'Maschinen-Ingenieur' (Mechanical Engineer) in August 1949. On 1 October 1949 he began working for the company again, this time as a construction engineer. A few months later, Marianne Dahl took up a position in management at Boge. Wilhelm Laucks had taken her on with the words, 'If you conduct yourself well, you could be at Boge until retirement'. Marianne Dahl and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven got to know each other better and were married in January 1957. Their first son, Eberhard, was born in September 1957, the second, Wolf Dietrich, in August 1959. Wolfgang's sister Doris had married harbour construction engineer Karl-Heinz Boe in 1956 and moved to Hamburg. The Boe marriage pro-

duced two children: Johann in 1956 and Antje in 1959.

In March 1958, Hermine Boge died at the age of 77. Her shares in the company were taken over by her daughters Mathilde and Ella. Even though the women of the Boge family had to leave business activities largely to the men, as was the custom at the time, they were nevertheless important initiators, communicators and opinion leaders, and, in their capacity as shareholders, occasionally involved in decision-making.

Guided by Ernst Thomas, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven began gradually taking on more responsibility, initially for product development, later for marketing, until he finally became authorised signatory. In the mid-1960s, Ernst Thomas began to increasingly withdraw from the day-to-day running of the company, for health reasons. At the same time the family was also setting the course for the next generation in other areas. Mathilde Meier-Scheuven and Ella Thomas transferred capital shares in 1969 to their children Doris Boe, Helga Thomas and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven. Doris Boe did not live to see the continuing growth of the company, the purchase of the 54,000 square metre site on the edge of Bielefeld and the construc-

1951: Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven now actively involved in the company.



tion of a completely new company complex in 1973–1974. She became seriously ill and died in 1972. Her company shares were inherited by her children Johann and Antje. At the end of October 1975, Ernst Thomas gave up his position as General Manager at the age of 80 and, with Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven as Managing Director having sole power of representation, the third generation finally took over at the helm. Ernst Thomas died in July 1980, shortly

before his 85th birthday. For over 50 years he had supported and shaped the company with vision and initiative.



The nature of the business challenges to be faced now may have been different in the days of Ernst Thomas and Otto Boge, but there were definitely still questions of fundamental importance to be answered, and the right course

to be set for the development of the company. Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven vigorously pushed ahead with product development. At first a sales subsidiary was established in Belgium. Taking into account the strong growth of the company and the heavy burden resting upon Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven, a Commercial Manager from outside the family was appointed in 1979. In

1983–84 the second phase of construction in Bielefeld-Jöllenbeck followed, bringing once again a considerable expansion to the production area. In 1989, a second subsidiary was set up in the Netherlands, heralding the onset of globalisation. In addition, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven committed himself to establishing a sales network in the former East German states. He was at this point in time 64 years old and was thinking about passing on the expanding company to the fourth generation. Gradually he withdrew from the day-to-day running of the business. In 1992, a second external General Manager was taken on until 2001, for the duration of the transition period from father to son.

In the meantime, it was clear that Wolf Dietrich Meier-Scheuven would follow in his father's footsteps. He graduated in 1989 with a degree in Psychology and in 1990 with one in Business Management. He arranged with his father that he should first spend a few years gaining practical experience in other companies.

In 1995, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven left the company and handed over management and shares in the business to his son Wolf Dietrich. At the handover, he was able to leave his son a well-established family business. Since the mid-1990s the fourth 'Boge Generation' has borne

Top: As successor to Otto Boge, Ernst Thomas shaped the company.

Mid-1990s: From one generation to the next: Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven hands over to his son, Wolf Dietrich.



responsibility at the head of the company, together with General Manager Rolf Struppek, who took over from the previous external Commercial Manager. During this time, foreign trade has developed enormously, and the export ratio has risen from 25 to 60 per cent. Boge has adapted to the globalised world and acquired a leading position in the world market for the supply of compressed air.

At their deaths in 1999 and 2002 respectively, Ella Thomas and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven left their respective children, Helga and Wolf Dietrich, a company with a great future ahead of it. Foreign trade, in particular, was to be continually expanded. Here, it was no longer just a question of piston, screw and turbo compressors, but of system solutions for compressed air supplies, of the planning and construction of customer-specific plants and of energy-efficient control processes.

Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven had conveyed to his son the objective of a successful family business formulated by his predecessors - that the company should be passed on to the next generation in at least as good a shape as which it was taken over. This opens up opportunities for the (currently) five descendents of Otto Boge in the fifth generation.

The company is underlining its commitment to the city of Bielefeld and the region by currently planning a further construction phase and making additional future-oriented investments in Bielefeld as a business location. The company is well aware of where its roots are. The Boge story has always played against the backdrop of the city of Bielefeld and its economic development. This close connection is the justification behind this book. It puts the phases of a changing 100-year company history into the context of 100 years of civic history, and illustrates 100 years of Boge in Bielefeld.

The current Boge production site in Bielefeld-Jöllenbeck.





II. Favourable Starting Conditions and Bad Times – Perspectives up to the End of World War I



1911: The family home at 89 Ravensberger Strasse. Hermine Boge and the children Mathilde and Ella. The sign to the left of the front door reads 'Specialist for door-closers, Otto Boge, Telephone 1536'.

Periods of growth – City and economy around 1900

Bielefeld 1907: The city was booming. Since the middle of the 19th century, the population had risen from a modest 10,000 to over 75,000. Once the first steps into industrialisation had been taken (Vorwärts Spinning Mill, 1851; Ravensberg Spinning Mill, 1857; Mechanical Weaving Mill, 1864) the city drew the poorer classes among the rural population like a magnet. After all, it offered the hope of work, something which was no longer to be found in the countryside. The 'emancipation of the peasantry' at the beginning of the 19th century saw the lowering of the minimum legal age for marriage among the rural population. More children were born and, above all, more children survived the first critical years of life, thanks to the improvement in health standards. The corresponding migration of people into the cities caused the populations there to increase rapidly.

Population growth in Bielefeld
1850-1914

Year	Population
1852	10.637
1861	13.218
1871	21.803
1875	26.377
1880	30.679
1885	34.931
1890	39.950
1895	47.455
1900	63.046
1905	71.796
1910	78.380
1914	82.580

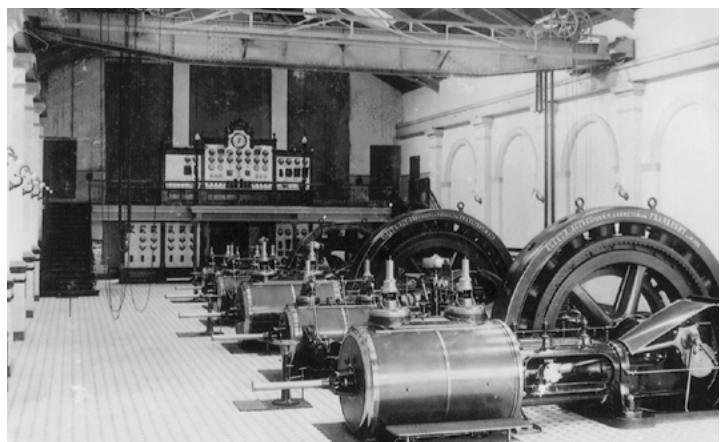
Source: Karl Ditt (1982)

Around 1902: In 1900, Bielefeld gets its own electricity supply (Pictured: Machine room of the power station.)

The face of the city of Bielefeld changed too, as never before in history. The cramped, small-scale layout once dictated by the position of the city walls had long since disappeared. Reformed tax and land laws had made for rapid expansion of cities. Even before 1900, Bielefeld had grown far beyond its original boundaries. The division into private plots of land which had previously been used jointly by the city's residents opened the door to new land-use opportunities. From the 1850s onwards, industrial sites were established and new residential areas were built in the former 'Feldmark' area.

Every aspiring industrial city faced the same kind of problems. Conditions dictated by accelerated growth meant that the concept 'city' had, to a certain extent, to be re-invented.

Above all, it was possible to emphasise the contemporary socio-political aspects of the urbanisation process (with its varied infrastructure demands such as the supply of gas, water and electricity) by aiming to provide for the existential needs of all citizens with the aid of publicly funded or subsidised institutions. Orientation according to the 'common good' played a very important role. Hence, moderate pricing policies were aimed at ensuring access to supplies of energy and drinking water for the poorer sections of society.





Around 1905: The Municipal Theatre was built in 1904, as was the Town Hall.

Civic life also had to be completely reorganised with regard to waste and sewage disposal, transport and mobility, street cleaning, public health, hygiene and leisure. Cultural institutions, such as the Municipal Theatre, were of enormous importance, and the expansion of schools and the entire edu-

cation system had become urgent necessities. Clubs, societies and organised sport – gymnastics clubs in particular – enjoyed a significant upturn in popularity, as well.

Modernisation measures on all levels offered not only practical advantages to the social lives of many people, but, in the medium term, also contributed decisively to a radical change of thinking and a new urbane lifestyle. The immigrants from the surrounding countryside had become townspeople. Industrialisation had also completely changed the previously rather static economic structure of the city. In the decades

after 1900, Bielefeld still retained its close links with linen and its vital and characteristic textile industry, though it was no longer textiles alone which were responsible for the city's increasing wealth. Meanwhile, the metal industry and mechanical engineering had made their mark, too. As far back as 1863, Th. Calow & Co. had established an iron foundry and machine factory in Bahnhofstrasse, which produced, in addition to special machinery for the textile and leather industries, steam-driven engines. At 'Kupferhammer' in Brackwede K. & Th. Möller began operating an iron foundry, boiler shop and machine factory in 1864. Here, too, steam engines and steam-boilers and also special machinery for a number of branches of industry were produced.

'Made in Bielefeld' meant first of all, sewing machines and later on bicycles, those innovative products which found buyers all over Germany and which made for a sizeable increase in the number of jobs in industry. Around 1910, for example, Dürkopp alone employed over 3,500 people.

Together Dürkopp, Anker, Koch's Adler and Baer & Rempel accounted for the fine reputation of Bielefeld's mechanical engineering products. Cash registers were to follow, and soon afterwards motorcycles. For a short time, Dürkopp

Number of workers in the major Bielefeld sewing-machine factories 1875-1910

Year	Baer & Rempel	Koch & Co.	Anker-Werke	Dürkopp
1873-76	125	106	70	250
1879-80	90	141	130	300
1884-85	150	205	230	670
1890-91	266	267	not known	1,000
1895	394	311	589	1,856
1900	578	504	698	2,452
1905-06	702	777	845	3,457
1910	797	861	879	3,525

Source: Ditt (1982)

even manufactured automobiles. Gildemeister had been in the tool-making business since 1870. Having produced only custom-made products for a long time, the growing demand for motorised lathes and milling machines around 1900 led them to change over to mass production.

Weekly wages of male workers in the Bielefeld textile and metal-industries 1880-1910 in Marks

	Textile industry	Metal industry
1880	not known	15
1890	15	not known
1900	20	24-25
1910	23	29-29

Source: Ditt (1982)



Around 1900, Dr. August Oetker was enjoying great success with his products in a quite different sector. From modest beginnings in Aschoff's chemist's shop in Bielefeld's old town in 1891, came the inspiration to sell baking powder in convenient pre-measured portions to meet customer demands. This brilliant business idea enabled Oetker even before World War I to employ 350 people in his new factory, and further development of the company was to continue most successfully.

Bielefeld soon made a name for itself in the graphic trades, too. The city earned the nickname 'Little Leipzig' – in reference to the major city of publishers and books further east – with regard to its own flourishing printing and publishing sector. Such traditional concerns as W. Bertelsmann Verlag, printers J.D. Küster Nachf., Eilers, publishing house Velhagen & Klasing and Gundlach are the fruits of this development.



Above: Oetker's new factory building.

Left: around 1900: bicycles, sewing machines, cash registers – the Adler poster showcases the top-quality products of the Bielefeld metal industry.

Early days – The Otto Boge commercial enterprise

Otto Boge was born on 27 April 1878. He trained as a metalworker with Gilde-meister, which, at the end of the 19th century, was already one of the top tool-making businesses in Bielefeld. It is open to speculation, whether it was thanks to the business policy of the company he trained at, that the young metalworker, who later also worked for Dürkopp and Droop & Rein, was seized by the spirit of invention. After all, Gildemeister was a company which, until well into the 1890s, had concentrated not so much on mass production but on the manufacture of special machinery – generally items custom-made to customer requirements.

Founded in 1890, Droop & Rein, too, had made its name with special-purpose machinery, constructed in close consultation with their customers. It is quite conceivable that it was this affinity for the out of the ordinary which he experienced at Gildemeister and other Bielefeld mechanical engineering companies, which shaped metalworker Otto Boge and his subsequent career, fired his imagination and brought his ingenuity to the forefront.

In addition to an inventive spirit, he also shared with his brothers Carl and Adolf the courage to become active in business. While his brother Carl went his own way and became a coal

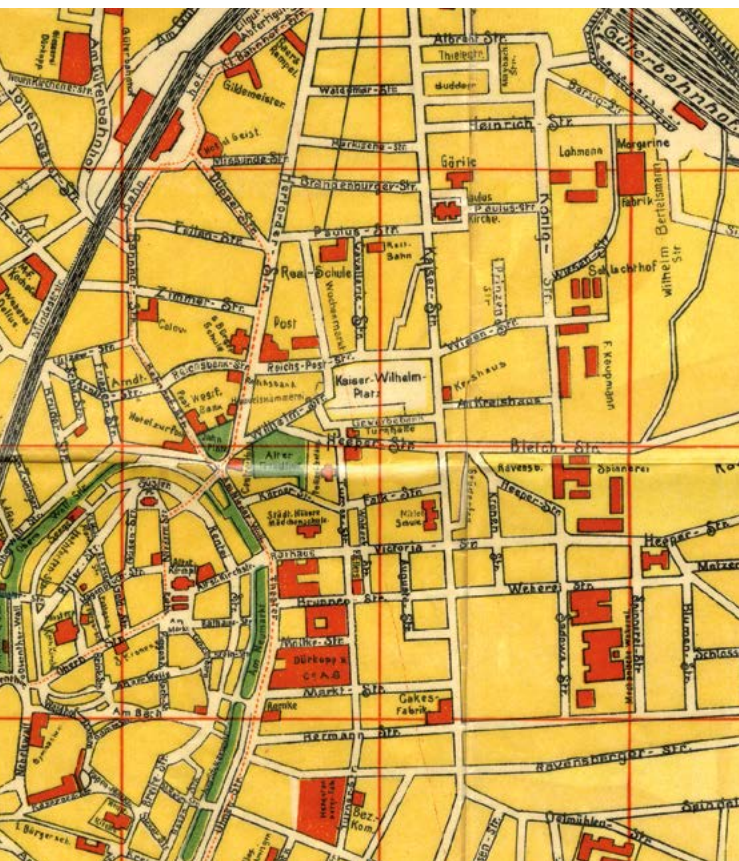
dealer, the careers and business interests of Adolf and Otto Boge were destined to bring them together on many occasions over the years. In the process, the Boge brothers proved to be a fine example of how close family ties and persistence in following individual business interests need not be mutually exclusive. As brothers they took care of the family relationship; as businessmen they always focused on their own business successes. Together with other partners, Adolf Boge founded the 'Rheinische Türschliesserfabrik' (Rhineland door-closer factory) Boge & Kasten in 1903 in Solingen. The three letters BKS – Boge, Kasten, Solingen – can be found on keys and safety locks to this day. The 'BKS' brand is synonymous with protection and safety.



Around 1925: Contemporary advertising poster for Boge & Kasten Solingen, BKS for short, a brand which is still widely known to this day.

The story of the Boge family business, however, did not begin with keys and locks. When Otto Boge set up his own company on 7 November 1907, his brother Adolf was producing hydraulic and pneumatic door-closers in Solingen.

Evidently, Otto Boge was also in part responsible for this innovative product, which was especially in demand for commercial applications. In a 1925 review of the early days of his company, we read, 'Mr Otto Boge helped to design the well-known, leading door-closer, which he introduced and sold from 1907.' The first company address was 42 Heinrichstrasse in a new district of the city dominated by trade and industry and close to the station and to the northeast of the city centre.



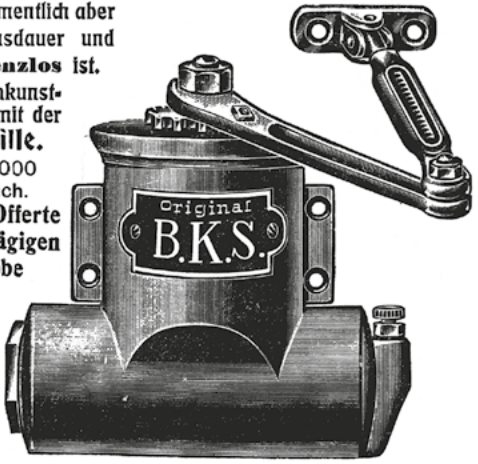
We have already mentioned the door-closers manufactured by BKS in Solingen as the economic basis and foundation of the young Bielefeld businessman's livelihood. Initially, Otto Boge had taken over sole agency for his brother's company in the administrative region of Minden. Looking back, the door-closers, marketed under the name 'Boge's Original' in various sizes and designs, were highly successful. According to an advertisement in a Bielefeld directory, approximately 2,000 were in use in 1909 in Bielefeld alone.

Ein einziger Versuch überzeugt, dass der

Original B. K. S. Türschliesser

in jeder Beziehung, namentlich aber
In Bezug auf Lebensdauer und
Funktion **konkurrenzlos** ist.
Prämiert auf der Kochkunst-
Ausstellung Bielefeld mit der
Goldenen Medaille.
In Bielefeld ca. 2000
Stück im Gebrauch.
**Verlangen Sie bitte Offerte
und Muster zur 14 tägigen
kostenlosen Probe**
durch
Otto Boge
Heinrichstrasse 42.
Telephon No. 1536.

No. 7



Above: 1912: Product promotion for door-closers on an enamel sign; 1909: Advertisement in the Bielefeld directory.

Left: City plan of 1909. In 1911, the company moves from 42 Heinrichstrasse to 89 Ravensberger Strasse.

'Early in the morning,' according to a later account, 'it was time for the delivery round with a carload of door-closers. Otto Boge himself mounted the door-closers he sold and returned home in the evenings with an empty car and the corresponding reward in cash. Business progressed well, soon enabling the appointment of sub-agents and the purchase of the family's town house at 89 Ravensberger Strasse.'

A look at company documents from the period before World War I and at sales figures underlines the fact that the business relationship with his brother Adolf stood on a firm footing. In 1913, the 'Rheinische Türschliesserfabrik' signed a contract with Otto Boge for the exclusive sales rights in Germany. A number of large cities and industrial centres were explicitly excluded from the contract – BKS conducted its sales here itself – but the overall great demand seemed nevertheless to guarantee Otto Boge's company lasting growth as well.

Bielefeld was a good choice of business location for Otto Boge's company. The wide range of industry sectors and seemingly unlimited growth prior to World War I meant that there were grounds for hope that further business successes would follow.

22

July 1913.

Monat	Tag	Fol.	Soll	Haben
	2 Fleckler Lippspringe an Martinstor 5a.6 10 ang. Nr 1 126- 25% 21.50	112 ✓	14109.65 94.50	463 ang.
	2 Hoppe, Josef. Paderborn an Martinstor 120 1 ang. Nr 3 4 Kaufm. Paderb. 4 Kaufm. Paderb.	✓	21.60	
	2 Schneider, Josef Paderborn an Kämpferstr 21 1 ang. Nr 2	✓	18.-	
	2 Fausch, Jos. Teul an am Bahnhof 1 ang. Nr 3 24 1 - " 4 22	✓	52.-	
	2 Röhren, H. Paderborn an Bangerstr 1 ang. Nr 2 18- 1 - " 3 21.60	✓	39.60	
	2 Ostermann, Paderborn an Kämpferstr 21 an 1 ang. Nr 3 21.10 22	✓	21.60	
	2 Rieding Paderborn an Liederstr. 7 1 ang. Nr 3 24 10 22	✓	21.60	
	3 Leichter, Franz Paderborn an Thiesstr 15 1 ang. Nr 3	✓	21.60	
			14459.55	

July, 1913: The 'Journal' informs us that on the 2nd and 3rd of the month, Otto Boge sold his products in Lippspringe and Paderborn.

Closing ranks and potential conflict – World War I and 'revolutionary times'

The fact that Bielefeld's economy experienced the years before World War I as a very successful time is also a reflection of the general, rapid economic expansion within the German Empire. The economy in Germany had grown more quickly than in all other European countries and, by 1913, the German Empire had risen to become the leading export nation.

Not only its economy, but its educational system, science and technology were renowned the world over as well. Aspiring industrial cities such as Bielefeld were able to take a highly optimistic view of the future; a future which – or so it seemed at least – could not be disturbed, even by the repeated threat of war.

Should the German Empire become involved in a European war against France and Russia or even against England, for example, over the protracted crisis in the Balkans or the trouble which had long been brewing in the colonies?

The opinion in all political camps was that, militarily, the empire was certainly well equipped and would definitely come out victorious, thanks to its inner strength and economic power. Here, the vision of German greatness and superiority had not only taken root in the heads of the political elite. Broad sections of the population also willingly subscribed to such propaganda.



When, in the first days of August 1914, the European nations actually did declare war, the mood in Bielefeld, too, was one of enthusiasm for the war. Even the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany), who had been concerned about reconciliation and agreement only a few days before the war started, no longer wanted to stand aside and followed the official, and equally false, version of matters: the German Empire was fighting a defensive war. The unifying closing of ranks across all party divisions and social barriers, however, did not last long. Soon, the number of obituary notices for the fallen also began to grow in Bielefeld's daily



newspapers, and it was not long before the first food shortages gave rise to discontent amongst the population.

From the point of view of the economy and industry, it was no longer the market which gave

Top: 1917: A genuinely serious appeal by the city of Bielefeld in the fourth year of the war; food and clothing were becoming scarce and should be used sparingly.

Right: Around 1916: In the course of World War I, women were engaged in many work areas, here on the trams.

decisive impetus to production and products and regulated supply and demand, but rather the political assessment which determined which production areas were to be classed as vital to the war effort and which were not. Whole industry branches were to be transformed for war production, and in the metal industry, for example, bicycles fit for war service, special tool-making machines, grenades and machine-gun parts replaced household sewing machines and standard bicycles.

Every famous company in the Bielefeld metal industry, and also other industry sectors, had become a 'supplier to the army' and produced armaments.

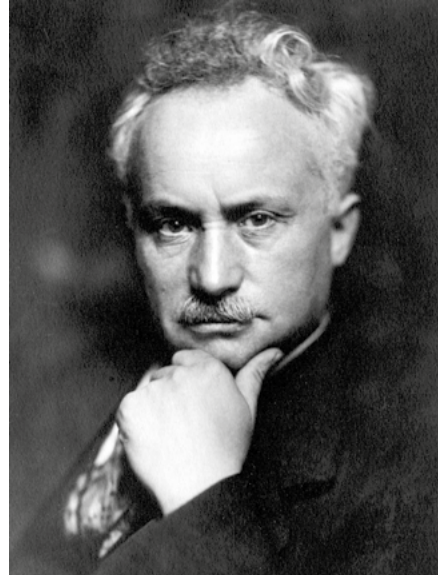
The city's Lord Mayor, Rudolf Stapenhorst, felt able to speak highly of the Bielefeld economy and with it the employment situation, despite the shortages in the food supply which were becoming evident during World War I. From mid-1916 onwards, there was practically no more unemployment.



It must be said that the favourable situation in industry, thanks to the war, could not detract from the overall uncertainty when it came to supplies. Besides, in many cases wages were simply not sufficient to cover the cost of living during this prolonged period of rising costs.

The consequence was a conflict over pay, which was heightened from 1917 onwards not least because companies in the armaments industry were earning well and were able to pay high dividends, even in times of widespread poverty. All over Germany, social differences heralded the end of the so-called 'truce' which had been agreed across all classes of society and walks of life at the onset of war. At this point, the political and social divides between workers and the conservative middle class, which had been papered over in a makeshift fashion by the war, were torn open again, although Bielefeld had suffered only a one-day strike by the end of the war, but no social unrest.

Whereas elsewhere, at the end of the war and during the period of revolution, phases of turbulence and even brief anarchy followed, Bielefeld's Social Democrats, headed by their leader Carl Severing, made every effort to defuse the situation. It was the prime responsibility of the unanimously elected 'Volks- und



Soldatenrat' (people's and soldiers' council) to ensure peace, order and security in the city.

Nationwide, the political situation calmed down for the time being, and following the elections to the National Assembly the Weimar Republic was constituted. In the long term, however, domestic peace could only be safeguarded within a stable economic and socio-political framework. Such a framework was far from being in place, even in Bielefeld. In the transition phase from war economy to peacetime economy, the lack of foodstuffs and raw materials so often lamented by the Bielefeld Chamber

Around 1920: Carl Severing, leading light of Bielefeld Social Democracy, was a man of moderation and agreement, particularly after the collapse of the Empire.

of Commerce, among others, was the most urgent problem to be tackled. Necessity is the mother of invention and, since supplies of coal were repeatedly jeopardised by strikes in the Ruhr region and on the railways, a small coal pit in Kirchdornberg was called to mind, which promised to deliver a meagre but reliable yield. The shaft had been disused since 1848, but a number of experts thought there was a realistic chance of around 200,000 tonnes of coal being extracted during a period of six and a half years from 1921 onwards. However, this type of emergency plan to solve the fuel question itself entered a state of crisis. Over 2.5 million marks had already been invested, when the plans for coal extraction near Bielefeld finally disappeared once more into the investors' drawers as a result of the incalculable risk of even higher costs and doubts about profitability.

There were signs of hope, though. Bielefeld companies saw themselves duty bound to re-employ soldiers returning from the war. The first steps towards economic recovery were taken by these companies, despite difficult conditions at the outset. In contrast to the textile branch, Bielefeld's metal industry mastered the crisis of the post-war years relatively well. With sewing machines, bicycles and other vehicles, Dürkopp, for example, succeeded very rapidly in taking up

its pre-war production once more. Companies such as Anker and Gildemeister, too, increased their staff levels quickly and, from 1920–21, reported profits and dividend payments. Hence, in spite of the problems following World War I, the city and its business enterprises most certainly had good reason to take an optimistic view of the future.

Otto Boge KG – From commercial to industrial concern

World War I had brought to an abrupt end favourable economic development on both the large and small scale. Otto Boge, too, had been called up to do active service. Thanks to his technical skills, and presumably because he was no longer among the youngest recruits, he was sent to work in an army vehicle repair workshop in Russia.



For Otto Boge, the end of the war meant starting again from scratch. Upon his return from the war, his identity card shows his address to be in the Rhineland.



Apparently, the family was living temporarily close to his brother, Adolf Boge.

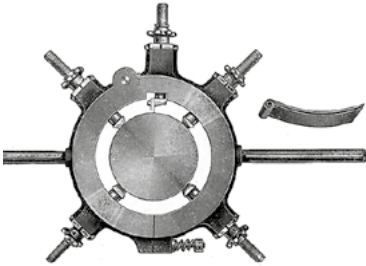
All his savings had been used up by the war; the equipment and remaining stock had been sold off. Yet there were still grounds for optimism. From a businessman's point of view he had even been able to turn his stint in the army to his long-term advantage. His work on defective army vehicles had not been limited to the monotony of everyday routine tasks, but rather gave him repeated opportunities to consider solutions to technical problems in the fledgling sector of engine and drive technology. Otto Boge returned to Bielefeld with a brilliant business idea, which laid the foundations from 1919 onwards for the manufacture of special tools for vehicle repair. The 'equalising fork for out-of-round crankshafts' saved garages time and money. Repairs of this kind could now be carried out without complicated grinding procedures or dismantling the engine. There were only two other employees – a lathe operator and a salesman, Wilhelm Laucks, later authorised signatory – who made up the new 'works'; and



Top, left: Around 1916: He uses his technical skills repairing motor vehicles.

Left: 1919: Otto Boge's identity card gives an address in Solingen.

Right: Around 1920: Wilhelm Laucks, Otto Boge's first commercial employee and later authorised signatory of the company.



supported Otto Boge in the initial development of his new products.

In those times of political and economic unrest, unconventional ideas were needed.

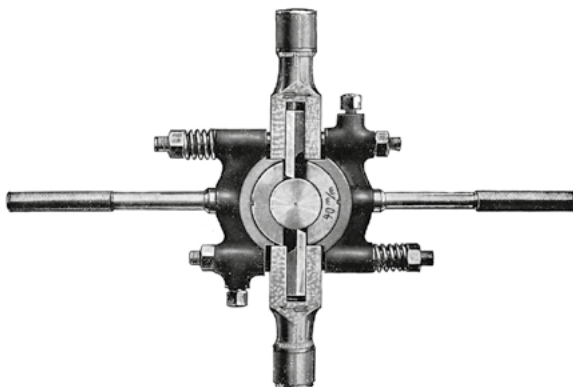
Trade of specialist tools was to be the top priority in the future, but the sale of door-closers was also to continue. A further pillar of the business was the optimum exploitation of the company vehicle as a taxi. Hence the new trade registration read as follows: 'Sale of door-closers, carriage of passengers by motor vehicle, manufacture of tools.'

Other specialist tools such as the 'die stock', developed by Otto Boge, or the 'valve-seat cutters' were firmly expected to be economic successes. Correspondence between Adolf and Otto Boge in 1919–20, however, also highlights the particular competitive situation in which the brothers evidently found themselves. According to Adolf Boge, a number of businesses from Remscheid had sensed there was a good deal to be made and were 'clearly very keen' to produce the stock. Passing on his invention to a third party, however, was something Otto Boge could never imagine doing. For him it was

'crystal clear' that he would manufacture the stock himself, since, as he stated unequivocally and most formally in a letter to his brother's company, 'Clearly, I need not reiterate that the invention stems from me. If you happen to have found a small improvement, I am most grateful to you for it, but the idea was mine, after all'.

The products which promised to be the most successful commercially had in the meantime become matters for dispute, as it was not Otto Boge but his brother Adolf who had taken out a patent in his name for the new tools. Initially, Otto Boge insisted that the patents be signed over to his name, but in the early 1920s the quarrel seems to have suddenly been resolved.

It can only be speculated as to why Otto Boge no longer insisted on his own patent specification. It seems likely that, with the contractual agreement to transform the small business into a limited partnership, as of 1 January 1920, the dispute about patents was considered settled. After all, Otto Boge KG now counted his brother Adolf and his partner in Solingen Carl Bremshey as Limited Partners. Their initial financial contribution of 15,000 reichsmark each must surely have considerably widened the scope for development of the Bielefeld company.



Around 1920: Special tools such as the equalising fork meant that motor vehicle repairs could be carried out quickly and accurately on site.



1930s: The production, administration and technical office in Siechenmarschstrasse.

Gradually, a small industrial undertaking was emerging from the tiny business which, in 1919, had rented an office and a small workshop at 53 Hermannstrasse in Bielefeld. The fact that the company was continuing to prosper could be seen by the number of staff. In the summer of 1919, the company had a staff of six, a figure which had already risen to 13 one year later. By the time the number of employees hit 17, the small workshop was bursting at the seams and, trusting in future economic success, Otto Boge had already bought an existing factory building in the west of the Bielefeld city centre in 1921. Number 46a Siechenmarschstrasse had been used by Lepper since 1899 for the production of bicycle saddles and handlebars. At first, the ground floor offered sufficient space as a production area, but it was not long before Boge KG took over all the available rooms on both floors.

The door-closers manufactured in his brother's Solingen works remained an important and fundamental element of the business, but the production of special tools for the repair of motor vehicles opened up completely new commercial opportunities, including, for instance, in the field of steam-driven engines, agricultural machinery or ship's engines. Otto Boge had been able to pick up the threads of

his successful start in business prior to World War I and was now back on track once more.

In the turbulent period following World War I, with its political and social uncertainty, such success was by no means a matter of course. It was based on courageous decisions and a reliable assessment of the demand for the new products. Yet with the end of World War I and the establishment of the Weimar Republic, problems had in no way decreased. The company would have to tackle exceedingly difficult basic conditions in terms of economic policy in the years that followed.

Factory building in Siechenmarschstrasse:
Boge headquarters from 1921 to 1937.





III. From One Crisis to Another – The Turbulent Years of the Weimar Republic



Coup threat and inflation – Political tensions and tests of economic strength

Immediately after the end of the war, level-headed politicians were able, thanks to their influence with the 'Volks- und Soldatenrat' (people's and soldiers' council), to create relatively stable conditions in the city. However, this was but a temporary and deceptive calm, as political events in the German Empire were also not without their consequences for Bielefeld.



The enemies of the republic had been ever-present since its founding. On the right of the political spectrum in particular there was much vehement agitating against the 'Schmachfrieden', the perceived shameful nature of the Versailles peace treaty. Even before the final military defeat, German generals, led by Erich Ludendorff, had been constructing the 'myth

of the stab in the back'. Undefeated on the battlefield, but vanquished by the treachery of the enemy within – such was the demagogic accusation addressed to political opponents. In a time of peace, which for many people was not only one of material poverty but also synonymous with national shame and humiliation, such slogans found ready listeners. When it came to the so-called 'Kapp-Putsch' (Kapp coup) in the spring of 1920, the fledgling republic was put to a stern test.

As in many other cities, the military stationed in Bielefeld and other public institutions were visibly reluctant to demonstrate their support for the fledgling republic. It was not until two days after the coup, when the SPD also joined the call for a general strike and work was suspended all over Bielefeld. Following a fierce debate, the city council assembly issued a statement protesting against the breach of the constitution. At this stage, democratic structures were by no means firmly anchored. Democracy was still lacking in democrats!

Social depravation only served to intensify further the political tension. The much-cited level-headedness of Bielefeld's citizens was stretched to its limits in the face of completely insufficient food supplies.



Top: January 1919: Uneasy times in Bielefeld. Carl Severing delivers a speech from the balcony of the Town Hall.

Right: March 1919: At Dürkopp protests take place against the catastrophic lack of supplies.

As early as June 1919, the weekly market had been overrun and there were said to have been exchanges of fire between the military and demonstrators. On 30 July 1920, the trade unions gathered over 10,000 Bielefeld residents on the Kesselbrink for a protest demonstration because food prices had almost doubled in the first half of the year. Currency depreciation, however, had just begun. In 1920, hardly anyone would have thought it possible that the value of the mark would hit rock bottom in such a short time. In the autumn of 1923, a litre of milk cost 210 million marks. Newspaper sellers had been instructed not to accept banknotes under a face value of 1 million marks. It simply would not have been worth counting such 'small' notes. It would have taken too much time ...

Inflation indicators 1919-1923

	Cost of living (1913 = 1)	Real weekly wages of skilled railway employees (1913 = 100)
Feb. 1920	8.47	1918 83,3
Jan. 1921	11.79	1920 83,3
Jan. 1922	20.41	1921 74,5
Jan. 1923	1,120.27	1922 64,2
July 1923	37,651.00	1923 50,9
Sept. 1923	15,000,000.00	
Dec. 1923	1,247,000,000.00	

Source: Hans-Ulrich Wehler (2003)

How did the Bielefeld economy and industry cope with inflation? The ray of hope visible in the years from 1919 to 1921, together with currency depreciation, led initially to a veritable boom for many companies. Inflation is good for business! A look at the linen industry certainly gave grounds for this assumption. With the collapse of the currency, demand grew among foreign customers in particular, for whom German products had become considerably cheaper. The same could be said of other branches of Bielefeld industry.

Inflation, according to a report by the city administration, was in fact the cause of merely an illusory boom. For fear of a 'German sellout', export bans had had to be imposed, in Bielefeld in particular. And 'there was a wave of company set-ups, most notably in the bicycle and linen industries, to name just two examples. New bicycle and linen factories mushroomed everywhere. The consolidation of our currency at the end of 1923 brought fundamental changes to our economic life. A significant proportion of the newly founded companies folded'.

1923: Money produced in Bielefeld: the Stadtparkasse Bielefeld issues emergency money which is printed at Gundlach; its dubious 'value' is 250 million marks.



Business successes and conflicts – Otto Boge and the Limited Partners

Otto Sartorius, chief legal adviser to the Chamber of Commerce during the Weimar Republic, commented in a publication in 1926 on the hope within Bielefeld's economy of overcoming the various manifestations of crisis since World War I: 'The tenacious will of Ravensberg, to assert itself all the more in difficult times, will without a doubt enable us to overcome the obstacles and restraints which today threaten our economy to such a large extent.' Otto Boge, too, was most certainly equipped with such a tenacious will when it came to developing his company further in times of crisis. He had to demonstrate this on many occasions during the era of the Weimar Republic.

The decision to produce special tools for the repair of motor vehicles had developed into a business success. The 'equalising fork' in particular was not only in demand with domestic customers, but aroused great interest in Europe and far beyond. Boge tools were also bought in Palestine, India and Argentina.

During the trade inspection in October 1921, the company had to put in an application for a temporary extension of working hours from eight to nine hours per day. 'At the moment we have a number of unusually large orders, of

which only some can be fulfilled. Neither the installation of additional machines nor employment of more staff is feasible due to a lack of space.' New products were quickly added to the range. The 'valve seat cutters', for example, met with a good response from those same customers who were also interested in other Boge tools.

Otto Boge's trade with special tools flourished not least thanks to his close collaboration with BKS, the Solingen company belonging to his brother Adolf. The two parties had signed a contract in February 1920 which had not only eased tensions over patents, but had also defined the rights and duties of Otto Boge, the General Partner, and the Limited Partners, his brother Adolf and his partner at BKS, Carl Bremshey.

The extent to which business success became apparent in the years 1921 and 1922 focused attention once again on this partnership agreement. Otto Boge, who saw his position as General Partner insufficiently rewarded in comparison to that of the Limited Partners, had engaged Bielefeld lawyer Dr. Kamp to examine the contract. On the whole, the lawyer's evaluation confirmed 'an unjustified one-sided advantage



From 1920 onwards the company trades as a Limited Partnership (KG).

for the Limited Partners', and he recommended modifying a number of passages in the contract. The issue in the contract document which probably irritated Otto Boge most was the question of the subsequent handing over of the company and the worry that his heirs could possibly be excluded from its management. The lawyer was of the opinion that every partnership agreement should offer a general partner the opportunity 'subsequently to pass on to his children or his heirs that which he has built up during his lifetime'. Consequently, agreement should be reached as follows, 'that solely the heirs of the deceased General Partner Otto Boge should take his place... on condition that they put forward a suitable representative for appointment to the management, and that the position of the previous Limited Partners should otherwise remain unchanged'. In 1922, Ella Boge had finally married Ernst Thomas, who was soon also to join the company. It was all the more important to Otto Boge that his life's work should be safeguarded for his own family.

The correspondence with his brother Adolf on this subject is once again a prime example of the tenacity with which Otto Boge represented

his business interests within the family; at the same time, however, it also shows how their close family ties were never subject to negotiation when it came to business discussions. Between the opening greeting 'Dear Adolf' and the closing 'warmest greetings, your brother Otto' they spoke their minds: a modification of the contract in favour of the General Partner was urged in plain terms and it was stressed that this was a demand 'which I [Otto Boge] am today prepared under no circumstances to abandon'. It is of particular interest to note that Otto Boge carried on this quarrel during a period of extremely difficult economic conditions and furthermore social unrest, coupled with rapid currency depreciation. The timing of the discussion is unambiguous proof that Otto Boge simply could not conceive of the company failing. The company founder was convinced rather that at some point in the distant future he would leave the business he had built up to his closest relatives.

1921: Otto and Hermine Boge with their family: daughter Mathilde and the engaged couple Ella Boge and Ernst Thomas.



The 'Golden' Twenties – Reality or illusion?

The 'veil of inflation', according to economic historian Harald Wixforth, was only lifted when, on 1 January 1924, every company had been compelled by virtue of a statutory obligation to present a balance sheet based on the gold mark. It was only then that numerous bad investments, funded by cheap loans, and instances of overcapacity came to light. It turned out that many additional company purchases had been made in haste. Borrowers' debts might have shrunk due to inflation, but, with the end of currency depreciation, capital was lacking for the urgently needed modernisation of factories. On top of that, the new conditions dictated by tight monetary policy with extremely high interest rates had made it impossible for many companies to get a loan.

The 1924 report by the Chamber of Commerce summarised the situation as follows: 'An alarming number of people have entered private enterprise in trade and industry, who ... are otherwise lacking

all the prerequisites of the honest businessman. Following the illusory boom, they are now failing when faced with the harsh reality of competition and calculation.' The Chamber furthermore criticised the all too narrow financial footing upon which many companies were based, and the fact that inflation and the often hurried 'flight into real assets' had drastically increased the amount of fixed capital to the detriment of current working capital.

The true severity of this 'adaptation crisis' following the recent overcoming of inflation became apparent especially with regard to the bankruptcies of unreliable companies – which themselves had only been founded under inflationary conditions. These bankruptcies triggered a kind of domino effect even on healthy businesses, who in turn got into existential difficulties as a result. Seen as a whole, the German economy had stabilised itself since the spring of 1925, and people at the time quickly coined the phrase the 'Golden' Twenties to describe the period of sustained growth lasting until the Great Depression of 1929. With regard to Bielefeld, the 'golden' aspect of these years was pushed somewhat into the background. Here, in particular, it was the former flagships of the Bielefeld economy which were hardest hit, namely businesses in the textile industry.



The Chamber of Commerce on Herforder Straße 1.

Left hand side: Around 1860:
The 'Vowärts Spinnerei' in better economic times.

Around 1870: The 'Mechanische Weberei'.
To the left of the image is Heeper Straße. Later followed the development of the East of Bielefeld.

In spring 1925, the Supervisory Board of the 'Vorwärts Spinning Mill' took the far-reaching decision to close down the factory, at least temporarily, in the autumn of the same year. Competition from abroad and the continuing displacing of flax by cotton had had an adverse effect on the company even before World War I.

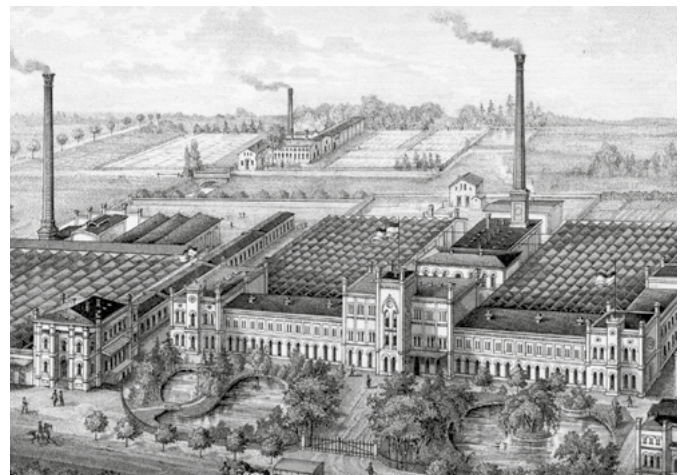
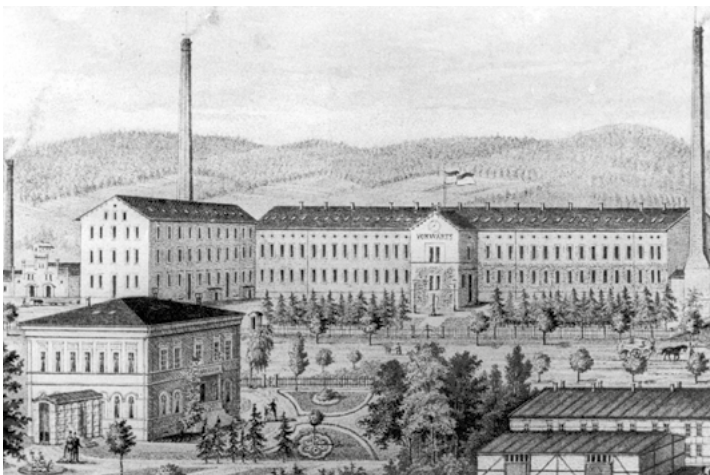
The Ravensberg Spinning Mill, no less, had had to be shut down for six months in 1925 for similar reasons. Eight hundred workers were laid off.

Alongside the spinning mills, the Mechanical Weaving Mill, too, threatened to collapse in 1926 due to economic conditions and a lack of competitiveness. In 1927, however, the company was saved. Gustav Windel, owner of the Hermann Windel GmbH, had taken over the majority of shares and was able to revive the business. Such examples are more indicative of a fight for survival than a true 'golden' age.

Taking a look at other branches of the economy, it can be seen that the metal and engineering industry were also no strangers to problematic situations such as fluctuating demand, poor yields, low sales and production restrictions. After all, these were the branches which were dominant in Bielefeld, employing approximately

20,000 people. In many sectors of the metal and engineering industries, large increases in production followed on the heels of the end of inflation. The transition to electric machine drives and assembly-line production indicated, for the sewing machine industry for example, that in future considerably fewer workers would be able to produce a larger number of machines.

In addition, the relationship between employers in the metal industry and the trade unions was extremely tense due to the issue of working hours. The eight-hour day, which had already been agreed in 1918, had become practically irrelevant since the time of inflation with its short-lived export boom. The 48-hour week was in force, with the possibility of adding a further seven hours, subject to agreement. Workers in the metal branch were therefore worried that further rationalisation steps in conjunction with continued long working hours would lead to redundancies. And what was more, wages had continued to fall further behind price increases.

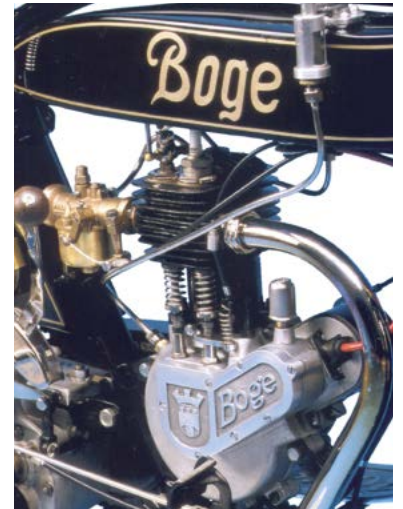


Motorcycle venture – Between boom and depression

Despite difficult basic conditions, ideas for new projects had been maturing in Otto Boge's mind since the autumn of 1922. The company founder stood before decisions of 'far-reaching effect', which he outlined more precisely and with self-confidence in a further letter to his brother Adolf in January 1923: 'I want to make the new motorcycle model the best brand in Germany' The construction of a motorcycle which would be classed as average in terms of quality compared to other manufacturers, was not what Otto Boge was aiming for. He also took this opportunity to press tenaciously for a new partnership agreement: 'Our business has potential for growth and good future prospects, but only if it continues to be led by the personal initiative of a shareholder who is deeply rooted in it; and even then only if that person knows exactly what he is working to achieve and shows the greatest interest at all times.' A corresponding agreement with the Limited Partners was only reached two years later. In the meantime, Otto Boge devoted himself wholeheartedly to the motorcycle business and initially put two models onto the market, which were each equipped with 2.25 HP engines. The first and cheapest motorcycle, the '2 PS' –

2 horsepower – didn't even have a gearbox. It was driven directly by the engine via a belt to the rear wheel. The 'M 2', which appeared shortly afterwards, was admittedly more successful; it had the same engine performance and was equipped with a two-gear transmission. In 1925, a stronger model, the 'SM 2' with 3.5 HP was added. This product range was completed finally by the addition of a moped. The performance of the 195-cc engine was limited to 2 HP because the legislative body granted tax exemption up to this limit. The manufacturers of such bikes were therefore justifiably able to reckon with high demand.

Within a short time, the company had established itself in the engine and motorcycle business and even supplied drive units for other makes. The company was by now trading under the



Top: Boge from Bielefeld. The municipal coat of arms on the engine block.

Left: 1925: After only a short time, Boge motorcycles became popular exhibition objects at motor-vehicle trade fairs; here the SM 2 model.

name 'Tool and Engine Factory'. 'Department 1' was still producing special tools and door-closers, while 'Department 2' offered engines and complete motorcycles.

While inflation was hurrying towards its sad climax in 1923, the accelerated currency depreciation did not mean, as already described, that the economy came to a standstill. With his decision to build motorcycles, Otto Boge had initially been able to set a course for expansion, also in terms of personnel, since high growth rates had been predicted for the motorcycle business. Whereas just 30 staff were registered with the Trade Supervisory Office in the winter of 1922–23, the number of Boge employees rose to 51 only six months later. Increasing turnover figures for motorcycles meant that the factory building, which had been taken over just two years previously, was once again too small. It was only the renting of a former bicycle factory in the neighbourhood which eased the space problem and paved the way for staff numbers in excess of 120 by the summer of 1924.

Development of employment figures at BOGE 1919.1925

Half-year	Employees
Summer 1919	6
Winter 1919-20	11
Summer 1920	13
Winter 1921-22	18
Summer 1922	27
Winter 1922-23	30
Summer 1923	51
Winter 1923-24	35
Summer 1924	122
Winter 1924-25	57
Summer 1925	51

Source: Staatsarchiv Detmold

In 1922, Otto Boge KG had also begun taking on trainees, for both metalworking and commercial professions. While in April 1922 apprentice Willy Menge began his three-and-a-half year training as a lathe operator, Fritz Wollbold embarked on a career as Boge's first commercial trainee in May 1922.



1924: The motorcycle in the forefront; the main products of both departments.

§ 3a.)
Der Lehrmeister gewährt dem Lehrling während der Lehrzeit

- a) ganze - halbe - Befristung
- b) Wohnung
- c) Bett
- d) Kleidung
- e) Reinigung der Wäsche

Im Falle der Erkrankung übernimmt er, soweit nicht die Ueberführung in ein Krankenhaus angeordnet wird, die Pflege des Lehrlings.
Das Schulgeld und Lehrgeld für die Fortbildungsschule - Fachschule - bezahlt

oder § 3b.)

Für Wohnung, Unterhalt, Befristung und Wäsche hat der Lehrling selbst zu sorgen. Dafür zahlt der Lehrmeister an den Lehrling für jede Woche - jeden Monat - ein Kostgeld von

M. im ersten Jahre, M. im dritten Jahre,
M. im zweiten Jahre, M. im vierten Jahre.

Ein Abzug für die ohne Verschulden des Lehrlings verbrauchte Zeit findet nicht statt.
Während der Erkrankung des Lehrlings wird das Kostgeld - nur für Tage, Wochen

abzüglich der Krankenunterstützung - nicht - gezahlt.
Das Schulgeld und Lehrgeld für die Fortbildungsschule - Fachschule - bezahlt

oder § 3c.)

Der Lehrmeister zahlt dem Lehrling einen zusätzlichen jährlichen Lohn für die geleistete Arbeitsleistung

im ersten Jahre 1.- M., dritten Jahre 2.- M.,
zweiten Jahre 1.- M., vierten Jahre 3.- M.

Während der Erkrankung des Lehrlings wird der Lohn - nur für Tage, Wochen
abzüglich der Krankenunterstützung - nicht - gezahlt.
Das Schulgeld und Lehrgeld für die Fortbildungsschule - Fachschule - bezahlt

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Das Schulgeld und Lehrgeld für die Fortbildungsschule - Fachschule - bezahlt

§ 7.
Der Lehrling ist verpflichtet, die Fortbildungsschule (Fachschule) regelmäßig und pünktlich zu besuchen.
Der Lehrmeister ist verpflichtet, dem Lehrling die zum Besuche der Fortbildungsschule (Fachschule) erforderliche Zeit zu gewähren und ihn zum regelmäßigen und pünktlichen Schulbesuche anzuhalten.

§ 8.

Der gesetzliche Vertreter übernimmt die Verpflichtung, den Lehrling anzuhalten, daß er während der Lehrzeit allen Fleiß auf Erreichung des Gewerbes verwendet, dabei dem Geschäftsinteresse des Lehrmeisters dienlich, diesem und seinen Stellvertretern mit Gehorsam und Achtung begehrt und sich ihnen sowie den Geschäftsführern gegenüber stets eins anhängigen und bescheidenen Verhaltens befleißigt. Auch verpflichtet sich der gesetzliche Vertreter, den Lehrling zum regelmäßigen und pünktlichen Besuche der Fortbildungsschule (Fachschule) anzuhalten.
*) Außerdem verpflichtet sich der gesetzliche Vertreter, Schäden, die der Lehrling durch nachweislich grobes Verschulden dem Lehrmeister zufügt, dem Lehrling zu ersetzen.

§ 9.

Vor Ablauf der vertragsmäßigen Zeit und ohne Auffündigung kann der Lehrling entlassen werden:

1. wenn er oder sein gesetzlicher Vertreter bei Ablauf des Lehrvertrages den Lehrmeister durch Verletzung falscher oder gefälschter Arbeitsbücher oder Zeugnisse hinterzogen oder ihn über das Bestehen eines anderen, ihn gleichzeitig verpflichtenden Arbeitsverhältnisses in einen Irrtum versetzt hat;
2. wenn er eines Diebstahls, einer Einwendung, einer Unterschlagung, eines Betruges oder eines anderen Vergehens schuldig ist;
3. wenn er die Lehre aus eigenem Willen aufgegeben hat oder sonst den nach dem Lehrvertrage ihm obliegenden Pflichten nachzukommen beargwöhnt wird;
4. wenn er die Bemerkung ausgesprochen hat, daß er die Lehre aufgeben will, oder seine Verweigerung der Fortsetzung der Lehre aus eigenem Willen erklärt;
5. wenn er sich Tätlichkeiten oder grobe Beleidigungen gegen den Lehrmeister oder seinen Vertreter oder gegen die Familienangehörigen des Lehrmeisters oder seiner Vertreter zu Schulden kommen läßt;
6. wenn er einen vorläufigen und rechtswidrigen Entlassungsantrag zum Nachteil des Lehrmeisters oder eines Stellvertreters des Lehrmeisters oder seiner Vertreter oder Mitarbeiter seines Lehrvertrages stellt oder zu stellen sucht oder mit Familienangehörigen seines Lehrmeisters oder seiner Vertreter Handlungen begeht, welche wider die Gesetze oder die guten Sitten verstoßen;
7. wenn er zur Fortsetzung der Lehre unfähig oder mit einer gefährlichen Krankheit behaftet ist;
8. wenn der Vorstand der Handwerkskammer die Aufhebung des Lehrverhältnisses auf Grund der Verletzung der Vorschriften zur Regelung des Lehrlingswesens verlangt;
9. wenn der Vorstand der Handwerkskammer die Aufhebung des Lehrverhältnisses auf Grund der Verletzung der Vorschriften zur Regelung des Lehrlingswesens verlangt.

§ 13.)
Wird das Lehrverhältnis auf Grund der Bestimmungen des § 9 Ziffer 1 bis 7 und 10 durch den Lehrmeister aufgelöst, so kann dieser eine Entschädigung beanspruchen.
Diese beträgt, wenn das Lehrverhältnis aufgelöst wird,
im ersten Jahre 100.- M., im dritten Jahre 200.- M.,
im zweiten Jahre 150.- M., im vierten Jahre 300.- M.
Durch diese Vereinbarung wird ein weiterer Schadenersatzanspruch ausgeschlossen. Bei unbehaltener Bezahlung der Entschädigung in den Grenzen des § 127 g der Gewerbeordnung ist der Lehrling mitverschuldet.

§ 14.)

Wird das Lehrverhältnis durch Verschulden des Lehrmeisters vorzeitig aufgelöst, so ist dieser dem Lehrling oder seinem gesetzlichen Vertreter zum Schadenersatz verpflichtet.

§ 15.)

Wird die Lehrzeit durch Krankheit oder andere nicht vorherzusehende Fälle insgesamt länger als 3 Monate unterbrochen, so kann der Lehrmeister Urlaub dafür durch entsprechende Verlängerung der Lehrzeit fordern.

§ 16.

Alle Streitigkeiten aus diesem Lehrvertrage, sowie aus dem Lehrverhältnis überhaupt, unterliegen, wenn der Lehrmeister Mitglied einer Innung ist, dem Ausschuss für das Lehrlingswesen der Innung, wenn er nicht Mitglied einer Innung ist, dem Gemeindevorstande gemäß § 71 ff. des Gewerbegesetzes und in den Fällen, für welche Gesetzestexte errichtet sind, dem Gewerbeamt.

§ 17.

Die Parteien unterwerfen sich ausdrücklich den von der Handwerkskammer oder einer zuständigen Innung erlassenen oder nach zu erlassenden Vorschriften zur Regelung des Lehrlingswesens.

§ 18.

Der Bestand der Lehrzeit hat sich der Regelung der Gewerbeordnung vor dem zuständigen Prüfungs-Ausschuss zu unterziehen und ist verpflichtet, den Bestimmungen desselben Folge zu leisten.
Der Lehrmeister hat dem Lehrling die zur Aufrechterhaltung der Prüfungsarbeiten erforderliche Zeit zu gewähren und die zu ihrer Verrichtung erforderlichen Materialien und Werkzeuge zu liefern. Dem Lehrmeister fällt das Eigentum an dem gefertigten Stücke zu.

Besondere Bestimmungen:

Der Vorbehalt der Lehrzeit beträgt die Hälfte aller im Lehrvertrage festgesetzten Arbeitsstunden.
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Der Vorbehalt der Lehrzeit beträgt die Hälfte aller im Lehrvertrage festgesetzten Arbeitsstunden.

Vorstehenden Vertrag gelesen zu haben und mit den Bestimmungen desselben einverstanden zu sein bescheinigen durch eigenhändige Namensunterschrift

Kristfeld, den 7. Januar 1922

Der Lehrmeister:

Der gesetzliche Vertreter:
(Der Vater, die Mutter, der Vormund, der Pfleger...)

Der Lehrling:

Willy Kump
Minzmaier 29

Die Wohnung des Lehrlings während der Lehrzeit ist angegeben.

§ 13, 14 und 15 können nach Vereinbarung der Parteien ausgeschlossen werden.
Der Vorstand behält zum Abschluß dieses Lehrvertrages gemäß § 182 Ziffer 6 des Bürgerl. Gesetzbuches die Genehmigung des Gemeindevorstandes, wenn der Lehrvertrag für längere Zeit als ein Jahr abgeschlossen wird.

Lehrvertrag.

Komm. Stand und
Nr. und der ver-
f. Glieder
zu einem für genau
angewiesen.

Zwischen Herrn Otto Boge Commandit-Gesellschaft
und Herrin Frau Paula Kump, Mühlentstr. 27

als Lehrling
als gesetzliche Vertreter (Vater - Mutter - Vormund - Pfleger)

des minderjährigen Willy Kump
ist heute folgender Lehrvertrag geschlossen worden.

Herr Otto Boge § 1.)
Commandit-Gesellschaft
nimmt den am 7. Jan 1922
geborenen Willy Kump
als Lehrling zur Erkennung des Lehr

Die Lehrzeit beträgt 1 1/2 Jahre; sie beginnt am 1. April 1922
und endet am 1. Oktober 1923

Die ersten 4 Wochen der Lehrzeit, also die Zeit bis zum 1. Mai 1922
gelten als Probezeit. Während dieser Probezeit kann das Lehrverhältnis jederzeit durch einseitigen Austritt ohne Entschädigungsanspruch aufgelöst werden.
Erfolgt vor Ablauf des letzten Tages der Probezeit von keiner Seite ein Austritt, so ist dieser Lehrvertrag rechtsverbindlich.

§ 2a.)
Das von dem gesetzlichen Vertreter zu zahlende Lehrgeld beträgt 100 Mark und ist in 10 Raten von 10 Mark zu zahlen und zwar:
am 1. April 1922 mit 10 Mark,
am 1. Mai 1922 mit 10 Mark,
am 1. Juni 1922 mit 10 Mark,
am 1. Juli 1922 mit 10 Mark,
am 1. August 1922 mit 10 Mark.

Der Lehrling hat, wenn die vorzeitige Auflösung des Lehrvertrages durch sein Verschulden stattfindet, keinen Anspruch auf Rückerstattung des Lehrgeldes.
Wird der Lehrvertrag durch Verschulden des Lehrling oder seiner gesetzlichen Vertreter aufgelöst, so ist das

Einigen sich die Parteien über die vorzeitige Auflösung des Lehrvertrages oder wird der Lehrvertrag durch den Tod des Lehrlings aufgelöst, so hat der Lehrmeister nur Anspruch auf Bezahlung des Teils des Lehrgeldes, der auf die zurückgelegte Lehrzeit entfällt. Das Gleiche gilt, wenn beim Tode des Lehrling eine Fortsetzung des Lehrverhältnisses mit dem Nachfolger nicht stattfindet und wenn

erfolgt (§ 10 und 11 dieses Vertrages).
§ 2) Der § 2a) muß aufgeführt werden.
§ 3) Es darf nicht eine längere noch längere Lehrzeit vereinbart werden, als die Handwerkskammer für den betreffenden Gewerbezweig festgesetzt hat. Ausnahmen sind nur mit Genehmigung des Vorstandes der Handwerkskammer zulässig.
§ 4) Die Probezeit hat mindestens vier Wochen zu betragen und darf die Dauer von drei Monaten nicht übersteigen.
§ 5) § 2a) kann nach Vereinbarung gestrichen oder abgeändert werden.

Admittedly, the upward trend in the company was by no means a continuous trend; the building up of the business in the time between 1921 and 1925 was to a certain extent a scaled-down mirror image of the general fluctuating economic situation. Hence the Trade Supervisory Office received not only applications for the approval of overtime, but also, on 1 November 1923, noted the announcement of the first-ever temporary shut-down: 'We have received no sizeable orders for weeks and are therefore not in a position to raise the high sums needed to pay today's wages. Neither can we pay for additional materials required to continue running the business. Therefore, our liabilities today already exceed our assets.' Subsequent developments must have felt like a ride on an emotional roller-coaster for all those involved, whether worker or manager. A revocation of the shut-down was followed by further applications to suspend production temporarily, only to see the workers who had previously been laid off reinstated a short time later, thanks to an improvement in the order situation.

People had long since given up on the worthless 'Papiermark' (paper mark). For offers to motorcycle dealers, the dollar had been the measure of all things since 1923. That is why the '2 PS' model – the basic model in Boge's motor-

cycle range – 'without transmission, horn or lamp' cost 130 US dollars. The 'M 2' 'with transmission and kick starter, horn and lamp' was on offer for 190 US dollars. In the fast-moving times of inflation, the only decisive factor when converting into paper mark was the official Berlin exchange rate for the dollar on the day before payment was made.

Even after currency depreciation had been halted by the introduction of the so-called 'Rentenmark' (security mark) at the beginning of 1924, the motorcycle seemed, in Germany at least, to be a product with a future. After all, an influential specialist journal made a most positive forecast in December 1924: the 'extraordinary impoverishment' in Germany cannot stop the motorisation of traffic, but it can delay the decision in favour of the motor vehicle, for the time being at least. Even a small Ford automobile would not be available in Germany for under 2,500 marks, while you would only have to pay around 600–700 marks for 'a good, small-sized motorcycle'. This general assessment could initially be confirmed by Boge's own business successes, which were obviously linked to the Automobile Exhibition in December: new customers placed orders for 255 of the newly developed motorcycle model alone, to the value of around 250,000 goldmark.

What's more, sizeable orders from home and abroad indicated that business for the special tools was also flourishing. The influence of motorsport on the motorcycle business and the perception of the motorcycle as a means of transport for large sections of the population were not to be underestimated. For this reason, the participation of Boge motorcycles in the so-called 'Deutschlandfahrt' (Tour of Germany) in 1925 brought with it an enormous gain in prestige for the company.

The target on which Otto Boge had set his sights – to become the 'leading German manufacturer' with his products – seemed to be within his grasp. Contrary to all expectations, however, advertising success was no longer reflected in rising sales figures. Instead, the company slid more and more towards an existential crisis. How was this development to be explained? The quality of the Boge motorcycles – unanimously highly praised – could hardly have been the cause of their demise. It is therefore necessary to examine a whole host of other reasons.



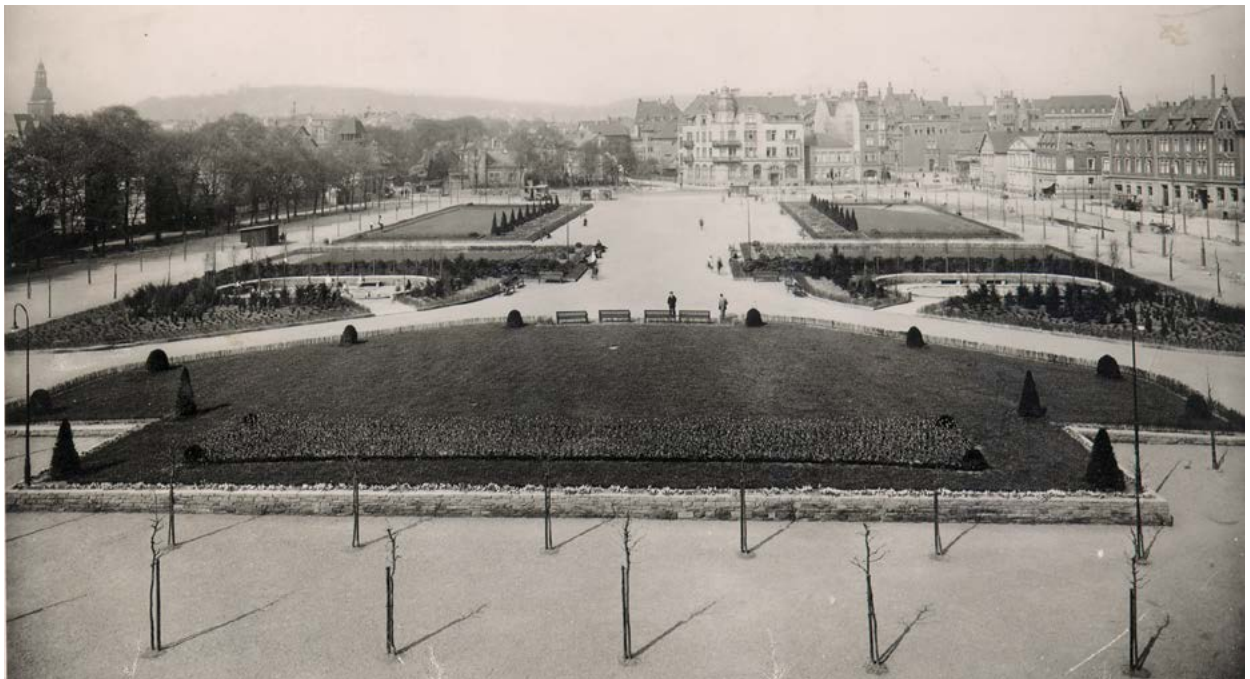
1925: Success in competition
Centre, wearing hat: Otto Boge.

Optimism and radicalisation – The end of the Weimar Republic in Bielefeld

The economy had just started to pick up in 1926 and had developed into an upswing in 1927 which was only to last until the autumn of the following year. The municipal administration report judged this brief turn for the better as a 'renewed economic upturn to an extent previously not thought possible...'. Presumably, the city of Bielefeld was partly to blame for this seemingly overly-positive opinion, thanks to its efforts to improve municipal infrastructure and boost charitable house-building initiatives by means of a large-scale construction and development programme. Commitment on this scale had therefore also become possible because inflation, of all things, had increased the city's economic scope of action. After all, as a major debtor, the local authority had been able to benefit considerably from the decline of the currency.

To this day, the city profits to a certain extent from the visions of the former head of its municipal planning department, Friedrich Schultz, and from the 'successful flight into real assets' resulting in the building projects implemented. Playgrounds and sports fields were laid out; the 'Wiesenbad' open-air swimming pool was built in 1927; schools such as the Helmholtz Secondary School were built and the 'dusty wasteland, the Kesselbrink', was transformed into a public park.

Cooperative housing projects, such as in the suburb of Sieker on Königsbrügge and also in other districts, point to the city's social commitment in difficult times, and have only in recent history been re-discovered as an element of urban development in the form of publications and guided tours.



Kesselbrink around 1930: The strict layout of the flower beds is most striking, but this idea of an inner-city park landscape could still be considered innovative today.



Top: 1926–27: Construction of the Wiesenbad open-air swimming pool as 'emergency work' within the scope of 'a programme of productive provision for the unemployed'.

Bottom: 1920s: The district of 'Königsbrügge' – a model for cooperative housing projects in the late 1920s.

The economic down-turn had caused unemployment figures to rise from the spring of 1928 onwards. It would still take another year before the warning signal of the collapse of share prices on the New York Stock Exchange heralded the Great Depression and destroyed the first few hopeful signs of economic and political stabilisation. In Bielefeld, too, economic decline went hand in hand with political radicalisation. The communists may have remained traditionally weak, but at the far-right end of the political spectrum the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) was becoming stronger. In the local-government elections of 1930 it gained 12 seats. Admittedly, the party still lagged far behind the SPD, which won 22 seats, but in the election for the position of Chairman of the City Council the councillors chose the National Socialist Emil Irrgang by an extremely fine margin. Irrgang had received all the votes from the middle class parties, and gave Bielefeld the dubious reputation of being the first Prussian city to have elected a Nazi representative to head a municipal authority.

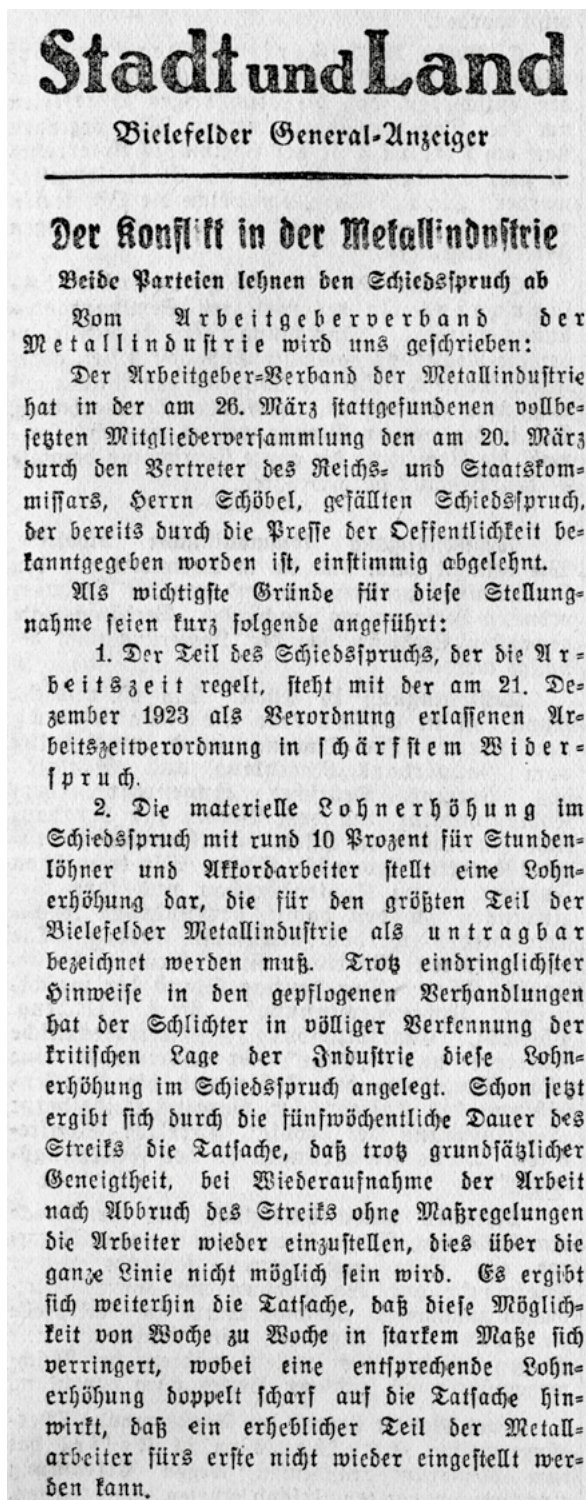
The Nazis had by this time become socially acceptable, and rapidly increasing unemployment figures served only to strengthen radical right-wing standpoints. Every demagogic means was now employed against the repub-

lican forces in the city. NSDAP agitators threatened that amidst the 'drumfire of the Hitler movement' Servering's 'red fortress Bielefeld' would fall, and soon the workers would 'themselves drag its representatives out of City Hall.' Unemployment continued to rise, and in the metal industry alone 40 per cent of workers were without a job at the end of 1930. After 30 January 1933 'red' Bielefeld unavoidably 'fell'. The Nazis had assumed power at local and national level.

Hanging by a thread – Bankruptcy or consolidation?

It was not easy to achieve lasting success in the motorcycle business. At the beginning of 1925, Otto Boge himself explained that he was compelled 'at all costs' to exploit the boom months of March to August – to be able to 'shell out' in the winter months. After all, it was not possible to bank on 'regular sales' in this branch of industry.

There may have been good forecasts from all sides, but the demand for motorcycles had gone down dramatically since the middle of 1925, contrary to all expectations. Wilhelm Laucks, alongside Ernst Thomas one of Otto Boge's closest colleagues, talked of a 'catastrophic situation' in the entire motor-vehicle sector. On top of this, there can be no doubt that the strike throughout the whole Bielefeld metal industry, lasting roughly nine weeks and entailing a lock-out in protest at the reduction in working hours, had a negative effect on the company. As Otto Boge explained in an application for a loan from the 'strike protection fund' of his professional association, the company had bought a considerable amount of materials, which it had not been able to process during the strike. Finally, the economic situation throughout the entire metal industry had started showing signs of weakening in the autumn of 1925, leading to a severe, albeit short, crisis in 1926.



Stadt und Land
Bielefelder General-Anzeiger

Der Konflikt in der Metallindustrie

Beide Parteien lehnen den Schiedsspruch ab

Vom Arbeitgeberverband der Metallindustrie wird uns geschrieben:

Der Arbeitgeber-Verband der Metallindustrie hat in der am 26. März stattgefundenen vollbesetzten Mitgliederversammlung den am 20. März durch den Vertreter des Reichs- und Staatskommissars, Herrn Schöbel, gefällten Schiedsspruch, der bereits durch die Presse der Öffentlichkeit bekanntgegeben worden ist, einstimmig abgelehnt.

Als wichtigste Gründe für diese Stellungnahme seien kurz folgende angeführt:

1. Der Teil des Schiedsspruchs, der die Arbeitszeit regelt, steht mit der am 21. Dezember 1923 als Verordnung erlassenen Arbeitszeitverordnung in schärfstem Widerspruch.
2. Die materielle Lohnerhöhung im Schiedsspruch mit rund 10 Prozent für Stundenlöhner und Akkordarbeiter stellt eine Lohnerhöhung dar, die für den größten Teil der Bielefelder Metallindustrie als untragbar bezeichnet werden muß. Trotz eindringlichster Hinweise in den gepflogenen Verhandlungen hat der Schlichter in völliger Verkennung der kritischen Lage der Industrie diese Lohnerhöhung im Schiedsspruch angelegt. Schon jetzt ergibt sich durch die fünfswöchentliche Dauer des Streiks die Tatsache, daß trotz grundsätzlicher Geneigtheit, bei Wiederaufnahme der Arbeit nach Abbruch des Streiks ohne Maßregelungen die Arbeiter wieder einzustellen, dies über die ganze Linie nicht möglich sein wird. Es ergibt sich weiterhin die Tatsache, daß diese Möglichkeit von Woche zu Woche in starkem Maße sich verringert, wobei eine entsprechende Lohnerhöhung doppelt scharf auf die Tatsache hinwirkt, daß ein erheblicher Teil der Metallarbeiter fürs erste nicht wieder eingestellt werden kann.

1925: Ten-week strike in Bielefeld:
Boge is also affected.

Alongside these external influences, there were also problems within the company. Despite a fundamental agreement between the General Partner and the Limited Partners on procedure regarding a new partnership agreement in January 1925, the relationship between the parties was strained to such an extent that Adolf Boge and his Solingen partner Carl Bremshey left the company in the wake of a serious argument. Otto Boge was able to compensate for the loss of their capital investment by bringing a new limited partner into the company, but the external signs of crisis were so dramatic that the company got into financial difficulties in the autumn of 1925. And in December that year it was compelled to go into receivership in order to avert bankruptcy.

‘As a result of the catastrophic shortage of money’ under which his customers also suffered, Otto Boge wrote in his application to the county court, that these had not been able to buy large numbers of firmly ordered motorcycles. Outstanding debts had only shrunk ‘to a minimal extent’. Yet, although the existence of the company was under extreme threat, Otto Boge remained remarkably optimistic: ‘Our situation can most certainly be expected to improve, as sales of motorcycles will rise during the season which is soon to start.’ At least the balance sheet,

to be presented before court, documented a slight glimmer of hope in terms of the quantity of stock and the amount of outstanding debts. It is also conceivable that Otto Boge’s optimism had an effect. In any case, the court came to the conclusion that there was ‘a reasonable prospect’ of remedying the insolvency and averting bankruptcy by reaching agreement with creditors. Without this advance assessment by the court, there would have been no chance of avoiding bankruptcy. There was now at least a hope of reaching a settlement via the receivership arrangement. The process which followed was the beginning of a difficult period, not just for the company, but also for the family. Not only did machines have to be pawned, the family home in Ravensberger Strasse also had to be sold.

A letter to the Trade Supervisory Office makes clear the bitter consequences also facing the Boge employees: ‘Sales opportunities are so bad, firstly due to the difficult situation in our sector and secondly because of our financial position, that we are compelled to make the majority of our workers redundant.’

Agreement with the major creditors was imperative, if a settlement offer were to have any chance of success in this situation. As the new Limited Partner, master builder Wilhelm Klar-

horst brought 40,000 marks into the company and, in addition, granted a loan of over 50,000 reichsmark. A businessman commissioned by Bielefeld county court to administer receivership was certain that, had agreement with the major creditors not come about, all further efforts would have been worthless and the opening of bankruptcy proceedings would have been inevitable. Tough negotiations were necessary until, at literally the last minute, agreement was successfully reached. Following the agreement with Klarhorst, all other creditors consented to the 'compulsory settlement at a rate of 40 per cent'.

When receivership officially came to an end on 18 April 1926, the worst had been averted, but the economic situation of the company was still precarious. The original core trade of special tools was successfully intensified for the automobile industry, but this was still not sufficient to keep the factory working to capacity. At least the remaining materials from motorcycle production could be processed and the last motorcycles were utilised, in part to pay creditors, but the motorcycle business as a whole could not be saved. It has not been possible to ascertain the exact number of motorcycles built at Boge between 1922 and 1925–26. A figure of around 1,000 has been mentioned in various contexts,

but, taking the healthy economy until the summer of 1924 into consideration, this number would seem to be too low.

As far as Ernst Thomas, the businessman alongside technician Otto Boge, was concerned, experiences stemming from seasonal dependency and the recently overcome crisis spoke against the motorcycle business. It was above all thanks to his far-sightedness with regard to business, together with the opinion of close colleague Wilhelm Lauck, that motorcycle production was abandoned in 1926 – a wise decision, without which the company would probably not be in existence today. New products were needed to be able to steer the company into quieter economic waters in spite of the external signs of crisis.

It was only a few weeks after the liberating settlement coup that the company found itself once again with its back to the wall. 'At the end of next month, we will be forced to make further employees redundant and possibly close down the business completely.' was to be read in a letter of 28 May 1926 to the Trade Supervisory Office. For the second time, however, help arrived in the nick of time, and a light appeared at the end of the tunnel: at the same time, Dürkopp abandoned production of milk centri-

fuges. Thanks to his friendly relationship with Dürkopp's works manager, Otto Boge was able to take over the repair service and the delivery of spare parts and in so doing withdraw his application for redundancy or plant closure.

With hindsight, and seen from the perspective of the current product range, the year 1926 represents a decisive and positive break with the past, quite apart from all the previously overcome existential problems. It was a turning point at which the company found its way out of crisis: a report dated 30 September 1926 states that company turnover had been mainly drawn from the motorcycle business until June, whereas between July and September sales had been largely achieved thanks to a new product. The company had identified the compressor or the 'electric motor-driven garage compressor air pump' for its manufacturing programme. This product, originally made under licence, was closely related in technical terms to the engines

produced up to that point, as it was a piston machine. Hence, the conversion of production to compressor technology was not an insurmountable task in terms of cost. Just a few months later, the motorcycle had disappeared from the company letterhead. From 1927 onwards, the Otto Boge Limited Partnership traded under the designation 'Tool and Compressor Factory'.

How times changed: a further letter to the Trade Supervisory Office this time announced not the closing down of the factory or the laying off of workers, but requested permission to work in three shifts around the clock. 'The acceptance of a large order, which we are unable to carry out on the basis of a working day of eight hours, compels us to set up a three-shift arrangement for a part of our production.'

Soon, customers could be supplied with Boge compressors, e.g. the 'mobile power air-pump, 'Egob', which had been on offer since 4 November 1927.



1927: A change of product in 'Department 2' from motorcycle to compressor.



In 1930, a 'stationary power air-pump' was to follow, and a range of so-called 'Schnelldienst' – 'quick service' – compressors were developed shortly afterwards.

A glance at the development of the company in the years of the world economic crisis from 1929 onwards clearly proves that orientation towards compressor technology was the right strategy. No great profits were actually made, but the



stabilisation of turnover figures speaks for itself and also satisfied the banks: 'It would be remiss of us not to express our sincere thanks for kindly providing us with your

balance sheet as of 31 December 1931, whose figures can be seen as quite satisfactory under the given circumstances.' The 'given circumstances' of the prevailing crisis had even taken their toll on larger Bielefeld businesses, and industry in Bielefeld had seen numerous bankruptcies since 1929. Unemployment in the employment agency district of Bielefeld reached its highest level in February 1932. Some 23,699 people were without a job. And even large companies

such as Dürkopp, which had helped to safeguard the survival of Otto Boge KG by means of the trade with milk centrifuges in 1926, had to shut down a part of its production. At around the same time, Otto Boge wrote to the Deutsche Bank, that the company was doing relatively well, despite the 'current, not particularly rosy prospects. With respect to incoming orders, incoming payments and losses, a satisfactory close to the current year' could be reckoned with.

In an attempt to make a provisional appraisal of company development from its founding in 1907 until the end of the Weimar period – and hence as far as its 25th anniversary – it becomes apparent that, in terms of its own product developments, whether special tools, engines and motorcycles or ultimately compressors, the company has always focused on modern technology and the central idea of the motorisation of society. Despite the fact that the company's concentration on the motorcycle drew it into a serious crisis and bankruptcy was only averted by a hair's breadth, this commercial



low point never caused Otto Boge to abandon the fundamental idea in itself. On the whole, motorisation was on the rise during the entire Weimar period. Between 1921 and 1929, the number of motor vehicles rose by around 26 per cent. In comparison with the rest of Europe there was a considerable amount of catching up to be done, as the degree of motorisation (the number of cars/lorries per 1,000 inhabitants) stood at just ten vehicles in Germany in 1929. Other states with a comparable gross domestic product, meanwhile, such as Great Britain, France or even Denmark, had long since reached the level of around 30 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants. Here was potential which could not be estimated too highly. In addition, the compressor was a very important product when it came to the expansion of motorisation infrastructure. Petrol stations, garages, vulcanization businesses and the like were all dependent on compressed air and generated a demand for the corresponding technology. In the light of the myth of the 'Reichsautobahn', the German motorway system, and remembering the corresponding job creation programmes

might have been expected that these would have triggered even higher rates of growth. However, it is surprising to find that the number of motor vehicles rose by only 18 per cent annually between 1934 and 1938.

Such growth figures in the automobile sector, however, in addition to the expansion of compressed air technology into many other economic spheres of application, were always to prove promising for Otto Boge KG.

Key figures relating to the world economic crisis in Germany 1929-1933
(1928 = 100)

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Gross national product	101	94	79	65	67
Industrial production	102	87	69	58	66
Capital goods production	103	81	61	46	49
Average wage / salary	101	94	80	62	63
Property income	99	89	74	60	62
Share prices (1924-26 = 100)	134	109	81	55	67
No. of employed (in millions)	17.9	16.5	14.4	12.5	13.4
No. of unemployed (in millions)	1.9	3.7	5.1	5.3	6.0
Unemployment rate (as % of persons in employment)	9.6	15.7	24	30	26

Source: Wehler (2003)

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IV. 'Gleichschaltung' and Conformity – Developments during the Nazi Era



1930s: Petrol stations, garages and motor vehicle repair shops need compressed air.

Political upheaval – National Socialists in power

Just as little as Nazi policy was responsible for the fundamental planning of a motorway network, can it be credited with the achievement of widespread motorisation in Germany. And much can be said for the fact that other 'brown myths' fail to bear comparison with historical fact. Proponents of the theory that it was National Socialism alone which was responsible for a far-reaching economic upturn from 1933 onwards meet with stern opposition. According to economic historian Christoph Buchheim, 'spontaneous positive influences' were registered as early as the autumn of 1932, and a renowned institute for economic research has also confirmed a marked improvement in the job market situation of the period. What's more, it is asserted that, 'essentially, the effects of the job creation programmes of previous governments' were only felt in 1933. National Socialism was, therefore, not to thank for this success, but still managed to take the credit for it, exploit it for propaganda purposes and use it to strengthen its power base. In all official statements and reports, and similarly in the Bielefeld administration report for 1933, the point at which the upward trend kicked in was stated 'precisely': 'With the nomination of Adolf Hitler as Reichskanzler, the great task of reconstruction began. In the forefront was the reintegration of millions of unemployed national comrades into the work process ...'

Without a doubt, the economic situation was more than precarious towards the end of the Weimar Republic. In the employment agency district of Bielefeld, over 20,000 people were without work. Given the fact that this figure had already been cut in half only one year later, and that by the end of 1936 almost full employment had been achieved, one can begin to understand this assessment, and especially the rapidly increasing support for Nazi policies, at least during the years of peace before 1939. According to historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler, the idea of the extraordinary achievement of the Hitler dictatorship was anchored in the 'collective memory of the Germans' for a long time.

For approximately 8,000 Social Democrats who followed the call to a rally on the Kesselbrink by the 'Eiserne Front' (iron front) – a broad, social democratic dominated coalition against Fascism – and also the bourgeois-republican forces which had not yet been taken in by National Socialism, Hitler still seemed to be a fleeting, temporary phenomenon. He was for them a kind of puppet, manipulated by such powerful 'German Nationals' as Alfred Hugenberg or right-wing Centre Party politicians such as Franz von Papen. It would not be long, however, before it became clear who were the puppets and who were the puppeteers.

Parties and organisations belonging to the labour movement were soon no longer in existence. By the early summer of 1933, Germany's SPD, the KPD (Communist Party) and the trade unions had been banned and freely elected works council representatives were forced out of office under threat of losing their jobs. The local-government elections in 1933, the last which took place for a long time, were also not conducted according to democratic principles. In Bielefeld, too, the city hall parties disappeared from the local political stage – all except the one, now omnipresent, party.

Admission to public offices, for example the appointment of new local councillors, was now tied to an oath of allegiance to the 'Führer' – once the candidates had proved their 'Aryan descent' back to 1800.



Top: March 1933: Democratic structures have been dismantled; only NSDAP city councillors 'march' into the Town Hall.

Bottom: 1933: Marches, meetings, large rallies – mass gatherings characterise the image of the Nazi dictatorship.

Compressed air, a growth market – Profitable business and strong competition

Parallel to the alarming political upheaval, a 'normal' life was going on for many workers, employees and businessmen, which, at first, turned out to be highly satisfactory. The economic situation appeared to be calming down. Among the unemployed, there was growing hope of finding work, and many businessmen saw their companies on an upward trend. In the meantime, Otto Boge and his son-in-law Ernst Thomas could be certain that they had pinned their hopes on the right product at the right time. 'Motorisation' in the 1930s meant not only a further increase in the number of motor vehicles, but was also closely linked to the

expansion of the network of petrol stations and garages, which had been somewhat neglected during the Weimar era. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, plans for the building of the motorways were lying in a drawer at the ministry, virtually ready for implementation. In conjunction with the broadly-based measures for job creation under the Reich Labour Service, further expansion was

pursued even more intensively than in previous years. The technical infrastructure of petrol stations and garages was also lacking for this nationwide road network. Therefore a lucrative market for compressed air and compressor technology seemed to be developing.



1930s: Various models of tyre pressure gauge ensure that tyres run smoothly.



Rival companies, however, had not been idle. For a central German manufacturer, Leo in Gera, the newcomer Boge had already been a keen rival during the world economic crisis. The attempt, however, to force Boge out of the market with giveaway prices, failed. The competitor had granted the end consumer the same resale price

Around 1935: Motorway construction in Lämershagen near Bielefeld.

The expanding network of petrol stations and garages means an increased demand for compressed air.

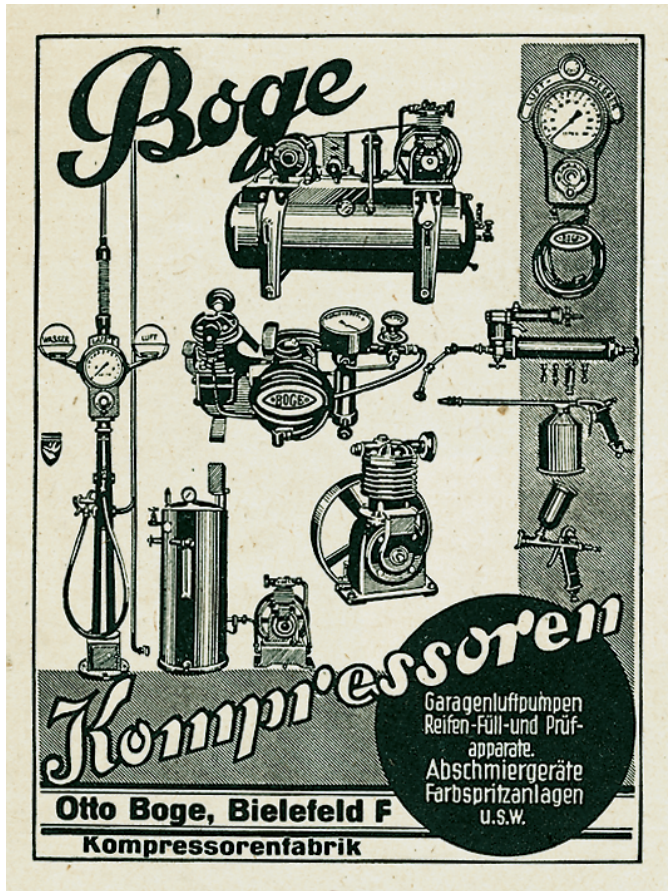
as the dealers, while Boge had always refused to employ this policy, and as ever offered the dealers better conditions than the end consumers. For the company which was just marking an upward trend, this was a risky road to take, which could also have led into the dead end of a new crisis. Boge, however, stayed on the road to success, since it had built itself a good reputation in this sector by retaining graduated prices. Since 1933, Boge had been able to win as new customers many dealers, who had previously bought rival products.

In his twice-yearly reports to the Deutsche Bank as creditor, the authorised signatory Wilhelm Laucks had positive words to say about the financial year of 1933. In the course of the year, sales had been increased and his prognosis was for a 'relatively favourable annual result'. Six months later, Laucks was even able to report a small profit. Thanks to the economic revival which began in mid-1933, stocks of goods had had to be increased, and at the end of the year an order came in from the 'Benzene Association' in Bochum, to the value of 50,000 reichsmark.

Boge had made a good name for itself with these first large orders, and the following years serve to emphasise this sharp upward trend. A subsequent report states that, thanks to intense

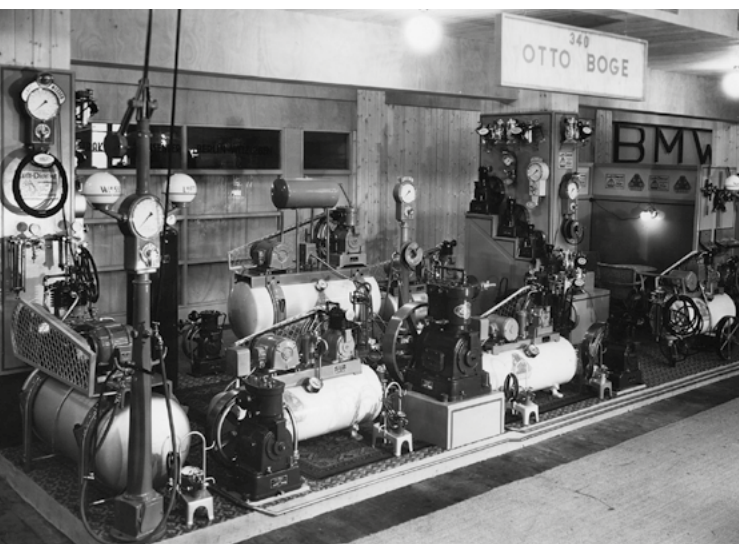
demand, sales had 'positively shot up', and increases in turnover of between 20 and 30 per cent per month were not uncommon. Admittedly, this rapid development increased the need for capital, but it did not prove necessary to take out bank loans. In 1934, Boge had been able to double its turnover, thanks to new recruitments. The ratio of outstanding amounts to debts 'had shifted from 5 to 4 towards 8 to 5' according to Wilhelm Laucks, and the authorised signatory forecasted a favourable result, even in the event of an economic downturn.

The general economic upswing was, however, by no means a guarantee that the relationship to the competition would ease. On the contrary! On the occasion of the 'International Motor Show' in the spring of 1933 in Berlin, Boge promoted its 'Schnelldienst' model with the slogan 'Boge Schnelldienst can do more! Unbeatable value for money!' In protest at this type of publicity, Leo, who was evidently engaged in a permanent feud with Boge, obtained an interim order and managed to ensure that the Boge product in question could not be offered for the duration of the trade fair. The competitor saw his own product at a disadvantage and insisted on his supposed rights from a registered design. Boge argued, on the other hand, that the existence of this registered design was wrongful,



since other companies used the same construction, and a corresponding French patent had been issued back in 1922.

In summary proceedings, a legal battle was then fought, the result of which became known within one month. The court was essentially of the same opinion as Boge, namely that the existence of the registered design used by the rival company was wrongful. However, in return, Boge had to desist from the allegation that the Boge pump was better than that of its rival, which also 'was as loud as a threshing machine' when in operation. The costs of the lawsuit were to be shared, 20 per cent to be borne by Boge and 80 per cent by Leo. No further promotion for the 'Boge Schnelldienst' compressor could be made, and compensation claims had now also arisen from the expected loss of sales at the motor show.



1930s: A complete range of compressed air products; shown above in a promotional poster and below on a trade-fair stand.

Exclusion and keeping in step – Economy on the upturn

Whilst the economic climate was clearly improving, the reprisals taken against Jews and political opponents of the regime were on the increase. The exclusion of the Jewish population began immediately. With effect from 1 April 1933, the NSDAP had implemented a boycott of all Jewish businesses, doctors and lawyers. SA and SS men blocked entrances; anti-Semitic and inflammatory slogans could be read in shop windows. Even a well-respected sports official was affected. Julius Hesse, Chairman of DSC Arminia Bielefeld from 1909 to 1914, who at the time had saved the club when it was in serious financial difficulties, ran a shoe and sports equipment shop on the Alter Markt.

A witness at the time recalled the mindless slogans daubed on windows and house walls: 'Heil Hitler! Only buy your shoes from Wittler! Don't buy from Hesse, "sonst bekommst du was in die Fresse" – or you'll get your face smashed!' Even given the awareness of the potential for brute force personified by the SA and SS and their more subtle methods of intimidation, with hindsight it seems quite incredible to think that there was so little protest against such inhuman excesses. After all, the Nazis had only been in power for two months!



The judiciary, however, would not have been in a position to help. The foundations of the state of law had been swept away, and five notaries in Bielefeld had to close their chambers. After all, 'the maintenance of public order and safety was brought under severe threat' whenever Germans 'were handed certificates which had been drawn up or certified by Jewish notaries'. As if that was not enough, exclusion went hand in hand with scorn and derision. An article in the *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten* advised a lawyer to move to Dortmund: '... indeed, Dr. Kamp, my dear fellow, there are supposedly quite a number of coal mines in the vicinity of Dortmund; would not that be an ideal place for you?' The jibe closed with a cynical cheer, '(Sc) hip, (sc)hip, hurra!' – the German word 'Schippe' meaning 'shovel'. It is hardly likely that Otto Boge was in agreement with the tactics employed by local slanderers and libellers. In the 1920s, he had always been competently advised by precisely the same Dr. Kamp in his dispute with his Limited Partners in the matter of the new partnership agreement. Naturally, the fact that the lawyer was of Jewish descent was of no significance whatsoever.

An extremely important means of consolidating the power of the Nazi party was its policy of 'gleichschaltung' – forcing into line – in industry. Consequently, the assembly of the Chamber

Photograph from around 1930: Hesse's shoe and sports equipment shop on the Alter Markt. The Jewish businessman and his wife were deported to Auschwitz in 1943 and murdered there.

of Commerce ceased to operate on 11 April 1933, under pressure from the NSDAP. The new assembly of 'the right people', which elected the new board of directors after an election on 20 June which could be more aptly described as a farce, had long since learned its lesson. The inaugural speech of the new chairman Heinrich Oberschelp, Director of the Rixe bicycle factory, ended with 'three cheers' for the 'Führer' and the battle cry 'Sieg Heil!' The process of gleichschaltung took a similar course at the Chamber of Crafts and Trades, whose board of directors had initially been extended by only one member loyal to the regime. In contrast to the trade unions, however, gleichschaltung in these organisations was less about excluding opponents to the regime – of whom there were few in this context – but rather about doing away with the simple possibility of representing an independent opinion. From the spring of 1933 onwards, Bielefeld companies were able to report positive economic data again. In many branches the long-awaited upturn had arrived, although it rapidly became clear that the upward trend was to a large extent dependent on impulses from the state. Efforts at re-armament did not yet play a direct role in 1933, but the militarisation and drive for uniformity in society progressed at a pace. The textile industry, in particular, profited from this development, receiving orders for

the Reich Labour Service or for the SA and SS. In the metal industry, especially in bicycle production, the upturn had become apparent as early as the spring of 1933. From 1935–36 onwards, growth literally surged, due to increased state armaments targets. Since the four-year plan of 1936, Bielefeld had played quite a significant role in the German armaments industry. The final administrative reports before World War II indicate the close connection between growth and re-armament: thanks to the 'reinstatement of military sovereignty', unemployment was as good as overcome, and a lack of skilled labour was becoming apparent. After 1936 industrial turnover had doubled, and indications of a renewed increase of 20 per cent for 1937 pointed to the success of the mechanical engineering sector in particular. Tool-making factories were 'overloaded with orders to such an extent' that long delivery times had become the norm.

Indeed, as their company reports show, some of the bigger businesses in the region had to a large extent already turned to the production of armaments in peacetime. However, it would be an illusion to believe that such decisions had always been taken voluntarily, and this is particularly true of the armaments industry. Elements of a planned economy, such as state-controlled distribution of raw materials or investment mo-

ney and detailed production targets restricted the businessman's usual scope of action.

Within the scope of historical analysis of social and economic aspects of the image of the businessman in the Nazi period, a broad discussion has been conducted on the subject of the businessman's moral responsibility, particularly with regard to the issue of forced labour. The fact that such questions can currently be looked into in a much more diversified manner than some 20 to 30 years ago, is not least down to the courageous decisions made by many companies to open their archives unreservedly for research purposes. In place of crudely simplifying speculation about the way German businessmen saw their role under Nazism, there is now room for a balanced representation, which places relevant attitudes in their historical context and takes into account the economic and social developments, as well as the basic socio-political conditions and intellectual and cultural trends of that time. Only broad-based access to the subject can shed light on what motivated businessmen and company decision-making, and so help to do away with sweeping generalisations.

The former director of the Frankfurter Metallgesellschaft AG, Richard Merton, who had to leave

Germany in 1939 and had been expatriated, wrote in 1955: 'If, from the year 1933 onwards, I did not get involved in the sins of Nazism as so many others did, then it is ... no particular achievement of mine, but I rather owe it to the fact that by having four Jewish grandparents I was protected against this. Others ... had the option of joining in, of making compromises ... The vast majority did so, out of a compulsion to keep their jobs ... which thus enabled them to continue to feed their wives and children.' Of course this opinion must not be used as a means of justifying any manner of inhuman behaviour, and the question will have to be asked in each case, of how much scope for action businessmen and managers actually had, for example when it came to deciding to produce armaments or whether to assign forced labourers to their factories. Examination of many different cases would surely bring to light many different types of motivation, ranging from conformity out of opportunism to enthusiastic participation.

Successful growth – Big plans – Strokes of fate

The success of Otto Boge KG in the 1930s is most certainly to a large extent due to the fact that the company had systematically turned its attention to possible major clients. Hence the regional post offices, the state railway, the police offices of the Länder (federal states) and the German army were among the recipients of information brochures and advertising material:

‘... On the assumption that among the possible acquisitions to be made on the part of the national postal authority to boost the economy, items from my production will also be purchased by the various postal bus services, allow me to take the liberty of presenting you with a set of catalogues.’ At the same time, circulars were sent to representatives containing instructions on how to deal with potential major clients, such as the state railway: ‘This matter is of particular importance, and I would ask you to visit each manager’s office, machine shop and repair shop which might be of interest. ... Since these

businesses have only heavy lorries or compressor stations in operation, only the large power air-pumps or compressor stations are to be considered, so that we are dealing solely with objects of a considerable size, which, in terms of your commission and my increased turnover and the occupation of staff, are of particular value.’

The 18 independent trade agencies operating for Boge at that time also received special instructions regarding dealings with the official procurement agencies of the German army. At this point in time, in the spring of 1935, the political decision to re-arm had long been taken, so that, here too, new market opportunities opened up to the company: ‘The barracks have now been completed. In the last few days, I have received very many enquires and orders, and it is therefore extremely important to work intensively on those units, who have not yet placed orders.’ The paths of Boge and Leo, the rival company from Gera, crossed again and again. According to Otto Boge, clients would most probably choose between this competitor and his own company, but would always need three offers to choose from. Should it be at all possible to influence the situation, it would be advisable to put in a third offer from a dealer who stocks one’s own products



A mainstay of the business since the 1930s:
air and water from a single source.

Competitors had attempted in the meantime to set new standards for petrol stations by means of new compressor types. The aim was to force Boge out of this business sector. It goes without saying that competition was not only good for business in this instance, but that it also triggered further technical advances at Boge. Not wanting to surrender this area to a rival without a fight had made the development of new products and features an absolute necessity. As late as the 1950s, these new Boge compressors were themselves setting new standards.

While particular attention was paid to possible major clients, 'normal customers' were not neglected. In December 1934, Boge had bought his first service van to be able to carry out small repairs directly on site. The spare engines carried in this vehicle served at the same time to persuade customers of the necessity of possible new purchases. In this respect, a kind of representative contract was agreed with the newly employed mechanic, which guaranteed him a special commission in the event of a sale.

The following years saw business improve dramatically for Boge. From 1933 to 1937, turnover was increased from around 225,000 reichsmark to over 1.4 million reichsmark. The factory in Siechenmarschstrasse which had been bought

in 1921 was gradually becoming too small, and in the spring of 1937 Otto Boge had to make a quick decision. The site and buildings of Dürkopp's former iron foundry in Meller Strasse were up for sale. Due to its favourable location close to the railway station, there were a number of potential buyers. After all, this was a 3,500 sq m site, which although only partially taken up by factory buildings, had much potential for expansion through additional purchases. In the end, it was thanks to Otto Boge's good relationship with Dürkopp that his offer was accepted. The purchase price was to be 56,000 reichsmark. Otto Boge came to an agreement with his brother Adolf to secure the financing of the deal.

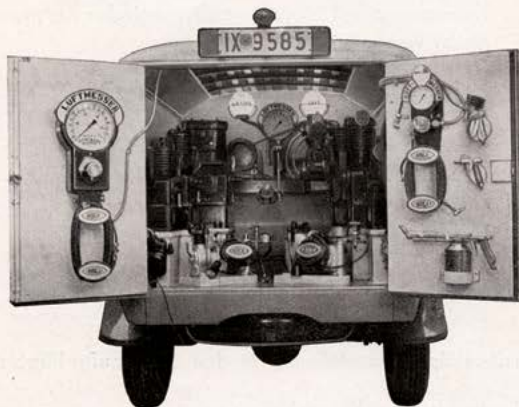
Clearly the brothers' clouded relationship had long since improved, once Adolf Boge had left his position in the company as Limited Partner in 1925. In the meantime, Adolf Boge had his own business and had sold the brand BKS to an American rival, Jale & Thowne. He was now active in the market with a new product, which – in this respect there were definite parallels again – was also directly linked to motorisation. Adolf Boge was now producing shock absorbers for motor vehicles. It is particularly interesting to note that it was Otto Boge of all people – the exact time is unknown, but it was presumably in



Boge-Kundendienst.



Um die Kundschaft in allen, die Verwendung von Druckluft betreffenden Fragen richtig zu beraten, stehen in allen Bezirken Deutschlands geschulte, erfahrene Bezirksvertreter unverbindlich zur Verfügung. — Ebenso Vorführungswagen, mit einer Auswahl Boge-Kompressoren, Reifenprüfer, Abschmiergeräte, Farbspritzgeräte etc. etc.



Die durch den Kundendienst garantierte richtige Beratung, die langjährigen Erfahrungen als Spezialfabrik, u. die durch eine Fülle von Anerkennungen belegte, besondere Qualität der Boge-Erzeugnisse, sollte auch Sie veranlassen, diesem Fabrikat den Vorzug zu geben.



Abb. 7. Beim Füllen von Reifen.



Abb. 8. Beim Abblasen des Fahrgestells mit Petroleum.

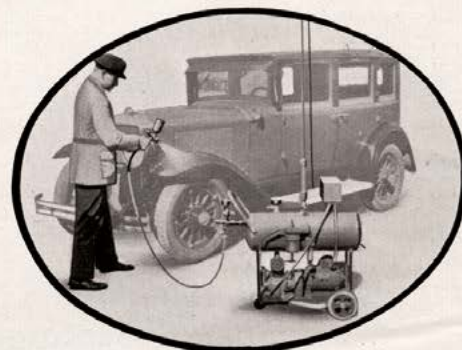
Abb. 9. Beim Abschmieren
mit autom. Fettpistole.

Abb. 10. Beim Lackieren des Wagens.

Boges Station „Universal“

klein, handlich, sparsam,
billig in der Anschaffung
und doch sehr
leistungsfähig.

Abb. 11



Alles in einem
Kompressor
Luftsäule
Abschmiergerät
Farbspritzanlage

Beschreibung s. Seite 7.

G e s u c h .
des Fabrikanten Otto Boge
Bielefeld
Siechenmarschstr. 46a
um Erteilung meines Patentes.

Ich melde nachstehende Erfindung.
" Blattstossdämpfer für Automobile "
an und beantrage, mir auf dieselbe
ein Patent zu erteilen.

Die gesetzliche Gebühr von
RM. 25.- habe ich an die Kasse des
Reichspatentamtes eingezahlt.

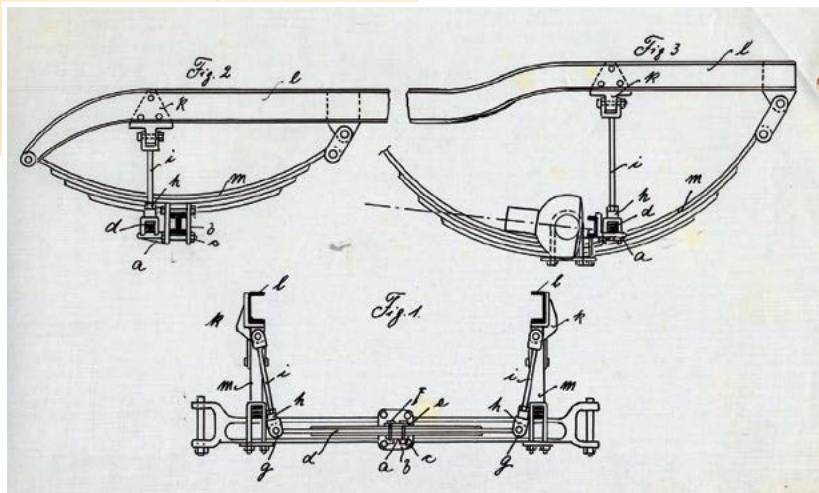
Dieser Anmeldung liegen bei:

- 1 Zeichnung auf Kartonpapier
- 1 auf Pausleinwand
- 2 Beschreibungen
- 1 Eingangsbestätigung

An das
Reichspatentamt
Berlin S.W. 61
Gitschinerstr. 97-103

the late 1920s – who applied to the German Patent Office in Berlin for a patent: 'I would like to register the following invention, a "leaf spring shock absorber for motor vehicles" and request that this patent be granted to me.' In the enclosed description, Otto Boge stated that this was a new type of shock absorption, which could not only compensate for vertical vibrations due to potholes, but could also reduce lateral swaying of the bodywork in bends.

Unfortunately, company records give no information as to whether the brothers had already worked together on the development of the product idea, or whether Adolf Boge's shock absorber business was possibly based on the technical developments made by his brother. In any case, the correspondence between the brothers during the 1930s underlines their good relationship. Hence it is not surprising that Adolf Boge contributed to the financing of the purchase of land for a new factory to the tune of 40,000 reichsmark.



Around 1930: Result of close consultation with his brother Adolf: Otto Boge's patent application for the 'leaf spring shock absorber'.

As additional security for the promised mortgage, Otto Boge handed over to his brother a large part of his plant. These 49 machines were to remain on loan in the Bielefeld factory, however.

Before the new factory could be set up, however, there were a number of bureaucratic hurdles to overcome. Accompanying the 'Four-Year Plan' of 1936, there were various 'implementation orders' which made obtaining planning permission comparable to running the gauntlet through the different institutions.

First of all, there was a licence requirement imposed by the employment agency in Bielefeld. Furthermore, a 'clearance certificate' was needed from the municipal building inspection authority regarding the necessary building materials. This requirement stemmed from state regulations on saving raw materials and using as many old materials as possible when constructing new buildings. Otto Boge was repeatedly obliged to explain his business situa-

tion: expansion was absolutely necessary, above all in the interests of the workforce.

The office space within the old premises was no longer sufficient to allow production to be 'carried out in a proper manner'. Precisely because a large amount of 'old material' could be used in construction, the plan was 'definitely in the national economic interest'. In an effort to speed up the applications to the authorities, Otto Boge repeatedly pointed out that the company had progressed to become 'one of the leading companies in the industry' and that it permanently supplied the army, air force and navy. Products from Boge KG were also 'to a considerable



1937: Office in Siechenmarschstrasse shortly before the move to the new location.

degree' destined for the expansion of the petrol station network along the new motorways.

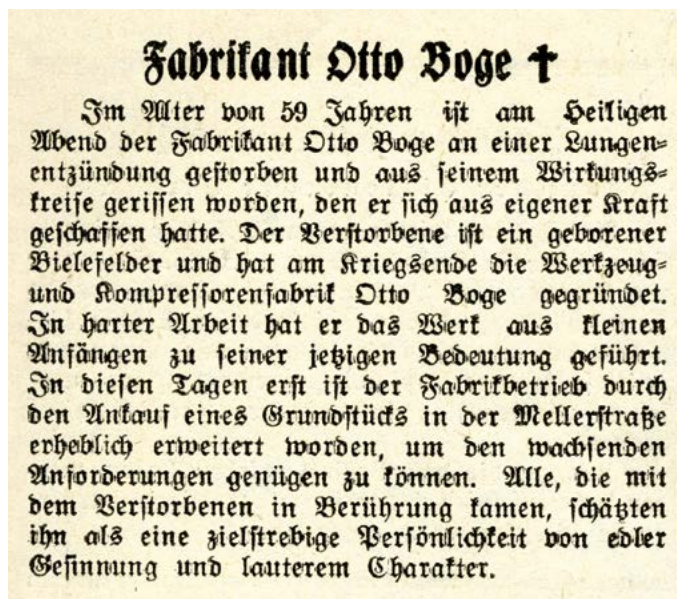
Bureaucracy, however, proved to be extremely long-winded and the question of the use of 'old material' alone was discussed over many months. Besides, the Trade Supervisory Office with its own bureaucratic structure was responsible for certain matters of factory security and health and safety. Then there were the reservations of the municipal building inspection authority, concerning access to the building, which had to be cleared up. It was not until the 'Westphalia No. 2 Regional Advisory Office for Plant Air Raid Protection, Reich Group Industry' had finally conducted a thorough examination of the construction documentation that building and conversion measures could begin in summer 1937. The move was to be completed by the end of that year, so construction of the new building and the transfer of production from the old to the new premises should be concluded in as short a time as possible.

On top of all this, production was running at full steam, but the company was lacking in workers, not least because larger businesses with sizeable state orders were clearly able to pay a higher hourly rate. In 1937 Boge got into a dispute with Dürkopp on this issue, and was very blunt

towards the employment agency. Large businesses, in particular those entrusted with state commissions, were making assurances of wage payments, without consideration of general interests and peace within businesses, 'in order by this means to obtain people or to remove them from businesses at random and without any effort'. Dürkopp, above all, played a very unfortunate role here. 'I would much appreciate it, if you would correspondingly inform the relevant personnel departments of these companies of the fact that they, like any business, have the right to search for and employ people, but that in so doing they should respect the existence of others and peace in general.'

Otto Boge, the company founder who had successfully steered the business from its modest beginnings, most notably through various existential crises, lived to see the upturn and healthy development of the company which started at the end of the 1920s. He did not experience, however, the move to the new factory. He died on Christmas Eve 1937, only a short time before the actual transfer of business was completed, at the age of just 59. Older reports state quite simply that he had caught severe pneumonia during one of his long stays on the draughty building site.

Company employees bid their final farewell to Otto Boge in their own moving obituary. They knew that during the constant struggle to expand and develop the company their welfare had always been his major concern. The memory of this socially responsible entrepreneur was honoured by the pledge to continue his life's work in the way he would have wished.



Discrimination and persecution – War and destruction

The consolidation of their power since the mid-1930s led to an increase in organised Nazi excesses against people of a different opinion and above all against the Jewish population. This was soon to be 'legitimised' by the quasi uncertainty of the law under the so-called 'Nuremberg Laws'. For many Jews this was just the beginning of a long road of suffering and everyday discrimination, which condemned them literally to the gutter should an 'Aryan' come towards them on the pavement. When on the night of 9 and 10 November 1938 the Bielefeld Synagogue was set alight, the fire brigade was forbidden to fight it. It was only permitted to prevent the flames from spreading to neighbouring buildings.



At the same time, groups of enraged thugs attacked Jewish businesses, whose owners then had to pay for the clearing up of the damage themselves, as prescribed in a perfidious decree by Hermann Göring. Many Bielefeld Jews decided to emigrate – insofar as they even got the opportunity to do so and were able to find a country willing to accept them. The number of so-called 'Aryanizations' or expropriations also increased, whereby Jews were forced to sell their businesses for well below their value. If they had the chance to go abroad, the 'Reich Flight Tax' or the 'Jewish Capital Levy' saw to it that hardly anything was left from what were drastically reduced sales proceeds in the first place.

The reactions of Bielefeld's population varied – as everywhere – between disapproval, fear, indifference and enthusiastic agreement. Even among the more thoughtful people, the mood must have ranged from unease and doubt at the activities of the SA and SS on the one hand, to pride at the economic and foreign policy successes of the German Reich on the other. Germany was by now well on the path to war. Suddenly and unexpectedly, Hitler had achieved his most recent interim foreign-policy targets in the spring of 1939: from the 'Anschluss' (annexation) of Austria, to the march into the Sudeten-

1938: The burning synagogue in Turnerstrasse, secretly photographed by a Bielefeld resident.

land and finally the breaking up of Czechoslovakia. There had been no resistance to speak of, for example from France or England.

When World War II began with the invasion of Poland, large sections of Bielefeld's industry could hardly have been surprised by events. The bigger businesses, at least, had long been prepared for war. The Chamber of Commerce had been writing letters marked 'Secret' to the companies for some months. Whether they were about regulations on 'stocking up on coal', about the 'enemy aircraft warning service', applications for so-called 'reserved occupation' status for important employees, or the 'supply of gas masks', the recipients of these letters must have known from the spring of 1939 onwards that war was not far off.

At this time, some Bielefeld businesses, for example Dürkopp, were already working full steam on armaments programmes. The author of a history of the city of Bielefeld, Reinhard Vogelsang, describes how the company delivered 'an entire arsenal of military equipment', even in peacetime. At Anker, a successful civil production programme of sewing machines, bicycles, cash registers, accounting machines, etc. had been banned as 'not essential to the war effort' and over the years had only gradually been

completely replaced with armaments. In Brackwede, companies such as the 'Kammerichwerke' and 'Ruhrstahl AG' were 'fully taken up with armaments production' from the beginning of the war.

As ever more skilled workers were being called up into the army, they were being replaced from 1942 onwards by forced labour. Historian Hans-Jörg Kühne, who has made a detailed study of the situation in Bielefeld, estimates that in the period from 1939 to 1945 for the municipal area of Bielefeld alone a total of 9,264 forced labourers had been assigned to 142 businesses, 25 farms and an unknown number of private households.



1940: Troops returning home after the French campaign.



Close contact with them was forbidden, under threat of punishment. Forced labourers were not allowed during an air raid to go to the company air raid shelter, nor did they find sufficient protection in the 176 camps and other huts in which they were quartered in Bielefeld. Some companies, however, evidently ignored this instruction and did supply protection for forced labourers. In doing so, they showed that conscious flouting of the inhuman demands of Nazi bureaucracy was quite possible in some cases.

Complete protection against the bombing was possible neither for forced labourers nor for the local population. From the early summer of 1940, shortly after the German air raid on Rotterdam, German cities were under threat of bomb attacks. Bielefeld was hit for the first time on 21 June 1940, though at this time and during subsequent raids in the same year, the number of those killed and wounded was relatively small. The regime missed no oppor-

tunity for propaganda. A particularly perfidious example was when, in September 1940, the Bethel Institution was hit by falling bombs and mentally-handicapped children were killed. The regime then made a great show of denouncing 'Churchill's crime', while Hitler's euthanasia decree had long been put into action, and rumours were already spreading amongst the population about the state-controlled extermination of 'unworthy' lives.

Until almost the final phase of the war, the number of victims and the amount of destruction was limited, in comparison to other industrial cities. This was to change, however, during the course of 1944. The city had already survived a heavy attack in January which resulted in over 90 casualties, when 30 September 1944 was to become the 'worst day of the war'. Bielefeld, according to Reinhard Vogelsang, had been 'submerged' with high-explosive and incendiary bombs. Fire brigades from all over Westphalia were engaged for over three days in fighting the 'full-blown fire storm'. Some 649 Bielefeld residents had been killed, over 1,300 injured and more than 10,000 people had lost their homes. Large sections of Bielefeld's old and new towns were wiped out. The population would have to wait another six months before the longed-for end of the war, and in further air raids, the Allies'

Top: 1942: Gauleiter Meyer visits a camp for female forced labourers from Eastern Europe.

Right: 30 September 1944: The city is reduced to rubble, as seen looking northwest from Detmolderstrasse towards Diesterwegstrasse.



tactic of attrition pushed the number of victims higher.

Totally oblivious to the progress of the war and the fact that the front in the East was drawing ever closer, the Nazis continued their programme of expulsion and extermination. After the first group transport in December 1941, when 88 Bielefeld Jews were deported to a ghetto in Riga, at least a further eight such transports were to follow before the end of the war, with unspecified destinations somewhere in the 'East' or with the concrete destinations Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. In September 1944 and even as late as February 1945, the final deportation trains pulled out of Bielefeld station. The extermination machine, the close cooperation between Nazi bureaucracy and the state railway, continued to function to the very end. There are no exact figures, but it can be assumed that from the 1,000 members of the Jewish community in Bielefeld, approximately 500 were able to emigrate. Only 28 survived deportation and the camps, so that it is no exaggeration to suggest that the number of victims lay well above 400.

At the end of March 1945, the perpetrators and their ringleaders were either on the run or holding out at their command posts – in Bielefeld in the 'Sedanbunker'. The many members of the 'master race' in the party – once so mighty everywhere – had shrunk by 31 March in Bielefeld to 'a bunch of drunken district leaders' of the NSDAP, who fled on the afternoon of 4 April and headed in the direction of the River Weser. American units had long since reached the Teutoburg Forest. That same day, the city was handed over without a struggle, and the white flag flew from City Hall. For Bielefeld, World War II was over, and with it the National Socialist era.



13 December 1941: Deportation of 88 Bielefeld Jews to Riga. At this time, 3rd class carriages are still being used. Soon they will be replaced by cattle trucks.

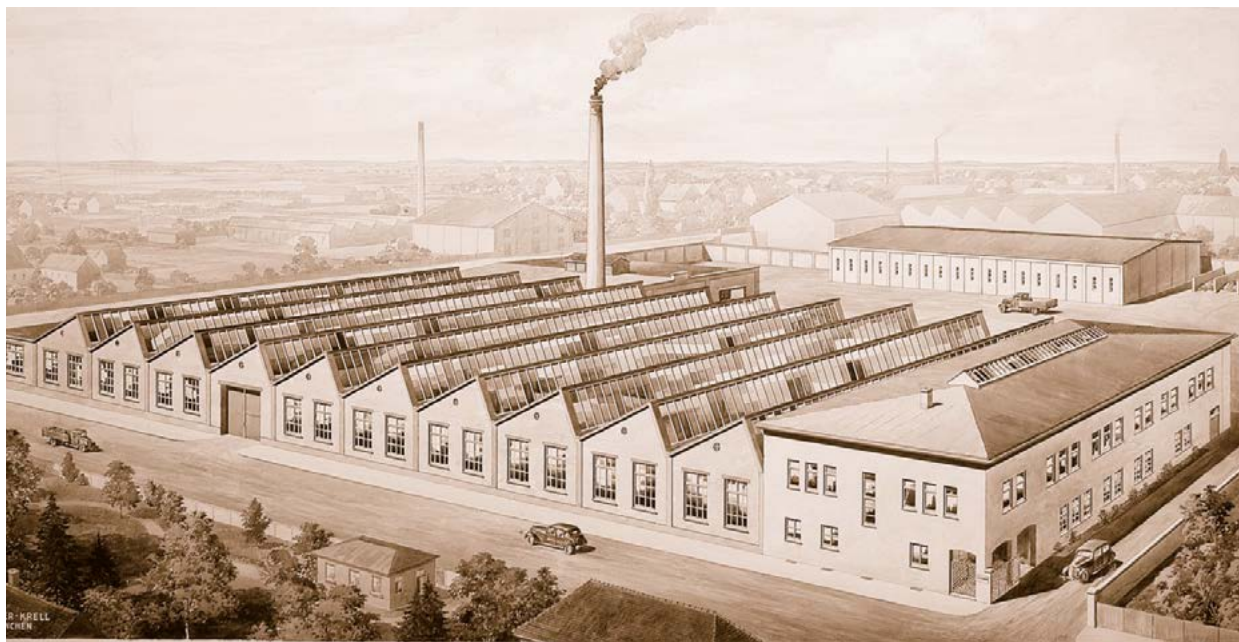
The war – Otto Boge KG as an armaments factory

At the time of the company's greatest loss, it was a stroke of luck that Ernst Thomas, Otto Boge's son-in-law, was able to take over management of the company immediately. After all, he had been working in the company at Otto Boge's side since 1922, had experienced for himself the highs and lows and, above all, had always supported and actively pushed ahead with the expansion of the compressor business. Now Ernst Thomas stood at the head of this successful company.

Without doubt, the company had developed so well not least because it had tried to and succeeded in winning major clients since the beginning of the 1930s, and had, therefore, been able to profit early on from surges in state demand. The army, navy and air force, in particular, had already emerged as buyers of Boge products in 1936–37. And, although it did not produce armaments as such, the company was registered with the authorities as an 'armaments factory' even in 1938. At least this designation can be inferred from a letter from the employ-

ment agency, which worked closely with the Gestapo in questions of new appointments, in which the appointment of a long-standing SPD member to a job at Boge was refused: 'Following an announcement by the Gestapo, the employment of metalworker [name] ... in an armaments factory is turned down for reasons of state security.'

In the subsequent course of Nazi rule, and from the beginning of World War II in September 1939 at the latest, the company was fully integrated in the state armaments programme. Projects which were 'essential to the war effort' now had absolute priority. The company requested from its customers compulsory confirmation of which of the orders placed fulfilled this criterion and which did not. Otto Boge KG conducted its core business with compressors, even in wartime, but at the beginning of 1940 the factory had to be converted at least partially for the production of grenades. A report from January 1942 made clear that there was even a lack of special machines for the production of





Facing page: Around 1940: Optimistic representation of the company site.

Top: The Meller Strasse plant from 1938: Common room, production, office, washroom.

munitions, and that the factory had had to construct such machines for its own use and even for other armaments factories. According to Ernst Thomas, the company's own construction office was largely occupied with such work. Engineers, foremen and works managers had to neglect their usual duties, in favour of grenade production – in 1940 at least.

Looking back on the Nazi era, it is always interesting, from the point of view of company history, to see which state regulations and obligations a company was subjected to, to what extent these state regulations were implemented voluntarily, and how this voluntary support was motivated. In industrial regions such as Bielefeld, which were important to the war effort, it can be assumed that all companies, especially in the metal-processing branch of engineering, were dependent on state-controlled raw material assignment. At the beginning of the war, according to Reinhard Vogelsang, the expert on Bielefeld city history, a problem arose for many Bielefeld companies 'in that they were prohibited from continuing their previous production of goods for civilian use'. Boge company documentation includes evidence of the close link to armaments production regulations. And yet the production of grenades seems to have been restricted to the year 1940 only. However,

even though the company had subsequently returned to its core competence, the manufacture of compressors, it still had not left the circle of armaments factories. In a high-tech army, compressors were considered as armaments in a wider sense.

According to information from Ernst Thomas, Boge had been designated a 'special factory' because of its particular product range. This classification was very important for the company, since it had constantly to prove the urgency of materials procurement: 'I have been urged to remind my suppliers that deliveries to companies designated as special factories by the high



command of the Wehrmacht must in all cases be carried out on time.' And in order to be able to concentrate fully on the compressor business, other production fields were abandoned or transferred to other Bielefeld companies, inclu-

Since 1940: Mobile, diesel-driven piston compressor used by the German Wehrmacht in the desert campaign in North Africa to free military vehicles of sand.

ding production of equalizing forks, with which Boge had started out as an industrial concern in 1919.

If, however, one studies all the circulars and notifications concerning materials procurement, which the company had had to take into account, at least since the beginning of the war, it is astonishing that state-controlled armaments production had even managed to continue until 1944–45 and not been suffocated by its own bureaucratic stipulations. In the area of 'iron working' alone, highly complex procedures were in operation between so-called 'quota holders', such as the Wehrmacht, the national postal authority and state railway, etc., an 'iron clearing house' in Berlin, the armaments factories and their suppliers. Companies must have had to expend an enormous amount of time and effort just to navigate through the jungle of burgeoning and rapidly changing regulations regarding 'iron accounts', 'iron certificates', 'iron transfer certificates' and 'iron tokens'. In addition, there were special 'reservation procedures' or 'approval certificate procedures' for particular products. The objective of this highly exaggerated bureaucracy, which included several inspection and approval departments, was to ensure that only goods which were 'absolutely vital to the war effort' were actually produced. The lon-

ger the war went on, the more rigid state intervention became. In accordance with a 'directive from the Reichsminister for Armaments and War Production', an order was issued in September 1944 to examine once again all commissions and orders in terms of their specific urgency, with the result that many commissions – and certainly civilian ones – were simply no longer carried out.

For many years, the intervention of Nazi institutions in economic processes and the multitude of regulations from the authorities had precluded all chances of free enterprise. One can only speculate as to how Otto Boge, until 1937, and later Ernst Thomas fitted into this system of dependencies. A discussion of political motives is to be found nowhere in the available files, and there is no evidence of any statements either in favour of or against National Socialism from either party. The biographies of both these men, who reached adulthood in the imperial era, lead one to assume that the Weimar Republic may not have been particularly close to their hearts, but that for reasons of common sense they were still able to come to terms with it. As a trained metalworker, Otto Boge emanated from a skilled workforce which was already highly self-assured at the end of the 19th century. Early on, he had developed an ambition to use

Ernst Thomas safeguards the existence of the company in troubled times.



his talents in self-employment – even against all opposition. The company was always in the forefront of his actions, and he had constantly strived to secure lasting success for the company from the late 1920s onwards. Neither political enthusiasm nor genuine commitment to a party of the extreme right is conceivable in his case, and neither Otto Boge nor Ernst Thomas was a member of the NSDAP. In January 1933, after the troubled years of the Weimar Republic, a businessman did not have to be a fervent Nazi to welcome at first the victory of the National Socialists for reasons of economics or general political order. After all, the true barbaric extent of Nazi injustice could not have been foreseen at this point in time.

At the same time, the economic situation improved, and, for the first time in its history, Otto Boge KG experienced a continuing upward trend. It is understandable, that the people responsible at Boge made every effort to strengthen this economic status and, if possible, to develop what had been achieved even further. And it was surely in this sense, too, that Ernst Thomas acted, following Otto Boge's death. Without a doubt, the company had to come to terms with armaments bureaucracy, if it wanted to safeguard its existence. The idea of 'flight into the factory' and 'focusing entirely on

the maintenance and survival of the business', as historian Hans Mommsen believed of many German businessmen, could also begin to explain the involvement of Otto Boge KG in the sphere of Bielefeld's armaments industry.

When talking about this sector, the close correlation with the issue of forced labour must also be discussed and examined with regard to Boge. Forced labour was not restricted to a small circle of larger armaments factories, but in the centre of Bielefeld alone 9,000 forced labourers were distributed across 142 companies. Bielefeld's records on the subject are closely linked to the 'house records' of the city of Bielefeld, which give information as to whether or not specific buildings were used as forced labour camps. Generally, not only do the names of the labourers appear in these documents, but also in many cases the companies to which they had been assigned. Thorough research in the relevant archives has produced no results in this context. Almost certainly, no forced labourers were employed by Boge. It is conceivable that the company, being a 'special factory' due to the complex nature of its production, was not considered suitable for the use of forced labour, or that the company possibly managed even in wartime to hold onto its permanent workforce, which was so important to production.

What is certain is the fact that Boge evacuated at least part of its production to Bad Salzuflen because of the bombing. The factory in Meller Strasse was not destroyed, but due to the impact of bombs in the immediate vicinity the factory buildings had been damaged.

In a former bicycle factory, the 'Lippischen Fahrradwerke', production facilities were available for compressors and compressed air equipment. It is not known under what conditions production took place there. The corresponding documents offer no precise information about Boge.

The final records referring to the company in World War II date from the end of October 1944. Once again, they give an insight into the directives of armaments policy, underline the demands for a further increase in production and so announce a final rallying of Bielefeld's industry.

There remains only a short quote from Wilhelm Laucks concerning the days of the city's occupation and the end of the war in Bielefeld: Soldiers from the American units moving in on Bielefeld are said to have 'shot open' cupboards and drawers at Boge. The soldiers could hardly have been searching for anything in particular. It was probably more a case of the 'normal' effects

concomitant with the final throes of war and the occupation of the city. Not for the first time in its history did Otto Boge KG now have to start again from scratch.



Top: 1943: The building of the 'Lippischen Fahrradwerke' (bicycle works) in Bad Salzuflen. Part of Boge's production had been evacuated here in 1943 because of the air raids on Bielefeld.



V. From Community Spirit
in the Ruins to Consumer
Society –
Developments in the
Post-War Era

Late 1950s: Boge site in Meller Strasse.

Years of ruin – Politics and economy following total defeat

Also in Bielefeld there was no 'zero hour', a term used repeatedly in many contexts to describe the end of World War II. The Nazi Lord Mayor may have been in temporary hiding in Bethel, but work went on in City Hall, even on the day of occupation by American troops. Just one day later, American officers were able to fill provisionally the office of Lord Mayor. Josef Niestroy, an insurance salesman who had immigrated to the city from the region of Silesia [now in Poland], had taken over the task on the recommendation of Church representatives.

An 'advisory committee' was to act at Niestroy's side, which however – like the Catholic 'Lord Mayor' himself – enjoyed no support in Protestant Bielefeld. Above all, opponents of the Nazi regime came out against a 'policy of appointment', which had committed the heads of the authorities, the courts, the banks, the postal service, etc. to cooperate. Carl Severing, who had lived a very secluded life in Bielefeld during the Nazi era, was later to criticise harshly the fact that 'civil servants from all branches of the municipal authorities' had shown not the slightest qualms about 'committing themselves on 5 April to a democratic state', while up until the occupation of the city they had presented themselves as 'organised party members of the NSDAP'.

Westfälische Zeitung
Bielefelder Tageblatt

Preis 10 Pfg.
Druck und Verlag: J. D. Köhler Nachf.,
Verleger Dr. Reinhard Kessler,
Hauptredakteur: Carl Kessler

Einwohner Bielefelds!

In dieser ersten Stunde wird die Bevölkerung aufgerufen, höchste Ruhe und Besonnenheit zu wahren und äußerste Disziplin zu üben, damit unnötige Leiden für unsere Heimatstadt vermieden werden. Die Stadtverwaltung wird alles tun, was in ihren Kräften steht, um einen geordneten Gang der Verwaltung aufrecht zu erhalten. Ein jeder trage durch sein Verhalten dazu bei, daß Reibungen und Spannungen auf ein Mindestmaß herabgedrückt werden.

Die Lenkung der Lebensmittelversorgung und die Bewirtschaftung der Spinnstoff- und Schuhwaren sowie der Haushaltsgegenstände erfolgt in bisheriger Weise planmäßig. Dem Kleinhandel ist es schärfstens untersagt, Lebensmittel ohne Marken abzugeben. Die Ausgabe von Spinnstoffen, Schuhwaren usw. muß vorläufig bis zum 20. April gesperrt werden.

Alle Personen, die in den letzten Tagen Lebensmittel oder Textil- und Schuhwaren sowie Haushaltsgeräte aller Art aus öffentlichen Beständen oder Versorgungslagern ohne behördlichen Ausweis empfangen oder in Besitz genommen haben, sind verpflichtet, sie zurückzugeben, damit sie der allgemeinen Planbewirtschaftung zugeführt werden können.

Die Rückgabe hat vom Mittwoch, dem 11. bis Freitag, dem 13. April in der vorgeschriebenen Ausgehzeit zu erfolgen. Es sind abzuliefern:

- Lebensmittel in der Turnerstraße 49 (Hauptzollamt)
- Textil- u. Schuhwaren, Leder u. Haushaltsgeräte im Stadttheater

Die Straßen dürfen nur in den für den Geschäftsverkehr freigegebenen Zeiten betreten werden.

Es wird weiter darauf hingewiesen, daß von 18 Uhr bis 7 Uhr morgens auf Anordnung der Besatzungsmacht die Häuser in keinem Falle verlassen werden dürfen, da sich jeder, der in dieser Zeit auf der Straße angetroffen wird, der Gefahr aussetzt, ohne Anruf erschossen zu werden.

Der Stadthauptmann
Niestroy

Bielefeld, den 10. April 1945.

1945: The temporary 'Lord Mayor' Josef Niestroy, appointed by the occupying forces, appeals to the population of Bielefeld on 10 April 1945.

MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY

FRAGEBOGEN

WARNUNG. Im Interesse von Klarheit ist dieser Fragebogen in deutsch und englisch verfaßt. In Zweifelsfällen ist der englische Text maßgeblich. Jede Frage muß so beantwortet werden, wie sie gestellt ist. Unterlassung der Beantwortung, unrichtige oder unvollständige Angaben werden wegen Zuwiderhandlung gegen militärische Verordnungen gerichtlich verfolgt. Falls mehr Raum benötigt ist, sind weitere Bogen anzuhäften.

A. PERSONAL

Name Thomas A. PERSONAL Ernst
 Name Zuname Vornamen
 Surname Middle Name Christian Name
 Geburtsdatum 29. 10. 95
 Date of birth
 Staatsangehörigkeit Deutsch
 Citizenship
 Ständiger Wohnsitz Bfpl. Am Birgapan 3
 Permanent residence
 Gegenwärtige Stellung Mitgliedführer
 Present position
 Stellung vor dem Jahre 1933 Politikrist
 Position before 1933

B. MITGLIEDSCHAFT IN DER NSDAP

1. Waren Sie jemals ein Mitglied der NSDAP?
☒ Ja Nein
2. Daten
3. Haben Sie jemals eine der folgenden Stellungen in der NSDAP bekleidet?
 (a) REICHSLEITER, oder Beamter in einer Stelle, die einem Reichsleiter unterstand? Ja Nein
 Titel der Stellung Daten
 (b) GAULEITER, oder Parteibeamter innerhalb eines Gaues? Ja Nein
 Daten Amtsort
 (c) KREISLEITER, oder Parteibeamter innerhalb eines Kreises? Ja Nein
 Titel der Stellung Daten Amtsort
 (d) ORTSGRUPPENLEITER, oder Parteibeamter innerhalb einer Ortsgruppe?
 Ja Nein Titel der Stellung Daten Amtsort
 (e) Ein Beamter in der Parteikanzlei? Ja Nein
 Titel der Stellung Daten
 (f) Ein Beamter in der REICHSLEITUNG der NSDAP? Ja Nein
 Titel der Stellung Daten
 (g) Ein Beamter im Hauptamte für Erzieher? Im Amte des Beauftragten des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP? Ein Direktor oder Lehrer in irgend einer Parteiausbildungsschule? Ja Nein
 Titel der Stellung Daten
 Name der Einheit oder Schule
 (h) Waren Sie Mitglied des KORPS DER POLITISCHEN LEITER?
 Ja Nein Mitgliedschaft Daten der
 (i) Waren Sie ein Leiter oder Funktionär in irgend einem anderen Amte, Einheit oder Stelle (ausgenommen sind die unter C unten angeführten Gliederungen, angeschlossenen Verbände und betreuten Organisationen der NSDAP)?
 Ja Nein Titel der Stellung Daten
 (j) Haben Sie irgendwelche nahe Verwandte, die irgend eine der oben angeführten Stellungen bekleidet haben?
 Ja Nein
 Wenn ja, geben Sie deren Namen und Anschriften und eine Bezeichnung deren Stellung

C. TÄTIGKEITEN IN NSDAP HILFSORGANISATIONEN

Geben Sie hier an, ob Sie ein Mitglied waren und in welchem Ausmaße Sie an den Tätigkeiten der folgenden Gliederungen, angeschlossenen Verbände und betreuten Organisationen teilgenommen haben:

PERSONNEL QUESTIONNAIRE

WARNING. In the interests of clarity this questionnaire has been written in both German and English. If discrepancies exist, the English will prevail. Every question must be answered as indicated. Omissions or false or incomplete statements will result in prosecution as violations of military ordinances. Add supplementary sheets if there is not enough space in the questionnaire.

PERSONNEL

Ausweiskarte Nr. A09126
 Identity Card No.
 Geburtsort Solingen
 Place of birth
 Gegenwärtige Anschrift Bfpl. Am Birgapan 3
 Present address
 Beruf Mitgl. Kaufmann
 Occupation
 Stellung, für die Bewerbung eingereicht Mitglied d. Ortsgruppen
 Position applied for

B. NAZI PARTY AFFILIATIONS

Have you ever been a member of the NSDAP? yes, no. Dates.

Have you ever held any of the following positions in the NSDAP?
 REICHSLEITER or an official in an office headed by any Reichsleiter? yes, no, title of position, dates.

GAULEITER or a Party official within the jurisdiction of any Gau? yes, no, dates, location of office.

KREISLEITER or a Party official within the jurisdiction of any Kreis? yes, no, title of position, dates, location of office.

ORTSGRUPPENLEITER or a Party official within the jurisdiction of an Ortsgruppe? yes, no, title of position, dates, location of office.

An official in the Party Chancellery? yes, no, dates, title of position.

An official within the Central NSDAP headquarters? yes, no, dates, titles of position.

An official within the NSDAP's Chief Education Office? In the office of the Führer's Representative for the Supervision of the Entire Intellectual and Politico-philosophical Education of the NSDAP? Or a director or instructor in any Party training school? yes, no, dates, title of position, Name of unit or school.

Were you a member of the CORPS OF POLITISCHE LEITER? yes, no, Dates of membership.

Were you a leader or functionary of any other NSDAP offices or units or agencies (except Formations, Affiliated Organizations and Supervised Organizations which are covered by questions under C below)? yes, no, dates title of position.

Have you any close relatives who have occupied any of the positions named above? yes, no, if yes, give the name and address and a description of the position.

C. NAZI "AUXILIARY" ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES

Indicate whether you were a member and the extent to which you participated in the activities of the following Formations, Affiliated Organizations or Supervised Organizations:

There could, however, be no talk of 'democracy' under occupation. The 'Lord Mayor' was purely a receiver of orders, who was to put into practice with the aid of his administration the decisions of the US military and, just a few days later, those of the British military government. Top priorities were the supply of food and accommodation. But very soon, denazification measures were also to hit members of the 'advisory committee'. Only one building authority official and the two representatives of the Church were considered to have a 'clean slate'. Hence, the Deputy Mayor was arrested during a session and interned, just days after his appointment. Screening of all civil servants, employees and workers for the city council began in May 1945. Out of a total of 933 staff, 127 were made redundant by the military government.

From the 'point of view of rational handling of work', as can be read in a report by the administration on the immediate post-war period, denazification greatly impeded the work of the authorities. After all, not only was the removal of 1.5 million cubic metres of rubble to be organised, but schools, hospitals and other public institutions, such as public transport and the remaining technical infrastructure, had to be built up again. The announcement by the housing office that the entire population was

strongly limited in its 'natural right to adequate housing' was hardly surprising, given the extent of the devastation. Evacuations had reduced the number of inhabitants by the end of the war to around 70,000. The many people returning to the city and the influx of those driven out elsewhere was a huge challenge to the housing control authorities, and Bielefeld became a 'focus of housing need'.

When considering the situation of the economy after 1945, the currency reform and American aid in the form of the Marshall Plan are generally seen as the decisive factors which triggered lasting growth. This idea would also seem to ring true for the city of Bielefeld, since over 700 businesses in trade and industry had been destroyed or at least partly destroyed, and many companies in the immediate post-war period were not able to produce at all. Following the capitulation of 1945, however, the economy was not in its death throes, since over 100 new businesses were founded between 1945 and 1948, most of them in the textile, food and construction industries. Economic historians were also able to show that German industrial production in 1946 had already reached 40 per cent, and in 1948 even over 70 per cent of its 1936 level, the final so-called 'normal year'. In this respect, Marshall Plan aid and currency reform were not

the all-decisive triggers, but rather supported, accelerated and broadly strengthened an upward trend which had already been set off earlier.

Considering the images of widespread destruction and total defeat, it is also surprising how quickly even the larger Bielefeld companies

managed to get on their feet again. Besides the formerly large production lines of the pre-war days, Anker, for example, was in 1945 already producing household goods with over 300 employees, and by the spring of 1946, bicycle, sewing and office machine production had been taken up once more. Meanwhile, Anker again had a staff of over 1,500.



1947: It's 'all hands to the pump': clearing rubble in the centre of Bielefeld.

Barter transactions – Otto Boge KG after World War II

At the end of the war Boge only had a staff of around 30. Six people were still working in the commercial department, the rest in 'production' – insofar as there was anything to produce! The equipment stock had shrunk drastically, so that normal production runs were out of the question. Besides, the military government had confiscated important machinery. Boge faced an uncertain future and at first just managed to keep its head above water with spare parts deliveries and repair work. There was only enough work for a two-day week; management merely worked part-time. And what about the handling of business in the commercial area? It was more reminiscent of bartering in prehistoric times than of the exchange of money and goods in an industrial society.

Former apprentice Franz-Willy Schubert, who had begun his training at Boge on 15 October 1945, and later rose to become head of the export department, worked for a total of 47 years at Boge. He remembers some memorable barter transactions: a compressed-air bottle full of potatoes was delivered along with the request to convert it into a functional compressor. Such commodities as a barrel of sugar beet syrup, a tub of salted herrings or a large quantity of beef stock were also known to have been accepted for other jobs. An empty warehouse could also

simply be used as a distribution point for food. Fairness was imperative when food was weighed and allotted according to marital status and the number of children in a family before being handed out to the employees. The fact that such bartering was nothing unusual is demonstrated by requests from other companies to the Bielefeld City Council. In exchange for the delivery of working clothes, the mayor of Wesermünde, for example, suggested that the local fish industry pay the equivalent value in fish!

Work, which was lacking at Boge in the immediate post-war period, was plentiful in other areas. To compensate for shortages in the supply of fuel, the entire workforce was drafted into tree-felling from the end of 1945 as the sight of rubble should not permanently dominate the cityscape. All male citizens born between 1887 and 1931 were obliged to participate for three days in municipal clean-up campaigns – and, what's more, 'without respect of person or profession', according to the military government directive. Everyone, even the weakest, was needed. The reward for a total of 24 hours' work: a warm meal every day.

It was a hard path to be trodden until production at Boge could get under way again. Demand for Boge compressors picked up soon

after the war, but all transactions could only be performed under strict supervision of the military government. The company had long since received the coveted permit or operating licence. But there were clear limitations to this permit. The company was allowed to do repair and maintenance work, but not manufacture or sell any new compressors. At the beginning of 1946, Ernst Thomas wrote to a customer, 'I regret to inform you that I am unable to fulfil your order of 23 October 1945 for 30-32 compressors

of type LK 2, due to the new operating licence. I therefore leave it to your discretion to contact the Mech. Eng. Branch (Econ 11) Mil. Gov. Headquarters 307 (P) Det. Münster i. Westf., to request either the corresponding extension of the permit, or the granting of permission for me also to manufacture the compressors you have ordered. I have already approached Münster in this matter. My application regarding this was rejected, however.'

Zur Beachtung:	
1. Der Arbeitspaß dient lediglich als Ausweis über Registrierung und Beschäftigung. Er bleibt daher im Besitz des Beschäftigten. Dieser hat ihn stets bei sich zu tragen und nach Aufhören der Beschäftigung an das Arbeitsamt zurückzugeben. 2. Eintragungen dürfen nur von den hierfür zuständigen Stellen gemacht werden. 3. Die Vorlage des Arbeitspasses beim Arbeitgeber erfolgt nur zum Zwecke der Bestätigung des Beschäftigungsverhältnisses und daher erst nach Abschluß des Arbeitsvertrages. Spalte 2 und 3 ist vom Arbeitgeber nur zu Beginn des Beschäftigungsverhältnisses, Spalte 4 bei Beendigung desselben auszufüllen. 4. Mißbrauch, besonders der Besitz doppelter Arbeitspässe, wird strafrechtlich verfolgt.	
Unselbständig Beschäftigte lassen sich vor jeder Lebensmittellkartenausgabe vom Arbeitgeber das Fortbestehen des Arbeitsverhältnisses bestätigen (Spalte 5). Die Kontrolle der Selbständigen erfolgt in größeren Zeitabständen auf besondere Anordnung des Arbeitsamtes.	

ARBEITS-PASS	
Nr. 132/21115	Kennk. Nr. AS 570256 EAA
Familienname:	Vorname:
SCHUBERT Franz - Willi	
geboren am:	bei Frauen auch Geburtsname
1. 11.28	
Geburtsort:	
Bielefeld	
Familienstand: <u>led.</u> , verh., gesch., verw.	
Wohnung: Bielefeld Mittelmündstr. 3	
Erlerner Beruf:	Berufs-Gruppe und -Art
Beschäftigt als:	25 a 1
Arbeitsamt Bielefeld F. W. Schubert Eigenhändige Unterschrift ausgestellt am: 21. 1. 44 ARBEITSAMT Bielefeld Unterschrift LAA 11.1 - 2	

1947: Work permit belonging to the young Boge employee Franz-Willi Schubert as proof of regular employment.

Stadt Bielefeld

Stadtbauamt

Herrn Franz Willi Schubert

Bielefeld

Wittkeindsstr. 3.

Zur weiteren Entfernung des in unserer Stadt noch lagernden Trümmerschutts werden Sie auf Grund des Beschlusses der Stadtvertretung vom 5. 2. 47 und unter Zugrundelegung der Verordnung der Mil.-Reg. MP.LS/44054/2 von Mai 1946 hiermit aufgefordert, sich zu einem 3-tägigen Räumeeinsatz zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Diesen Einsatz sollen alle männlichen Bielefelder Bürger der Jahrgänge 1887—1931, außer Schwerkranken und Schwerbeschädigten, ohne Ansehen der Person oder des Berufes ableisten, und es soll sich niemand ausschließen. Für Jeden, auch für den Schwächsten, ist Verwendung.

Es soll jeweils montags bis mittwochs oder donnerstags bis samstags gearbeitet werden, und zwar an den ersten beiden Tagen je 9 Stunden, am 3. Tag 6 Stunden.

Arbeitsbeginn: 7 Uhr

Einsatzplatz: **Vor dem Bunker Bündlerstraße**

Ein warmes Mittagessen wird kostenlos und markenfrei geliefert. Es wird gebeten, ein Essgeschirr mitzubringen.

Ihr Einsatz ist für den 1947 vorgesehen.

Wir bitten zum Arbeitsbeginn dieses Schreiben mitzubringen, nachdem Sie zu der Lohnfrage auf der Rückseite Stellung genommen haben.

Sollte Ihnen, evtl. nach Rücksprache mit Ihrem Arbeitgeber, der von uns angegebene Zeitpunkt nicht passen, so geben Sie bitte auf der Rückseite dieses Schreibens den Ihnen genehmen Termin (innerhalb eines Zeitraums von 2 Wochen) an, und lassen Sie dieses Schreiben innerhalb 3 Tagen dem Tiefbauamt (Räumungseinsatzbüro, Rathaus, Zimmer 86) zugehen. Mündliche Rückfragen können zwischen 10.00 und 12.30 Uhr und zwischen 14.30 und 16.30 Uhr an die gleiche Stelle gerichtet werden.

I. V.

Dr. Ing. Freitag
Stadtoberbaurat

Bitte Rückseite beachten!

Georg Bode, Druckerei, R. 26. 3. 46, Bielefeld, 16069/1500 April 47, Kl. A
70 g/m²—323—4

An das

Stadtbauamt

Ich nehme an dem 3-tägigen Räumeeinsatz in dem gewünschten Zeitraum teil.

Auf eine Lohnzahlung verzichte ich.

~~Ich muß um Auszahlung des Stundenlohns von RM 0.70 bitten.~~

Ich kann an dem Einsatz nicht in der von Ihnen vorgeschlagenen Zeit, wohl aber vom bis 1947 teilnehmen ~~und erscheine ohne besondere Aufforderung.~~
(Unzutreffendes streichen!)

Unterschrift: F. W. Schubert

Wohnung: Bielefeld, Wittkeindsstr. 3.

Geburtsjahr: 1. Okt. 1928

Kenntnis genommen:

Unterschrift des Betriebsrates: Wiedmann

Kontrollvermerke: (Nur von Dienststellen auszufüllen)

1. Arbeit aufgenommen: Bauführer

2. Arbeitsaufnahme vermerkt: Räumungseinsatzbüro

Bescheinigung

(Nach Ausfüllung nicht mehr aus der Hand geben).

Es wurden 24 Stunden für den Schutträumeinsatz der Stadt Bielefeld gearbeitet

Stadt Bielefeld
Räumung 1947
Stempel

Küller
Unterschrift

Ausweis über den Einsatz zu den Aufräumarbeiten in der Stadt Bielefeld

Vor- und Zuname: Schubert, Franz Willi

Geburtsdatum: 1. 10. 28 Beruf: Kaufm. Lebfg.

Wohnung: Bielefeld, Wittkeinds Straße 3.

Bielefeld, den 19. 10. 45.

Der Oberbürgermeister



1947: All residents of Bielefeld who were fit to work, in this example Franz-Willi Schubert, were called upon to help and drafted to three-day rubble-clearing duty.

New beginnings – First elections and currency reform

Parallel to the gradual economic normalisation, new political structures became evident. The occupying forces' idea of 'democratising and decentralising local and district administration' was to open up new opportunities for the parties from September 1945. The SPD in particular was able to fall back on the old organisational structures from the Weimar period. Even the KPD, hit hardest by persecution, reactivated its party committees. While the FDP (Free Democratic Party) picked up the traditions of the left-liberal DDP (German Democratic Party), the path towards the foundation of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) led through a difficult process of fusion. National conservative and liberal-right currents were to be as much accommodated as interests which were of a predominantly economic or confessional nature. Consensus was reached surprisingly quickly, and by the end of 1945 a local party landscape had developed which was reflected in the 'appointed council' set up by the military government in January 1946. The military government had meanwhile removed Niestroy and appointed Social Democrat Artur Ladebeck as Mayor.

It is interesting to note that, in the wake of the devastating experiences of the war, almost all parties stood for socio-political reform. Only the FDP propagated reconstruction 'on the basis

of private ownership and a free community of entrepreneurs and farmers'. The CDU, on the other hand, still followed its 'Principles of Cologne' from June 1945: a 'Christian socialism' which would oppose the rule of capitalism and which foresaw state control of the energy sector, banks and insurance. 'Through the collapse of National Socialism,' such was the election call of the party before the first free local elections on 13 October 1946, 'the rule of arbitrary capitalist economics must also find its just end. The time has come for thorough economic and socio-political reform.' 'To work, everyone!' was the motto of the SPD, which, in contrast to its initial call for a fundamental reform of the economic system, referred in its local manifesto only to the necessity of planned economic steering of the construction industry to solve the housing crisis. Even for the KPD, officially at least, the mood of the times did not point to 'revolution'. Moderate tones dominated, and the call for a reform policy of 'active participation' in the economy. Election results on the whole confirmed the political-party preferences of before 1933. While the SPD achieved 50.2 per cent and the KPD 6 per cent of the vote, the middle-class block, fused into the CDU, won 39.3 per cent. The FDP's 4.4 per cent was not enough to clear the five-per-cent hurdle needed to get a share of the seats. With the first local elections in the British-occupied

zone, the first chapter in the immediate post-war history of Bielefeld also came to a close.

On roads and squares, on the other hand, the results of the war were tangible for a long time to come – literally with hand and spade! Rubble had to be cleared from the ruins; a duty to which all male residents of the city were called. A newly released and extremely undernourished prisoner of war could quite well be faced with a well-fed civil servant from the municipal authorities wanting to draft him ‘to shovel rubble’, and so find himself angrily praising the very place he had just escaped from – a Russian labour camp beyond the Urals. By contrast, former party members, well skilled in accepting benefits, were said to have successfully dodged such community service, although the then head of the employment authorities actually did draft former members of the NSDAP to help. Criss-crossed by tipper-wagon rails, the old part of the city long resembled a giant building site. While the stones which could still be of use were painstakingly worked over and put aside, the rubble was transported to the site of a former brickworks in the East of Bielefeld. Soon, a roughly 20-metre-high mountain had been piled up, nicknamed ‘Monte Scherbelino’ by the population (‘Scherben’ in German being the word for ‘shattered fragments’).

From an economic perspective, the currency reform of 20 June 1948 was the decisive milestone on the road to socio-political and economic progress after World War II. More than three years after the demise of the Nazis, the ‘financial balance sheet of World War II’ may have devalued savings accounts and liquid assets, but it also put an end to bartering and black-market trading. That each citizen, by being handed an initial allowance of 40 deutschmarks, got off to the same fair start, as was often claimed, is one of the myths surrounding the foundation of the second German democracy. Those with material assets and property were clearly at an advantage. Debtors also profited. They had only to pay back 10 per cent of their reichsmark liabilities. The much-described phenomenon of shops and shop windows practically filling up ‘overnight’ only proves that trade and industry had worked towards the date set for the currency conversion, but also that the goods produced had actually been held back during the days of the worthless reichsmark.

There may have been a broad range of goods on offer, but not everyone could afford them. The lifting of price controls had encouraged some dealers to increase prices sharply. This profiteering led to the legendary ‘Bielefeld egg fight’ on the weekly market. It is hard to imagine



Top: 1947: Tipper wagons, used to transport rubble, cross the city centre.

Bottom: 20 June 1948: New money! Queues form at the issuing points (Stadtsparkasse bank and Oetkerhalle).



Map of damage to city centre

that Bielefeld's housewives, usually so orderly and restrained, could become so enraged as to pelt one of the stallholders with his over-priced eggs! Their actions were not totally without success. While some stallholders left the market, others put their prices down.

In October 1952, Ladebeck presented a report on post-war administration. With a certain pride in what had been achieved, this interesting pamphlet provided a comprehensive answer to the rhetorical question of the title, 'Ist nichts geschehen?' ('Has nothing happened?').

Meanwhile, more than 31,000 exiles were living in the city. Surely the greatest achievement of local politics after World War II was to have integrated these people into the city community. The population had risen from 129,000 to 163,000. Some 8,600 flats had been renovated and 5,400 new ones built.

In 1952, the city of Bielefeld published documentation on the extent of the destruction.

Facing page: 1955: Pedestrians in the tunnel.
In 1955, Jahnplatz is converted to a thoroughfare suitable for cars through the city centre.

Hard on the heels of the post-war problems which weighed heavily on the authorities, however, came the first signs of growth problems caused by the so-called 'economic miracle': how to plan the flow of traffic. In future, urban planning was also to orientate itself around the automobile. Car parks in the city, designs for 'high-rise garages', the re-design of the Kesselbrink, which was simultaneously to be used as a bus station, plus the use of Jahnplatz as a thoroughfare suitable for cars through the city – such priority design projects marked the beginning of a new, urban feeling.



Number of exiles in the cities of North Rhine-Westphalia (as of: 1 April 1952)

	Total Population	Exiles/Refugees	in %
Oberhausen	212.632	17.165	8,0
Krefeld	179.501	15.669	8,7
Bielefeld	162.082	31.424	19,3
Hagen	156.122	14.458	9,0
Mühlheim/Ruhr	154.664	10.875	7,0
Solingen	152.664	11.824	7,7

Source: Bielefeld City Council (1952)

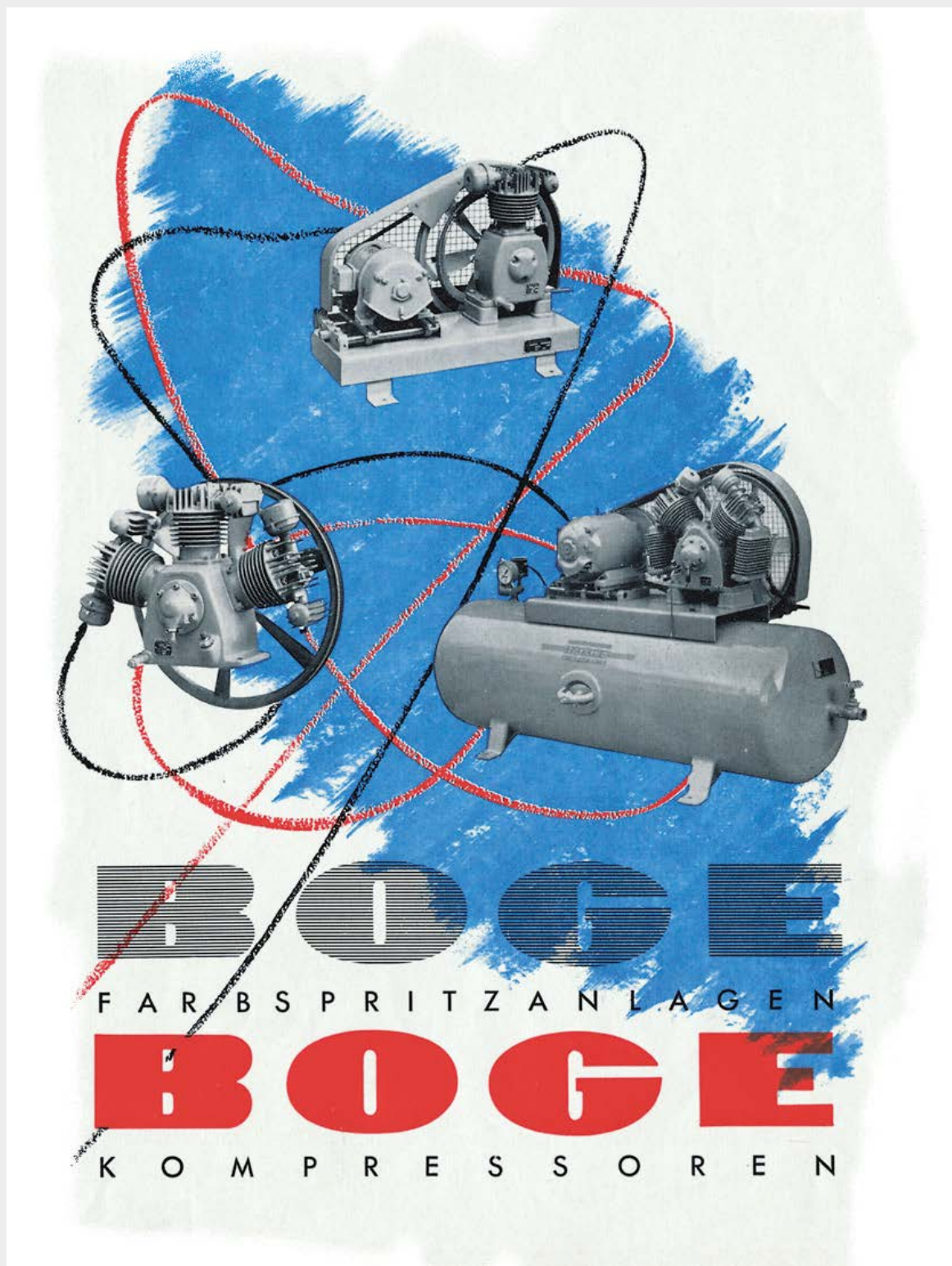
Hard fought-for new start – From bartering to record turnovers

With regard to the doggedness with which company objectives had to be pursued in order to survive in economically hard times, Ernst Thomas had been able to learn a lot from his father-in-law, Otto Boge. In official correspondence to the Chamber of Commerce or to the military government, haggling over raw material quotas or applying for the extension of the operating licence, Ernst Thomas took every opportunity to advertise the company, or to point out its particular importance in this period of reconstruction. A letter to the Chamber of Commerce, for example, reads, '... the transport industry in particular, such as the state railway, postal service, transport companies, control of rubber and fuel supplies, etc. depend on the maintenance of my production.' 'Furthermore,' he says in a plea for a functioning infrastructure, 'compressors are essential to the water supply and to high-voltage switchgear at electricity plants. We are, as you know, the leading company and the only one of its kind in the British-occupied zone.' Ernst Thomas was successful, and as soon as one bureaucratic hurdle was taken, attention could be turned to another one and the next objective could be targeted.

In June 1946, Boge had received the new permit, granting him an unrestricted operating licence, and he could now 'as in the past, produce all types of compressor'. The permit was valid

for all so-called 'requirement groups', so that now the 'only things' which stood in the way of further normalisation of the situation were material shortages and the reduced machinery. A self-assured letter to the military government states, 'For the broad-based production which is now due to re-start I will require, as submitted in my last materials request, for the third quarter of 1946, in addition to the various metals listed therein, iron: 50 tonnes Ulg and 76 tonnes cast ... Since, as I have already mentioned, we are the only and, therefore, leading company in our specific branch, an urgent demand due to reconstruction has built up, which, following the extended approval of our production, it is imperative to meet as quickly as possible.'

The company's further activities, for example the efforts towards the release of confiscated machinery, also underline the management's unshakable faith in a better future. In the meantime, with the founding of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, jurisdiction had been re-assigned between the military government and the German authorities. Following the first elections to the 'Landtag' (state parliament) in the spring of 1947, Düsseldorf now had a democratically legitimised state government and an economics ministry which could take care of the release of machinery. The argument that the company was



'the only special factory' for compressor technology in the British-occupied zone, working for the military government, the railways, postal service, energy and water-supply sectors, must have been crowned with success this time, too, since the situation at Boge continued its return to normal. The submission, however, that the company had 'not manufactured military equipment' during the war, can conceivably be put down to concern for the future development of the company, but would probably have been of no importance for the release of the machinery. The company could perfectly well have admitted to the production of grenades (in 1940) and the role of 'special factory' in compressor construction for the Wehrmacht. Above all, ministerial officials in the new Düsseldorf ministry of economics would probably have been well aware of the circumstances surrounding state constraints and regulations regarding the involvement of the mechanical engineering sector in the armaments industry. Or, they might have worked themselves as experts within the structures of the Nazi economic authorities. Everyone knew that it was hardly possible to solve the problem of denazification satisfactorily in any institution on a national, state or local level. In 1948–49, more former party members were working in some authorities than in Hitler's day. In the British-occupied zone, too, reconstruction took

precedence over political screening.

Reviewing the activities of the Boge management, personified by Ernst Thomas, during the period from 1945 until the currency reform, it becomes clear that at Boge no one simply waited for better times to arrive, but rather took dogged, small steps in that direction themselves. When, on the day after the currency conversion, normal business life began again, Boge was already ideally placed for the ensuing competition. Apparently, there was a considerable backlog of accumulated demand, not only in the areas of foodstuffs and consumer goods, but also in manufacturing goods. The first two compressors, costing 1,795.00 Deutsche Mark each, were bought just one day after currency reform and paid for in cash!

For Boge, this was the welcome starting signal for a period of such rapid development in sales that demand could soon hardly be met. This development, however, also had its negative side, because of problems with material procurement which lasted into the 1950s. For certain types of urgently-needed sheet steel, for example, delivery times of up to 18 months were the norm. Some rolling mills took on no further orders from the spring of 1951 onwards. In a circular to the Boge agencies there had already

been talk of 'serious production difficulties' or of an extension of Boge's own delivery times. 'I do not know,' said Ernst Thomas, 'how things will develop over the course of the next few months and would ask you to see to it that customers make their plans in good time, so that I can comply with these where possible.' In addition, prices began to fluctuate: 'The upward trend in material prices and other production costs have, in the meantime, assumed such proportions, as to make it impossible for me to bear these increases alone. ... Since it is impossible at the moment to foresee further developments, I must reserve the right, as a matter of form, to charge the relevant price which is valid on the day of delivery.' And prices, in which the wage and salary increases of the workers and employees were now reflected, continued to rise.

The factory buildings on Meller Strasse may have largely escaped destruction and bomb damage during the war, but the company still reached capacity limits following currency reform. The production site in Bad Salzuflen had been given up after the end of the war. Now, the development in sales served to underline the urgent need for additional warehouse and production space. The first factory extensions had been realised as early as 1949 and, following further expansion in 1954, and with the addition

of another storey to the office building in 1964, the possibilities offered by the Meller Strasse site had now been totally exhausted.

The purchase of land for expansion would only then have made sense if, after years of planning, local redevelopment concepts for the area around the station could have been brought into line with the company's ideas. Corresponding discussions had begun in the early 1950s. Boge remained in negotiations with the municipal planning authorities in the period that followed, as well. But the company concentrated initially on exploiting the possibilities of its existing site – and soon also on new products.

1949: View from the roof of the office building in Meller Strasse towards Jöllenbecker Strasse and Weststrasse.





From 1949: Space is at a premium; company growth demands regular expansion of existing structures.

Urban planning and economic miracle – Bielefeld in the 1950s

109

In local government politics in 1952, the dominance of the SPD had broken down over the issue of the occasionally problematic integration of exiles. A new right-wing party, the 'League of Expellees and Deprived of Rights' (BHE), also found support in Bielefeld. The SPD remained the strongest party in City Hall, but the alliance of CDU, FDP and BHE created a new majority situation. For a short time, the FDP was able to fill the post of Lord Mayor. Developments in local-government politics in Bielefeld were shaped by the stable majority of the SPD in 1956, the stalemate of 1961, when SPD and CDU/FDP gained 24 council seats each, followed by the SPD majorities in the 1960s.

Meanwhile the face of the city changed, accompanied by critical comments which were scarcely heeded in the era of the ensuing economic miracle. Gustav Engel, former head of the city archive and author of fundamental works on Bielefeld's city history, intervened in the planning discussions of the 1950s. He criticised above all the structural changes in the old town. Engel also warned against 'false romanticism', in view of the 'necessities of the time', but he gave the urban planners an almost nostalgic piece of advice from the perspective of a local historian, 'Listen, too, you master builders, to the voices which resound from the depths of time, from

where the roots of the city rest in the earth. Then, Bielefeld will be beautiful once more.' Engel's appeal seems not to have been taken to heart. Critics later maintained that the city lost more of its historic structures during the reconstruction work of the 1950s than through the bombing raids of World War II. Between 1950 and 1952, for example, when Kreuzstrasse was due to be completely redesigned and the carriageway widened to 19 metres, all the – still habitable – houses on the south side of the old road had to be demolished before the actual road building could begin. Not all house owners accepted these plans without resistance, so building work was delayed.



Around 1950: Kreuzstrasse before rebuilding.
On the right in the picture are the towers of the
Neustädter Marienkirche.

For some people at the time, building work did not progress fast enough, and the assertion that 'too few bombs fell' was heard among the more malicious gossip. It is possible that this had something to do with the painful memories of the recently lost war, where the past – at least in terms of historic buildings – was not in great demand and instead, an occasionally 'misled desire for modernisation' made headway in Bielefeld, too. In any case, the view that with the destruction of historical buildings the identity of a city could be damaged only took shape in much later discussions about redevelopment.

Bielefeld's economy had been enjoying a rapid upward trend since the currency reform. However, if one looks only at the old, traditional sectors, a somewhat different picture emerges. Companies such as the Vorwärts and Ravensberg Spinning Mills and also the Mechanical Weaving Mill – symbolic of Bielefeld's industrialisation – struggled once again with signs of crisis, after the existential crises of the 1920s and '30s, and were only able to produce on an extremely low scale or had to abandon production altogether, despite the fact that increased demand after the war and even after the currency reform had brought businesses a short-term boom. Just a short time afterwards, companies in other countries with much lower wage costs

were able to assert themselves against the old, established Bielefeld businesses – a fact which could be seen to a certain extent as a foretaste of the 'globalisation problem'. The Bielefeld linen industry experienced a quite similar development, with short, abrupt upturns after 1945 and again after the currency reform. Despite huge cost cuts, the industry was unable to stand up to the even cheaper foreign competition. Over many decades, spinning mills, weaving mills and the linen industry had made their mark on Bielefeld's economy. Now, one by one, they were dropping out of the competition.

In the case of bicycles and sewing machines – typical industrial products of Bielefeld from the last quarter of the 19th century – developments had not been particularly bright either since the 1950s. Admittedly, demand had initially picked up in these areas thanks to accumulated demand, but in the bicycle sector stagnation soon turned into a continual downward trend, broken only by brief interim highs. Since the economic situation for sewing and tool-making machines was still robust, and remained so, the 'big four' in Bielefeld (Anker, Koch's Adler, Phönix, Dürkopp) in general continued to operate very successfully during the 1950s. Problems began to mount in the 1960s. As in the textile industry, the pressure from foreign competition took its

toll. Not for the last time were expensive, quality products at a disadvantage compared to much cheaper offerings.

And yet, on the whole, the 1950s and '60s can be said to have been a successful time for industry in Bielefeld. Soon after the war it was judged as being particularly stable, not only because it had a broad and varied base, but also because the service sector had grown enormously at the same time. The Chamber of Commerce had established in 1949 that, of all the 20 regional chambers in North Rhine-Westphalia, no other demonstrated 'such a diverse economic structure' as the one in Bielefeld.

Despite the fact that difficult times had begun for a number of traditional Bielefeld businesses, this had no effect on developments on the employment market. The year 1955 was one of full employment, and in 1960 the labour shortage – for every unemployed worker there were eight vacancies – could only be compensated for by the influx of refugees from the GDR.

What happened to the trauma of war and the memory of the crisis years which followed? They faded gradually and made way for the enjoyment of increasing prosperity, a prosperity which was increasingly being felt by workers

and employees, thanks to wage developments in the 1950s. People could afford to buy things once more, and after the initial 'wave of gluttony', clothes, furniture and cars were among the sought-after consumer items of the era of the economic miracle.

Growth in German industrial production in the 1950s
(in per cent of previous year)

Year	in %
1951	18
1952	6.8
1953	10.0
1954	11.8
1955	14.9
1956	7.9
1957	5.2
1958	3.1
1959	7.6

Source: Abelshauser/Petzina (eds.) (1981)

Setting the course – Clever investments and fortunate personnel policy

The first business successes after the war in the 1950s were still entirely based on those products, whose basic models had been developed back in the 1930s.



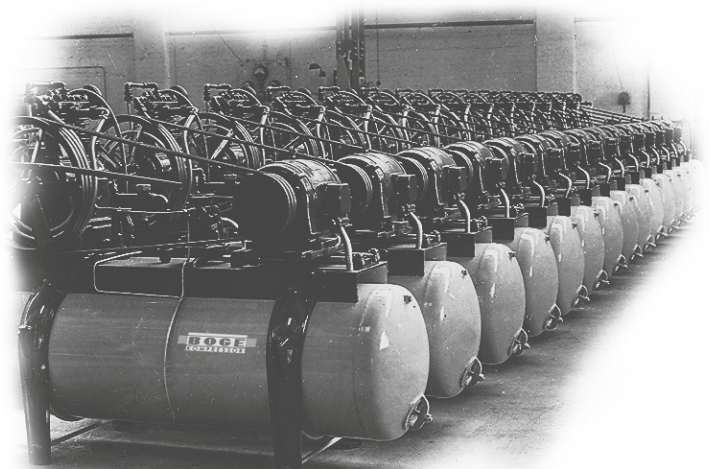
Top: Advertisement from the 1950s.

Right: 1950s: Ready for dispatch: piston compressors from modern series production.

Facing page: 1960: Staff gathered on the site for a photograph on the occasion of Ernst Thomas' 65th birthday. In the front row, in the centre is Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven.

Compressed air technology, however, had progressed in the meantime, and competition had become tougher since World War II. Among the rivals was a company called Kaeser, which had only begun building compressors in 1948. When Ernst Thomas and Carl Kaeser met at one of the first post-war trade fairs, Ernst Thomas is supposed to have tried to talk Kaeser out of the compressor business, 'Forget it, Mr Kaeser, there is not much money to be made with it ...'. That there was in fact a lot of money to be made with compressors was demonstrated not only by Boge, but soon proven most conclusively by Kaeser and other rival companies.

Tough competition in the era of the economic miracle demanded technical innovation. Adaptation to the technological 'state of the art' was the order of the day. Market share should not only be maintained, but, if possible, increased. From 1952 onwards, Boge was supported by a consultant engineer and designer, who came to Bielefeld every fortnight from Stuttgart to inspect the product range and develop it further with new designs. New machines, new tools, new devices for compressor construction – all this meant a huge increase in investment costs for the new product range, which itself could, of course, not be developed overnight.



At the same time, there were thoughts of expanding the business field to include a hydraulics programme. For a short period, Boge also manufactured hydraulic pumps, lift cylinders and control valves. Considerable financial expenditure was also necessary at the beginning for this new area, and further investments for new machines would be unavoidable. Facing the high costs of what could turn out to be a difficult development process with an uncertain outcome – and with which the company was crossing new frontiers – those responsible kept their feet firmly on the ground. The hydraulics division was abandoned, so that attention could be devoted entirely to new developments in the field of compressors. It was now that the K 15 and K 25 models were developed and, for the first time, ones with three or four cylinders, offered for sale under the designations K 35 and K45. In addition, Boge now manufactured compressors with a V-cylinder arrangement, which made for extremely smooth running of machines.

Boge was highly successful with this new generation of industrial piston compressors, especially since more and more industrial application areas were being tapped into. Consequently, the number of employees rose quickly to over 250. Recruitment of new personnel occasionally ran along quite unconventional lines, according to former Boge employee Hildegard Güse, who had applied for a position as a clerk in 1950. By chance before her interview she got into conversation with a 'nice elderly gentleman'. It was only later that she learned that the gentleman in question was Ernst Thomas, the head of the company. She had already got the job without even having to show her references!

Trainees, too – or apprentices, as they were still called in the 1950s and '60s – not only had good opportunities, they could also practically pick from a choice of training vacancies themselves. Hence, in 1964, a total of 4,650 Bielefeld school-leavers were offered a choice of approximately 7,000 training positions.



When Ingo Opitz applied for an apprenticeship at Boge as a fitter in 1958, at 5 to 12, the ratio of apprenticeships to applicants was less advantageous, but still extremely favourable compared with the current situation. Training lasted three-and-a-half years, during which the monthly wage for a trainee rose from 20.00 Deutsche Mark in the first year to 108.00 in the fourth year. Prospects after training were not bad either. For Opitz, who had attended technical college following his training and after his first years of work experience, a number of opportunities opened up in the course of his 49 years working for Boge which took him right up to leading positions at the interface between engineering and commercial administration.

In 1958, the year in which Ingo Opitz began his apprenticeship at Boge, long-standing authorised signatory Wilhelm Laucks went into retirement after some 40 years of service. Whereas Laucks had successfully contributed to the development of the company from its first steps as an industrial concern right down to the days of the economic miracle, Opitz was able to follow in various functions the rise of the business to its current position. In these fast-moving times,

in which business life is characterised by the ideal of the employee who is prepared at any time to change his job, it may be worth noting in passing, that here are two Boge employees who between them experienced an unbroken 89 of the 100 years of company history. Such long Boge careers – and there are many others besides the ones mentioned – have undoubtedly served the company well. Looking back, the supposed anachronism of long periods of employment has turned out to be the kind of far-sighted personnel policy, which is often practised in tradition-conscious family businesses. Employees develop within the company, get a broader overview of things and can therefore operate flexibly in a variety of functions for the company. In the 1950s, this personnel policy included in particular joint leisure activities. Parties and outings for the workers were a fixed part of the social life of the company. So, for example, an entire train was chartered without further ado to take the workforce for a two-day trip to the wine-growing regions on the Rhine.



Aboard the special train to the Rhine:
a works outing in 1952.

'Investments' like this in the working environment were reflected ultimately in the economic success of the company. From the 1960s onwards, however, interest in joint activities wore off because attitudes to leisure had gradually begun to change noticeably in the course of the favourable economic development taking place at all levels. Holidays with the family were soon no longer just one of the Germans' fondest dreams, they had become reality. In many respects, leisure time could now be adapted more closely to the needs of the individual. And then, in the meantime, there was that large 'piece of furniture', typically housed in dark brown veneer, occupying pride of place in the living room – the television set – which was increasingly calling the tune in people's spare time.

A large company party in 1960 provided an opportunity for provisionally taking stock, which the Bielefeld press felt worthy of a special report. 'Recently, the 100,000th compressor has left the workshops of the Kompressorenfabrik Otto Boge at 2 Meller Strasse, which – with a permanent staff of 250 – is considered a leading company in its branch in the Federal Republic and exports its products all over the world.'



The young apprentice Franz-Willy Schubert, who had successfully tried his hand at the barter transactions of the post-war period, had, since 1 January 1959, become Franz-Willy Schubert Head of Exports, whose interest in and talent for foreign languages allowed him to make new contacts abroad. The post-war period had long since come to an end for Boge. Phases of reconstruction and consolidation had given way to a time of impressive growth.

Top: 1960: Do good and talk about it: Boge's success in the local press.

Left: Boge dances and celebrates its economic success: office party in 1960.



VI. 'Limits to Growth' – New Development Opportunities



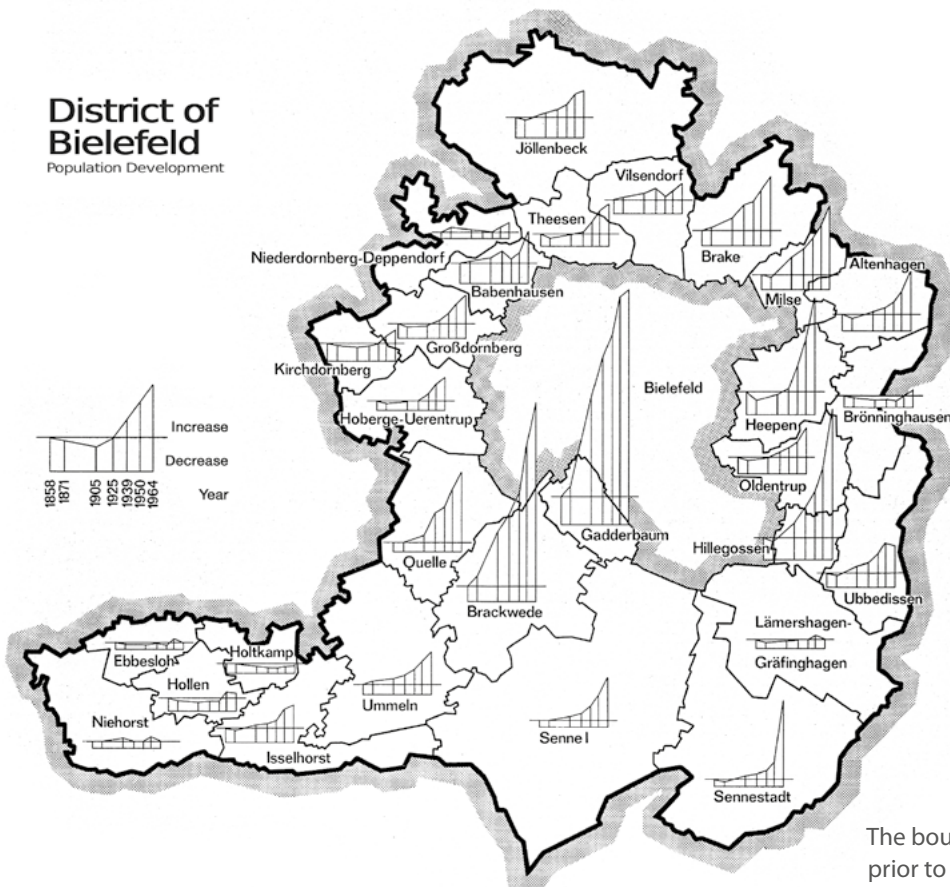
The new assembly plant in Jöllenbeck. The second phase of construction was completed in 1984

A shortage of space – Local-government reorganisation in Bielefeld

Bielefeld had expanded far beyond the borders of the area incorporated into the city in 1930. It then encompassed not only the administrative district itself, but also – for example due to the transport links and integrated infrastructure – the small, independent boroughs in the surrounding countryside. With reference to its actual administrative boundaries, the city of Bielefeld, however, spoke of ‘space-related bottlenecks’ in house building and industry. Bielefeld’s Lord Mayor, Artur Ladebeck, who carefully observed the trend towards migration of industrial companies in particular, chose a noteworthy subheading for his report in 1959 on the issue of space in the city, ‘Pills, injections or operation?’

For Ladebeck and other local politicians it had long been clear that the ‘patient’, the city of Bielefeld, was only to be helped in the long term by a major operation. The prime objective was the creation of a uniformly administered economic area.

Complaints about a ‘serious shortage of space’ for the expanding industrial sector brought the Chamber of Commerce in East Westphalia into the discussion process. After all, the Chamber had noted in its report for the years from 1958 to 1963 ‘alarming tendencies’, in as much as 26 out of 29 Bielefeld businesses which had moved away had found new sites close to the city boundaries, i.e. within the district.



The boundaries of the district of Bielefeld prior to local-government reform in 1973

The Chamber made a renewed statement in December 1967, after a unanimous vote in the full assembly had crystallized for the 'large-scale solution', to give up the district of Bielefeld in favour of the city. The planning sovereignty of each of the smaller boroughs was thought, on the other hand, to be an anachronism.

The story of local-government reorganisation is also the story of internal party struggle, especially within the SPD, 'which held the absolute majority in the city and the district, provided the Lord Mayor and the District Administrator, and which counted among its leading members a number of the most influential figures in this process.' Although within the SPD at district level strong words were chosen – revolution was threatened in Heepen should it be incorporated into Bielefeld – time was clearly on the side of those with big-city ideas.

In 1970 concrete planning and negotiation got under way, and it quickly became clear that the boroughs had the intention of selling themselves as dearly as possible. In the discussion with Heepen, the city reacted with generous promises of investment which totalled some DM 25 million. The 'threat of revolution' could finally be warded off with firm pledges of new indoor and outdoor swimming pools, road and canal

building, construction of sports facilities and kindergartens.

While agreement could also be reached with other boroughs, Sennestadt alone refused point blank to agree to the reorganisation plans. In what was for the time a pioneering example of modern urban development, the granting of the town charter had taken place just a few years previously and Sennestadt had good grounds to justify its continued independence.

In 1971, there were already 6,500 jobs and a further 500 were due to be created by the establishment of works by such companies as Gilde-meister, Terfloth & Snoek and Eilers. Yet not even a constitutional complaint was successful. The 'demands of Bielefeld as a major regional centre' took priority. On 1 January 1973, the old municipal district together with the boroughs which had previously been part of the wider, rural district now made up the so-called 'kreisfreie' (literally 'district-free') city of Bielefeld. In place of the independent local councils, new, regional representations took office, which were granted limited authority and controlled by the city council. Independent borough administrations were turned into regional administrations, embedded in the hierarchy of the city administration.

Success brings growth problems – Boge in the 1960s

In July 1971, the company wrote a letter to the planning office of the city of Bielefeld. Joint discussions had been under way since 1954 to clarify 'which areas of land would remain for the expansion of our works following the extension of the EB 61 road'. Whereas earlier guidelines from the authorities certainly offered scope for Boge's expansion plans, the situation had changed radically in the meantime – and worsened Boge's position dramatically – due to the concrete plans for the Ostwestfalendamm expressway. Now, there was an 'extremely urgent obligation' to search for other additional possibilities for expansion. By now, the management at Boge favoured a 'large-scale solution' with the 'construction of a branch factory on the edge of the city', because 'for us, after 17 years, the matter ... has developed into an existential question, and we would much appreciate it if you could help us to acquire such a piece of industrial land of approx. 30,000 – 40,000 square metres, without railway connection'.

This letter to the Bielefeld planning office marked the end, for the time being, of a long process, during which the Meller Strasse site had been repeatedly extended since World War II, and it had been hoped that enough space would be found in the immediate vicinity for a generous expansion of the company. Like the

1950s, the 1960s were also years of continuous growth. The industrial application of compressed air made its breakthrough once and for all. In order to be able to concentrate fully on compressors, the company gradually gave up production of special tools and other garage equipment. With the success of the second generation of industrial compressors, total turnover doubled between 1959 and 1969, and the number of staff rose quickly to 250.

Alongside Ernst Thomas, who since the mid-1960s for health reasons had slowly been withdrawing from the daily business of managing the company, the third generation of the Boge family was now assuming responsibility.

Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven had 'officially' entered the company in 1949, following his mechanical engineering studies. Initially as an employee, later as authorised signatory, the father of today's company head was able to prepare himself specifically for his role as Managing Partner. He had 'grown up in the company' and had got to know it at his grandfather's side. As a 15-year-old in 1940 he was a trainee in the company before the war



Top: 1960s: Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven, grandson of Otto Boge, takes over a leading role in the company.

Left: 1961: Ernst Thomas greets Federal Minister for Economics, Ludwig Erhard, on the trade fair stand.

suddenly disrupted his career plans. After 1945, concrete tasks awaited him. After Ernst Thomas finally left the company in 1975, the baton – and with it the power of sole representation – was passed on from the second to the third generation, from uncle to nephew.

In the 1960s, expansion of the factory was limited to the addition of a further storey to the office building in Meller Strasse, but the economic development of the company had long since made clear that the site was still set to burst at the seams.



July 1963: Economic success necessitated further constructional expansion.

The search for storerooms for machines and compressed air bottles ended in success in the east of the inner city (Mittelstrasse); premises had been found for the commercial departments in the neighbourhood and finally, an empty factory building became available close to the company which would relieve production in the main building. This building, the former 'Kampmann's Machine Factory', was conveniently located in terms of transport and was right on Boge's doorstep. It was, however, also situated in the middle of the planned redevelopment area.

Hence it was just a matter of time before these production premises, which had only been rented, would have to be abandoned again. For the interim period from 1965 onwards, though, the building served its purpose well. In a circular to all Boge agencies it says, 'By putting into operation our new branch factory in the immediate vicinity of our principal factory, we have been able to increase production considerably, and as we have already pointed out before, cut the long delivery times of 1964.' Thanks to the additional space, the company was now in a position to deliver 'every standard compressor type within 8 to 10 days, or within 14 days at the latest and, in urgent cases, to help out immediately from current production.'

damm expressway – Bielefeld’s planned city ring road. The authorities were uncertain ‘as to whether the planned roads shown in the plans accompanying your application must not again be considerably modified’. ‘Under these circumstances,’ a representative of the building regulator wrote, ‘I find it impossible to make a statement at this present time on your overall planning or on detailed aspects of your plan.’ Even two years later, little had changed in this state of uncertainty. ‘Although I have been able to clarify a number of points in the meantime,’ a representative of the planning office wrote in 1969, ‘I am still not able to give the company any conclusive information.’

If the issue of works expansion had meanwhile assumed existential importance, then not least because the leading German manufacturers in this hotly-contested market were engaged in some crossing of swords. Every supplier, for example, observed very closely his rivals’ advertising campaigns. Conflicts, which usually culminated in accusations of ‘unfair trading practices’ due to inadmissible ‘unique selling propositions or superlative advertising’, were not uncommon. Boge did not shy away from confrontation in such circumstances, and in the mid-1960s it came to a lengthy lawsuit with its competitor, ALUP. When the situation reached an impasse,

ALUP in a countermove turned its attention to Boge’s advertising leaflets and demanded on their part that ‘Boge refrain immediately from violating the rules governing fair trading practices’. Only months later, after the main proceedings were pending at the district court in Stuttgart, were the attempts at mediation by the German Engineering Federation (VDMA) at least partially successful.

Despite the mediation attempt, Boge still saw its rival’s advertising ‘as technically incorrect’. Consequently, according to Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven, agreement could not be a matter solely for Boge, ‘whereby it accepts everything that ALUP demands’. Boge was, however, prepared in principle to defuse the conflict further. Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven suggested a personal meeting, ‘I am certain ... that a petty war between us or between German compressor manufacturers in general, whether open or in secret, makes no sense, and that we should therefore avoid everything which weakens us in the face of the competition which can be expected from abroad’. The pressure of this competition was also behind the formation in 1969 of the so-called ‘Club of Four’, consisting of representatives from Boge, ALUP, Electron and Kaeser. An agreement ‘to increase mutual trust’ was aimed, among other things, at a commitment to inform each

other in detail about future trade-fair activities advertisements in specialist publications, newspaper advertising and at 'further observation of the competition'.

Wolfgang Meier Scheuven had already encouraged this cooperation in the spring of 1968, in order 'to be able to put up greater resistance to the much larger foreign competitors by joining together'. Cooperation should, however, not consist of monitoring and inspection of competitors' products, 'but be creative, strengthen the group and bring success to each individual member'.

In the meantime the issue of company expansion at the old site had reached a stalemate. In July 1971, a decision had still not been reached as to the exact route of the Ostwestfalendamm expressway in the catchment area of the Boge site and consequently as to the size of any possible expansion areas.

The city, meanwhile, had established a task force to prepare a diagrammatic examination of the link between the road and the inner city – a complicated affair which had far-reaching consequences for Boge. Within the scope of a meeting with the building authorities, the real issue arose for the first time of whether the city could help with the procurement of a new plot of land. Prior to local-government reform in 1973, however, local options were limited. Only extremely vague and non-committal mention was made of building areas in the East of Bielefeld. The parties involved did not give a thought to a possible site in Jöllenbeck, at that time in 1971 still beyond the city boundaries.



1960s: A look at production.

ALUP**KOMPRESSORENFABRIK**

ADOLF EHLMANN KÖNGEN/NECKAR · GEGRÜNDET 1923

Alup-Kompressorenfabrik 7316 Köngen/Neckar · Postfach 20

Firma

Otto Boge

48 Bielefeld

Postfach 1420

zu Hd.v. Herrn Meier-Scheuven

FERTIGUNGSPROGRAMM:

Industrie-Kompressoranlagen
 Farbspritzanlagen · Farbrückkessel
 Farbspritzgeräte · Farbspritzpistolen
 Waschkompressoren · Reifenfüllmesser
 Garagenluftpumpen · Garagengeräte

Ihre Zeichen

II/ste

Ihre Nachricht vom

10.11.67

Unsere Zeichen

Eh-vo

7316 KÖNGEN/NECKAR

16.11.1967

GESCHÄFTSLEITUNG

Sehr geehrter Herr Meier-Scheuven!

Vorweg versichere ich Ihnen, dass sich unsere Verkaufstätigkeit nicht speziell gegen Ihre Firma richtet. Es gibt keine alten und keine neuen ALUP-KampfpPreislisten, welche etwa nur im Wettbewerb gegen "Boge" angewendet werden. Dies schliesst natürlich nicht aus, dass den Marktbedürfnissen entsprechend heute ALUP-Kompressoren mit anderen Leistungsdaten und grösseren Leistungseinheiten angeboten werden.

Es ist uns bekannt, dass Sie die Leistungsdaten und Preise Ihrer grossen Dreizylinder-Kompressoren geändert haben. Nähere Einzelheiten sind für uns nicht feststellbar. Es drängt sich die Vermutung auf, dass die betreffenden Preislisten als "Aktentaschenlisten" behandelt werden. Offenbar ist es modern geworden, dem Wettbewerb die eigenen Preise so lang wie möglich zu verheimlichen.

Sehr geehrter Herr Meier-Scheuven, wissen Sie übrigens, dass die Firma Kaeser zur Messe 1967 für ihre Erzeugnisse Netto-Preislisten herausgebracht hat? Die Preise dieser Listen liegen aber nicht durchweg um 20 % niedriger. Bei einigen Modellen beträgt der Abschlag wesentlich mehr. Bei einem Modell mit einem bisherigen Verbraucherpreis von ca. DM 6000.-- liegt der Nettopreis um ca. DM 450.-- niedriger als nach der üblichen Brutto-Preisliste. Was sagen Sie dazu?

VDMA**VEREIN DEUTSCHER MASCHINENBAU-ANSTALTEN E.V.**

RECHTSABTEILUNG

VDMA - 6 Frankfurt/Main 4, Postfach 4269

Firma

Otto Boge

Kompressorenfabrik

48 Bielefeld

Postfach 1420 - 5. DEZ. 1966

Ihr Zeichen

Ihre Nachricht vom

Unser Zeichen

617 Bol/schn.

6 FRANKFURT/MAIN

Barkhausstraße 16

2.12.1966

Betrifft:

Meinungsverschiedenheit mit der Firma ALUP-Kompressorenfabrik

Sehr geehrte Herren !

Herr Schubert von der Fachgemeinschaft Pumpen und Verdichter hat uns darüber informiert, daß zwischen Ihnen und der Firma ALUP Meinungsverschiedenheiten über die wettbewerbsrechtliche Beurteilung von Ankündigungen in Prospekten bestehen. Diese Meinungsverschiedenheiten haben bereits zu zwei gerichtlichen Auseinandersetzungen geführt. Wie uns Herr Schubert weiter mitteilte, soll beiderseits der Wunsch bestehen, diese Meinungsverschiedenheiten im Interesse aller Beteiligten durch eine verbandsinterne Schlichtung beizulegen. Wir sind gern bereit, an einem solchen Schlichtungsversuch mitzuwirken. Daneben be-

The German Engineering Federation (VDMA) acted as mediator in the lawsuit against ALUP.
 Company documents from 1966 and 1967.

Energy crisis and structural change – Bielefeld's economy in the 1970s

After roughly two decades of almost unres-
trained growth, the oil crisis of 1973 gave
rise for the first time since World War II to serious
doubts about the continuation of such dynamic
economic expansion and drew attention to the
finite nature of raw materials and natural resour-
ces. The phrase 'limits to growth' underwent a
decisive change of meaning. At the same time,
not only did economic figures in general worsen
as a result of the energy crisis, but signs of crisis
and structural change were to be felt – highly
symbolically – also in Bielefeld. The year 1976
saw one of the great industrial concerns, Anker,
go bankrupt.

Through local-government reorganisation
the boundaries to physical growth as limiting
factors in the economy had been overcome, but
now economic growth itself was under threat.
Whereas the local bicycle manufacturers, for
example, had searched desperately for new staff
shortly after currency reform, the 'long, slow
demise of the German bicycle sector' was now
soon to begin. Many Bielefeld companies in fact
rose to the challenge of motorising their bicy-
cles, but their ultimate downfall started when
small cars became affordable for larger sections
of the population by the end of the 1950s.

Cheap imported textiles made life hard not just
for the textile industry itself, but led to a sales
crisis in household sewing machines as well.
Only Koch's Adler was able to hold its position
on the market until the end of the 1960s, while
all other large Bielefeld manufacturers had long
since abandoned production of household sew-
ing machines. From the 1970s onwards, indus-
trial sewing machines were produced in Bie-
lefeld, and still are today, by the amalgamated
Dürkopp-Adler company. Some time previously,
Anker had concentrated on the production of
office machines, cash registers and electronic
accounting machines, when, despite good
turnover figures, great uncertainty prevailed for
the first time in 1971. From the turn of 1973–74
all branches had suffered significant losses in
turnover as a result of the energy crisis.

It was nevertheless a shock for Bielefeld's eco-
nomy and local politics when the traditional
firm, Anker, declared itself bankrupt, despite
rehabilitation attempts in the meantime and, of
all times, in the year of its 100th anniversary in
1976. Over 3,000 Anker employees in Bielefeld
lost their jobs.

Growth/decline of German industrial
production 1969-1975
(in per cent of previous year)

Year	in %
1969	13
1970	7
1971	1.5
1972	4.3
1973	7.0
1974	-1.4
1975	-7.0

Source: Abelshauser/Petzina (1981)

Sector-specific weaknesses such as in the case of bicycles, sewing machines or textiles and serious individual cases, do not mean that Bielefeld's economy had been in a kind of permanent state of crisis since the 1970s. Overall developments into the 1990s pointed more to huge structural change and the strengthening of the service sector. As far as Bielefeld economic historian Harald Wixforth is concerned, the 'trend towards the tertiary sector' in the Bielefeld economy 'has certainly served to compensate for difficulties in other economic branches'.

Indeed, the decline in jobs in industry was balanced by the growth of the service sector.

Within the forty years from 1950 to 1990, ratios between industrial and service sectors had been almost exactly reversed: whereas in 1950 almost 56 per cent of workers were employed in trade and industry and some 42 per cent in the service sector, by 1990 only 42 per cent were working in trade and industry, while the tertiary sector claimed almost 57 per cent of those employed. Amongst the largest service providers in the health, nursing services, administration and education sectors with some 20,000 jobs are the social welfare organisation 'von Bodelschwinghsche Anstalten', the city administration, the University of Bielefeld and the universities of applied sciences.

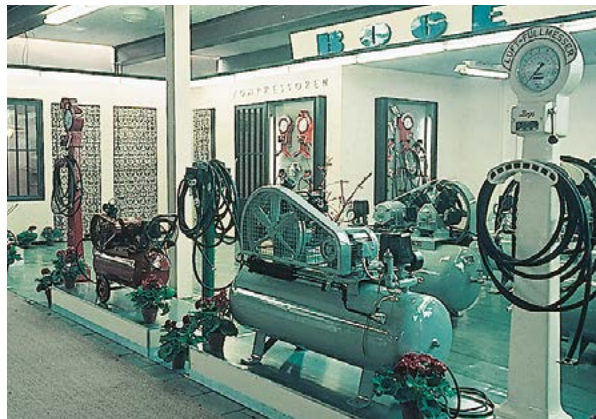


Around 1970: The Bielefeld University building.

Successfully bucking the trend – Boge in the 1970s

The multitude of application areas for compressed air in industry, trade and daily life – whether the rock drill down the mine, the paint spray gun at the varnisher's workshop or the drive mechanism in the dentist's drill – serves to suggest a certain invulnerability to crisis among compressor manufacturers. Sector-specific weak periods can be compensated for by booms in other sectors. In the 1960s Boge was able to put forward with great success a sophisticated compressor programme which was tailored to prevailing requirements thanks to its innovative product policy. Continual technical progress enabled higher speeds and therefore increased performance. In 1970, approximately 300 types of compressor could be manufactured for the most varied applications on the basis of only a few basic models. This 'modular design principle' was developed and refined further in the years that followed. Boge had made a good name for itself in this time, especially in the field of large industrial compressors, and regularly showcased its newly acquired competences at trade fairs.

Incidentally, for the family business, trade fair presence at this time also meant family presence, which was not limited to just 'being there'. In the days before the word 'catering' featured in the German Duden dictionary, it was a matter of course that the female members of



The product range, as showcased at trade fairs (piston compressors, tyre pressure air pumps), is supplemented by the first screw compressor (orange) in 1973.

the family catered to the needs of visitors to the stand – and that meant making sandwiches backstage! The family belonged to the company, just as the company was part of the family.

Just how successful Boge had been since the end of World War II can be seen not least by how the location question was solved after years of discussion. For Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven the economic facts all spoke in favour of expansion at a new location. Otto Boge's grandson had long since realised that the competition at home and, above all, abroad could only be countered through the controlled growth of his own company. If he were to wait any longer, its economic existence would be in danger. Boge himself put an end, therefore, to the tortuous discussion about the Meller Strasse site and took the decision to build a new factory. The company was willing and able to invest a considerable sum in a new location.

Since the city's options were limited when it came to finding a suitably large plot of land, Boge chose to try an advertisement in the local press – and was successful! A Jöllenbeck farmer by the name of Lechtermann was offering an appropriately large site, measuring in all around 54,000 square metres. 'In response to your advertisement in the Westfalen-Blatt,' Lechtermann

wrote, 'I can offer you an industrial site of the size required. As the building area has not yet been surveyed, your wishes as to the size of each plot of land and connecting roads can be fully taken into account'. And with an eye to a much-discussed major transport project at the time, which later vanished into some planner's drawer, he added, 'Large feeder roads are being planned, in connection with the regional airport at Nagelsholz, which will run close by the building area'. Conditions were favourable and within a very short time agreement was reached on the arrangements for the land deal. Everything then happened very quickly. Planning and building work on the Jöllenbeck site progressed on what seemed like a yearly basis: In November 1971, the Düsseldorf 'Integral – Architekten und Ingenieure GmbH' was invited to tender for 'general planning, encompassing structural, working and interior-finish design', plus a feasibility study. In September 1972, the same company put forward its 'offer and proposed fee for overall planning and monitoring of construction of a new factory building in Jöllenbeck' and was awarded the contract. A further year later, in the summer of 1973, the foundation stone was laid and in May 1974, in the first construction phase, Boge moved into the new branch works which had an initial production area of 7,500 square metres.



Around 100 Boge employees from the assembly and technical development departments started working at the new site. The company managed to achieve this 'coup' in the impressively short period of three years. Parts of production and the commercial administration remained at first in Bielefeld, but the company was no longer dependent on the outcome of the stalemate regarding municipal plans for the redevelopment area. The 'existential question', as formulated by Ernst Thomas and Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven in letters to the municipal building authorities in the summer of 1971, had been answered highly successfully and single-handedly.

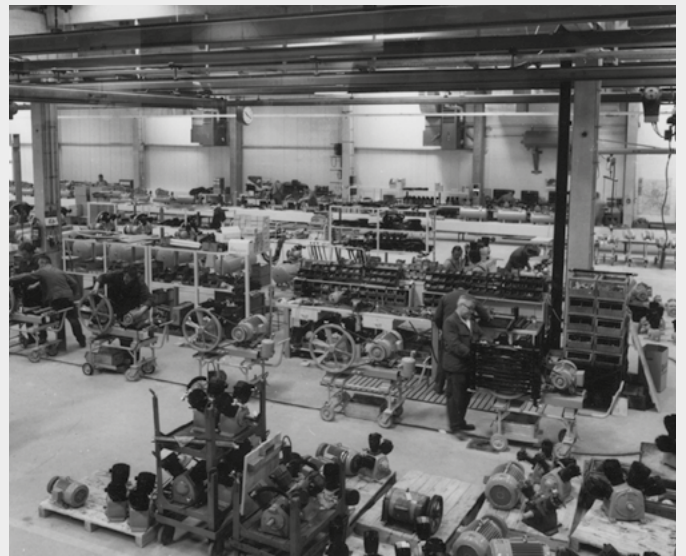
The company's shareholders – the members of the Thomas, Meier-Scheuven and Boe families – without reservation bore responsibility for and supported the far-reaching decision to change location at every phase of the project.



In the technical field, too, Boge was able to demonstrate good results in the 1970s. In 1972, development work on the screw compressor began and in 1973 the first Boge screw compressor was presented at the Hanover Fair. Whereas in the case of piston compressors, the air is compressed inside a cylinder, the screw compressor works on the principle of two parallel rotors with differing profiles running in opposite directions to each other.

Laying the foundation stone in the presence of the shareholders in the summer of 1973.

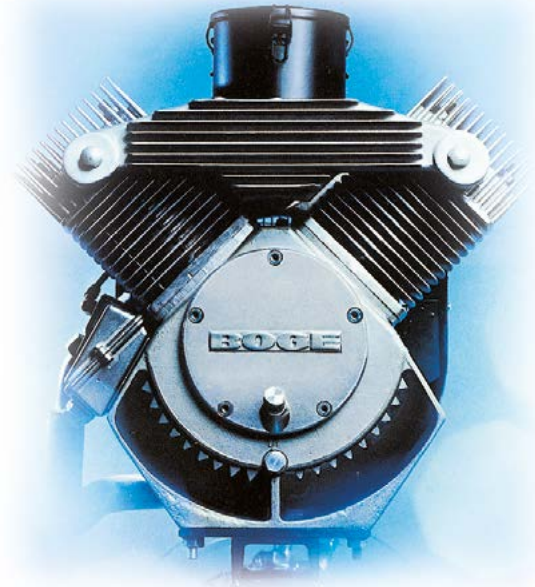
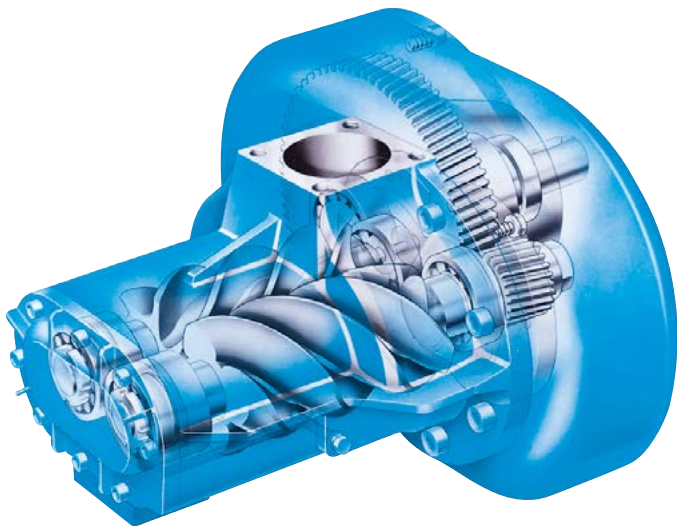
Bottom: Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven and his son Wolf Dietrich at the foundation-laying celebrations.



1973–74: Construction and completion of the first phase of the building out in the countryside, plus a look at the planning and production departments.

Here, the intake air is compressed in chambers, which continuously decrease in size due to the rotation of the rotors, until final pressure is reached. While the technical principle had already been developed in 1878, it was not until the end of the 1960s that a Swedish company succeeded in bringing it to readiness for series production.

The onset of production of Boge screw compressors in 1974 did not by any means spell the end of the tried-and-tested piston devices.



Top: Manufacture of screw compressors.

Left: The principle of the screw compressor.

Bottom: The classic piston compressor.

It quickly became apparent that it was not a question of 'piston or screw', but that each design would find a specific area of application in its own right. The years of development work, which culminated in a complete programme of screw compressors of initially 10 machines each with a maximum pressure of 8 or 10 bar, had been worthwhile. With the growing range of products on offer, new client sectors with highly specified compressed air requirements opened up to the company from the late 1970s onwards,

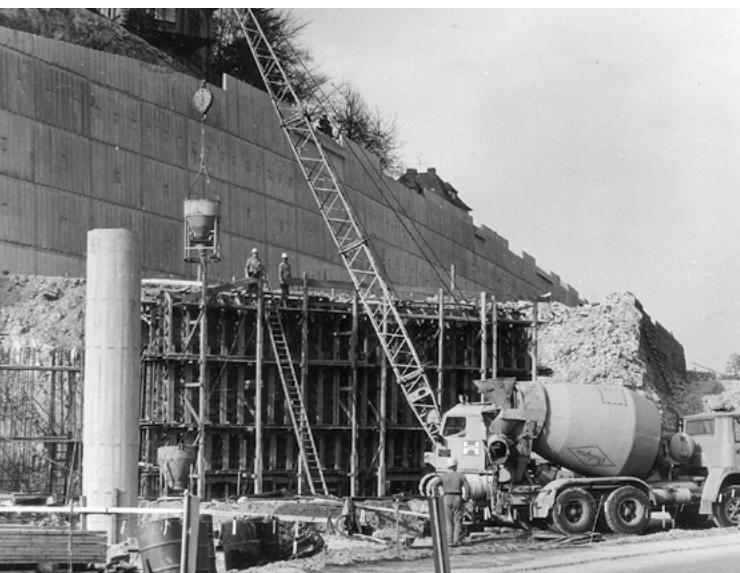
thereby increasing turnover considerably. Whereas in the beginning the ratio of piston to screw compressors was well balanced, the proportion of screw compressors in the Boge product range amounted to approximately 80 per cent by the mid-1990s. Now that the company had overcome the space-related 'limits to growth' with its decision in favour of the Jöllenbeck site, economic growth objectives could be re-defined.



Complete compressed air system
(screw compressors).

Growth under fire – Controversial issues in local politics

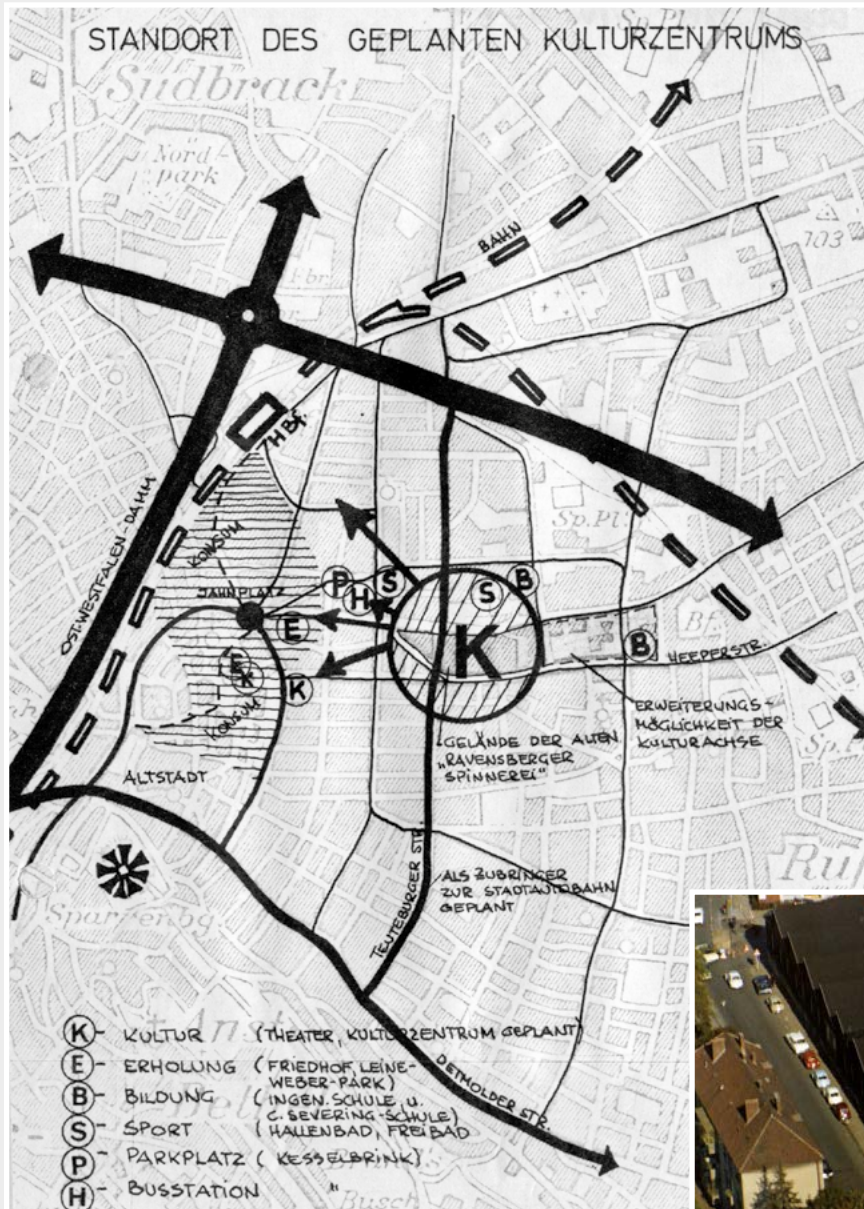
In areas of local-government politics such as infrastructure development, the matter of 'limits to growth' had become increasingly important from the 1960s and '70s onwards. For the first time, major municipal building projects such as the Ostwestfalendamm expressway, the plans for the redevelopment areas around the main railway station or other road-building projects received criticism, not only in relation to other uses, but of a more fundamental nature as well. In the opinion of various citizens' initiatives or student protest groups, the 'limits to growth' had long been reached. By contrast, the city's building authorities were still pursuing their ambitious visions of seemingly unlimited material development. 'According to planners' forecasts,' cites the former head of the building authority, Jürgen Hotzan, in 1969, 'it will be necessary in the year 2000 to build 25 parallel lanes in the Orsningpass alone to accommodate motorised traffic'. It was just a question 'of whether the politicians can give us the money to do so'.



1970s: Construction of the Ostwestfalendamm expressway as a fast route into the city centre.

A few years later, plans for a large road intersection would almost have led to the demolition of the 'Ravensberg Spinning Mill', were it not for the massive protests from citizens in support of the preservation of the industrial monument and the use of the site by the Adult Education Centre. The city stuck to its building plans for a long time, but in the end all those involved were glad that the historical buildings were able to be saved. In terms of the preservation of historical monuments, the saving of the spinning mill 'was an ingenious example, far removed from any notion of romantic nostalgia and worthy of imitation, of how to deal with a monument so characteristic of the cityscape and so crucial to the identification of the people with their city'. It is therefore only logical that parts of the site are today used as a Museum of History to showcase the story of city.

In the district known as the 'Kamphofviertel', behind the main railway station and close to the Boge company site, the building authorities and citizen's protest groups found another bone of contention. In this case it was a question of the extent of local redevelopment plans. The residential area in the catchment area of the Ostwestfalendamm expressway was set to fall victim to the excavator and wrecking ball, though in the end not all of it did.



Top: 1970s: In the course of planning for a new street intersection, the Ravensberg Spinning Mill was set to be demolished. The consequence was widespread public protest against building plans.

Right: Around 1975: Parts of the Boge assembly plant have already been moved to Bielefeld-Jöllenbeck.

In the wake of citizens' commitment against such large-scale projects, local-government politics had to re-orientate itself. In the early days of the German environmental movement, its local branches naturally developed clearly-defined opinions on road construction and urban redevelopment. Many citizens of Bielefeld in the meantime saw their urban environment with different eyes and defined their ideas of quality of life in the city in ways which were not always identical with those of local-government politicians and the municipal building authorities. Strictly speaking, the effect of new local political ideas was not felt until the end of the 1970s. Until then, the familiar party spectrum remained intact.

Local-government elections in 1973 and 1975 each saw the SPD as victors, now supported by the FDP. The 'Bunte Liste' (Rainbow List) was founded in the summer of 1978, as a forerunner of the 'Grünen' (Green Party), after citizens' initiatives such 'Pro Grün' or 'Grüne Aktion Zukunft' had taken up environmental issues. The conservative, local press in Bielefeld may at first have recognised in the 'Bunten' merely 'Bielefeld's new Left' which had forged a tactical election alliance 'under the banner of environmental protection'; the colour 'Green' seemed nevertheless to send out an effective political signal. In

local-government elections in 1979, the 'Bunte Liste', with 5.7 per cent of the vote, entered the city council for the first time. By the time of the next local elections the topic of environmental protection was well established on the political agenda, and many extremely controversial discussions were held on the subject. For the CDU, the city of Bielefeld had lost its reputation as a 'business-friendly city' not least thanks to the politics of the 'Bunten Liste'. In the election of 1984, however, the new party-list alliance, strongly supported amongst students, met with a much broader response compared to 1979, gaining 13.5 per cent of the vote. Municipal building and redevelopment policies and the 'Brake toxic-waste scandal' in particular had dominated the election campaign. The local press talked of 'an affair which stank to high heaven', when it became known that the subsoil underneath a new residential area in the district of Brake was contaminated with poisonous electroplating sludge, heavy metals and chlorinated hydrocarbons. The city, which had designated the site as building land, was overwhelmed by an avalanche of compensation claims totalling millions.

When in September 1984 an assessor from the regional council also discovered 'serious irregularities' in the approval procedure for modifying

the legally binding land-use plan, the head of the building authority responsible was removed from office in November 1984.

Environmental questions were now among the more controversial issues in local-government politics. Ecological issues had been institutionalised in the form of their own department in the administration, but more than a few people with an interest in local politics could only detect 'ideological' positions. They criticised the fact that aspects relating to financial policy and the business management and economic costs of environmental protection had also to be recognised. On the other hand, subsequent economic costs resulting from failure to protect the environment, or the idea that such protective measures at the workplace could actually bring economic advantages, were matters which played only a subordinate role until well into the 1980s.

Once again, in 1988, a new political force appeared on the local political stage. The aim of the 'Bürgergemeinschaft für Bielefeld' (Citizens' Alliance for Bielefeld, BfB) was, by its own account, to compensate for the 'political imbalance' which had been caused by the 'blackmail politics' of the 'Grün-Bunten' parties. No problematic issue was neglected, ranging

from the city's undoubtedly serious burden of debt to educational and social policy. With the aim of creating an 'economically-friendly climate' and at the same time 'systematically putting the environment back in order', the BfB directly linked ecology with economy. The manifesto for the local-government elections in 1989 was successful, and the BfB was able to clock up 9.6 per cent of the votes. With the 'Grün-Bunten' reaching 10 per cent, that meant that around 20 per cent of the votes cast had been won from the traditional parties. The balance of power in local Bielefeld politics – which now had to be shared between five parties in the city council – had been shaken up considerably. For the first time since 1961, the CDU was able to fill the post of Lord Mayor again, allied with a slim majority to the FDP and BfB. Without doubt, local politics had become more complicated, but the new issues and groupings also enriched politics at ground level. Protagonists, who for decades had been content to travel along the familiar paths of three-party democracy and 'knew every pothole', so to speak, now had to get used to new political ideas. And those who, to a certain extent echoing the movement of 1968, were critical of three-party democracy anyway but had still decided on parliamentary representation of their interests, had to not only move towards 'the system', but also find their place in it.

An unmistakable profile – Compressors and more

Memos written at the beginning of the 1980s on the subject of 'sales promotion' indicate the definition of clear objectives for the company and for growth. New production opportunities at the new site had led to increasing sales figures. It was now a question of not only maintaining this level, but of expanding on it if possible, within the framework of a wide-ned product range. The company no longer saw itself just as a constructor of compressors. By means of comprehensive programmes of accessories for plant construction and process engineering, customers were to associate the preparation, storage and conveying of compressed air unmistakably with Boge as a competent partner. During these years, it was precisely in the fields of preparation tools (dryers, filters) that it was possible to exploit new technical opportunities.

'Where do we stand?, Where do we want to go?, How do we get there?' were the classic marketing questions. With answers based on internal and external statistics it was hoped that market share could be increased, even to such an extent as to 'preclude demand for rival products'. The advertising and communication strategy was aimed at presenting Boge as the compressor specialist and the supplier with the largest and, above all, most varied production pro-

gramme. Participation at trade fairs, in newspaper, brochure and direct advertising aimed at original equipment manufacturers, dealers and consumers – everything was geared to support this strategy. It was a question of translating the newly-won capacity in Jöllenbeck into lasting economic success.

In terms of technology, the compressor range was extended according to the 'building block principle', so that in the mid-1980s some 1,200 compressors could be put together out of just a few basic components. 'Made to measure in mass production' was the motto of the Boge principle: to react to specific production situations, whatever the scale, with technical solutions as needed. Alongside a wide range suitable for every type of industrial application, a series of compressors for the do-it-yourself sector had been introduced in 1977, the so-called 'Spezi'-models – a 'pal' in German – which had proved extremely successful.



Made for DIY fans:
robust do-it-yourself compressors.



Economic opportunities also lay dormant in the technical refinement of well-established standard models. By developing special valves, for example, Boge technicians found a way of increasing the output of their compressors by up to 25 per cent with the same engine power. The fact that technical progress of this kind could extend the periods between maintenance and therefore reduce operating costs for customers was a substantial incentive for buying



Boge products. In a greatly expanded research and development department, Boge was able to experiment with new electronic possibilities relating to sophisticated control and monitoring tasks in consultation with customers, and apply the results directly in practice.

Whilst elsewhere complaints were heard about too much 'environment' in the economy and ecological thinking was primarily regarded as a cost factor, much consideration was already being given in the technical departments at Boge to the efficient use of energy. Why should it not be possible to use the heated cooling air generated by the operation of a compressor for room heating and warm-water boilers? It contained, after all, 95 per cent of the electrical energy supplied to the compressor. Just how great the potential saving could be in this instance was calculated by the Boge technicians: By using a compressor with a driving power of 45 kW, operating for eight hours over 250 working days, the amount of heat generated could be used in the winter months for heating purposes and in the summer months via heat exchangers to heat process water. The realistic potential saving from this one machine at the time amounted to between DM 5,700 and DM 7,400 per year.

Technical innovation and economic success remained closely linked, although the use of Boge's own 'energy' was less efficient, due to the distribution of capacities over the two sites in the centre of Bielefeld and at Bielefeld-Jöllenbeck. The assembly and other technical departments in Jöllenbeck were dependent upon smooth-running deliveries by lorry from

the main site in Meller Strasse. In this context, former employee Hildegard Güse describes, among other things, a rather unusual shuttle service involving these vehicles. As she had difficulty reaching her new place of work in Jöllenbeck in the first years after the move, she took the opportunity of travelling with one of the lorries which regularly drove there every morning. It soon became clear to all involved that the inner-city site would sooner or later have to be abandoned. Quite apart from the 'frictional losses' caused by commuting between the sites, the plans for the redevelopment area around the main railway station and for the construction of the Ostwestfalendamm expressway had taken on a more concrete form.

Many companies in the metal and engineering industries which had settled close to the station in the last third of the 19th century had either transferred their inner-city sites to the new designated industrial estates, were planning such a move, or were no longer active in the market. For this reason, the decision by the Boge management to move the entire plant to Jöllenbeck came as no surprise. Following the second phase of construction in 1984–85, Boge had in Jöllenbeck a production area of over 15,000 square metres and over 2,500 square metres for the commercial administration departments.



1984: Modern architecture inside and out, following conclusion of all building work at the Jöllenbeck site.

Pushing the limits to growth – Bielefeld since the 1990s

In comparison with many other cities whose economic structure was once dominated by industry, Bielefeld had coped relatively well with the structural transition towards the economic predominance of the service sector. During the course of the 1980s, however, it had become clear that the jobs lost in industry could hardly be fully compensated for by increases in other fields. In Bielefeld, too, the number of unemployed rose.

The government coalition of Socialists and Liberals had failed in 1982 on a national level not least because of its assessment of the economic situation. Even the package of measures proposed by the new Federal government under Chancellor Helmut Kohl, aimed at strengthening the domestic economy and reducing unemployment, remained largely uninspiring. Tax reforms and cost-cutting measures for the economy triggered at best bouts of rationalisation, but did not stimulate the job market. By the end of the 1980s, the unemployment rate had settled at what was then a high level of 8.5 per cent. Apart from the slightly more positive fact that the unemployment rate lay a little under the average, the economic situation in Bielefeld corresponded more or less to the overall picture in the Federal Republic. Due to long-term unemployment, more and more people were dependent

on income support, and the tight social-services budget meant that the city's financial leeway had become more limited. It was not until the years of the 'Wende' – with hindsight still a fascinating period in politics overall – when the former GDR was re-incorporated into the Federal Republic, that Bielefeld's job market was granted brief respite and federal state budgets enjoyed a short breathing spell – in the West at least.

Although growth had climbed to a rate of 5.7 per cent in 1990, and unemployment had fallen to around 6.5 per cent, this was merely an illusory boom when considered overall; a flash in the pan which only helped to satisfy the accumulated demand in Eastern Germany. According to Harald Wixforth, Eastern Germany had become for many West German companies 'the outlet for stagnating sales and sinking profitability'. On the other hand, the prerequisites for 'flourishing green pastures' – the image often conjured up of renewed prosperity – were simply not in place in the new federal states. Without the enormous sums of money transferred from the West, the rebuilding of East Germany, popularly known as the 'Aufbau Ost' project, would not have been able to progress with the intensity it has experienced to date. When after a few years the 'unification boom' ended, and on top of that

the world economy found itself stuck in a weak phase, the old federal states saw themselves once again confronted with the same problems which had already beset the economy in the 1980s. At that time, it was probably the overall economic situation which was to blame when power struggles in the Bielefeld political arena were occasionally fought with no holds barred and the issue of environmental protection in particular was the cause of bitter controversy. Such heated and excited tones had progressively died away during the course of the 1990s, and the day-to-day work of the city council was characterised to an ever increasing extent by a spirit of pragmatic cooperation. In the meantime, there was agreement across all parties that economic stimulation and environmental protection need not be mutually exclusive, and that stimulation of the economy at the expense of environmental protection would be bad for location promotion policies in the long term.

The more recent past has revealed, also in a local context, opportunities for economic growth which were largely undreamt-of in the 1980s, for example in the fields of new technologies, renewable energy sources or in terms of the efficient use of energy. Hence when Boge promoted its new products in 1991, it also used environmental-protection arguments and the

simple, but true observation that it was possible to save money and energy thanks to the 'environmentally-friendly' technology in the new compressor models.

With respect to the convergence of economy and ecology, education and knowledge, science, technology and technological change are most certainly the decisive resources needed to reveal new development opportunities and overcome limits to growth. Such resources play an important role in Bielefeld. The university started its activities in the winter semester of 1969–70 with just 250 students in the subjects of mathematics and sociology.

As a 'reform university', it was actually planned as a small university, and in its function as a place of research it was to revive the principle of the 'indivisibility of teaching and research' and, at the same time, actively pursue an interdisciplinary approach to research. Originally, a limit of 3,600 students – shortly afterwards 5,500 – was envisaged. In the days of educational expansion, however, these self-inflicted 'limits to growth' were quickly and without much ado adjusted upwards on more than one occasion. The number of students currently lies at around 18,500. Approximately 1,600 university employees are responsible, as service providers in science and

administration, for the smooth operation of the many research fields at this renowned 'mass' university. Alongside the university, no less than five universities of applied sciences have been established in Bielefeld. Together with the Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences with its eight faculties, the Public Service College, the College for Medium-sized Business Training, the University of Applied Sciences for Business and latterly the University of Applied Sciences for Social Welfare make up Bielefeld's broad, diverse educational and research landscape.

From an economic perspective, the knowledge acquired at the universities, particularly in technical and scientific subjects, can be seen ideally as the 'preliminary stage' of new ideas and development opportunities in operational application. Accordingly, the 'limits to growth' can also be understood as snapshots based on the extent of knowledge at a given time. They are consequently in no way rigid and not by definition linked to economic standstill or pessimism. Therefore, not only in Bielefeld's 'knowledge-based society' can 'limits to growth' also be the starting point for new and optimistic ways to new growth targets.

Worldwide challenges – Regional roots

When, in 1938, large crates with the destination 'Honkong' stamped on them were loaded up at Boge's then new inner-city site in Meller Strasse, exports of this kind were the exception, and not just for political reasons. Apart from the fact that Nazi economic policy had introduced rigorous export regulations and inspections, export markets as yet played a rather subordinate role.



Little changed at first in this respect after World War II. As former Head of Exports Franz-Willy Schubert reports, it had been possible in principle to export goods since 1948. By order of the military government, however, a seven-page export form had to be issued and certified by customs, even for the smallest overseas delivery.

Even without these bureaucratic hurdles, made still higher by special regulations regarding compressor construction imposed by various European countries, foreign trade until the 1970s made up only a small proportion of business compared with current figures.

In 1974, Boge's increased commitment to foreign trade began with the establishment of a marketing subsidiary in Belgium; a company in the Netherlands was to follow in 1989. With these first major institutional steps across the borders into Europe, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven had laid the foundations for the company's stronger commitment to business abroad. Close contacts to specialist dealers in Asia (Singapore, Taiwan) were set up and intensified.

The opening of the inner-German border which ultimately led to the reunification of the two German states meant that totally new possibilities suddenly presented themselves in view of Eastern Europe. A large compressor manufacturer in the former GDR, the 'Geraer Kompressorwerke' was up for sale through the so-called 'Treuhand', the trust set up to facilitate the integration of formerly state-owned GDR companies into the private sector. A lot of thought was given at Boge to the question of involvement in Gera, not least because the company

was all that had remained of one of the oldest German compressor manufacturers, which until 1945 had traded under the name 'Leo'. Since the decision by Otto Boge and Ernst Thomas in 1926 to enter the compressor business, Leo and Boge had at times been bitter rivals. Here was a 'late opportunity' so to speak, to take over the company at last, but Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven ultimately decided against the Gera project for economic reasons – a wise decision, as it turned out. The economic revival had proved to be a short-term flash in the pan triggered by re-unification and was to be followed by a sales crisis soon afterwards.

Of all times, in this critical situation at the beginning of the 1990s, Boge had invested in a new product programme. At this time, the 'modular design principle', which allowed the configuration of individual compressed-air solutions in close consultation with the customer, had been expanded and found growing recognition also in foreign markets. Hence, the introduction of oil-free condensing piston and screw compressors in 1994 really tapped into the prevailing trend. It is true that most compressed-air applications could already be served by the standard models and corresponding filter systems, but in many sensitive areas, such as foodstuffs, drinking water, dentistry, beverages,

optics, electrics, textiles, chemistry and pharmacy, there was a great demand for these new technical options. In addition, according to an internal strategy paper, 'more and more buyers are demanding oil-free compression for ecological reasons – or even for image reasons'. From the point of view of product offers and in terms of technology, with its many advanced solutions for the plant manufacturing sector, for example, or with regard to increased electronic monitoring of compressed-air supplies, Boge was able to offer comprehensive service. The company was well positioned then, for the transition from the third to the fourth family generation.

Before Wolf D. Meier-Scheuven succeeded his father in management of the company in 1995, it had seemed that, following his studies in psychology, life would take him in a different direction. It was rather by chance that taking a look at the psychological aspect of purchasing behaviour made him bridge the gap to the study of economics. Perhaps it is precisely this rare double qualification as a psychologist and a businessman which has helped to determine his success at the head of the company. In any case, says Meier-Scheuven, both 'have a lot more to do with each other' than you would often think. Previous phases working at Dürkopp-Adler AG as assistant to the board of directors and in the

Weidmüller-Group in marketing equipped him with the practical skills needed to take over management of Boge.



Good preparation in theory and practice, plus the foresight of his father saw to it that the transition from one

generation to the next went smoothly. 'Young people,' according to Meier-Scheuven senior, 'have a clear eye for certain problems. You have to let them get on with things and make their own mistakes.' In practice, this attitude meant that the father visited the factory from time to time, but that his son made the decisions by himself and bore sole responsibility for them right from the start. Otherwise it was a case of – as said with typical East Westphalian sobriety – 'I've been at the helm long enough now', and 'You've got my telephone number!'

Since 1996, Wolf D. Meier-Scheuven has had alongside him at the head of the company management and finance expert Rolf Struppek. In their efforts to expand foreign trade, in particular in the light of the globalised economy, the



Boge bosses have been in agreement since the start of their collaboration. In the process, special attention has been paid to the expanding markets in Asia. As early as 1996, Boge had opened a branch office in Singapore, and, having had marketing partners in China since 1994, business developed so well in the following years that they opened first a marketing subsidiary in Shanghai in 1999 and then in 2004 an assembly plant to serve the Chinese market.



Other foreign markets, too, are of interest for Boge. In more recent times, further foreign commitments in Great Britain, Singapore, the United States, Italy, Spain & Portugal, Australia & New Zealand and Dubai have been added. Boge

1995: The fourth generation, Wolf Dietrich Meier-Scheuven, takes over responsibility.

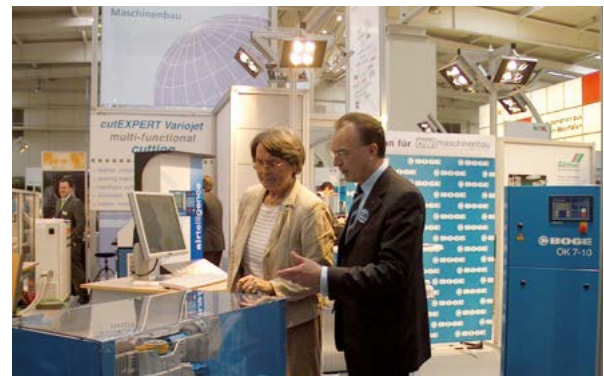
2004: A first overseas production site is opened in Shanghai.

is indirectly represented in over 80 countries through a network of marketing and service partners.

Although foreign trade has grown rapidly since 1995, and the export quota has more than doubled from 25 per cent to around 60 per cent, the domestic market has by no means been neglected. For a long time it was possible to achieve growth, bucking the domestic trend in the sector. With its own marketing and service centres in Hamburg, Berlin, Rhein-Ruhr (Rheinberg), Mannheim and Munich and more than 25 reliable marketing and service partners at various locations, Boge is represented all over Germany. The fact that the company has pushed ahead on the domestic market, alongside its commitment abroad, and at the same time, made a clear statement in favour of Bielefeld as a business location, indicates that the balancing act between a down-to-earth attitude and orientation towards the world market can be successfully mastered.

Orientation towards the world market profits from cooperation. Since its founding in 2003, Boge has taken a leading role in the branch network 'OWL-Maschinenbau', an innovation network of engineering companies in the East Westphalia/Lippe region. Every single member

company will benefit if together they succeed in permanently strengthening the economic and technological performance of this engineering region in international competition. For Rolf Struppek, Boge Managing Director and at the same time member of the Board of Directors of 'OWL-Maschinenbau', one of the most important objectives is also working successfully as a competence partner with regional universities. In addition, the network's BINGO Initiative (a job offensive for engineering professions in the region of East Westphalia/Lippe) has set itself the target of convincing young people of the attraction of a technical career and the chances it offers. What started in 2003 as a relatively small group of 13 companies has turned into a real success story. For some time now, well over 100 companies have been long-standing members of 'OWL-Maschinenbau'.



owlmaschinenbau
OstWestfalenLippe

Boge makes a stand for engineering in the region. Managing Director Rolf Struppek with North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister for the Economy, Christa Thoben, at the Hanover Fair in 2006.

In addition to this, Boge's involvement in the German Engineering Federation (VDMA) has a long tradition and is part of the company identity. Just as Ernst Thomas had headed a 'specialist division' for compressors from 1951, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven also worked from the 1960s onwards on the committees of the Federation, and was later elected to the board of the team of experts for compressors and vacuum pumps. It went without saying that his son, Wolf Dietrich Meier-Scheuven, would continue this tradition. Following various responsibilities within the Federation, which sees itself as 'the voice of small and medium-sized industry', he has belonged to the board of the Federation in North Rhine-Westphalia since 2001 and since 2005 to the board of the VDMA at national level.

The company is also treading new paths in terms of internal training programmes. The qualification offensive to train 'Boge Specialists' has been in existence since the turn of the millennium. There is a high demand for places on these courses which last several months and take place exclusively in the participants' free time. Places often have to be assigned by drawing lots. Both the company and its employees profit from the learning effect in the special sectors 'Logistics' and 'Assembly', as this form of specific further training boosts overall competence and

improves the quality of the final product – and in the process helps to safeguard individual jobs.



Since 1999 Boge has fostered an exemplary and successful partnership with a secondary school situated nearby in Enger. With the Boge plant as the location for their extramural studies, school students experience an unaccustomed perspective on the world of work – and learn in physics, for example, alongside the 'grey theory' its practical application in the factory. This proven, fruitful exchange between the Realschule Enger and the company has run smoothly for years and is supplemented and enriched time and again by the input of new ideas.

Proud of their certificates:
the latest batch of 'Boge Specialists'.



That Boge is among those companies in the region for whom a solid commitment to East Westphalia is immensely important is also demonstrated by its handling of the company's turbulent history. Whether one comes across newspaper reports and interviews about historical products, such as door closers, special tools, or motorcycles; or is reminded of the first Boge compressors; or whether one buys Boge or BKS products at internet auctions, it is clear each time that the return to past values is more than just nostalgia.

The fascination for the object, for the historical technology, is always accompanied by a sense of consciousness of the company's history and

the sometimes difficult, but mostly correct, decisions made by the protagonists at the time. The recognition of the dovetailing of family and business is both a reminder and an incentive to lead the company into its second century and at some stage in the distant future to pass it on in good economic shape to the next generation.



Top: School students from the partner secondary school in Enger 'exploring' the plant.

Right: Still running to this day: Boge compressors from the 1930s and 1940s.



VII. Responsibility for the Family; Family Accountability – Taking Stock



Otto Boge, Ernst Thomas, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven and Wolf D. Meier-Scheuven stand for the tradition of a modern family business.

Taking this final, speeded-up look at the company's history, it is noticeable that Boge has often made progress in economic terms precisely when ambient conditions were difficult.

Otto Boge is a soldier in World War I. The already well-established business with door-closers is interrupted. In 1919, the Weimar Republic just founded, there can be no question of there being political and economic instability. And yet Otto Boge ventures to expand his small business undertaking by embarking on the industrial production of special tools for motor vehicles. Employee numbers rise rapidly. The contours of a small industrial company quickly become visible. His brother Adolf, himself successful with 'BKS' in Solingen, participates as a Limited Partner. 'Otto Boge KG' is founded and success follows, since 'equalizing forks', 'screw plate stocks', 'valve seat cutters' and other tools are in demand. Motorisation is in full swing. Germany, too, though still lagging far behind other countries, is on the move. A fluctuating order situation, however, offers no basis for stable forecasts of future developments.

Then inflation sets in. Otto Boge remains true to his idea of progress through motorisation. 'I want to make the new motorcycle type the best

brand in Germany' he explains to his brother, Adolf. There is no thought given to the idea that the company could possibly fail as a result of inflation. On the contrary, with his head full of business ideas for motorcycle construction and convinced of his own success, Boge is thinking of the distant future – and therefore also of the family, or to be more precise, who could eventually carry on running the company.

A partnership agreement signed in 1920 fails to settle these questions satisfactorily. His lawyer sees 'an unjustified one-sided advantage for the Limited Partners' and hence also for Boge's brother Adolf. As Managing Partner, Otto Boge insists on his decisive influence in the question of succession. Family ties are now put to a hard test. After years of arguing, he gets his way, initially at the expense of the relationship with his brother. A new contract now safeguards the status of his family. Adolf Boge and his partner in Solingen relinquish their positions as Limited Partners and leave the company.

In the meantime, the motorcycle business which got off to such a good start hits rock bottom – contrary to all expectations. The German motorcycle industry is in deep crisis, which drives even economically-sound companies to the brink of ruin. Whereas the company employed

122 workers in 1924, their number has plummeted by the winter of 1925–26. Demand has all but disappeared, firm orders are not honoured, and no new orders are in sight. To avoid bankruptcy, Boge has to go into receivership. The company founder, however, remains optimistic and convinces his creditors that the company will find its way out of the crisis. Giving up is out of the question. Instead, thoughts turn to new products. Otto Boge decides on compressors, so-called ‘power air pumps’, thus keeping faith with his idea of mobility through motorisation. And his decision for this product proves to be a total success – in the long term. The first small compressor is the precursor of a rapidly expanding selection culminating in today’s broad and distinctive range.

Following Otto Boge’s untimely death the company is run by his son-in-law, Ernst Thomas. He, too, is keen to succeed and fights doggedly for the expansion of the business. Particularly in the critical years after World War II, it is down to his perseverance that the company is soon able to resume production. Unwaveringly, he overcomes the hurdles imposed by the military government and the economic administration. This is the foundation for the turbulent period of upward growth which is to follow currency reform in 1948.

In the face of stiff competition at home and abroad, Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven, Otto Boge’s grandson and thus representative of the third generation of the family, sees himself confronted with a choice in the mid-1960s: grow or give into pressure. Not least out of a sense of responsibility for the coming ‘Boge generations’, he decides in favour of expanding the company, a task which can no longer be achieved at the old inner-city site. A completely new assembly plant is built on the outskirts, in Bielefeld-Jöllenbeck. The laying of the foundation stone in the summer of 1973 is followed by the so-called ‘oil crisis’ in the winter, which leads the whole country into an economic downturn and, in the eyes of some people, is a portent of the end of the industrial society. Contrary to all crisis scenarios in economic policy, however, the new factory is ready for occupation in record time. From the early summer of 1974 onwards, Boge is producing at the new site.

New products, developed since the beginning of the 1990s, once again in difficult times, are aimed at the entire spectrum of compressed air supply. In addition, Boge correspondingly offers comprehensive service. Looking abroad and at the careful expansion of foreign trade, the company remains unconditionally competitive. The investments during the crisis have paid off.

The question of whether to grow or give in arises once more in a different form in the age of globalisation. Since 1995, Wolf Dietrich Meier-Scheuven – the fourth ‘Boge generation’ – has stood at the head of the company, having been joined at the helm in 1996 by Managing Director Rolf Struppek. Boge has taken up the challenge of the world market. The company is growing especially abroad, and at home too, despite prolonged weak domestic economic trends. The proportion of exports continues to rise. Interesting foreign markets such as China are not primarily seen as risks, but rather as opportunities for further growth as a manufacturer of compressors and supplier of compressed air. Making use of these opportunities is the best way to guarantee that Boge remains successful on the market, as an independent family business in the long term offering prospects for the Boge generations to come.

Is it merely a coincidence, or are there good reasons why difficult economic conditions have repeatedly given the company new momentum? Economists consider well-run family businesses to be particularly capable of making progress in hard times. Those who do not have to impress stock-market analysts with their quarterly figures can rely on their staying power to achieve their goals and are in a position to use ‘uncon-

ventional strategies’ to do so. The board of the ‘Family Business Foundation’ has also discovered that family firms are apparently good at ‘turning the opportunities offered by globalisation to their advantage and using domestic employment, even in times of recession’. In this context, the question arises as to whether a listed public corporation with a largely anonymous group of owners could still be a ‘model for our business world’, and whether the ‘family business would not be a more suitable model for German economic policy’.

There is, however, no such thing as sure-fire success. Family businesses are not more resistant to crisis per se. Conflict, opposition and paradox which would arise from the activities of the family business would have to be ‘borne’ by the family, a scientist at the University of Witten-Herdecke argues. If a family is able to do this, it has at its disposal a ‘unique competitive advantage’, because the family is then a ‘resource’ and not a ‘danger’.

For Prof. Arist von Schlippe from the ‘Family Business Institute’ (WIFU) at the University of Witten-Herdecke the key factor is ‘the ability to pass on the family’s own value orientation and thus offer its members a framework for identity and commitment’. What is of particular interest

here is 'the creative power of handed-down stories' which is of great importance to the cohesion of the shareholders.

One look inside the collection of the small private company archive belonging to Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven, father of today's company head, quickly reveals just how important the connection to tradition and value orientation was for Otto Boge's grandson, the man who continuously developed the company with his innovative ideas.

The 'creative power' of his handed-down stories has evidently fallen on fertile ground. The current recollection of and the sense behind 100 years of company history is not just a nostalgic end in itself, but rather the motivating force behind the continuation of what in the past has always been an innovative development process.



Images spanning generations: Otto Boge and his grandson Wolfgang Meier-Scheuven, Ella Thomas and Wolf D. Meier-Scheuven with his daughter Julia.

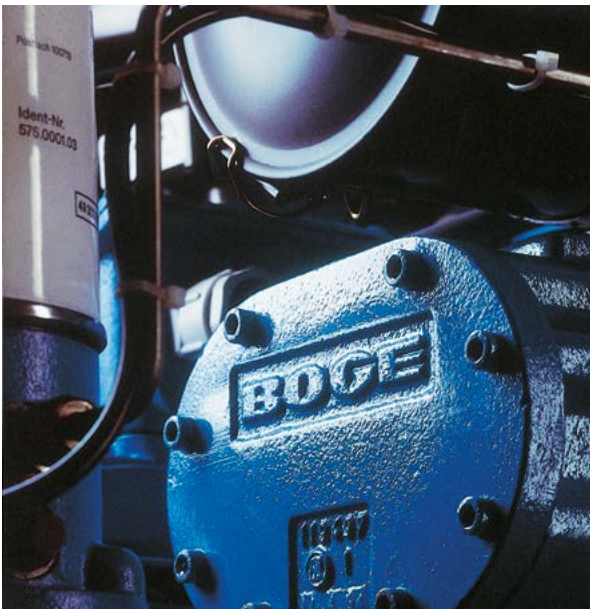


VIII. From Bielefeld to the World – An Interview with Wolf D. Meier-Scheuven and Rolf Struppek on Management between 1995 and 2007

A graduate in business and psychology,
Wolf Dietrich Meier-Scheuven has been Managing
Partner since 1995.

Rolf Struppek is a graduate in business management
and has been Managing Director of Boge since 1996.

The closer the story brings us into the present day and the more attention turns to further objectives in the future, the less written records can be used as the 'classic source' for the historian. The recent past and the present are fused together in a dynamic development process which allows a number of different possibilities for what is essentially an 'open' future. What kind of opportunities the future will hold depends on the people involved in this development process. Reason enough for the author Jürgen Büschenfeld to interview Wolf D. Meier-Scheuven and Rolf Struppek about the company's recent history and hence also the plans for Boge in the future.



Mr Meier-Scheuven, you took over the running of the company from your father in 1995. What kind of position was the company in at that time?

Meier-Scheuven: Until the mid-1990s, Boge had expanded largely within Germany and over the years had established a reputation here as a leader in the field of piston and screw compressors. The proportion of exports lay at around 20 per cent.

With the opening of the inner-German border in 1989, the branch experienced a short but unprecedented boom which led to a considerable expansion of manufacturing and marketing capacity. When the economic upturn in Eastern Germany did not come about, German manufacturers were left from 1992 onwards with dwindling sales and an increased burden of fixed costs and consequently reduced returns. A price war and falling employment figures were the result. Competitors were forced to give up or sell their companies. The German market offered only little scope for growth; the big markets, however, were to be found abroad. In this situation, my father had begun the development of a new series, which set the clear trend towards exportability and cost reduction. This was the situation in 1995, when Boge management changed from one generation

to the next. It was not alarming, but it was not rosy either. On leaving the company, one of the executives wished us success in holding the ship on course in the rough seas of the time.

What were your first moves?

Struppek: The stabilisation of the company was the most important thing in this situation. In our opinion, it was a question of equipping the company for the future in all areas, to control costs in the face of negative market trends, and to create structures for productive growth. In order to achieve systematic internationalisation, a suitable organisational framework had to be developed, and to do this we had to push ahead with the necessary modernisation measures.

Both management and the divisional and departmental heads were often late in receiving the necessary control information. First of all, we established a modern controlling system with a comprehensive reporting system and decentralised IT structure. In this way more transparency was achieved and decision-making became faster and more decentralised.

Meier-Scheuven: My father belonged to a different generation of businessmen. All decisions had to be considered by him, all correspondence landed on his desk. Then he consulted the individual departmental heads as to which steps were to be taken in a given matter. They handled this up to a certain agreed point and then reported back to him or received further instructions. In the meantime the company had reached a size which necessitated the decentralisation of the decision-making process in order to be able to react quickly enough. Today, we have more team structures and set more store by personal responsibility. We have even exchanged managers in certain positions in order to boost and speed up the renewal process.

Struppek: Naturally enough, the employees at first kept a critical eye on the work of the new management. We actually had the feeling, though, that the employees had been wai-



Rebuilding of the IT landscape gained recognition outside the company, too.

ting for the generation change. Together with external consultants we have developed a new communication climate.

It was at this time that our 'Management Forum', an information platform for all executives, or the 'Management Circle' a body for leaders with high management potential, came into being.

Meier-Scheuven: When more responsibility is shifted to the second level, the leaders need a basic, strategic objective to which they can orientate themselves. We agreed our strategy with the Management Circle for the coming years and called it 'Boge 100' because we wanted to have the targets listed in it implemented by the year 2007 to coincide with the celebration of our 100th anniversary. In the process we introduced a fundamental change of perspective. We analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the company against the background of customer requirements.

Struppek: 'Boge 100' was above all to be a kind of guide rail for our company activities in the coming years.

It also had an effect, however, on the attitudes of employees and clients. It gave the employees a vision: it became clear that rumours of selling the company, spread again and again by competitors, were completely unfounded because

their employer had planned for at least the following ten years. For the employees it also meant job security. After all, we already had 3.5 million unemployed in Germany in 1995. But at the same time 'Boge 100' also gave our customers confidence, since they could now count on a long-term collaboration in the field of compressed air.

What was the key message of 'Boge 100'?

Struppek: On the basis of the fundamental objective of the shareholders, to maintain Boge as an independent, successful family business, we also drew up company objectives. Expansionist market targets on the one hand and a results-driven target as a commercial corrective on the other.

We wanted to be the market leader in compressed air supply in Germany. Abroad, we wanted to be in demand as a supplier to the important markets. In the future, therefore, we wanted not just to be a manufacturer of compressors; we saw our task as being much wider,

-  ***We want to be an independent and successful family business, now and in the future.***
-  ***We want to be in demand as a supplier to the important foreign compressed air markets.***
-  ***We want to achieve above-average results in order to safeguard the development and continued existence of the company in the long term.***

The primary objectives of 'Boge 100' set out a clear agenda.

namely from production and preparation of compressed air to conveying it to the application area.

How do you aim to progress in the German market?

Meier-Scheuven: In the past, Boge had primarily concentrated on the German market and had reached a leading position. It was now a question of maintaining this position or even expanding it. As newcomers to the sector, Rolf Struppek and I first of all set about systematically analysing customer requirements. In the mid-1990s, we began, in collaboration with the German Engineering Federation (VDMA), to measure customer satisfaction every few years with respect to various performance modules. Over the last few years, we have repeatedly derived ideas for change from this information, including, for example, the 24-hour call-out service which we have been running since 1998. Internally, too, this orientation towards customer needs has left its mark on the attitude of the employees.

In the mid-1990s we built on our extensive network of branches in order to guarantee our customers maximum availability. On top of that, we revised our corporate design and improved

recognition of the brand and its message. We chose blue as the company colour and created a simple logo. Today we keep customers better informed with targeted information about the company and current issues in the compressed air sector – for example through our customer magazine, our in-house call centre and, of course, via the internet. We even have a special online guidebook on compressed air.



The customer magazine, forum.boge, has kept clients up to date in several languages since 1999.

Struppek: Ultimately, we have been successful because of product innovations, because of testimonials from important clients, and because we have specifically targeted the requirements of our customer groups. In sales, for example, we have designated so-called 'strong partners' in the various regions of Germany, and have developed a supporting concept for these partners. We have also structured our sales departments in such a way that they can better meet the differing needs, whether of plant-construction firms, original equipment manufacturers, dealers or consumers. In this way we have been able to gain market share in what has been a more or less stagnant market for over ten years now.

Where did you set your priorities with respect to overseas markets?

Meier-Scheuven: Boge was still relatively unknown abroad. If you want to attract business worldwide, you of course instinctively ask yourself where you should start. First of all, we analysed possible countries in terms of size and risk, together with banks, chambers of commerce and other consultants.

The result was a list of markets in order of importance, which we then wanted to work through in turn.

Struppek: In-house we also had to do our homework. It was not at all easy to structure a company which had been orientated towards the German market for around 90 years, in such a way that it could be successful on an international level. We made an effort, for example, to improve the foreign-language skills of our staff in various functional areas of the company. The number of employees who were capable of acting worldwide had to be increased, and not just in sales, but also in service. Suddenly we required fitters who could talk to customers in a foreign language. The time difference between Bielefeld and countries on the other side of the world made it necessary to make organisational changes. Product documentation, sales arguments and advertising material also had to be available in foreign languages. Training seminars had to be prepared and carried out for foreign-language customers.



The worldwide compressed air market is highly competitive, though. How were you at all able to set new trends?

Struppek: We are among the top suppliers in our sector. There are not many suppliers in this sector who can satisfy high quality demands, but there are market segments in every country for high-quality compressed air. In some cases it was sufficient to be present on the ground, knock on the doors of compressed-air dealers in the individual countries, and show them our products. Specialists recognise a good product when they see one, one with which they can differentiate themselves on the market and which satisfies customer requirements.

Meier-Scheuven: In many cases this desire to stand out also led to a demand for exclusivity in a particular country. At first, out of the necessity of obtaining an important partner in an important country, we occasionally gave in to this demand. This only works in smaller markets, however. When such demands were also put forward by partners in countries such as the

United States or China, we quickly realised that this was the wrong approach. Dealers grow merely up to a certain sales volume. Then only a minority invest to increase sales. Most concentrate simply on taking care of their existing client base.

Struppek: The founding of subsidiaries has proved to be the right path to follow in this case. Via a subsidiary we can create a basis in a country for cooperation with a number of specialist dealers operating regionally. Moreover, we can find out more about the market in question, by virtue of the fact that we sell directly to consumers to a certain extent.

Subsidiaries were founded in this way in the big European markets, but also in the USA and Asia. Commercial structures in riskier markets were set up with local dealers. Today, we have branches and subsidiaries in 11 countries.



Facing page: 1997: Group photograph of part of the staff, on the occasion of the company's 90th anniversary.

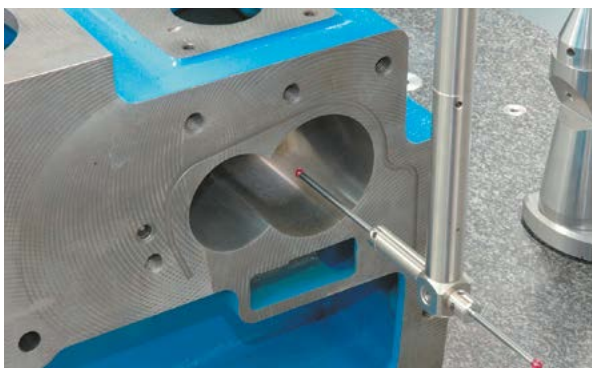
Right: Alongside subsidiaries operating nationally, many overseas markets are handled by specialist dealers. This has given a strong boost to export growth.

Meier-Scheuven: Much depends of course on the people who are doing business on the ground. That, too, has repeatedly cost us a lot of energy.

The English subsidiary was founded back in 1994. The staff were hard-working and committed, but success just did not materialise. Then in 1996 we bought a trading company with the aim of improving our market position. Thanks to synergy effects, organisational streamlining and local management things began to turn around. Today our market share in the United Kingdom is in double figures. We have had similar experiences in other countries, too.

Struppek: An essential contributory factor to achieving our objectives was, and still is, excellent after-sales service. Service has become an increasingly important success factor in engineering. The breakdown of a compressor can lead to an extremely costly loss of production. Therefore quick access to fitters, fast availability of spare parts, a comprehensive network of support points, and a coordinated maintenance programme are indispensable customer requirements.

We have considerably increased the number of service personnel and support centres. A programme of regular training ensures that our staff have state-of-the-art knowledge and skills.



What role has innovation played for company success?

Struppek: A huge one. And Boge meets this customer need with its strong, experienced development department. This has also on many occasions been recognised by the granting of a patent, for example the patented drive system for belt-driven screw compressors, or the awarding of several design prizes and an innovation prize for the oil-free condensing compressor.

Meier-Scheuven: Customers are paying more and more attention to price. Therefore, in the meantime, developments in the compressor sector have become very strongly orientated towards lowering manufacturing costs, since the manufacturer who won the price war would also be one step ahead with the customer. This led, for example, to the development of compact compressor stations with integrated compressed air preparation.

In addition, a lot of money was invested in the development of electronic control devices to optimise operating costs for the customer. Since German products are generally expensive due to high manufacturing costs, we tried to direct the customer's attention away from the purchase price to the running costs incurred during the entire life cycle of the compressor.

Attention to quality is rewarded with a high degree of customer satisfaction. Customer retention lies well above 80 per cent.

As a supplier of quality goods, we are at a distinct advantage. In peripheral areas, too, we endeavoured to achieve savings for the customer. In the service department we measure compressed-air requirements and check the piping network in the factory for leaks.

Struppek: Moreover, we were also interested in developing new markets by improving compressed air quality. We were able to gain market share in several industry sectors which require oil-free condensing compressors for the manufacture of their products, for example the producers of PET bottles. In addition, we also succeeded in saving customers' money in the long term on compressed air preparation by the use of oil-free condensing compressors.

Meier-Scheuven: In the past we have also increased the performance range of our products at both ends of the scale and have thus been able to find new customer groups. In 1995, the maximum driving power of the S Series was 110 kW; today we can reach 400 kW. At the lower end of the performance scale we have developed screw compressors for small delivery quantities which were previously achieved only by piston compressors.

In your opinion, what have been the most important developments on the market for compressed air technology and compressors in the last ten years?

Meier-Scheuven: A trend towards energy-efficient systems. This entails, on the one hand, the continuous improvement of existing modules and, on the other, the integration of new options, such as the increased use of frequency-controlled drives, intelligent controls and integrated service concepts.



Design and efficiency of Boge's screw and piston compressors set the trend.



Struppek: I have observed, alongside a growing demand for controllable compressors, a general shift in demand away from individual components to complete compressed air system solutions and services. The needs of the local operators determine the necessary compressed air supply features, which can be configured as modules to create an individual overall solution.

In the past Boge has been a Bielefeld company, firmly rooted in the history of the city. Do you believe there is a future for the business location in Bielefeld and in Germany?

Meier-Scheuven: The location offers many advantages for an engineering company. The standard of qualification of specialist personnel is good. Mechanical engineering is a key industry

sector in our region. We have a long tradition here in Bielefeld. A number of families have worked for us over several generations. Many employees have also been prepared to improve their qualifications for the future by taking part in our own further training programme, 'Boge Specialist'. Boge has a reputation as a good employer.

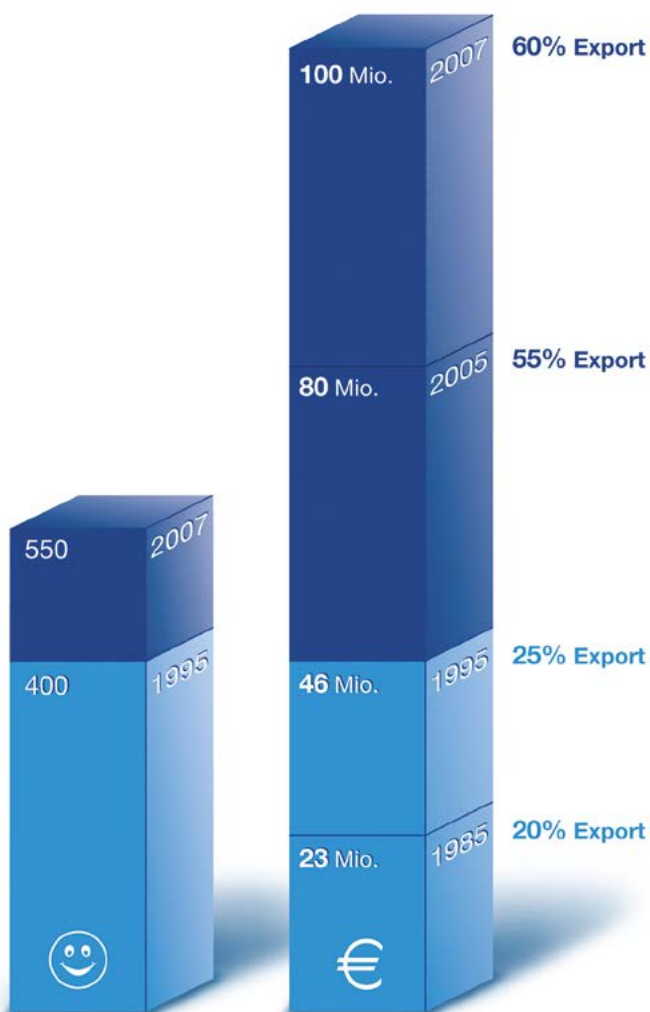
Struppek: So far, Boge has been a winner in terms of globalisation. We have been able to expand our business abroad considerably. Many jobs have been created in Bielefeld thanks to the increase in international trade. To date, we employ around 150 more people worldwide than we did in 1995.

Certainly, the changing times of globalisation demand that employees adapt, too. Up to now, it has been possible to negotiate the necessary measures between the employer's and employees' sides. In 1997, for example, we introduced flexible working hours through an internal agreement which permits us to tailor working hours more effectively to the current degree of utilisation in the company. And we managed to increase weekly working hours by in-house agreement.

As long as we can meet changing conditions by making such modifications, we will continue to bank on this location.

Meier-Scheuven: For a long time, however, conditions were not good for businesses in Germany. Companies have been complaining for a long time about basic conditions in comparison with other countries. In the long term, we cannot accept that our competitors can work with lower costs than we do. What's more, politics in recent years could not be considered particularly business-friendly.

This too has led to the fact that overseas locations have become attractive in the age of globalisation.



Boge has also opened a plant in Asia, hasn't it?

Meier-Scheuven: Boge opened an assembly plant in China in 2004. Screw compressors for the Chinese market are assembled here. The reason for this step was that our rivals had already taken it before us, and Chinese buyers began to accept locally-produced products in lower price brackets. With our imported goods we lost orders to our competitors. We did not want to accept that. Not a single job has been lost in Bielefeld due to this move; on the contrary, parts pre-mounted in Germany are also assembled in China. In this way, production in China safeguards jobs in Germany, too. Besides, much can be done at the German site to reduce costs. We have now made good progress in many areas. Thanks to continuous process innovation, we have managed to increase productivity and reduce unit wage costs in the Boge production division. In our development department we have been able to cut costs by integrating new materials and components. By consistent internationalisation we have tapped into new potential in the procurement department.

Struppek: In the last few years we have invested considerably in the Bielefeld site. This includes, for example, the company switching over to SAP software in 2004. Thanks to the subsequent

Since 1995 Boge has created 150 secure jobs and even succeeded in more than doubling total turnover.

gradual linking of our subsidiaries to SAP, we now receive a larger amount of relevant control information – which, for example, has also led to a sizeable reduction in our stocks, while at the same time increasing security of supply. In addition, we are making targeted investments in machinery and are increasing our production depth where particular Boge core competences are involved.

As Bielefeld businessmen you are involved in the region and in the community. What are your objectives?

Meier-Scheuven: We believe that, as businessmen and managers, we can play a part in the



Organised material flow in modern compressor mass production.

development of the region. The main aim is to take an active role in making living and working in the East Westphalia/Lippe region more attractive. We are eager to see that the region we live in develops to the advantage of its residents. We want to create good education and training opportunities so that people can find work. For this reason we have entered into a partnership with a school and are involved with the University Society and the Chamber of Commerce. Our region should also be attractive for potential employees from other regions. Therefore we have taken on responsibility in the OWL-Marketing GmbH.

Struppek: We set great store by personal and genuine commitment. Small and medium-sized enterprises have many common interests which allow them to be grouped effectively into regional networks. Here, it is a question of the joint development of locational advantages for small and medium-sized companies and of safeguarding their existence in order to stabilise the regional job market in the long term. From the beginning, Boge has played a leading role in the branch network OWL-Maschinenbau, for example, which was launched at the turn of the millennium by Bielefeld's Lord Mayor as the 'Initiative Pro Mittelstand' (initiative in favour of medium-sized enterprises).

Meier-Scheuven: Nowadays, entrepreneurial activities need to be backed up by a lobby. Engineering companies are working together nationwide in the German Engineering Federation to strengthen and maintain Germany as an engineering-industry location. The Chamber of Commerce is working in the region to ensure the development of the location and that education and employment are safeguarded. The employers' federation is helping to maintain the good conditions for companies in the region. I see it as my task to take on my share of responsibility, in an honorary capacity, in the Chamber of Commerce and in these federations. In competition with other regions and federal

states, the winners will be those who can organise most effectively competent diversity and therefore increase their impact on the market. As a traditional local employer, we want to be able to offer secure jobs in the future, too, for as long as conditions allow.

On the occasion of this anniversary, what do you wish for the company in the future?

Meier-Scheuven: Health and a long life. The company is in a good position. Since 1995 we have more than doubled our turnover. Our customers are satisfied with our performance and



As a tribute to the company by the city of Bielefeld, the site of the company headquarters is renamed Otto-Boge-Strasse in 2004.

and our products are still in demand. Boge is competitive at home and abroad. The employees are well-qualified and have potential for further development. We will develop 'Boge 100' further and prepare ourselves for the challenges of the future. As long as I can influence things, we will continue our course of steady growth. In this way, jobs will be secure, and I will be able to hand over to the family's next generation a company which is at least as good as the one I took over.



The motto of the big Boge 100 company party in the summer of 2007 is 'Looking forward to the future'.

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The Boge Logo through the Years



1907



1909

OTTO BOGE, BIELEFELD
WERKZEUG- UND METALLWAREN-FABRIK

1920



1926



1933



1935

BOGE
K O M P R E S S O R E N

1955

BOGE
KOMPRESSOREN

1973



1995



1998

