

Michael Stoffregen-Büller

From Westphalia into the World

FIEGE –
The Portrait of a Family Firm

FIEGE



The company

»Fiege – The Portrait of a Family Firm« is the subtitle of this book, which tells of the struggles and successes of four generations, covering a period from the late 19th to the start of the 21st century. It is the story of the ambitious development from a small rural family haulage business working with horse and cart into one of the most interesting logistics companies in Europe. The chronicle of the impressive rise of this Greven family also reflects a highly fascinating chapter in the economic history of the German region of Westphalia.

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FIEGE –

The Portrait of a Family Firm

Aschendorff Münster



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Towering upwards – the Fiege Headquarters at Münster-Osnabrück Airport

Anyone approaching Münster-Osnabrück Airport from the east will, after flying over the park-like landscape of the Münsterland and crossing the ribbon of the Dortmund-Ems Canal, see the highly modern glass and steel buildings of a smallish German airport. But while still only modest in terms of size, in terms of growth it is a giant. With passenger volumes increasing at double-figure rates, it is growing faster than any other airport in Germany.

Münster-Osnabrück Airport, or FMO in short, is surrounded on all sides by green countryside but is the gateway to a highly interesting economic region, one that is characterized by small and medium-sized business structures and is at an ideal location on the edge of the so-called "Blue Banana", that belt of prosperity identified by the EU Commission in Brussels as stretching from London in the north-west, taking in the regions on the River Rhine and in the state of Baden-Württemberg in the south-west of Germany, and extending down to Lombardy in the north of Italy. The Münsterland lies in the north-west of Germany, and with mechanical engineering, metalworking, the food industry, textile and chemical companies and any number of small but innovative firms, it can enjoy all the advantages of its geographical position, but without any of the disadvantages of a great conurbation.

The growing airport with its plans for further expansion stands as a symbol for the exciting development of this part of Westphalia. Anyone arriving here will sense this, and will at the same time also see another symbol of this progress. This is a tall, distinctive building, located beside the round-

about on the approach road to the airport, and with a height of 41 metres it makes the terminal buildings and even the control tower itself look small. An office building of severe and simple style, it is the work of Josef Paul Kleihues, a local Westphalian architect, but one who has been responsible for designing buildings throughout the world – in Chicago and Santiago de Compostela, in Berlin and Groningen – as well as holding professorships in Dortmund and New York, and whose name is also familiar to people outside the profession. But who, the traveller may ask, can have commissioned such an ambitious project from a star of the architectural profession and raised such a highly visible landmark as this in such a distinctly rural location? The answer is provided by the building itself: FIEGE.



Heinz Fiege and Dr. Hugo Fiege

This is the "headquarters" of a leading logistics services company, with 7,000 employees, subsidiaries at 157 locations in Europe, and business activities extending all the way to the Far East. It is the control centre of a company which, with its record growth rates and innovative ideas, has repeatedly caused a stir.

This success is the work of brothers Heinz and Dr. Hugo Fiege, who in the course of a mere 25 years have turned a modestly-sized haulage and forwarding business into what is now an internationally operating group of companies and a leader in the industry. The two brothers manage their enterprise from the 9th floor of the headquarters from where they can watch aircraft taking off and landing – themselves symbols of technological progress and world-spanning connections – but from where also, from the conference rooms on the top floor, they can look out over the green expanse of the Münsterland and back to their own rural origins. They can even see the farm where, as boys, they slept in one room and where they had to be out at first light to help with the animals.

There is something American about the career of these two entrepreneurs, although they have always stayed loyal to their Westphalian roots. Despite all their business daring, they have kept their feet firmly on the ground and take pride in being the fourth generation at the head of a family business with a tradition of more than 125 years to look back on.

The development of the haulage and forwarding firm of Josef Fiege of Greven into a state-of-the-art international logistics company which is a shining example not only for its competitors is also a chapter in the economic and social history of Westphalia and the Münsterland. This book will therefore attempt to tell the story of the Fiege family business, from its modest beginnings with horse and cart to the computer-controlled, fully automated, driverless transport systems of today. While the past is now a closed book, the present, especially given the growth and innovative impetus of the Fiege Group, is still very much open to change. So this book can only be a momentary snapshot.

But how did it all start – more than 125 years ago?

1

The beginnings –

Joan Joseph Fiege, carter and farmer



1873

In the early summer of 1873, in a village in the Münsterland, a 38-year-old farmer's son starts doing deliveries with his horse and cart, with no possible way of knowing that in doing so he is founding a family business that a 125 years later will be giving a livelihood to thousands of people in nearly all the countries of Europe.



Market Street in Greven – painting by W. Palmes

Two years previously, Wilhelm I has been crowned Emperor of Germany in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, and amid the general mood of euphoria over national unification, also the Prussian Province of Westphalia begins to feel reconciled with the unloved Protestant monarchy in far-away Berlin. There is a sense of optimism in the air, with the hope of peace and prosperity. Münster, the capital of the Province of Westphalia since 1816, is home to a Provincial

President, the generals of the tradition-conscious garrison and, in his palace beside the Cathedral of St Paulus, the Bishop – all setting their stamp on the lives and livelihoods of the people, on family, school, politics and society.



The town centre of Greven, with St Martinus' Parish Church

13 kilometres to the north of Münster lies Greven, a village of 2,000 souls and the centre of an extensive parish. It is a simple place, with single-storey houses along Market, Münster and Ems Streets, and overtowered by St Martinus' Church, first mentioned in written records as early as the 12th century. Greven was once an important customs post for the bishop of Münster, was known far beyond the borders of Westphalia for its cattle and general markets, and despite wars, plagues and fires, developed into a village where travelling traders, merchants, linen weavers and arti-

sans settled. This development was favoured by the village's location on the River Ems, which could be navigated by flat-bottomed boats, the so-called Ems punts, to the small port near Greven, so providing a connection to the North Sea. Even if the need to tow the boats by horses and the changing water levels in the river made the transport of flax, cloth, foodstuffs, iron and wood an arduous affair, the Ems was for centuries the main life artery of Greven – still reflected in the fact that the local coat of arms shows an Ems punt with proudly filled sail on a blue background.



Greven on the Ems, viewed from the west – lithography by August Schlüter, 1856

However, the fortunes of this village of artisans and small farmers only really began to turn in the mid-19th century. While all the main highways had previously passed Greven by, and the village elders and guild masters could only watch impotently as the cattle and wool transports from

Münster to the north-west travelled along the post road on the left bank of the Ems, the improvement in the highway from Münster to Ibbenbüren via Greven and Saerbeck in 1843 meant that Greven finally found itself part of the main network of roads. This was due to the efforts of Baron Ludwig Vincke, the first Provincial President of Westphalia, who indefatigably sought to improve the pitiful state of road communications in his region.

1856

Another event of equal importance occurred in 1856, when Greven was included in the nascent railway network, becoming part of the Westphalian Railway from Münster to Rheine. This was thanks to the efforts of a textile manufacturer in Greven, who succeeded in persuading the planning officials that the route should pass through Greven, and not through nearby Borghorst.

In the previous year, the new age had already started in the village on the Ems with the foundation of the "Greven Cotton Spinning Company" ("Greverer Baumwollspinnerei Aktiengesellschaft"), marking the beginning of the textile



The Greven Cotton Spinning Company

era in Greven which would have such a crucial effect on the development of the village and would end only a century later. This meant an end to the days of the poverty-stricken linen weavers working in their small farm cottages. It was the start of industrialization. Now, factories are being built, with all the equipment, machinery, beams and cast iron pillars being supplied from England. A new upper class develops: the manufacturers, founders of textile dynasties, living in splendid villas – and not only in Greven but also in Emsdetten, Rheine, Gronau, Borghorst and Ochtrup – and completely disrupting the time-honoured social structures in these small Münsterland villages, where hitherto the priest, the school teacher and the apothecary have held sway. They earn good money, the Schründers, Biederlacks and Cramers, and they bring prosperity to Greven.

This is evidently what motivates Joan Joseph Fiege, the youngest son of Johann Wilhelm Fiege, a farmer born in 1785 on the old family farm in Westbevern-Brock, not far from Kattmanns Kamp, to move down the Ems and settle in Greven, the aspiring new textile centre. There are no written records or letters to testify to this decision. At this time people only write their names in the family Bible and under contracts; everything else is passed on by word of mouth.

But Joan Joseph Fiege has little choice, as he has to find a livelihood for himself. In Westphalia at this time, the law of inheritance requires that farms be passed on whole, to prevent them being broken up into ever smaller lots which would ultimately not be viable. This means that the eldest son inherits everything and the younger brothers and sisters have to leave the family home, in many cases without even a small portion to start them off in their new life.

1873

Joan Joseph Fiege is born on 1st April 1835 as the youngest of seven children, and as a child experiences the dramatic



crises on the land, with catastrophic crop failures, horrendous grain prices and hunger, and also the political upheavals of 1848, whose effects can even be felt in the tranquil Münsterland. He sees the poor day-labourers in their rented cottages with a few acres of land, where they eke out a living growing flax, which they then process themselves. And he sees them being put out of work by mechanization and industrialization, forcing them to seek a living as migrant workers across the border in Holland, or to go and work in the coal mines and rolling mills of the Ruhr district. Many see emigration to America as their last chance. Cottagers, farm labourers, artisans and brickmakers, but also small and sometimes bigger farmers set off to the promised land of plenty, many of them fleeing from hunger, servitude or military drill in the conscript Prussian army. The wave of emigration from Westphalia reaches its peak between 1846 and 1854 and is consciously experienced by Joan Joseph Fiege. 20 years previously, emigrants from a neighbouring village founded their town of New Glandorf in Ohio, and now send proud reports of their prosperity as farmers in the New World.

However, for the young farmer's son, there can be no question of leaving his native Westphalian region. He is convinced of being able to make a living at home, especially as he has been given a modest portion on leaving the family farm. Greven is his chosen destination, where he hopes to make his fortune. First he works as a coachman for the Terfloth family in Market Street, who are dealers in textiles. Skilled in handling horses, hard working, always punctual and, unlike many waggon drivers, not addicted to the demon drink, he soon makes himself indispensable.

Within a few years, thanks to his iron thrift, he so successfully adds his earnings to what he has inherited that he is

ultimately able to buy a plot of land on a hillside from one Ludwig Terfloth, a wood merchant, punt owner and local poet. There he builds a house, complete with farm buildings, barn and stables where, after his marriage to Maria Anna Gertraud Krone from Greven-Bockholt, he is able to take up residence around the year 1868.

The beginnings of the new-fledged farmer and his wife are modest. Their few acres of land consist of poor sandy soil and can only be made to yield a decent crop after the introduction of the new types of commercial fertilizers – "Thomas meal", super phosphate, China saltpetre or guano. This is the time when people in Westphalia begin to cultivate what was formerly wasteland, and also to drain the swamps.

Joan Joseph Fiege had, of course, learned to farm when he was young. Now, he grows rye, barley and oats – feed for the two horses and for cows and pigs, whose manure he spreads on the fields. Farmer Fiege tends and tills his land, sows and harvests, and saves. And whenever he has enough money put aside, he buys more land.

1873

In 1873, two years after the birth of his first son Josef on 31st December, who will soon be followed by a brother Bernhard and four other children, comes the decisive step. With a fine nose for the potential offered by a flourishing business location like Greven, Joan Joseph Fiege decides to use his experience with horse and cart not just for farm work, but also for the transport business.

However, his first steps in this direction are very cautious, and at first are only a sideline to farming. He delivers coal to people in the village and round about, then starts to trade in coal on a modest scale and establishes a small coal depot of his own. In doing this, he still regards himself as working in the family tradition, because charcoal had been made at his childhood home in Westbevern-Brock.



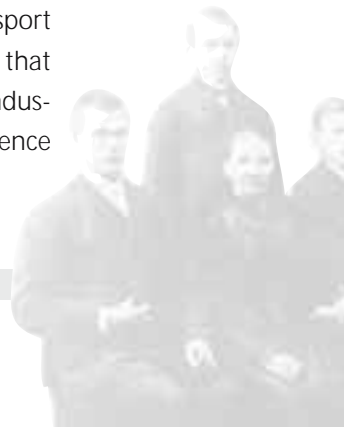
The textile mills in Greven need large quantities of coal for bleaching and dyeing, firing the steam boilers, and also for generating electricity. The coal is mostly delivered to Greven by rail, but not all the factories have their own railway sidings. Even the firm of Schründer, located only 200 metres from the station, have their coal brought by horse and cart from the railway, to avoid the expense of laying tracks and building loading ramps. These are opportunities for Joan Joseph Fiege which he takes advantage of whenever the horses are not needed for ploughing or harvesting. Additionally, he receives orders from Greven's shopkeepers to make deliveries, carrying flour, fat, oil or household appliances to the customers round about.

By the mid-1870s, navigation on the River Ems has virtually ceased. The freight capacity of the punts is too small, and pulling them from the towpaths is too slow; navigation is impossible whenever the river is in spate in the spring, and also when it has nearly dried up in hot summers. But there are still some boat loads arriving at or setting off from "Krögers Kämpcken", so here, too, Fiege can be seen with his horse and cart on the way to the river, laden with wood or grain.

1876

The first written documentation of his business activity, preserved in the town archives of Greven, is the tax register for the year 1876, in which the farmer Joan Joseph Fiege is recorded as Tradesman No. 22, residing in the hamlet of Wentrup, and required to pay an annual tax of six Marks for his business of "Coal Trading", the said tax also being payable in monthly instalments of half a Mark each.

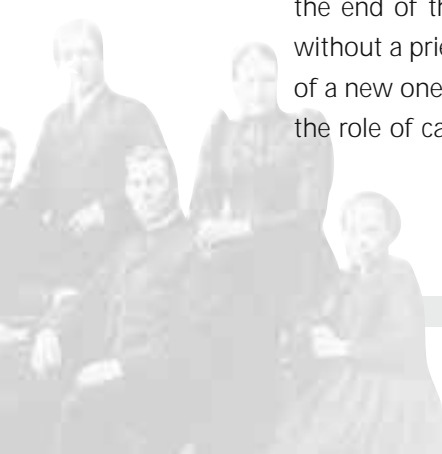
The wisdom of carrying on two businesses, i.e. transport and farming, is highlighted during the economic crisis that occurs a few years later, when also the Greven textile industry finds itself caught up in difficulties through the absence



of customs duties to protect it from the competition of manufacturers in England and Alsace. The sales from the local mills fall significantly, which consequently means less haulage work for Fiege with his horse and cart. This is also reflected in an official letter of 9th February 1880, informing him of a reduction in the amount of trade tax he is required to pay, from six Marks to three Marks a year. But because of his other business of farming, the family, which has now grown to eight, does not fall into distress.

Now aged 45, Joan Joseph Fiege is proud of what he has achieved, of his sons and daughters, and especially of Josef, his eldest son, now aged nine, who helps in the stables, sits beside him on the box when making deliveries, and is now becoming an expert in handling the horses.

Father Fiege is a good Catholic, attending mass at St Martinus' every Sunday with his family. Like all the people of the village and the surrounding farms, he follows with indignation the machinations of Chancellor Bismarck, who over a period of twelve years, in what will subsequently be known as the 'Kulturkampf', seeks to break the power of the Catholic Church. This process had started with the eviction of the Jesuits in 1872, was followed by the laws on the supervision of schools by the state and by the prosecution of clerics who opposed these measures, and has resulted in March 1875 with the deposition of Bishop Bernhard Brinkmann of Münster, who to the dismay of the faithful first ends up in Wandorf Prison and is then able to flee into exile in Holland. Greven is also directly affected by all of this. From 1878 until the end of the 'Kulturkampf', the parish of St Martinus is without a priest. The state refuses to allow the appointment of a new one, so that Assistant Priest Niehoff has to take on the role of caretaker in an effort to keep parish life alive.





Joan Joseph Fiege with his family

Reconciliation between the state and the Church begins on 13th February 1884, when Bismarck is forced to give way. The Bishop of Münster returns to his palace in triumphal procession, and also Joan Joseph Fiege, together with other people from Greven, goes on an outing to the provincial capital to celebrate the restoration of the old order.

For the people of the Münsterland, all of them dyed-in-the-wool Catholics, the return of their bishop marks the promise of a new start. And indeed, the time up to the turn of the century is a happy period in the history of the Germans in their new Reich. It marks the start of the modern age. New residential districts are built in the towns and cities, waterworks and power stations go into operation. In Greven, there are two new bridges across the Ems, albeit subject to toll. Joan Joseph Fiege, too, working with his now grown-

up sons, benefits from the general economic upswing and the boom in building activity. They still transport coal, but now additionally timber for the Greven wood-trading firm of Sahle, especially oak, felled in the surrounding woodlands and carried to the sawmills along the mill streams, from where it then has to be collected again as timber for building. Also the number of tours to Münster increases which, with the time needed for loading and unloading and for feeding and watering the horses, take up a whole day.



Greven – St Martinus' Church



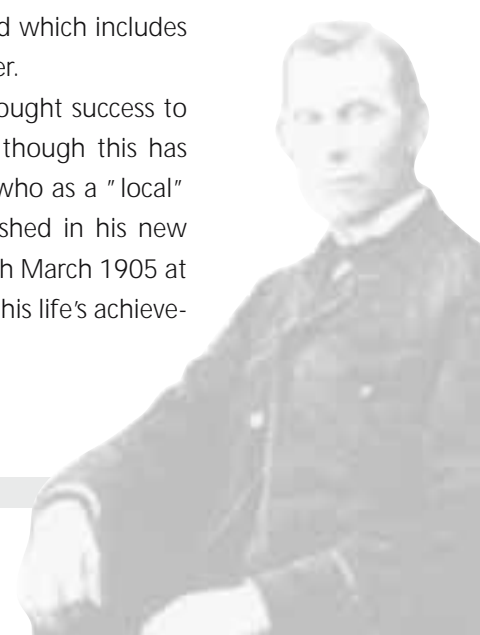
With nearly 30,000 inhabitants, the turn of the century sees Münster at the height of its importance and as the undisputed capital of Westphalia. The citizens of the old city of the prince-bishops has long since come to terms with the Hohenzollern monarchy in Berlin, and since the accession of Wilhelm II in 1888 are enjoying the "glorious age of the Kaiser" and the mood of German jingoism. Münster is the seat of the Provincial Parliament, presided over by a marshal, and besides the Provincial President, the self-governing Province of Westphalia also has a Chief Administrative Officer. The city is home to elite cavalry regiments and their officers, high-ranking government officials and aristocrats in their elegant town houses, while order and public morals are maintained by the constabulary in their spiked Prussian helmets.

Fiege's trips to Münster take him to the weekly markets and goods fairs. Before setting out, the floor and sides of the heavy covered waggon have to be scrubbed to clean away the coal dust, ready for carrying farm products from Greven to the provincial capital and, on the return journey – for travelling empty would mean losing money – goods for the shopkeepers in Greven.

But Joan Joseph Fiege and his sons are also already looking beyond their local boundaries, as can be seen from an Imperial Post Office Record Book for the year 1900, where all registered and COD deliveries are listed and which includes places as far afield as Dortmund or Hanover.

Prudence, toughness and acumen have brought success to the small farmer's son from Westbevern, though this has certainly also been due to his wife Maria, who as a "local" made it easier for him to become established in his new home. When Joan Joseph Fiege dies on 11th March 1905 at the age of 70, he can be well satisfied with his life's achievement.

1905



2

The second generation –

Josef Fiege, carrier, farmer and publican



The transition from father to son is a smooth one. As the eldest son, Josef Fiege, who was born in 1871, takes over the farm. For years, he and his brother Bernhard have worked with their father, gathering experience both in the transport business and on the farm. Josef also already has his own family. In Roxel, a village to the west of Münster, he has wooed and wed Maria Willenborg, the daughter of a gardener who originated from the region of Oldenburg and who is employed at Hülshoff Castle, birthplace of the Westphalian poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. And also his eldest son, christened Josef in his turn, has been born in October 1904, a few months before the old man's death.



1908

The brothers Josef and Bernhard now decided to continue running the haulage business together. But what will prove so successful 65 years later with another pair of Fiege brothers, this time fails. In 1908, each decides to go his own way. Bernhard takes over his father's delivery business, and until the mid-1930s, working from Marktstrasse in Greven, operates in competition with his brother.

Josef Fiege, now aged 37 and full of energy, founds his own haulage business at No. 37 Greven-Wenttrup and commissions the architect Schulte to build a new house at Plot No. 17 adjacent to Hüttrup elementary school, where all the children are taught in one class – which costs what at that time is the very considerable sum of 13,093.00 Reichsmarks. The result is a spacious brick building, with room also for a public house. As Josef Fiege initially has no licence to sell alcohol, he sells food and later also stamps for the Imperial Post Office. Near the house, the necessary buildings for the haulage business are also provided: stables for the horses, a barn, and a shed for the vehicles.

Josef Fiege now devotes most of his energies to tours to Münster, continuing the business of transporting provisions



for the shopkeepers. Through the Dortmund-Ems Canal, opened in 1899, passing to the east of Greven and providing the long-needed link between the Rhine and Ems and the North Sea, he now also has a new destination in the Westphalian capital: the canal port. Here, goods of all kinds are loaded and unloaded, offering opportunities for carriers to earn money. They can be seen queuing up in long lines on the quays, delivering grain for onward shipment or collecting stones, bricks and other building materials. Also the Fiege teams from Greven go to the freight offices at the port to obtain a load for the return journey.

An invoice contained in the Fiege archives, made out in October 1905 by one B. Terfloth, a distributor with an office in the port of Münster, to "Messrs. Anton Cramer & Co. in Greven" for delivery of a barrel of lard, is an indication of these regular transport activities.

But orders are also regularly carried out in Greven itself, with coal, stones and timber being transported; and then there are the transports for the textile mills, where production is running at top speed.

In the first decade of the new century, the economy is flourishing. In the city of Münster and even in the village streets of Greven, the first motor-cars start to appear, heralds of a new and revolutionary technology, still looking like traditional carriages, but producing a dreadful stink and a frightful noise. But for all practical purposes, horses are, as they have been since time immemorial, still the indispensable source of pulling power, whether for the carriages of the nobility, or for drawing muck carts, milk, beer or vegetable waggons. In the fields, the plough, harrow, hayturner and roller are still pulled by horses.

Josef Fiege has grown up with horses, has learned how to handle them under the supervision of his father, knows the

illnesses they are prone to and how to treat them without the expense of calling in the vet. In the case of the dreaded colic, the animals have spirits and black coffee forced down their throats or a sack filled with hay or hay seed and soaked in hot water laid across their backs.

But feeding, tending and shoeing are only one aspect; the harnesses also have to be kept in order, shafts repaired and the iron-tyred wheels of the heavy freight waggons replaced. Most of this is done without outside help. Only in this way is it possible to put money aside for a rainy day or for buying more land. For Josef Fiege is determined to be just as successful as his father and to make sure not to neglect the farming business, which provides a firm foundation for the family livelihood.

Nevertheless, he sees himself primarily as a carrier, sitting on the box or walking beside the horse and cart, whatever the



Josef Fiege doing farm work in fields where one day the firm will be located

weather – a strongly built man with a thick, Wilhelminian moustache, dressed in rough, simple clothing, and with a pipe in his mouth.



Fiege cart and horses outside the pub in Wentrup

In the happy years before the outbreak of the First World War, Josef Fiege sees the old days slowly disappearing from the roads of Westphalia: the rumbling of the iron-tyred wheels over the cobblestones of blue basalt or granite, sparks flashing from slipping hooves; the cracking of whips; the carters, many of them hard-drinking but entertaining characters; travelling traders with their closed vans; travellers on foot and in the saddle; hearses drawn by black horses; scissor grinders and umbrella menders with their equipment.

It takes skill to reach one's destination without a collision or without the breakage of traces, shafts, axles or spokes. For many roads in Westphalia are still in very poor condition.

Many of them are still unsurfaced sandy tracks, and even the highways can only be negotiated with skill and good luck. After damage by frost in hard winters, they are often only given makeshift repairs with shovel, hand stamper and hand-drawn roller, so that avoiding the deep potholes calls for constant alertness on the part of the drivers. It is hard work being out in all weathers, in boiling heat, torrential rain and showers of hail, in spring and autumn, and always



The old roads – a Münsterland country road lined with birch trees

in fear of the waggon getting stuck on the muddy ways or of losing a horse through a fall on a slippery road in winter.

20 kilometres to the north of Greven, beyond the hills of the Teutoburg Forest, lies the village of Ibbenbüren with the "Schafberg", from whose depths coal had been mined since the end of the 15th century.

Coal is part of Fiege's business. And the location at Grüner Weg is convenient, because from there, unlike on journeys to the station, it is not necessary to cross the Ems. The highway goes via Saerbeck, direct to the state-owned coal mine. Along with the tours to Münster, this now also becomes an increasingly frequent journey.

In the twilight of dawn, still almost dark, the empty waggon sets off along the metalled road, lined by great lime trees, past the cemetery and into the wild and lonely countryside. It is then a good ten kilometres till just beyond the small village of Saerbeck, past the old parish church of St Georg, the wayside inn of "Spiekers Marie" finally comes into sight, where it is time for a break. The horses need a rest, a drink and a feed. Then the journey continues, always at a steady, energy-saving pace, across the new bridge over the Dortmund-Ems Canal and towards the slopes of the Teutoburger Wald, passing Dörenther Cliffs on the right, with the bizarre rock formation of the "Crouching Woman". The climb up the winding road is hard work at the best of times, even if it is made easier by the fact that the waggon is still empty. On the home journey, after the back-breaking work of loading the coal sacks at the pit, the going is easier because now it is downhill, but this also means braking hard to prevent the horses from stumbling under the weight of the heavy load.



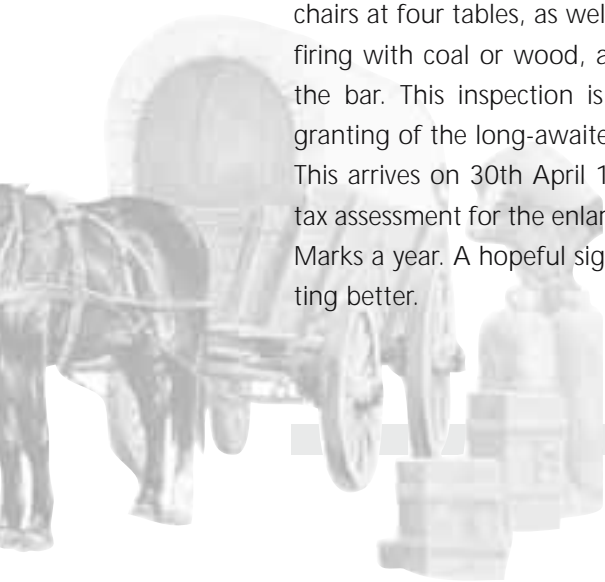
Altogether, it is a round trip of twelve to fifteen hours, the greatest distance that can be managed in a single day. Sometimes it takes till after nightfall, so hurricane lamps have to be hung on the wagon. The loneliness of the way is also not without its dangers. There are often dubious characters roaming the countryside, and there are frequent reports of attacks and robbery.

To defend himself if need be, Josef Fiege always carries a loaded pistol in his jacket on these tours to Ibbenbüren. On one of these journeys through the dark, he takes it out to pass the time, and accidentally shoots himself in the hand. Fortunately, the injury is not serious.



1911

In a letter dated 13th April 1911, the Fieges receive good news from the District Committee of the Rural District of Münster, officially informing Josef Fiege, in best copperplate handwriting, that he is "hereby authorised to sell coffee, milk and non-alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises". And in March of the next year, with typical Prussian thoroughness, official stock is taken of the premises. All details are recorded in writing: the dimensions of the public room and the two guest rooms, the ventilation through two louvres in the windows, and the distance to the well, ten metres to the pissoir, five metres to the latrines. Also the furniture and furnishings are precisely noted: altogether 22 chairs at four tables, as well as pictures, curtains, stoves for firing with coal or wood, and of course the main feature, the bar. This inspection is probably the precondition for granting of the long-awaited licence also to sell alcohol. This arrives on 30th April 1914, and at the same time the tax assessment for the enlarged business is increased to 200 Marks a year. A hopeful sign for the future. Things are getting better.



[illegible][illegible][illegible]

1914

Four months later, the First World War breaks out, with patriotic enthusiasm and blind jingoism. In Münster, the scheduled visit by the Kaiser and the forthcoming Catholic Conference have to be cancelled. The troops are moved out of the cavalry and artillery barracks as fast as can be managed. Josef Fiege has no need to worry about being called up, even supposing he, too, should have been infected by the general mood of patriotic zeal, because at 43 he is too old, and as a farmer and carrier he is also needed on the home front. The Fiege farm is also spared the process of "horse mustering", under which all eligible animals are registered and requisitioned by military commissions travelling from village to village.



In Greven, little is felt of the distant war. Everything goes on in its customary way. Only when more and more obituary notices of young men from the village and the farms round about begin to appear in the newspapers, when food starts to become short, with rationing and ration cards, when officials start to search the farms to ensure that the required quantities of grain are being surrendered to the authorities, do the inhabitants of the tranquil countryside start to become aware that the country really is at war.

The Fiege family also suffers restrictions: part of the harvest is requisitioned, and the number of tours decreases because there is no longer anything to take to the markets in Münster, and shortage of raw materials has also forced the textile mills in Greven to cut their production. By 1916, meat is already in such short supply that the Prussian Agriculture Minister, Clemens von Schorlemer-Lieser, who himself comes from Westphalia, draws the people's attention in a decree to the possibility of eating "young rooks, which are very tasty".

Die Pelzamtbehörde des Amtes Greven i. W.

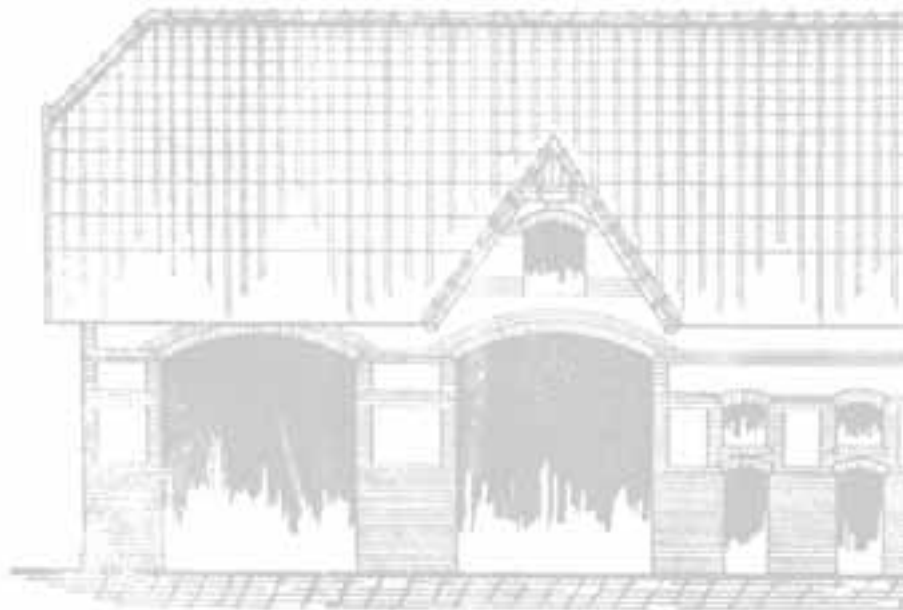


1918

No one goes hungry at the farm at Grüner Weg in Greven, in particular because the public house is still making money. In the familiar home surroundings, battles and trench warfare, the Marne and Verdun, capitulation and the November revolution are all remote and distant events that the local people have difficulty imagining or understanding.

In September 1918, amidst all the confusion prefacing the end of the war, Josef Fiege is again in the process of enlarging his property by the exchange and purchase of adjacent land, documented in two contracts notarized by "Bernhard Schründer, Royal Notary Public and King's Counsel" – probably one of the last acts done by him using such a grand title.

Six months later, Josef, the eldest son and just turned 15, leaves the local one-class elementary school in Wentrup, with a certificate that gives him lots of good marks. His worst grade is in singing, while under "Remarks", it says: "In the last year, the pupil was almost always released from school attendance".



In other words: he had to help out in the business at home. At this time, he is the only son, three brothers having died in early childhood, while his three sisters Gertrud, Maria and Anna are aged between only nine and six.

In Josef, soon to be known as the "Junior", the family has been lucky. He is tenacious, tough, intelligent and ambitious. It seems that also the second generation after Joan Joseph Fiege is destined for success.



3

Further ahead through motorization –

From local carrier

to long-distance transport business



1923

The years following the First World War are a troubled period. General strikes, street battles, the occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923 by French and Belgian troops for non-payment of reparation claims – all these things cause confusion and outrage among the people. The country, now a republic following the collapse of the imperial monarchy, is shaken to its foundations by inflation on a scale never experienced before. Only with the introduction of a new currency, the "Rentenmark", does the economy finally start to recover. Building activity begins again, and also in the textile industry of Greven, the spindles and looms gradually get back up to speed.

This also means an upturn for the Fiege haulage business, now being operated jointly by father and son. Josef Junior, now aged nearly 20, works as he has done since his early youth: up at dawn to clean the stables and feed and tend the horses, then putting them in the shafts, driving to the customers, loading and unloading the freight with his own hands; and on returning home in the evening there again are horses to tend, waggons to clean for the next day, or harnesses and equipment to repair.

Working with the horses has left a visible mark on him. As the result of a sudden movement when feeding the animals, one of them has shied and bitten his bottom lip so badly that the wound has to be stitched, leaving a scar that can be seen until the end of his life.

Already as a 13-year-old at school, Josef Fiege accompanied his father on the long tour to Ibbenbüren. Now, in the winter of 1923, they are on the road together again, father and son, to collect the coal that is so urgently needed.

They are muffled up in thick fur coats left over from the war, the leather side outside, their feet in bulky boots, warm woollen hats on their heads. It takes hours to reach



"Speikers Marie". Two men sitting silently on the box, their eyes on the traces and the back ends of the horses. The family tend not to talk very much at the best of times. But it is well imaginable that the son, naturally speaking in the local dialect, tells his father of his secret passion and of a bold idea that he has, and that he gets a gruff "Don't be daft, lad" back from his father.

For Josef Junior is fascinated by everything technical – machines, inventions, motor cars and, of course, lorries. These are now an increasingly common sight on the roads, and even in the remote village streets – diesel-engined



1924 – purchase of the first lorry

vehicles that saw service in the war, some of them with iron wheels, but also more modern ones, with big spoked wheels running on solid rubber tyres.

Young Fiege knows all the types and how much they can carry: the Büssing, Benz, Magirus, MAN and DAAG lorries, and he knows that they represent the future. Transporting goods by horse and waggon – that might still work for a while in short-haul deliveries, but anyone with bigger aims

has to go with the times. Real freight carriers now use engine power, as some were already doing in the big cities before and during the war, aided by state subsidies.

Josef Fiege urges his father. But the latter, now aged 54, will have nothing to do with spending lots of money on a lorry. He tells him: "Listen lad, you go spending money on a stinking rattlecan like that and all you'll do is end up in the poor house."

But he hasn't reckoned with the persistence of his son. He continues to urge, persuade and demand, and finally gets his way.



1924 – purchase of the first trailer

1924

With the result that in 1924 a used VOMAG lorry is bought in Lüdinghausen. The money to pay for it is loaned by one Mr. Beckermann, who agrees to accept repayment in instalments. Every time the payments are due, pigs have to be sold to raise the money.

The arrival of the motorized vehicle at the Fiege premises marks the start of a new era. Naturally, the transports with horse and waggon still continue, but all the interest is on

the VOMAG, a product of Vogtländische Maschinenfabrik AG in Plauen, and it also causes a stir among the neighbours in Greven. They are as impressed by the polished brass of the radiator as they are by the cranking of the engine in the morning to rouse it to noisy life.



The VOMAG, with solid rubber tyres

The new lorry certainly broadens the radius of activity, even if it does only manage 20 kilometres an hour, rattling over the cobbled roads on its solid rubber tyres. But with the ability to carry a load of nearly four tons, it can certainly move some stuff. Now, coal from Ibbenbüren can be delivered to the consumers in Greven in a matter of a few hours, and also tours to Münster no longer take a whole day – provided there are no breakdowns.

Occasionally, the lorry is also used for carrying passengers. For the annual festival at the Open-Air Theatre in nearby



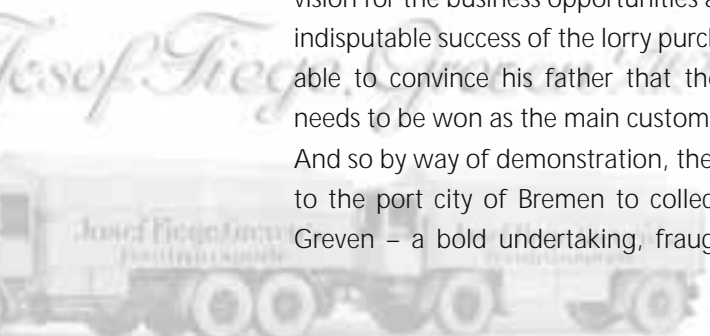
Tecklenburg, the back is carefully scrubbed, the radiator polished, and the lorry decorated with sprigs of green. Adults and classes of school children are ferried backwards and forwards, sitting on benches bolted to the floor.

The new technology also changes life at Grüner Weg. Besides Josef Junior, another driver is needed to man the lorry, though the Fieges are not likely to have read the recommendations of an automobile club in Berlin, whose advice for choosing a suitable person is as follows: "If the driver makes a nervous, bustling impression, he will probably be no better suited for a lorry than someone who is small and slight. The best person is a calm, steady (married!) man, who may even be somewhat slow, for the greatest enemy of a lorry is fast driving."

Advice of this kind is not necessary, especially as the typical Westphalian already fulfils these requirements by nature. "Slow", yes, and above all strong, because turning with the big, four-spoked steering wheel, operating the clutch, changing gear and braking is hard work.

The man chosen is one Tönne Peters. His parents help on the farm at harvest time, binding the sheaves and threshing, and also at potato planting in spring. So he is known to the Fieges as a reliable lad, and is helped to get his driving licence.

The advance into new technology also brings a broader vision for the business opportunities available. Following the indisputable success of the lorry purchase, Josef Fiege is also able to convince his father that the local textile industry needs to be won as the main customer of the coming years. And so by way of demonstration, the VOMAG is dispatched to the port city of Bremen to collect a load of cotton for Greven – a bold undertaking, fraught with risk, and one





Größtmögliche Kraftwagentransporte, Eigene Verladeanlagen

[illegible]

GREVEN LW. Jan 28, Feb. 1911.

Plus

See Also

J. C. Niederlack & Co.,

Water Table: pl. Fl. II.

Hasleton, I. Westf.

Rechnung

		g kg	lbf	kg
Febr. 27.	✓ 385 kg. = 4 Rollen Juteleinen nach Greven i.W. <u>400 kg.</u> (abgr.)	~.55	2.20	✓

1336

*Einlagen
fol. 126*

Verfahren gegen unbefugte Kopie von 1980: Zeichnungen sollten auf zwei Plastfolienböden gedruckt werden. (27.10.1980)

1330

Eingetragen
fol. 157b.

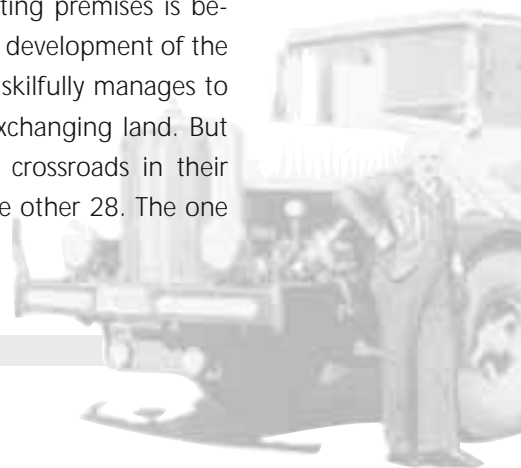
that many people expect to fail. But it does not, marking instead the beginning of several long-lasting and mutually satisfactory business relationships. The traditional country haulage business is starting to develop into a real transport operation. The driving force behind it continues to be young Fiege who, to make things easier, is now officially known as "Junior".

1929

Two years after the VOMAG, a second lorry is purchased – this time a Büssing. And in 1929 – the year in which the worldwide economy will be plunged into depression by the Wall Street Crash – son and father take another crucial step, by venturing into long-distance transport. This proves highly successful. They now carry bales of linen to Berlin as well as jute sacks from the firm of Biederlack in Emsdetten to Osterwedding near Wanzleben, to Calbe on the River Saale, and to Kassel.

An invoice still exists from the year 1931. The letterhead shows a splendid long-bonneted Büssing, with trailer and braker's cab above the tow bar. The name "Josef Fiege, Greven i. W." is written in ornate letters across the top, and beside it is the firm's round red emblem, with the initials "JFG" inside. Underneath, below the wheels of the lorry, it boasts: "Large-Scale Haulage, Motor-Vehicle Transports, Own Handling Facilities". And on a similarly designed invoice of a year later, it says: "Insurance – Forwarding – Storage".

Through the constant growth in the volume of goods transported, the space available at the existing premises is becoming too small to keep pace with the development of the business. Therefore, Josef Fiege Senior skilfully manages to enlarge the premises by buying and exchanging land. But father and son have now come to a crossroads in their working relationship. The one is 61, the other 28. The one





Before setting out: A long-nose Büssing NAG

is an elderly man, the other an energetic young one with new ideas, who really wants to be free to take decisions by himself. They therefore conclude an agreement of a very special kind.

1932

On 1st October 1932, the father sells the fleet of vehicles to his son: three Büssing lorries, one VOMAG lorry and one Wanderer car. The price of 93,000 Reichsmarks is to be repaid by the buyer to the seller over a period of seven years and nine months in monthly instalments of at least 1,000 Reichsmarks. Additionally, the son undertakes to use the vehicles so acquired exclusively for transporting goods on behalf of the forwarding business of the father – which is expressly not transferred to him in this agreement – until such time as all the vehicles have been paid for. To reduce the overheads, it is agreed that there will be a joint office but separate bookkeeping, and that the costs and wages



will be borne proportionately. "Any infringement of these provisions shall entitle the Seller to repossess the vehicles forthwith."

There is no record, either written or by word of mouth, on how harmonious relations between the two in the following years are. The Junior has moved a step forward, he now has charge of the vehicles and drivers, the materials and equipment, but the Senior remains the boss and keeps the reins in his hands. But it evidently works. There is no massive falling-out, and so no need to call on the arbitrators, as provided for in the agreement.

The technical interest of Josef Fiege Junior also means that the family is kept informed of events in the outside world. As early as 1924, he was one of the first people in Greven who, after establishment of the new radio station in the west of Germany, the "Westdeutsche Funkstunde" in Münster, and with the help of a double-T aerial, a crystal detector and earphones, was able to listen to stock market reports, dance music and football broadcasts from the Preussen Stadium in Münster. Now, the news comes from a black Bakelite wireless set behind the bar in the public room, and what it has to report is not good.

The number of people out of work in Germany in 1932 has risen to a horrifying six million. Many people are hungry, with little more than bread and potatoes to live on. In Berlin, the government of Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, himself from Münster and who will be dismissed from office in the further course of the year, is governing by emergency decrees.

On 30th January 1933, President Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler to the office of Chancellor. The Reichstag, the German parliament, passes the Enabling Acts, effectively relinquishing all its powers, the constitution is suspended, the



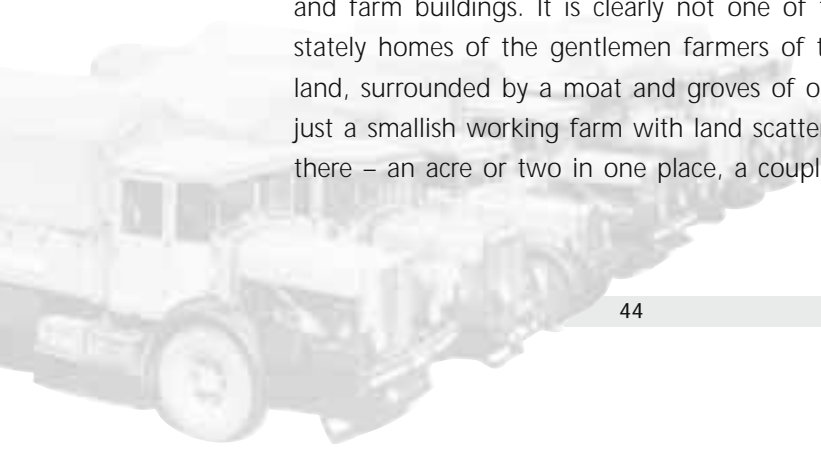
political parties and the regional state parliaments are dissolved, and the discrimination and persecution of the Jews begins. But things like this are no longer reported on the radio.

While the people of the Münsterland are mostly Catholic and conservative, they nevertheless want very little to do with the National Socialists. Still, there is a general hope that the new government will pull Germany out of its troubles, restore order and create jobs, that farm prices will finally start to rise once more, and that the economy in general will get moving again. In the Fiege transport business, too, as well as on the Fiege farm, there is a belief in the future, in peace and prosperity.

The new government soon makes its presence felt. A large number of central organizations is set up, registering and controlling every area of life. A National Farmers, Agricultural Workers and Nutritional Organization is established, with a Westphalian Regional Farming Association, whose letterhead shows the Imperial Eagle, a swastika with an ear of grain and a sword, and the inscription "Blood and Soil". The farmers count for something in the Third Reich – the government needs them for its bigger schemes.

1934

In December 1934, Josef Fiege Senior becomes an "Erbhofbauer", a hereditary farm-owner, as provided for by law. The whole of his landed property is recorded on Page 51 in the Register of Hereditary Farms for the Parish of Greven on the right bank of the Ems: meadows, woodland, arable land and farm buildings. It is clearly not one of the historical stately homes of the gentlemen farmers of the Münsterland, surrounded by a moat and groves of oak trees, but just a smallish working farm with land scattered here and there – an acre or two in one place, a couple of fields in



another, depending on how two generations of Fieges have managed to buy it. The names of the various pieces of land may have a poetic ring, but they also say something about the quality of the soil as it was originally: "Cronerheide" (Croner Heath), "Gründe am Berksken" (Land on the Hillside), "Plaggenacker" (Peat Field), "Grever Esch" (Greven Lea) or "Lütke Heide" (Little Heath).



Maria Fiege in the garden of the pub

The farm business together with the pub, where Mother Maria Fiege draws beer – now cooled by electricity and no longer with blocks of ice that have to be delivered every week – is still the main basis for the business as a whole. The profits from the farm are used to further expand the

transport business. The Fieges buy new lorries, giving bills of exchange as security that have to be honoured without a day's delay. Each time a payment is due, a number of pigs have to be sold.

Transactions of this kind can sometimes be critical, as the daughter Anna, born in 1913, remembers. She speaks of her parent's worries, which she herself, her elder sisters Gertrud and Maria, and possibly even the youngest son Heinrich, at that time aged only 14, are fully aware of. And she thinks back to how the days started in the Fiege household. "My father was up first. He would light the fire in the big stove in the kitchen and make coffee for everybody. Then he would make sandwiches, including for the drivers, and say morning prayers aloud. After that, everybody would sit down at the big table, have coffee, and then go about their work. Depending on the season, my father would also go out and work in the fields."

Josef Fiege Senior makes sure his daughters receive a good education. Anna takes the higher school certificate in 1934, then does a course in housekeeping, and hopes to get a



On the road – a Büssing with canvas covers specially developed for transports of bales of jute and cotton

place at university. At this time, there are serious difficulties in the office with two clerks, two brothers from Emsdetten, who are secretly planning to set up in business themselves and who start to do deals on their own account behind the boss's back; they also make accusations against him to the authorities. Their dismissal will later have far-reaching repercussions.

1936

Consequently, the father decides that in future it is essential for a member of the family to be permanently in the office to keep a watchful eye on the business. He chooses Anna, later to be known as "Aunt Aenne". At this time, no-one can know how important his decision will one day be for the survival of the firm. So Anna Fiege first of all attends a



Anna Fiege with her school friend Toni Naber, the future Mrs. Fiege



The fleet of lorries at the premises in Greven-Wentrup

commercial course in Münster and then, from 1936, learns everything there is to know in the office: taking orders on the telephone, making out waybills, calculating freight charges, and all the other things needed in a haulage business. She also learns to deal with the drivers of the lorries, now five in number and which are always manned by two drivers each. The drivers are all from the village, but behind the wheel feel like kings of the road.

The Fiege men are real long-distance drivers, with tours as far afield as Bremen, Hamburg and Munich. 1936 sees the arrival of the first six-wheel Büssings: giants of their day, able to carry ten tons, and used, among other things, to transport the complete cycle race track from Münster to Berlin for the Olympic Games there.

In 1936, the magazine "Der Grosskraftwagen" (The Lorry), which is also read in Greven, has something to say about what makes a good driver: "Reliable and experienced driv-

ers are in short supply today and therefore correspondingly in demand. A haulage business stands and falls with the drivers. In many cases, the proprietor places the whole of his capital in their hands. It only needs a couple of irresponsible fellows behind the wheel, driving and changing gear with never a thought, wasting time in one place and then having to drive like madmen to make up for lost time, with no regard for the vehicle and tyres, and the result is bound to be trouble. When the owner himself goes along, he listens to every noise, notices any problem before it becomes serious, has a rapport with the vehicle – Yes, the question of personnel is one that is truly crucial for the business.”

The Fieges – both father and son, the latter of whom himself sits behind the wheel – appreciate the qualities of their drivers and realize how important it is for the workers to be part of the family. And the drivers themselves, muffled up in thick pullovers and with leather cap at a jaunty angle on their heads, also know their worth.

It is still a hard job, leaving little time for a private life. A Fiege driver of this period complains that he is only at home on four Sundays in the year, but at the same time praises the good working climate in the firm. Because of frost damage to the roads, a shovel always has to be taken along and is in regular use. A mouthful of spirits takes the place of a heater, and at the end of each round tour it can almost be taken for granted that at least one of the tyres will be damaged. But not only the driving itself, on poor roads where, in the Münsterland, herds of sheep or even ox-drawn wagons might appear at any time, is hard work. Also starting the engine in the morning calls for lots of muscle power. The water and oil levels have to be constantly checked, the rocker shafts of the valves lubricated with an



oil can, the greasing nipples gone round with a grease gun, and when the engine is started, it has to be listened to carefully for any unaccustomed noises that indicate a problem in the making. Then there is the load to think about – and trying to pack on more than is really allowed – the complicated paperwork, and the long hours behind the wheel, with the risk of falling asleep, or the dangers of a tyre bursting. And that is an occurrence the drivers particularly dislike, because it is back-breaking work to remove one of the heavy wheels and then fit the spare onto the bolts of the hub.

By the year 1936 at the latest, the days when lorry drivers can regard themselves as adventurers and free spirits are over. They and the firms they work for have all been made compulsory members of the "RKB", the National Motor



Home from a tour – a well-deserved drink

Vehicle Operators Association, by the National Socialists, without anyone suspecting at the time that this is a further step in the secret preparations for war. Josef Fiege of Greven, too, is one of the 9,000 German carriers, with their altogether 13,000 lorries.

But business is still going splendidly. There are now seven lorries in regular operation. The mileages covered and the tonnages carried are increasing. And there is also enough money to buy more land. Josef Fiege Senior purchases 50 acres of uncultivated land in the hamlet of Greven-Wentrup, employing jobless people from Greven to make it fit for farming use.

The head of the family is especially proud of his youngest son Heinrich, now aged 17 and attending agricultural college, who is mad about horses and is such a talented rider that there are now also two saddle horses – Festa and Fari-na – in the stables. Heinrich wins prizes at the events of the "Westphalian Provincial Riding and Driving Clubs", but also entertains the spectators with what are nothing short of circus tricks, performing handstands on a horse that is lying on the ground.

1937

Following the completion of additional garages at Hüttruper Strasse in January 1937, on 2nd April of that year father and son go to a notary and agree in writing that the Junior will have the long-distance haulage business, while the Senior, now nearly 66 years old, will continue to run the forwarding business. They found a new firm, "Fiege & Co. GmbH", domiciled in Greven, and with Josef Fiege Senior as managing director drawing an annual salary of 6,000 Marks.

In August of the same year, the two partners make a final separation of the business operations. The long-distance



transport business is to be "managed without restriction by Fiege Junior for his own and sole account". Three lorries used for local transport are to be retained in the possession of "Fiege & Co. GmbH". The son buys all the machinery in the vehicle repair shop from the father, including turning lathes, welding apparatus and vehicle washing machine, as well as the office equipment, while the stocks of oil and petrol at the filling station and the tyres are also made over to him free of charge.

A few weeks later, the parents and son also sign an inheritance agreement, so that as far as can be foreseen, everything is ordered in the best possible way and Josef Fiege Senior should be able to sit back and enjoy the fruits of his life's work.

But the peace is suddenly shattered by a judgment passed against him for tax evasion. Evidently motivated by revenge, the two brothers from Emsdetten who were dismissed from the firm and have set up in competition with the Fieges have informed the tax authorities about business taxes not paid for the year 1936. Despite all their assertions of not having knowingly kept the books wrongly and of not having benefited by this in any way, the Senior is ordered to pay a fine of 90,000 Marks, and the Junior one of 10,000 Marks for aiding and abetting.

This is then also followed by a disciplinary hearing before the "German Work Front – North Westphalia Region", which ends with a "severe reprimand". This is bad enough in itself, but the real problem comes with a letter from the President of the Regional Administration, Count Droste zu Hülshoff, of 24th January 1938, withdrawing the permit to carry on long-distance transport. This is a most severe blow, as it virtually means a shutdown of the business, even if does not also extend to the local transport activities.



Dr. Lauscher, a solicitor in Greven, immediately enters an appeal, arguing that:

"The offence committed is a very minor one. This is also the view taken by the Münster Rural Region Tax Office. It only occurred because until 1st April 1936 Fiege Senior did not maintain proper bookkeeping. Besides the forwarding business, he also carries on farming and a public house. Through the highly complex nature of all these activities, Fiege Senior lost sight of the details of his business. All the profits were ploughed back into the firm. Fiege Senior and Junior have, without capital but with enormous effort – Fiege Junior initially working himself as a lorry driver – over a period of ten years built up the large enterprise of today from a small haulage business. They have worked day and night."

The lawyer further points out that father and son have been pioneers in the business of long-distance transport, underlining the importance of the firm in the context of national defence policy, and additionally drawing attention to the fact that the Fieges' case also has the support of the President of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. To avert the ruin of these bold entrepreneurs, he pleads for the operating permit to be restored.

1938

The appeal is successful. Three months later, on 10th May 1938, the President of the Regional Administration revokes his decision of January. So the long-distance transport business can be resumed. But sadly, this good news no longer reaches Josef Fiege Senior. He has died four days earlier, not far short of his 67th birthday. The official letter arrives on the day of his funeral.



4

Alone at the wheel –

Josef Fiege Junior



Much as he feels the loss of his father, for Josef Fiege, no longer the "Junior", it means that he now has undivided responsibility for the entire property and assets of both businesses and is now free to realize a long-nurtured goal, namely to do everything necessary to "expand the financially much more successful long-distance transport business, increase the fleet of lorries, win new customers and operate new routes."

1939

The first thing Fiege does is to draw lessons from the tax disaster. In May 1939, Erhard Specht, a man qualified in accounting and who will later become general manager of the part of the business formerly run by his father, takes charge of bookkeeping in the office, where the staff is altogether increased. The repair activities are also placed on a new footing. Josef Fiege concludes an agreement with Karl Determann, the owner of a vehicle repair shop, providing for the latter to take over the existing facilities on the Fiege premises on condition that he chiefly work for the Fiege transport business.



7.5 ton Mercedes-Benz in front of the garage at Grüner Weg

Four new lorries are bought, bringing the total to 18, together with their trailers. Compared to 1936, this is an impressive increase.



Vehicle line-up at the Fiege premises

As planned, the textile industry is the main customer for these transport capacities. Greven is a centre for cotton, Emsdetten for jute. The raw materials have to be collected and taken to the mills, and the finished goods delivered to the customers. The main port is Bremen, where cotton is landed from North America, Brazil, India, Pakistan and, in especially high quality, from Egypt, and is then made up at Schründer and Cramer in Greven into high-quality damask fabrics. But it is also woven into bed sheets, ticking for mattresses or drill for working clothes. The bales of jute are processed at Biederlack in Emsdetten, above all into potato sacks.

Fiege collects complete cargoes of cotton and jute from Bremen. But from there it is then taken not only to the textile mills in the Münsterland but also to firms in the region around Magdeburg, from where cellulose can be carried on the way back. The bales of jute weigh 180 kilograms each. So for the two-man team of each vehicle, it is heavy work loading them on to the back of the lorry. Naturally, the boss has given orders for the maximum load, plus a little bit more, always to be packed onto the lorries and trailers.



Accidents will happen – despite all due care and attention

In the night from 2nd to 3rd May 1939, the driver Vogel-sang, at the wheel of a brand-new Büssing NAG six-wheeler, loses control of his vehicle in a bend on the way from Bremen to Osnabrück. Immediately, there is talk of overloading. Josef Fiege asserts that the accident was due to a broken track rod and makes a claim against the manufacturers. But they have already received a written statement from one Willy D. in Burgsteinfurt, who evidently sees this as an opportunity to cause trouble for Josef Fiege, alleging that

with 75 bales of jute on board, i.e. a weight of 13.5 tons, the lorry was dangerously overloaded.

Defamation of this kind, especially from competitors, is normal on such a hotly contested market. Indeed, Josef Fiege has to take legal actions on several occasions to counter charges of this kind, but always wins.

1939

In the summer of 1939, Josef Fiege, farmer and freight haulier, sees himself at a high point in his life. Four years previously he has married Emmi Nordenkemper, and is now the father of two small daughters who are both in the best of health; the business is growing, there are 34 drivers on the payroll, and the profit expectations are good. The public house is well patronized, and everything also seems to be well-ordered on the farm. This has meanwhile grown to 34 hectares and is run by a manager, Josef Fiege's 60-year-old mother, his brother Heinrich, and a girl.



Fiege lorry, doing service as people carrier

But the pleasure in these achievements is clouded: Hitler wants war. As a freight haulier, Josef Fiege is able to see the

preparations that are going on for war more clearly than others. All the vehicles are recorded, and there are visits from officials in Münster who are responsible for "transport companies of importance for the military effort and national supply". Already at the end of 1937, a "General Agency for the Motor Vehicle Sector" has been established in Berlin, charged with reducing the large variety of types in the automobile industry and ensuring the suitability of lorries for military purposes.

Also as a farmer, Josef Fiege gets to hear a lot of rumours, even if sometimes only whispered by people behind their hands. And in the autumn of the previous year, the local farm leaders have received a confidential document entitled "Ministerial Order on the Introduction of Wartime Food Management".

Josef Fiege sees the rallies, the flag ceremonies and torch-light processions of the Nazis, he hears the speeches of the Führer on the radio, and he has not forgotten the rejoicing over the annexation of Austria in the previous year, or the promises of Dr. Meyer, National Socialist District Commander in Münster, to turn the city into a capital of the movement. Since May 1937, Josef Fiege has been a member of the party, a step which as the head of a transport business and an owner of lorries he has been forced to take. He is also a member of the Red Cross, and has in any case nothing against anything that will make Germany great again. But as a loyal member of the Roman Catholic Church, it disturbs and upsets him that the bells are no longer allowed to be rung at his local parish church of St Martinus, that all church societies in Greven have had to be disbanded, that church-run schools have been prohibited and that crucifixes are no longer allowed to hang on the classroom walls.



On 1st September 1939, the Germany army attacks Poland; two days later, Great Britain and France declare war on Germany. The Second World War has started. Five days earlier, an official but confidential letter from the Provincial President of Westphalia is received at the office, which states:



" Your company has been declared a transport company of importance for the military effort and national supply. You are part of the 'Münster – Rural Region' Motor Transport Pool and are required to follow the directions of the Director of the Pool. His address is: F. Blothenberg, Director, Münster (Westf.), Mittelhafen 18. Your tasks and duties are

as stated in the attached information sheet. You are required, until further notice, to carry on your business as hitherto, except that long-distance transports may only be undertaken with my prior permission."



The " attached information sheet" , divided into the sections "Tasks" , "Status" and " Duties" , is tantamount to a document of expropriation. The company now virtually belongs to the state, must act as directed, has to report any internal changes, and is required, on the orders of the motor transport pools responsible for local transport, to drive to railway stations, ports, and armament, war and general supply establishments, and to assure the transport of other essential goods. Finally, Point 3d states: " Every member has a duty to exercise increased vigilance for the prevention of arson,

damage or destruction to facilities as well as sabotage of any kind. All observations of this kind must be reported without delay to myself and to the office of the State Police."



A Fiege idea – loading ramps to match the height of the lorries

In the first days of the war, business goes on very much as usual. On 4th September, 166 sacks of jute yarn are transported from "Erste Feinjutespinnerei", a jute spinning mill in Brandenburg, to Biederlack in Emsdetten. But of the 34 drivers, 20 have been called up for military service and are either being fitted out in the barracks in Münster or are even already marching through Poland.

Josef's very much younger brother Heinrich, now aged 19, is a farmer, so his conscription is deferred. He is finally called up in October 1940, a few months after the first air raid on Münster. He is ordered to Lübben on the River Spree for training, and from there direct to the front in France. As the head of a transport company which is of importance for the war effort, Josef Fiege is indispensable – a privilege that many people envy him.

1940

On the last day of the year 1940, he founds the "Benefit Fund of the Firm of Josef Fiege, Long-Distance Transport, Greven", a registered society which has the object of supporting needy employees with small loans or gifts of cash. However, the number of his employees has been severely depleted. As in the case of other transport firms, the military authorities have simply come and taken away many of his vehicles, complete with drivers. And after the war, the question of whether they were requisitioned, i.e. expropriated without compensation, or only borrowed by the state, will cause many problems.

The military authorities simply help themselves. All the proud, heavy, six-wheeled lorries that should be rolling along Germany's motorways, now find themselves on the war fronts, painted in field grey camouflage. But there, they are completely out of place, providing easy, sitting targets for attacks from the air, and proving next to useless even in easy terrain but especially in the wide expanses of the Soviet Union, where they become hopelessly stuck in the sludge and snow or are simply abandoned for lack of spare parts. Fiege's Büssings and VOMAGs are taken by the Luftwaffe, the German air force, for deployment on the Western Front. All that he now has left are a handful of drivers and six or seven lorries, most of them old ones that had already been taken out of service and which are now restored for use as best as possible. Approval has to be obtained for every single trip, with a permit to be collected each time from the office of the Motor Transport Pool at the canal port in Münster. On each occasion, Aenne Fiege, who has now been working in the office for six years, has to mount her bicycle and ride the nearly 30 kilometres to Münster and back, as that is the only place where the permits and the necessary fuel coupons can be obtained.



Due to the shortage of tyres, the maximum speed for lorries has long been limited to 25 kilometres per hour, and the allocations of diesel fuel are becoming less and less all the time. The remaining Fiege drivers therefore have to learn and obtain a licence to operate vehicles powered by a wood-gas generator. Driving lorries with a "bathwater heater", as the wood-gas generators are known, is both unpopular and



A 1936 Hanomag tractor with solid rubber tyres, used for shunting

also potentially dangerous. The boiler is usually mounted vertically on the right, behind the cab. A complicated procedure has to be gone through before it is possible to set off on a journey: the generator first has to be filled with a layer of charcoal, up to the air jets; next, cubes of beech wood are placed on top of this; then, after closing the airtight top, the whole thing has to be lit using methylated spirit, paper, or easily burning wood. After that, it is a matter of waiting until, smelling horribly, sufficient carbon oxide gas to drive the engine is generated. On every tour, the lorry

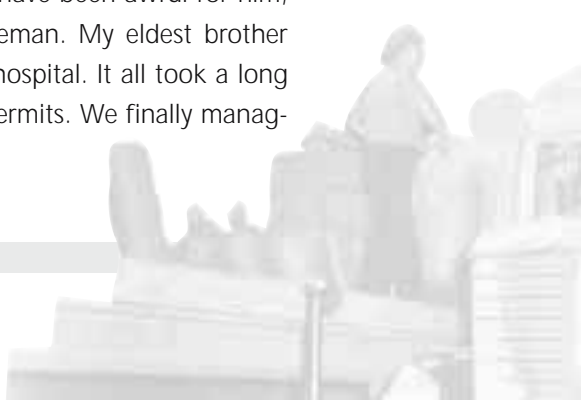
also has to take along the necessary quantities, because about every 20 kilometres the driver has to stop, raise the top of the producer, and fill up again with wood. From 1942, when liquid fuel is only allowed to be used for aircraft, tanks and front vehicles, virtually all the vehicles in the Münsterland are powered by wood-gas generators – including cars, where the sacks of wood have to be stowed on the back seats and in the boot.

At this time, the remaining Fiege lorries are mostly assigned by the Motor Transport Pool in Münster to carry food. Butter has to be brought from dairies in the country to the refrigerated warehouses in the towns and cities, grain to the mills, and coal from Ibbenbüren and the Ruhr district. Working for the old customers is now virtually impossible.

1942

In May 1942, Erhard Specht, who has been running the firm of "Fiege & Co. GmbH" as general manager since the death of Josef Fiege Senior, leaves the business. Initially, Josef Fiege takes his place, but then winds up the company, because since the beginning of the year it has ceased to do any business. However, the firm of "Josef Fiege Long-Distance Transport" continues to exist. Despite the name, it is not currently able to perform any long-distance transport – but the war will surely end one day.

In the same year, Heinrich Fiege, now aged 22, is severely wounded in the fighting around Orel in Russia, and in the arctic temperatures is taken to a military hospital near Warsaw. 56 years later his sister, Anna, remembers: "Because of the cold, he got thrombosis in his leg, and it had to be amputated. That must have been awful for him, being a farmer and a keen horseman. My eldest brother and I planned to visit him in the hospital. It all took a long time to get the necessary travel permits. We finally manag-



ed to get everything ready, packed up some things, and set off by train. We had to change trains in Osnabrück, and while we were there, an announcement came over the loudspeakers saying 'Would Mr. Fiege please come to information'. We did so, and were told that my brother had died that morning. So all we could do was to go back home."

So this means an end to all the wondering and planning as to whether Heinrich should take over the farm or join the firm once the war is over. The horses he had been so successful with are still in the stables, including a two-year-old chestnut mare, sired by Forscher, the famous stallion from Celle, which Heinrich had himself collected as a foal from Achthöven near Hanover and of which he had high hopes. It is altogether a year of misfortunes. Ten days before Christmas Eve, Josef Fiege's wife Emmi dies suddenly, leaving the three daughters Maria, Trudel and Margaret – the eldest five, the youngest only two – without a mother.

But life on the farm in Greven has to go on. Working in the fields is hard, using only horses and muscle power. There has long since ceased to be any fuel available for the few Lanz tractors in the village. Also in this war, there are visits from official "farm advisers" to monitor yields and check on the use of the feed and fertilizer allocations. District food offices specify, and monitor, how much has to be surrendered in the way of cereals, potatoes and cattle.

On the Fiege farm, everything is in shorter and shorter supply. But at least there is still enough to make sure nobody goes hungry. Old mother Fiege still bakes bread once a week, and despite being strictly prohibited, a pig is slaughtered now and again.

The mood among the much-depleted group of people who now gather every morning for prayers and coffee, home-made from barley or rye, is increasingly dejected. At night,

the eerie noise of the British and American bombers flying eastwards can be heard, together with the rattle of the German anti-aircraft batteries in their locations along the Dortmund-Ems Canal. The news is bad: capitulation of the German troops at Stalingrad in February 1943 and, almost every day, air raids on the city of Münster.

In the village itself, there are further causes of alarm. Curate Huesmann has been taken into preventive detention, four bells have been seized, and the procession on Corpus Christi Day has been banned. The Bishop of Münster,



5th August 1943 – Clemens August von Galen, the Bishop of Münster, in Greven

Clemens August von Galen, is therefore welcomed all the more enthusiastically when he comes to Greven to confirm the local children. Although it is strictly forbidden, church flags that had been hidden in attics can be seen flying from the tops of some houses.

This bishop is venerated by the faithful. In summer 1941, in a series of sermons in St Lamberti's Church in Münster, he denounced the Secret State Police, the Gestapo, and accused the government authorities of premeditated murder when nuns and monks were driven out and patients with mental disabilities removed from hospitals in Westphalia and taken away and killed. Now, in July 1943, a few weeks after another severe night-time bombing raid on Münster, he once again preaches against the propaganda of hatred and retaliation.

During these weeks, for safety reasons, more and more military offices are relocated, and Münster University Hospital, complete with all its medical equipment, is transferred to Bad Oeynhausen and Bad Salzuflen. This means a considerable amount of transport work that has to be done by the few remaining Fiege vehicles, under difficult conditions and always at the risk of attack from the air.

Despite the steadily deteriorating situation, a time in which it is extremely difficult for any civilian to travel, Josef Fiege manages to go to Belgium seven or eight times to check up in Vilvoorde on the use of his lorries that were requisitioned for use by the Luftwaffe. In December 1944, seven of his lorries and eight trailers are deployed on the Western Front at the NSKK Transport Brigade in Brussels, while a number of others are with the Speer Construction Brigade in Berlin. In Greven, there are now only two lorries left, setting off from the yard, where a concrete shelter has been built to provide protection from air raids, on their officially ordered missions.

From the west, the allied troops are starting to come nearer. Because of the constant attacks from low-flying aircraft, driving is becoming ever more hazardous. There is now

always a look-out sitting on the front mudguard to give the driver warning of approaching aircraft, so that with luck they will both have time to jump out and take cover somewhere, if only in a roadside ditch. The vehicles are repeatedly damaged, sometimes severely, and there are no materials available to make repairs.

The only good news for Josef Fiege during this period is that he becomes a father again, for the fourth time.

Two years after the death of his first wife, he has remarried in April 1944: Toni Naber, a farmer's daughter who has completed high school, from the Westerode part of Greven. She is a friend of Aenne Fischbach, and has already been working in the firm as a shorthand typist and commercial clerk since 1939. Now, on 8th February 1945, she gives birth to the long-hoped-for first son, who is baptized Heinrich Bernhard, but is later simply known as Heinz.

Even in the last few weeks of the war, five people are killed in Greven in an air raid, and before the village is occupied, the tower of St Martinus' is badly damaged by artillery fire. But Münster, the proud capital of Westphalia, lies completely in ruins. The heart of the city – the famous Prinzipalmarkt with its gabled houses, the Cathedral of St Paulus, the town houses of the Westphalian aristocracy and the baroque palace of the former prince-bishops – all the beautiful buildings and the symbols of its history have been razed to the ground.



1945

5

1945 –

A new beginning for Fiege after the defeat



1945

The German Reich has signed an unconditional surrender, and the war is over. The country is in ruins. Treks of refugees, groups of prisoners of war, the first soldiers returning home from the fronts – all of them ragged, and all of them hungry – can be seen moving along the pitted roads.

In Greven, both bridges across the Ems and the munitions depot at Gronenburg have been blown up. The entire Fiege premises – workshop, offices and warehouses – are occupied by British troops. At command headquarters, there are ideas of clearing everything and everybody out to make room for DP's, displaced persons. But this threat is averted by the establishment of a camp in the north of the village for former slave workers and prisoners of war. Mr. Embley, the liaison officer, declares that the business is needed and should take on special tasks for the occupation forces as a district repair shop. This means that while for some time Josef Fiege will not be master in his own house, things can at least still go on somehow, despite all the difficulties.



Josef Fiege, now aged 41, sees this moment is an opportunity. Through his circumspection and staying power, he has succeeded in bringing the business through the difficult years of the war; now, at the outset of peace, his experience and abilities will be needed all the more. Germany will have to be rebuilt, and that will not be possible without the transport of bricks and cement, steel, coal, food and clothes.

A temporary office is set up in what was the public bar, which now has no other use. His indispensable sister Aenne is there to help. She, who now bears the surname Fischbach, having married Karl Fischbach, the bank clerk in uniform, in 1943, is waiting anxiously for a sign of life from her husband. This finally arrives one day when a soldier from Coesfeld, who has already been discharged and sent home,

rides up on his bicycle with a note informing her that Karl is now a prisoner of war in Russia.

Efforts are made to establish a properly functioning office in the two public rooms of the pub. Half a dozen staff, together with a few drivers who have survived the war, do their best to put the boss's ideas into action. But it isn't easy. It is



Aenne Fischbach and her brother Josef Fiege

the British who give the orders, and they have to be asked for permission to do every little thing. For every journey, a permit has to be obtained from the transport office in Münster; diesel and petrol are still rationed and can only be obtained on coupons, while tyres and spare parts are not available at all.

The two lorries, still powered by wood-gas, are mainly employed in transporting food and collecting coal from

lbbenbüren and the Ruhr. Such tours are dangerous because the lorries are repeatedly plundered; when toiling slowly uphill, people let down the sides so the briquettes on the back tumble onto the road. There are also unpleasant encounters with foreigners – former prisoners of war or slave labourers who are roaming the countryside. On one occasion, the drivers of a Fiege lorry are forced at gunpoint by five armed men to transport stolen goods.

But Josef Fiege's main efforts are aimed at obtaining the additional vehicles that he so urgently needs. Two things now come in very useful: his powers of persuasion and his personal charm – shrewd but honest, humorous and reliable, and able to gain the trust of others. And secondly, the farm.

Fiege knows the people in the district administration office and also the other German administrative departments, and he knows how to approach them. But the British also take a liking to this big, strongly built man, who exudes optimism and who is always able to give technical advice and suggestions. However, it is the farm itself that provides the currency needed at this time: sausages in return for spare parts, pig halves in return for tyres.

1945

As early as December 1945, Josef Fiege succeeds in being issued with a document, written in English and German, from the Road Traffic Directorate for the Province of Westphalia and Lippe, headed "TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN" and stating: "The holder of this document is authorized to remove former vehicles of the former German Armed Forces from the vehicle pound in Greven. The said former German Armed Forces vehicles have been placed under the control of this office by the Military Government of the Province of Westphalia (307 p Mil. Gov. Dept.). Please permit the holder of this document to pass."



This paper bearing the stamp of the Provincial President is worth more than its weight in gold. Josef Fiege is allowed to take vehicles, still in their camouflage paint, and then strip them to assemble one functioning lorry out of several defective ones. He can remove any parts he needs, and use them himself or exchange them.



1945 – American troops on the station road in Greven

But he also buys in from outside the region: for example, two lorries, a Büssing four-and-a-half tonner and a Mercedes three-and-a-half tonner, from the firm of Münstermann in Göttingen, for a price of 8,000 Reichsmarks, plus 100 Reichsmarks "for the man who has guarded them" .

With a special permit from the occupation forces, Josef Fiege is allowed to enter captured material pounds – great

vehicle scrapyards – around Hamburg and Hanover to search for halfway decent parts, which are then restored for use in his own workshop by a master mechanic and a dozen assistants.



Seeing what parts can be used

The frequent trips he undertakes to these places in his field grey Mercedes 170 car are extremely productive. One time it might be Büssing chassis and Mercedes engines, which with imagination and skill can be combined in Greven to make a functioning lorry, on other occasions perhaps only axles and gearboxes.

1947

In the spring of 1947, together with workshop foreman Determann and an engineer from the construction firm of Hoch-Tief, he sets off to the vehicle yard at Rothenburg, with enough cash in his pockets to buy substantial quantities of materials. Against his custom, he allows Determann to take his place at the wheel. On a level crossing, the

vehicle is hit by a train, and Fiege is thrown out of the passenger seat and into a field. The two others are killed at once.

News of the accident, stating only that the driver and one of the other occupants has been killed, reaches the family in Greven. Josef Fiege's sister Aenne Fischbach, and her brother-in-law Josef Zaun, who was originally supposed to have gone on the trip to Rothenburg himself, set off in one of the lorries to the scene of the accident. The driver of the lorry, Mühlenkamp, is asked to identify the bodies, which have been laid out in a barn. Fortunately, he is able to inform the others who are waiting anxiously by that Josef Fiege is not one of them and that he has survived. After six weeks in hospital, he is able to return to Greven.

During this difficult time, he receives a piece of good news. His application of 28th June 1947 to the District Assessment Authority in Münster for compensation for requisition – i.e. the lorries seized during the war – has been granted and he will receive a sum of 213,481.80 Reichsmarks. A very welcome injection of capital, and just at the right time. Fiege is able to invest in further vehicles, so gradually, life in Greven is getting back to some semblance of normality.

But for most people, things at this time are still far from normal. By decree of the occupation forces of 23rd August 1946, issued by the Foreign Office in London, the State of North Rhine-Westphalia has now been created and the German administration is functioning as well as can be expected under the circumstances. But there are still many people on the verge of starvation, and there are thousands of refugees from the former eastern territories of Germany and people whose homes were destroyed in air raids with no roof over their heads. Black marketeering, bartering and smuggling is the order of the day. Every day, thousands of

people – on foot, by bicycle, by train, or by hitching a ride – come with empty bags or rucksacks from the Ruhr to the rural Münsterland, hoping to beg food from the farmers, or buy it in exchange for valuables: carpets, clocks, family jewellery and silver tableware, in return for bacon, eggs, bread or potatoes.

Inevitably, there are some farmers who exploit the need that others find themselves in, with the result that the Bishop of Münster, Michael Keller, sees no alternative but to appeal publicly to their consciences. He has an announcement printed with the title a "Message from the Bishop", warning them:

"Taking advantage of people in distress is a sin that cries to heaven. No amount of praying, churchgoing or taking the sacraments will help those who do so. God no longer lives in their hearts."

Many of these pitiable people also come to Greven in the search for food, and also find their way to the Fiege farm in the hope of help. On their tours to collect coal from the Ruhr, the drivers sometimes give them a ride back on the empty lorries.

Gertrud Pröbsting, who started work in the office in November 1945, remembers an amusing experience:

"There were often pretty young girls among them who wanted to get back to the Ruhr district. One of our drivers had already said he would take two of them back with him the next morning. But that didn't suit one of the other drivers, and he secretly put rotten apples in the wood-gas generator of his colleague's vehicle. So there this one was, first thing the next morning, trying to get the generator going, which of course it wouldn't, while the other driver was long since on his way with the girls. I wondered what would happen when they saw each other again. As you can



probably imagine, they set about each other like two fighting cocks. But then they had a drink together, and peace was restored."



Bad roads – a stranded lorry

Looking back from a distance, these years do not seem such a bad time, especially for the people in the country. Most have survived the war, and things are looking up.

At Fiege's, everybody is again like one big family, as they always were. They all have a sense of belonging together – the typists, office clerks, drivers, mechanics and commercial trainees. The first new one of these after the end of the war is Josef Grabbe, aged 17, whose father has signed his indentures in May 1947. They all eat together round one table, the apprentices in the antechamber. Every Friday, Grandma Fiege makes potato pancakes, and every Saturday there is "Stielmus" – a local vegetable – with cream. When the turnips need pulling, the grain is ripe or a thunderstorm is in the offing, it is a case of everyone out of the office and into the fields. The drivers, too, have to help with the farm

work when there is no driving to do – loading straw, picking potatoes, scything the ditches. Josef Fiege makes sure that no one is ever idle. Josef Michels, a driver who spent altogether 45 years at Fiege, remembers: "We once had a driver who wouldn't help with the farm work; he got his cards straight away. I said to him, I think you're daft not wanting to work in the fields. I love it."



1948

A day that marks a major event for everybody in these days is the 20th June 1948, later often referred to as Zero Hour. This is the day of the "currency reform" when the "DM" is introduced. It is a Sunday. Everybody is given DM 40 to start them off, and they are told that this is a chance for everyone to make a new start.

Josef Fiege is fortunate with the currency reform in two ways. As an owner of real property, land and property, he is among the winners, while those with savings in cash and only a wage to live on are the losers. Additionally, the new currency is introduced in good time for this year's harvest which, after many poor harvests during the war because of the exhausted land, turns out to be very good. So the profit

from the farm is able to help the haulage business, which on 21st June, the day of the opening balance sheet in DM, has grown to an impressive 41 lorries, with trailers.

The next two years, though, have their ups and downs. There are happy events: on 13th April 1949, Hugo, the second son, is born, and then, after 13 years of labour service, fighting, and captivity as a POW, Karl Fischbach, Josef Fiege's brother-in-law, finally comes home from Russia. His health is not good, but after some time he is able and willing to follow Josef Fiege's suggestion and, like his wife, work in the business.

1949

But there are also troubles. On 14th June 1949, Josef Fiege is ordered by the court in Münster to pay a fine of DM 40,000. This is the amount of the compensation paid for his vehicles requisitioned during the war and which he is now charged with having wrongfully claimed because, it is al-



Karl Fischbach and Josef Fiege

leged, he in fact sold seven lorries and eight trailers to the army, with the result that they were no longer his property and so not eligible for compensation. Josef Fiege lodges an appeal.

None of this slows down his energy or his determination to move forward. He buys land once more. This time, it is his neighbour Bernhard Topphoff who is prepared to sell. With the additional land, he is able to expand his business premises to 28,000 square metres. Altogether, things are progressing. The British finally move out, though leaving the property behind them in a poor state. Inside, the buildings are in a mess, the furnishings smashed and some of them burnt, and important documents, including social security records, have been destroyed. But at least it is possible to move back into the old offices at last, and it also seems likely that the pub can soon be reopened.

The 1950s, the time which will go down in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany as the Economic Miracle, also get off to a good start for the Fieges. In March 1950, the appeal of the previous year is successful and the fine is lifted by the court, which finds that Josef Fiege was indeed the owner of the vehicles until the end of the war. Also privately, there is reason for joy. Toni Fiege gives birth to her fourth child, a second daughter after Hildegard, who is christened Anne in St Martinus' Church.



6

Success and expansion –

The Fiege business and the Economic Miracle



The fifties get off to a promising start. The whole country is building, production is on the up, and everybody is working hard. In the Münsterland, the textile industry gets under way again. In Nordhorn, in the neighbouring state of Lower Saxony, the firm of NINO causes a stir with "Nino-Flex", its new poplin fabric. All the factories need coal, which Fiege transports in his lorries from the mines at Ibbenbüren and Oer-Erkenschwick. They also have to dispose of the cinders from the boilers, which can be used for surfacing the rough farm tracks and the potholed pavements in the villages round about. The whole outdoor area of Fiege's haulage premises is surfaced with this material to prevent the heavy lorries from sinking in.



Handling mixed cargo

The demand for cotton and jute is growing. Cotton is landed in Hamburg and jute in Bremen, as before the war. But it is not only the raw materials which have to be delivered

punctually to the Greven Cotton Mill, to Schilgen and Biederlack in Emsdetten or Kumpers in Rheine; the finished products then have to be taken to their customers. Jute sacks to the boggy lowlands of northern Germany where peat is dug, and fabrics and coats to Berlin.

There is now also a new area of business, the transport of mixed cargo, although the drivers do not like having to handle the stock lots, weighing 200 to 500 kilograms each, to make up loads of three to five tons. They prefer handling the familiar 180 kilograms bales of jute, working in pairs and with the aid of a sack trolley, and stowing them on the lorry and trailer.

1952

In 1952, the firm buys 14 lorries. Some of them are new, products of the German lorry factories that have now started working again. Except for VOMAG in Plauen, all the big



Nanny aunt Anni, Toni and Josef Fiege, Anne, Hugo and Heinz
(from left to right)

pre-war names are back in business: Mercedes, Büssing, Krupp with its giant 210 b.h.p. "Titan", MAN and Faun. Josef Fiege swears by Büssing in Brunswick, a firm with a long history and which as early as 1950 can celebrate the completion of its 10,000th post-war lorry, an S 8000. The constantly growing fleet is proudly displayed in the yard, and in particular the new Büssing NAGs, mighty, long-nosed vehicles weighing 16 tons, with six-cylinder engines producing 150 b.h.p. and able to move a load of 8.2 tons. These have a divided windscreen and a distinctive yellow triangle that has to be raised whenever a trailer is hitched on behind. The doors of the lorries bear the name "Fiege" in bold lettering.



Six-wheel VOMAG at the Fiege fuel station

Wolfgang Schründer, a son of the textile family and at that time aged 16, can still recall the scene in his mind's eye: "In summer, I often used to go to the gliding field at Hüttrup on my bike. One of the big attractions was going past Fiege's. I was always fascinated by the lorries and wonder-



Weekend – and all the lorries lined up in military order

ing whether they'd got any new ones. The old man always made sure that at the weekend they were all lined up smartly, in military order. It always gave me a thrill when I could see them through the fence. The actual buildings themselves gave a rather dilapidated impression. But I suppose Fiege thought his capital was in the vehicles, not in bricks and mortar. I'm sure he must have been an extremely careful man who turned over each penny ten times before he spent it, so if he had to put a new roof on a building, he would use roofing felt, and that would have to do. In that respect, he was years ahead of the textile mill owners. Some of them built factories with lots of elaborate decoration that was completely unnecessary."

In the early 1950s, Josef Fiege is a "big fish in a little pond". Both in Greven itself and in the whole area around Emsdetten, Mesum and Rheine, he has no real competition. The nearest big firm is Hellmann, but they are in Osnabrück. Business is in fact so good that Josef Fiege can start to think in completely new dimensions. Expansion and new premises at a new location are what he now has in mind. So new buildings are put up at Wentrup. These are essential to cope

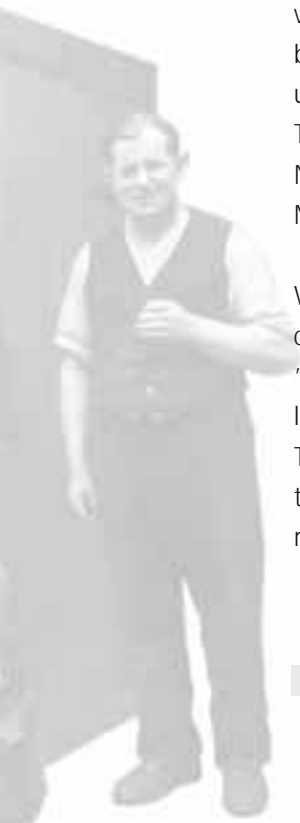


1952

with the constantly increasing volume of goods being handled by the firm, but by 1952 also the workshops and office space are no longer big enough for the 80 employees. An even more important step is the expansion outside the borders of Greven. Within only three years, Josef Fiege sets up branches in Haltern, Neuss, Schötmar and Letmathe-Östrich. This is followed in 1955 by an office in nearby Emsdetten, manned by a clerk working in direct contact with the textile firm of Biederlack and the jute spinning mill and who is responsible for consolidating the loads and allocating vehicles.

But while the branches have a good deal of operating autonomy, the big decisions are still taken at the head office. This is where all the strings come together and where Josef Fiege, together with his brother-in-law Karl Fischbach, who is authorized to act and sign on behalf of the company, and Karl's wife Aenne, have everything under control. Work goes on almost round the clock, in the freight and tariff department and in the bookkeeping, with late shifts and weekend work. In the great shed, all the goods that have been collected by the lorries on their various routes are unloaded and then re-sorted according to destination. These are written on big signs: Ruhr District, Rhineland, NORTH: Hamburg/Bremen, Bielefeld, Kassel, Berlin, SOUTH: Munich.

Willi Wilmer, who already started as a trainee forwarding clerk during the war, still remembers how things were: "Heavens, you wouldn't believe how hard we worked. The long-distance tours used to set off on Wednesdays, so on Tuesdays we would have to work till late in the night to get them ready. There were three people there every evening to make all the preparations. And then when the lorries came



back, the first thing the drivers had to do was settle up. They had to hand in the money they'd collected on the tour at the cash desk. Vehicle planning was done alternately by Mr. Fischbach and Mr. Nolte." And his colleague Josef Grabbe adds: "Everybody had to muck in. You can't imagine it. We would have 400 small shipments, and they all had to be processed in the evening. The first lorries would roll in at about 6, and the last ones at 8 o'clock. That's when things really started. All the waybills had to be written. One person would work out the distance in kilometres, another one the freight charges, then all of that would go to the planning department and the shipments would be allocated according to routes."

The most distant destinations are Berlin and Munich. Initially, there were also deliveries to Switzerland, but these were discontinued because border clearance took too long. Following division of the country into West Germany and East Germany, there are frequent difficulties on the tour to Berlin. Besides the normal waybill, a special Berlin Consignment Note with seven copies also has to be presented. If the border officials find even the smallest typing mistake, they sometimes order the entire lorry to be unloaded. On one occasion, it is discovered that the driver was formerly a member of the armed wing of the SS and he is arrested by the East German police. Josef Fiege, together with the shipping manager of NINO in Nordhorn and a government official from Bonn, has to use all his efforts and powers of persuasion to get the driver and the shipment released, and it takes a week to do so.

The establishment of the Bundeswehr, the German Armed Forces, means an increase in the number of tours to Munich. To enable uniforms to be sewn on Monday, a lorry leaves Greven on Saturday, taking a trailer-load of fabrics to



Heading south

Göppingen; here, cutting is done on Sunday, and then the journey continues from there to the Bavarian capital.

"That was quite a trip with the long-nosed Büssing 150," recalls Rudolf Keiper, who at that time had been a driver with Fiege for three years. "It would only do 58 km/h, at most. So the driving time to Munich was 20 hours. At that time, all the bridges were still in ruins, so you couldn't keep on the motorway all the time. You had to constantly turn off and use the ordinary roads, which were nothing like what they are today. You can't imagine it now. They were not much more than farm tracks, with potholes everywhere. But there would be all these lorries driving along them. And the worst thing was when two tyres went at the same time, which occasionally happened. After all, most of them were re-treads, but even the new ones weren't much better either."

Hans Galen, then a schoolboy in Greven and later to become director of Münster City Museum, hitches a ride on one of these tours together with a friend. They are planning a bicycle tour to Italy, and Galen takes advantage of his father's acquaintanceship with Josef Fiege to get a lift for part of the way.

"We were allowed to go on the back, and the tour we got was a transport of jute, a lorry and trailer, taking huge bales of jute from Greven to Munich. There was a bunk bed in the driver's cab, so the two drivers took turn and turn about and the journey was non-stop day and night. The average speed was 40 kilometres an hour, which was the best they could manage. In 1951, the roads were still in an absolutely dreadful state. It was only possible to use sections of the motorway because a lot of bridges had been blown up in the war and not yet rebuilt, so it took ages till we finally reached Munich. It was a very hard ride, lying on the bales of jute on the back of the lorry, with our bikes tied down so they wouldn't fall off."

At that time, there are some remarkable vehicles on the roads, in some cases huge combinations of one lorry pulling two trailers, and with a length of more than 25 metres. Pouring out smoke, they can only creep uphill at walking pace. If the weight is too much, the trailers sometimes have to be pulled up one at a time. The police tend to turn a blind eye. They rarely check the weight, which is nearly always exceeded, or the tyres, which are often worn down to the canvas, or the time the drivers have spent behind the wheel, which is usually far too long. Even into the 1950s, the drivers still see themselves as a special breed, as kings and heroes of the road, fulfilling the dream of freedom as portrayed in Hans Albers' 1953 film "At Night on the Roads".

Their workplace behind the wheel is austere, the bench seat hard and non-adjustable, the noise deafening, and the bunk bed, known as the "swallow's nest", confined. A heater is still an unknown luxury, in cold weather, a rug over the knees has to suffice. And when one of the drivers needs to "pay a call", this is frequently done out of the door with the vehicle still moving, because once stopped, it is hard to get the heavy load up to speed again.

1953

Rules and regulations are introduced by the government in Bonn in 1953. As a result, lorry and trailer combinations may no longer exceed a length of 20 metres, vehicles over 7.5 tons must be fitted with a tachograph, and the drivers must keep a work record book.

There are many accidents involving lorries, especially due to defective brakes or bursting tyres caused by the horseshoe nails that are lying around everywhere.

Fortunately, the Fiege business is spared any serious accidents. This is partly due to the quality of the workshop, but also to the technical interest and expertise of the boss. The growing fleet of lorries is his pride and joy. He knows how to handle the drivers, who treat his vehicles with care, calls them all by their first names, talks to them in the local dialect, and with his caring, paternalistic way creates a good working climate. Four of his drivers and their families live at Gimbter Weg, close by the firm, in the so-called Drivers' House.

Josef Fiege, known to his friends as "Jöppe", is well-liked by his staff, who much appreciate his social attitude and his readiness to help. "He was alright, the best there was," one of his drivers remembers. "He would do anybody a favour. You could get anything from him. If somebody was building a house, he would supply sand that didn't have to be paid



for. He would arrange for materials and allow the window frames to be made in the carpenter's shop. All you had to do was ask afterwards how much it cost. He even helped people to find land for building on."

With building loans and financial support from the benefit fund, Josef Fiege also looks after the private well-being of his people. But it is particularly the small gestures that make him so well-liked. "Here's a chicken, it'll go down well on Sunday," he would say to one of the drivers. Or he appears in the great shed with sandwiches and drinks for the people on the late shift.

Despite his affability, Josef Fiege, now approaching 50, is a man with authority and standing. He does not say much, but when he does speak, it means something and people



In the pub – Josef Fiege, Gertrud Zaun née Fiege, and Karl Fischbach

do what he says. Josef Fiege is a typical Westphalian, a farmer with a freight business, or a freight forwarder with a farm. He makes an impressive figure, walking around the business in his simple clothes, with thick shoes on his feet, a huntsman's hat on his head, and his dachshund Walli at his heels. His strengths lie in his dependability, his sense for figures, his grasp of complicated technical matters, his nose for good business opportunities, and his ability to deal with people – not only his employees but also his customers. He always finds the right tone, whether with the shipping managers of big companies, public officials, mayors or regional administration officers.



Bernhard Moss on his regular tour from Greven to Munich

Totalling nearly 40, the drivers are the biggest and, in their opinion, most important group of people in the company. In the mid-1950s, there is as yet no regular Christmas bonus, so all are given DM 100 as a gift, plus a voucher for working shoes from a shop in Greven and a second voucher



Hugo Fiege



Heinz Fiege



Josef and Toni Fiege with the children Maria, Trudel, Margret, Heinz, Hildegard, Hugo and Anne



Maria Fiege with her daughter Mimi and grandchild



Josef Fiege

for an outfit of grey working clothes, comprising two pairs of trousers, a jacket and a cap, that can be exchanged in Dortmund or Düsseldorf. But the other staff, too, are all loaded into a bus on a Sunday in December and driven to Brenningmeyer or Neckermann, the clothing stores, who open their back door specially for the Fiege staff, where they are allowed to choose clothes for DM 300 each.

For some time now, the Fiege pub has also been back in operation, which means there is now somewhere the drivers can gather in the evenings to talk about their experiences on the long tours. For the boss, this produces mixed feelings: on the one hand, it means good beer sales, but on the other, he needs drivers who will be fit for work in the morning. Following renovation, the pub is once again an attractive place in typical Münsterland style, with dark stained oak, tables made of light-coloured ash and scrubbed with sand, a massive bar and leaded windows. Custom is good, and so are sales.

Josef Fiege has every right to be satisfied: his two sons and five daughters are thriving, the transport business and workshop are doing well, and also the farm, which he always keeps a careful eye on, is earning a good profit. So all in all: the land and the business are flourishing.



7

■ Transport · Forwarding ·
Bodymaking · Tankers



From 1950, Greven is able to call itself a "town". After several fruitless applications to the authorities – the first as early as 1895 – what used to be known as "the biggest village in the Münsterland" is now, at last, a fully-fledged town, albeit a relatively small one, having a population of only 12,000, but through incorporation of the districts of "Greven right of the Ems" and "Greven left of the Ems", one of the biggest in terms of area in the whole of North Rhine-Westphalia. Consequently the new town, whose foundations as a location for industry were already laid in the 19th century through the Greven Cotton Spinning Mill and the link-up to the burgeoning railway network, is now well set for the future.



The 50th newly assembled lorry on the boss's 50th birthday

In the mid-1950s, the time of post-war reconstruction and the beginnings of prosperity for the still young republic, the world of Greven is still ordered on the old pattern. The local

"nobility" is still made up of the textile industrialists. They live in villas, own land, go hunting, play tennis, and keep themselves aloof. The middle class includes public officials, merchants, craftsmen and professionals. Finally, there is the relatively big group of more than 3,000 industrial workers and their families. The textile families and the middle-class families see each other on Sundays in church. They know each other, and they know their place in society.

1955

Josef Fiege is now one of the bigger local businessmen. By 1955, his fleet of vehicles has grown to 56 lorries and trailers, and he employs 135 blue and white collar staff. At more than half a million DM, the profit has increased by more than 250 percent over the previous year.

Despite all these external marks of success, he does not give himself airs. He remains a modest man, can still be seen driving a horse and cart now and again when something needs moving on the farm, or serving behind the bar in the pub. Without making a lot of fuss, he helps people in need, gives advice when it is asked for, and lends people money, even though he knows that in many cases he will never get it back. Josef Fiege is on the parish council, supports the Red Cross, and gives to the clubs and societies of the town when they come knocking on his door. He continues to play his role as the head of the family. Because of the size of the business, the drivers and office staff can no longer sit with him round the dinner table; instead, there is now his mother, very advanced in years but still a strong personality who keeps a sharp eye on everything, his wife Toni with the seven children and the kitchen maids and helps. There are often 18 to 20 people seated round the table, with Josef Fiege at the head, who always says grace.

Josef Fiege has been very fortunate with his second wife. She is as intelligent as she is hard-working, and not only





1953 – firm's outing to the Hermann Monument

manages to get along with her sometimes difficult mother-in-law, but also to deal with all the other things: the farm, the pub, and her big family.

Heinz Fiege, the eldest son, says of his mother: " She managed it all very well. She was a highly intelligent woman, and strong. But at first she really had to work hard to cope with everything, with the result that through the constant stress she wasn't always well. She was a very kind-hearted person, and got us through all our difficulties. She saw all the children as hers, not her own four children and then the other

three. We were all her children, and that does her tremendous credit. We were all treated the same. There was never any talk of step-children. I think that does her great honour. She brought us all up in exactly the same way."

And his younger brother Hugo also remembers his father's methods of education: "He was extremely generous and gave us lots of freedom; the only times he was ever really strict was if we went against his principles. The most important thing for him was honesty. If one of us children ever lied, we got a belting. But never apart from that. The one thing he couldn't stand was dishonesty. He believed that you have to stand up for what you've done. And he made us. If he knew we'd done something wrong, he would take us into the barn, where the cows were, and ask. Then he would expect us to stand up straight and say yes, I did it. And that would be the end of it."

Above all, Josef Fiege wants his two sons to do well for themselves. He intends for them to have a good education. Not like himself, just elementary school and two half-years at farming school in the winter time. Nearly everything he knows is what he has read for himself, heard, and thought for himself. Every day, at the mid-morning break, he reads the newspaper in the kitchen and also switches on the radio to listen to the schools programme.

The elder daughters first attended the nearby local elementary school, before going on to higher school. Hugo is now in his first year at primary school in Greven, where children of four grades are all taught together in one classroom, sitting at old-fashioned desks, and "encouraged" by the cane. Accompanied by the dachshund, his father walks with him through the fields nearly every evening, listening to his son's ideas.



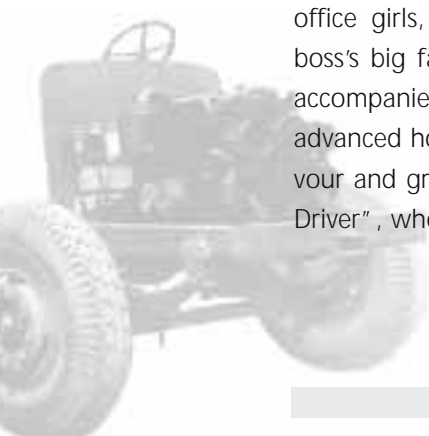
Both boys are brought up as good Catholics, and are servers at St Martinus Church. Heinz is the more boisterous and more impatient of the two, sometimes full of wild ideas. He is strong, sporty and, like his Uncle Heinz who was killed in the war, a keen horseman. He can milk cows and plough, works in the fields at harvest time, is always to be found among the lorries, and helps in the workshop and at loading and unloading the vehicles. Only school work is not much to his taste. After a year away at boarding school, he starts to go to intermediate school in Emsdetten. But Josef Fiege is convinced that his eldest son has inherited his talents and will one day make a good freight forwarder, while the younger one could take over the farm.



The business has now reached a size that calls for all the concentration and effort of the man at the top. The good old days, when all the firm was one big family who could gather in the bar of the pub, are over.

1957

In order to give everybody the sense of belonging, there is a firm's outing every year. Occasionally, this might be a trip to the GRUGA Hall in Essen, but usually it is to somewhere nearby – in most cases a country pub that has a room big enough to hold everyone. On such evenings, copies of the "Songbook of the Firm of Fiege – Forwarding, Long-Distance Haulage, Greven (Westf.)" are handed round, "to be returned after use". And then all the mechanics, drivers, office girls, forwarding clerks, the caretaker and all the boss's big family join in singing the old traditional songs, accompanied by one of the drivers on the accordion. At an advanced hour, one that is always sung with particular fervour and gravity is No. 6, the "Song of the Long-Distance Driver", whose tear-jerking verses go something like this:





Liederbuch



Fiege

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Das Buch bleibt Eigentum der Firma und ist nach jeder Veranstaltung zurückzugeben.

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From time to time, a photographer is called in from Münster to take a group photo of the growing workforce, all in best Sunday dress or dark suit and tie, lined up before the row of vehicles.

But such things are by the way. What counts is moving forward. One thing Josef Fiege does not like is standing still. And one result of this is his idea of vehicle construction. He is a firm believer that the lorry itself should weigh as little as possible so as to allow it to carry as much as possible, because only the payload earns money. He finds all the lorries and trailers far too heavy. And what is the point of having a workshop with master mechanics and bodymakers, if all they do is repair?

As a result, he buys in axles, wheels, canvas tops and all the bits and pieces for the superstructure and combines these



Quality work – fitting a trailer axle

with parts taken from old vehicles. Hexagonal pieces can be cut out of the side members of the chassis, without any reduction in stability. The result is a new, lightweight Fiege trailer.

But that is still not enough for the Fiege technicians and tinkerers, who are "married to Büssing". They also plan to make the cabs of the lorries lighter and better. So the boss can often be seen, standing in the yard with Jopp Dömers, the smith, drawing plans in the sand with his foot. "Try it like that. That should do it!" For writing and making proper drawings on paper is not Josef Fiege's thing.

Watched by the police, the drivers collect naked Büssing chassis from Münster, fitted only with the engine and with wooden seats temporarily bolted to the floor behind the steering wheel. Each finished lorry, with platform and can-



Light-weight trailer chassis – made by Fiege

vas top, is given its own chassis number, which always begins with 69575. These are the digits corresponding to the letters of the alphabet that spell the name "Fiege". This number is then followed by the actual serial number.

"These driver's cabs and platforms were made to such fantastic quality," Wolfgang Schründer reports, "that the lorries would do half a million kilometres. All the original vehicles from Büssing were given a new cab. They had a frame of solid ash which was then covered with metal sheet, and they were unbelievably strong, like old-fashioned coaches. The craftsmen that Fiege employed were first rate. They were real artists and magicians."



Workshop foreman Oskar Peetz at the turning lathe

While the boss is a stickler on quality workmanship, he always insists on low weight. The story goes of how one day, when a lorry differential is being repaired, Josef Fiege

places an iron plate that has been removed from it on the weighing scales. "They must be mad, this thing weighs twelve kilos." He immediately gets in his car, drives all the way to Büssing in Brunswick, bangs the iron plate on somebody's desk and threatens: "You fit a monstrosity like that any more and there'll be trouble. A plate made of ordinary sheet would do just as well, and I could then carry ten kilos more load."

However, Josef Fiege also thinks of his drivers and takes note of their complaints that whenever they have to stop somewhere overnight, there is only one bunk for one of them to sleep in, while the other has to make do with the driver's bench. The result is that he fits a cabin for a second bunk between the driver's cab and the load platform, but in such a way as not to restrict the cargo space – a design on which he takes out a patent.



Another Fiege invention – seasonal use by an easily exchangeable tanker body

The bodymaking business opens up completely new possibilities. Fiege starts to remove the superstructure from some lorries and replace it with tanks, so as to enter the business of carrying petrol and heating oil. Within a few months, he has a fleet of 15 tankers, delivering heating oil as far afield as Kassel. For some big customers who need heavy oil for generating steam and electricity, he also has various special vehicles in operation.

With the forwarding, transport and bodymaking activities and the new fleet of tankers, the business enters a period of growth never experienced before. As a result, more space is needed for enlargement, so Josef Fiege decides in 1958 to move the farm and build a new one elsewhere, though still to be run by the manager as hitherto, and still growing rye and turnips, and with cattle and 20 dairy cows, pigs and hens.



A Büssing lorry as supplied from the makers

Together with the relocation of the farm to land that belongs to him further eastwards, he also has the idea of building a new house for the family at Grüner Weg. In February 1959, the architect submits plans for a spacious, modern building. At the same time, to strengthen the jute business, Josef Fiege is involved in building a big warehouse in Bremen with cantilever roof design, and in setting up a branch office near the port.

1959

On the day before his 55th birthday, which it is planned to celebrate in style, he drives with his wife to a cellulose firm in Aschaffenburg to negotiate about freight terms. During the return journey, at about 9 o'clock in the evening of 2nd October 1959, on the Cologne–Düsseldorf motorway near Wupper Bridge, Josef Fiege overlooks the end of a traffic jam, which he tries to avoid by pulling onto the verge on the left, knocking over a traffic sign in the process and running into the back of a stationary car.

The cars are only slightly damaged, and both drivers get out to discuss how to settle the damage. Before getting back in his car, Josef Fiege goes back to raise the traffic sign he has knocked over, for the sake of the other road users. Just at this moment, he is hit by a car from Düsseldorf and sent flying 60 metres across the road. He dies immediately.

In Greven, news of the accident causes utter dismay. People simply cannot grasp that this man, who was always so well-liked, should have lost his life in such a tragic way. "Funeral of Josef Fiege" is the headline in the local papers a few days later. "Attended by mourners in numbers rarely seen in the town of Greven, the funeral took place yesterday morning of Josef Fiege, the owner of the forwarding and transport firm. Not only from the town and region, but from all parts of Germany, friends and acquaintances came to pay their





last respects to this man who has been taken from us so prematurely. People bearing the banners of temporal and church societies, the band of the Rifle Club and the employees of the firm of Fiege, which the deceased had built up into one of the most important forwarding businesses in the west of Germany, walked before the coffin. Countless wreaths and flowers were a further mark of the esteem and regard which Josef Fiege enjoyed."

Another newspaper wrote: "In the course of thirty years, through his untiring industry and selfless personal effort, he turned the carrying business founded by his grandfather into one of the leading forwarding and transport companies in West Germany today. His extraordinary abilities, combined with his likeable personality, made him a major business figure."

And in the obituary notice from the staff in the "Frankfurter Allgemeine" newspaper, it says: "His much too early death – at 55, when he was just at the peak of his powers – leaves a gap which will be impossible to close."



8

The zero hour –

The firm of Fiege without Josef Fiege



"The boss has gone – how can things carry on?" This is the fearful, helpless question that nearly 200 employees of the company are asking themselves. Josef Fiege was the soul and driving force of the business. His energy and ideas had guaranteed the constant growth of the business and the security of the jobs of the workforce. Without him, it hardly seems possible to go on at all. The business is much too dependent on him, on his decisions and his advice.

The life achievement of this man has been remarkable. From a small country carrying business working with horses and carts, he has, in only a few decades, built a modern transport company with nationwide operations. He had demonstrated his far-sightedness when, in 1924, he overcame his father's opposition and they bought the first lorry, using borrowed money. It required courage to take this step and embark on the business of long-distance transport. He could always see what was necessary and what things held the promise of future success: setting up a capable and efficient garage and workshop on his own business premises, purposefully expanding the fleet of vehicles, gaining new customers and establishing the branches.

1959

In October 1959, Bremen – Josef Fiege's youngest baby – is still in the process of construction. With a team of labourers from a Greven building firm, together with Fiege mechanics, all of them living in caravans, the great warehouse building is going up in Kornstrasse. This is a necessary investment, because wharfage fees cost real money, and the capacity of the firm's own lorries is not sufficient to immediately shift all the bales of jute unloaded from a big ship. In future, the goods are to be collected by local transport firms and temporarily stored in the warehouse at lower cost. This is the last, still unfinished business of the boss. And what will become of the bodymaking activities, and the heating oil business?



The firm of Fiege is in a critical situation, but fortunately there is still the family. Aenne Fischbach and her husband Karl have been working in the firm for years, both know all the ins and outs, they are thoroughly familiar with the business and they know the customers – she in the office, he working outside. And then there is Toni Fiege, the widow and heir, who recognizes that the company only has a chance of survival and of one day being passed on to her sons if her sister-in-law and husband take over the running of the business. For her, who was present when her husband was killed on the motorway, this is a difficult time, mourning over the loss and worrying about the business, the farm and the seven children, all of whom are grieving for their father. At the time of the accident Heinz is 14, Hugo only 10. For both of them, the early death of their father means a deep cut in their lives, an event that will set its stamp on both of them and their future way in life.

So Aenne and Karl Fischbach now set to work, supported by experienced department managers in the freight business and in the bookkeeping.

"It was very difficult at first," says Aenne Fischbach, looking back. "The customers thought that the death of my brother meant they could no longer rely on the firm. They were doubtful at first, but that soon changed."

Conspicuously often, owners of competing firms, who otherwise have never come near, invite themselves for coffee with Toni Fiege. They want to sound out the possibilities of a takeover, are interested in the vehicles, and above all in the government transport concessions, those blue and red permits for long-distance freight haulage which are only issued in limited numbers and are therefore very much sought after. But they are all sent away empty-handed. The staff are all firmly behind the company, with the two

Fischbachs at its head. Karl Fischbach knows the business and every man and woman working in it, keeps the costs under control, regularly tours the departments, the warehouse and the workshop, and makes sure everything and



Aenne Fischbach and Toni Fiege

everyone is working properly. Aenne Fischbach is in charge of the office, keeps a close eye on the freight accounts, and according to her staff is "the soul of the business". She has natural authority, negotiating skill, and a sure instinct. In the case of any upsets within the firm, it is her who

smoothes ruffled feathers and restores unity. When important members of staff, especially those in customer acquisition, threaten to leave and go to the competition, it is she who persuades them to stay. When the drivers threaten to strike for more wages, she addresses the men and ensures that Rule No. 1, "reliability and punctuality", is complied with.

1963

During the "Fischbach period", the business carries on in the tried and tested manner. The main focus is still on transport, whereby the major textile industry customers continue to play an important role, and further expansion of the branch in Bremen pays off. Bodymaking, however, largely ceases, among other reasons because at this time there are too many changes brought in by government regulation. Lorries may now be only 2.50 m broad and 4 m



A Mercedes articulated lorry with tilting silo body

high, and in any case, the age of the giants with the long bonnets is now over. From 1960, flat-nosed lorries, the so-called forward control trucks, start to come in, establishing a completely new generation in design.

Finances at Fiege in Greven are sound, with never any losses. But the boldness and daring of a Josef Fiege is lacking – someone who is ready to go new ways and who has his nose in the wind. Aenne and Karl Fischbach see themselves chiefly as trustees and caretakers, whose main job is to preserve and secure the business and one day hand it over in healthy condition. Certainly, they too see in the 1960s that the transport market is undergoing rapid change, that some haulage companies are already becoming freight forwarders, providing transport of mixed cargo throughout the country. But as yet, everything is going satisfactorily. New customers are being won, reducing the dependence on the textile industry.

Karl Fischbach sees his other important task in helping to bring up and educate the two Fiege sons. After his initial difficulties at school, which were mostly due to his unbridled temperament, Heinz Fiege has meanwhile settled down and taken his intermediate school-leaving certificate at higher commercial school, achieving excellent results. He has also completed his training as a forwarding clerk at the firm of "Rhenus" in Münster, obtaining the grade "very good" and distinguishing himself as the best in his year. He is therefore well on the way to being equipped to take over the business and successfully carry it forward. To this end, he prepares himself purposefully and systematically. His vocational training in the forwarding business is followed by a temporary traineeship at a bank and then several months working in truck bodymaking at Mercedes-Benz, in pre-



paration for the workshop at home in Greven. After working for some time at a firm in Bremen, Heinz Fiege plans to study at the German Commercial and Transport College in Bremen and take a degree in Business Administration.



Hugo Fiege

Also for Hugo Fiege, Heinz's junior by four years, Uncle Karl and Aunt Aenne in some way take the place of his father. They discuss with his mother what is to become of him. For through the death of his father, his performance at the

Augustinianum High School in Greven deteriorated so badly that the only thing to do was send him to boarding school, the Episcopalian Boys' School in Werl, for two years. With the positive result that he is now able to return to his old school in Greven to prepare for the final school-leaving examination there.

In the mid-1960s, the textile industry of the Münsterland gets under increasing pressure, especially through competition from the Eastern Bloc countries, above all Poland, but also from the low-cost producers in Asia. Short-time working, redundancies and ultimately plant closures are the result. Jute production falls by 20 percent, and the cotton industry is hit even harder. For Fiege, in what is already a difficult period as a result of the general economic recession, this means less freight, and less income.

These problems are compounded by the fact that the whole market is in a process of change. The classic haulage firms are unable to compete with rivals who have changed over in good time to freight forwarding and mixed cargo. This is a step Fiege has not yet ventured on. The situation is difficult. Karl Fischbach takes the view that a major change of this kind can only be undertaken with someone in the firm who directly represents the owners. He needs someone to share responsibility with him and therefore, in the late autumn of 1967, calls Heinz Fiege to Greven.

For him, this means an end to his dream of studying and of acquiring further experience in other cities and companies. Now aged 22, he follows this call, out of his sense of duty. But he makes one condition. Because his father has appointed his wife as heir in tail and his seven children as reversionary equal heirs, Heinz Fiege insists that the question of succession be settled as soon as possible in an officially notarized deed.





1968 – discussion at the Regional Parliament in Düsseldorf on road tax charges, with Heinz and Hugo Fiege (4th and 5th from right)

1967

So in December 1967, there is once again a Fiege in the firm, now in the fourth generation. Heinz Fiege has got a lot of his father in him, is like him to look at, and has his feet firmly on the ground like him, while at the same time being full of ideas and having the same restless energy. With the sharpened perceptions of someone coming in from outside, Heinz Fiege sees that the whole place is out of date. It consists of a hotch-potch of buildings, added onto as needed over a period of 70 years, and all of different sizes. It is all inefficient and antiquated. The same also applies to the fleet of vehicles, which still consists of the old box-type lorries.

However, there is capital available from the good years, so investment is possible. Heinz Fiege, therefore, together with his uncle, sets about making up for lost time, watched suspiciously at first by long-serving employees of the firm,

drivers who took their first turn at the wheel for Josef Fiege 30 years before. The young man also sweeps through the offices with a new broom. He completely reorganizes the business, buys new trucks with interchangeable platforms, which allow much more efficient use to be made of the tractor vehicles, and increases the number of personnel. Heinz Fiege has to learn on the job what it takes to keep the fleet constantly ready for use, to have fuel and tyres always available, to pay wages and taxes, and to run a company with nearly 200 employees. But it works, and the handover from Karl Fischbach, who stays in the firm until his death in 1983, to Heinz Fiege proceeds smoothly. Uncle Karl and Aunt Aenne gradually hand over the reins, but continue to work in the firm as loyal helpers and advisers. After an interregnum of nearly ten years, a Fiege is once again the undisputed head of the business. Through investment and reorientation to new customers outside the tex-



Workshop and vehicle body shop



Heinz Fiege

tile industry, the firm has been stabilized and is on course for success.

Also the long-overdue inheritance agreement is finally made in 1972. This is in large part due to Toni Fiege. She is still officially the owner of the business and keeps herself informed of everything, though without interfering. She has made sure that all the children have received a first-class education and, despite the problems with her health, has kept the big family together. It is thanks to her character and circumspection that things can now be set on a new course, but without causing discord. An important preliminary decision is taken. Heinz Fiege agrees with his brother

Hugo, who is studying Business Administration in Switzerland, that after completing his education and training he will also enter the firm, which they will then manage as joint and equal partners. Although they both have a good relationship with their five sisters, they see the difficulties of trying to run a family business with seven partners. So the sisters are paid compensation in return for relinquishing their shares, and once again everything in the Fiege family seems to be on the best way forward.



9

A dangerous reef –

Last minute rescue



1973

In the late autumn of 1973, the oil crisis – triggered by a dollar devaluation in the spring and the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt and Syria that started on 6th October – hits Germany like a thunderbolt. For the first time, the people of the country become aware of their dependence on energy, of the vulnerability of their economy, and of the threat to their prosperity. The government bans the use of motor vehicles on Sundays, when pedestrians, bicycles and even horse-drawn carriages can be seen on the motorways. Speed limits are imposed, and a dramatic increase in the cost of fuel touches the life nerve of the nation. For Fiege GmbH in Greven, the situation at the end of 1973 is precarious. Just when the firm, now grown to nearly 300



100 years of Fiege – Heinz Fiege making a speech



people, is celebrating its centenary at Hotel Nettelmann in Greven, there are dark clouds gathering overhead.

Under the pressure of external events, it now becomes clear that the pace of change and growth over the last three years has been too high. Heinz Fiege has tried at full speed to turn a no longer competitive transport firm into a modern forwarding enterprise. In 1970, new branches were opened in Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, and also interchangeable truck platforms, containers and a completely new fleet of vehicles have been bought. The changes to the old organizational structures have made it necessary to take on new staff. But all these essential measures have not produced the hoped-for success, because too many things at once – substantial investments, increased personnel costs, and the payment of compensation to the five sisters – have all added up to an excessive financial burden. And now, on top of this, there is the dramatic rise in costs as a result of the oil crisis. In 1973, for the first time in its history, the firm makes a loss, and it seems that its survival could even be in jeopardy.

Therefore, together with the company's accountant, Heinz Fiege gets into his car and goes to Hamburg to see his brother. "I went and got Hugo, just like had happened to me, and told him: 'This is how things are. You've finished studying, and I need you. It's now or never, the situation is serious'" . For the younger brother, this is a meeting he will never forget: " They really had to do some persuading. I was a young man working in an interesting city, and I was also the co-owner of a firm that wasn't the main focus of my life. I had my own career in mind, and told them to try and sort things out for themselves. But my brother said: 'There's no alternative at present; we need your help. You've studied Business Administration, and at home we don't even have

1974

a proper system of cost accounting. You have to come now and help us sort out the figures.'"

In early 1974, Hugo Fiege has only just graduated from Münster University, but by this time he has also been married for two years, to Lisa Hoffmann, a student of History and French, who was born in Nordhorn. Until his brother's visit, his plan of first gaining experience for a few years in a variety of positions seemed to be working. Following his time as an auditing assistant at Deutsche Treuhandvereinigung, he hopes to work as a manager or executive in various smaller firms, and will then be well equipped to join the family business. But he is unable to resist the urgent appeals of his brother and returns home with him, firmly backed by his wife, who tells him: "Hugo, you've got to do it."

So the partnership between the brothers begins in early 1974. Their ultimate success will also be due in considerable part to their wives. For four years now, Heinz Fiege has been married as well, to Uschi Dirting, the daughter of a textile manufacturer in the neighbouring town of Emsdetten, who is studying Business Administration in Münster.

Both wives are self-assured, well educated, interested in what goes on in the company – and they get on well together. But what is equally important: both brothers talk to their wives and ask their advice before taking any far-reaching decisions.

Heinz Fiege is now 29 years old. He is a hands-on, impulsive type, spontaneous, able to inspire others with his ideas, straight-talking, not ashamed of his country origins, a doer, and with an excellent grasp of figures.

"He has a brilliant and enviable memory," one of his former employees says; "he never misses a thing, however small or trivial it might be, and stores it in his brain like a computer, and that is naturally a tremendous help to him."



Heinz Fiege also possesses other talents: he has imagination, can grasp complicated matters quickly, analyze them and put them to use for his own needs. It is true that he also inclines to impatience and can quickly lose his temper, but his direct way with people also makes him well-liked.

Hugo Fiege, who is still only 25, is quieter, more controlled, and has a more conciliatory way about him. Skilled with words and with an acute mind, he wishes to apply the theoretical knowledge he has acquired and move the business forward through strategic thinking. He, too, has been shaped by his rural background, and sees himself as a typical Westphalian, with all the characteristics popularly attributed to them: reliability, steadiness and honesty.

So the two unlike brothers, whose abilities ideally complement each other, set about trying to bring the business out of its difficulties.

Heinz Fiege concentrates on the customers, on acquisition, and on the management of the processes and procedures in the transport business itself. Hugo Fiege focuses on the introduction of cost accounting and the commercial side of the operations, whereby he first of all has to learn how a forwarding firm operates. What are marginal tariffs, for instance, or how does the system of government permits work, and what is the distinction between local and long-distance transport? With the blue permit, he learns, firms are allowed to operate within a radius up to 150 km, with the red one throughout Germany. Seen in this way, the locations of the branch establishments take on a completely new significance. The denser the network, the easier it is to get round the restrictions imposed by the local transport permits.

Willi Wilmer, at that time a bookkeeper in the firm, remembers how the newcomer from Hamburg familiarized himself

with his new job: "I must say that Hugo really did work hard. He used to sit in the empty driver's cottage at Gimbert Weg, from where he would phone me and I would go over and explain some matter or other. And he really listened. He wanted to do things right. So he paid careful attention, and then acted on the basis of it. He wanted to introduce EDP, but that was expensive. I don't know much time I spent with Hugo. Heinz was never like that. He always had his own ideas, whereas Hugo proceeded systematically, from one step to the next."

In late 1974, EDP is introduced, but is handled externally at SVG, an accounting office in Frankfurt. A complicated procedure, but a modern one at that time. Every shipment and item of cargo is coded and entered onto a sheet of paper using a special golfball typewriter. The data carriers have to be taken to the accounting agency every day by a lorry travelling to Frankfurt. There are also innovations in the book-keeping: the business is divided into cost centres, from the head office in Greven, through the workshop, to the branches in Bremen, Hamburg and Neuss; everything is recorded and then booked manually using punch tape.

But the crisis that threatens the survival of the business has at this time still not been resolved. Despite the introduction of these restructuring measures, the big loss of the year 1973 has dangerous delayed effects. One of the big banks which provides most of the credit volume suddenly gets cold feet. It evidently has no faith in the abilities of the two young entrepreneurs, and cancels its credit – a blow which threatens to be fatal.

1978

In this moment of highest need, a rescuer comes along in the person of Ferdi Schade, the chief executive officer of Münster City Savings Bank. Against the advice of the credit





committees and his colleagues on the board, he decides to help. He knew Heinz Fiege the father, and is therefore convinced that "the two boys are carved from the same wood as their father. If they're given a fair chance, they'll make it." As Hugo Fiege says today: "He took over all the credits, and virtually gave us a second life." However, the banker makes the condition that in their future activities, the brothers be advised and supervised by a three-man board, of which he is a member.

Thanks to the support from Münster, things can go on. The business has been given a breathing space and the sons of Josef Fiege have gained the time to prove that they can make it as entrepreneurs and overcome their difficulties. Both are well aware that what they have to do is modernize and grow, but without over-extending themselves. They also aim to find a niche in the market, something that their competitors do not offer. So the Fieges set about finding new territory.

First, they have to deal with the immediate difficulties and then transform the concept of the business from "transport and forwarding" to "forwarding and transport", whereby they both recognize that the business is really of the wrong size for this. As a forwarding firm it is too small to compete with competitors that already embarked on expansion ten years previously.

External circumstances now trigger a development that will soon acquire a momentum of its own. The premises at Grüner Weg in Greven, with the old buildings and warehouses, have become too confined – already in the mid-1970s, the pub has to be closed to make room for new office space. And the residential housing built round about has also moved in closer and closer. Now, there are disputes with the neighbours who complain about noise, because



the lorries have to be loaded and moved about during the night. Even an agreement with them only to work indoors after ten o'clock at night does not put an end to the complaints, nor does the installation of insulating windows in the neighbouring houses at the expense of the firm. The best idea, therefore, which will allow the company to work as and when it likes and with space for expansion, is to relocate the business.



The Fiege premises at Grüner Weg

The town council of Greven are unanimous that every effort must be made to keep the renowned and long-standing firm of Fiege within the town boundaries. The town administration succeeds in persuading two farmers located about six kilometres to the north-west, in the Reckenfeld district of Greven on the boundary with Emsdetten, to exchange land and in this way provide space for the development of an industrial estate.

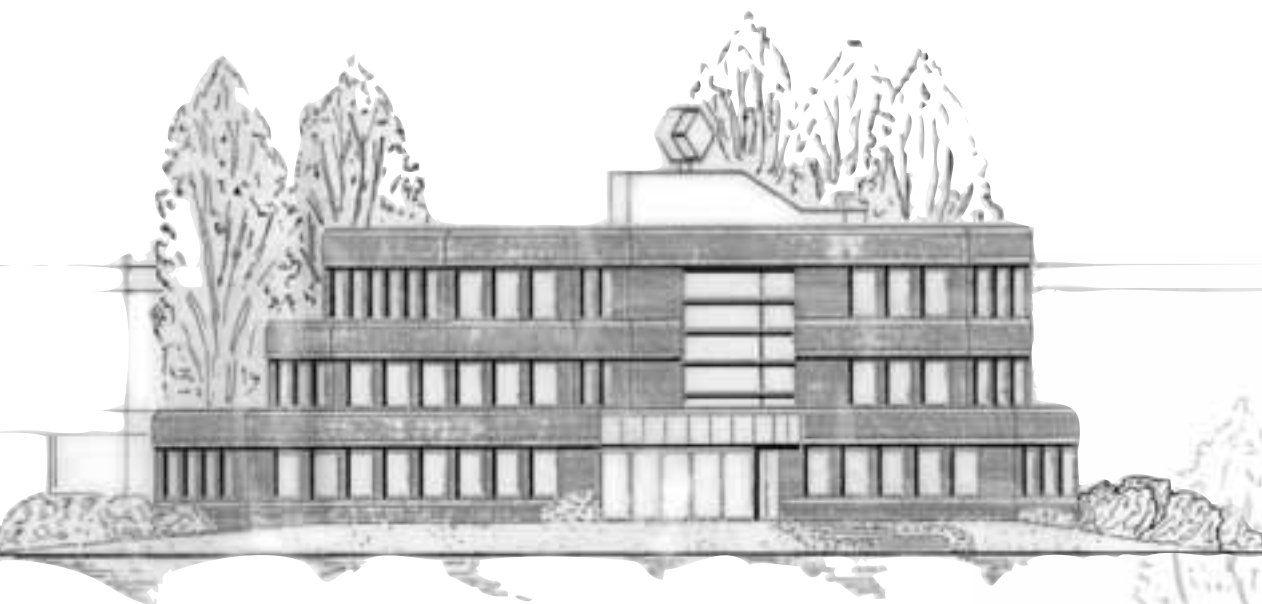
For the firm of Fiege, this is a defining moment. The two young bosses, who own the company in equal shares, grasp this opportunity, displaying the same characteristics that distinguished their father, namely far-sightedness and the courage to take risks. They negotiate with the town about the sale of their present site near the town centre, and also with the government of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia about grants towards the costs of relocating the business, and are successful on both counts. The town of Greven acquires the old Fiege property at a price set by independent experts, while money also comes from Düsseldorf, the state capital, because as good luck will have it, funds are currently available under a scheme to assist firms whose development would otherwise be restricted on account of emission protection laws.

Greven-Reckenfeld will become a milestone, the symbol of a start and breakthrough into a new dimension. With a space of 100,000 square metres, it is possible to plan something that will point the way forward into the future. But before starting on building, Heinz and Hugo take a careful look round in Europe to see what other firms are doing, which way trends are going, and what things look likely to have a future.

Finally, they hit upon the idea of transferring the concept of the new Berlin-Tegel Airport to the goods handling business. With its six-sided building, Tegel ensures that people have only a short way to go from their car to the aircraft. This is the core of the idea: to create a freight forwarding terminal equipped with state-of-the-art technology in the heart of the rural Münsterland, and with the offices separate from the building where the goods themselves are handled.



"Today it all looks obvious," says Hugo Fiege, "but at that time nobody had ever done it before. Every forwarder or warehouser always had his office where the goods were actually handled. I also see it as the first step towards logistics when we said that what we sell is brainwork and systems, and that we aren't just trolley pushers. Obviously, we have the trucks out there, and we can see them from a distance, and then we have the handling facilities behind; but that isn't us. What we do is organize the whole thing.



Plan of the new headquarters

We also built upwards, from where we could oversee everything. And that was probably a very important psychological point for our later development."

And his brother Heinz also comments on the situation at that time in his characteristic way: "Reckenfeld was also a

great risk for us. We had received compensation on a very generous scale, but on the other hand, we had to build something that was completely new. Setting up a completely new operation was naturally something we had no prior experience of. I was 35 at the time and Hugo only 31, and if I'm honest, we were both scared to death. But Reckenfeld was what really got us going."

1979

While the planning for the relocation is in full swing, an opportunity arises to expand the range of the company's activities and to embark on genuinely new territory. In 1979, Bridgestone, the international tyre manufacturer, needs a central warehouse in Germany which is also able to handle deliveries to the customers. In a warehouse in Hamburg with 15,000 square metres of space, Fiege succeed in developing the first logistics concept for brand goods anywhere in Germany.

Without being fully aware of it at the time, the two brothers are set on a new course. Something that is really innovative has now been added to the classical forwarding business: namely logistics.



10

New premises in Greven-Reckenfeld –

Klein-Wiele and the great leap forward



The decision to relocate the business is a venture that has two results. Thanks to assistance for the project in the form of grants from the town and the state, Greven remains the firm's domicile – a not unimportant identity factor, underlining Fiege's loyalty to the town and its local family traditions. "Greven is our base and our home," says Heinz Fiege. "Greven is where our origins are and where we have our roots, including the farm; and it is also where we recuperate our energies. In Greven we are near to Münster, and we have good access to the motorways and to the airport." But the second, more important aspect for the development of the company is that with the new premises at the Reckenfeld industrial estate, for the first time, the name of Fiege causes a stir throughout the industry.

1980

In 1980, with an investment volume of DM 10.5 million, the new head office and administration are established in a modern, three-storey building, and adjacent to it the six-sided goods distribution centre, the so-called GDC.

This embodies the concept of short ways to perfection. The huge hall complex, nearly ten metres high and with a floor space of 35,000 square metres, is accessed through 68 roll doors, with outside ramps which incoming trucks reverse up to for loading and unloading. For handling the goods, an underfloor chain system developed in America is installed, which transports the goods automatically from one loading gate to another. The size and innovativeness of the new facility now opens up the possibility of winning new customers of completely different calibre, ones who demand speed, quality and favourable prices for the handling of very large quantities of goods.

The days of the old transport business from Grüner Weg, with lorries carrying 25 tons of jute bales from Bremen to the cotton mill in Greven or when shipments of mixed cargo





The new premises in Greven-Reckenfeld

had to be assembled at great expense of time and physical effort, are now over.

The brand-new GDC has space. Shipments can now be assembled according to postcodes, recorded using modern EDP equipment, and then distributed. The rate of errors falls, and word gets around that Fiege have developed a new method and are doing something out of the ordinary. Success soon follows. Major manufacturers entrust the shipment of their products to the Münsterland-based forwarding firm. The result is that Reckenfeld is soon not only handling mixed merchandise, but also wallpaper and spirits. Wine becomes an exclusive and important activity. A cool room is even installed for expensive Bordeaux wines, the



exquisite "grand crus", and very soon Fiege in Greven is the distributor for more than a dozen major wine dealers in Germany, importing from all the wine-growing regions of the world.

Heinz and Hugo Fiege realize that with the goods distribution centre, also popularly and catchily known as the "goods hotel", they have taken a decisive step in the right direction, but they are also equally aware that they are still not a really strong, competitive forwarder, where goods handling, long-distance haulage and local transport are all optimally integrated. That can only be achieved with a network of 20 or 30 other centres, spanning the whole of Germany.

In the early 1980s, the company consists of the headquarters in Greven and the various branch establishments, as well as the logistics activities for Bridgestone in Hamburg, plus the business for an additional attractive customer, the Nestlé Group of Switzerland, for whom a big central depot with 1,900 different articles has been established to supply food stores in the north of Germany.

But the Fiege brothers still have as their ultimate goal the creation of an internationally operating freight forwarding business. However, in view of the many powerful competitors, this promises to be a difficult process, for it is expensive to establish additional branches, and time-consuming to negotiate with partners.

Additionally, they both recognize that transporting goods on the roads in Germany has no real future; that is something the Dutch and Belgians, with their subsidies and lower taxes, can do much more cheaply. In the medium term, it would make more sense to largely part with the firm's own vehicle fleet, by sub-contracting to small firms or by sale.





Nevertheless, it is at present necessary to establish an efficient maintenance shop in Reckenfeld, because the trucks are still being serviced in the old buildings in Greven, which have for the most part already being given up and are due for demolition. Every time the oil needs changing or new tyres fitting, the vehicles have to be driven backwards and forwards, which costs money.

Heinz and Hugo Fiege are fortunate, having the support of staff who in some cases have been loyal to the business for decades. With them and with interesting new recruits, they are able to move the business forward so successfully that it turns in a profit. A special role in this context is played by Klaus Sachs, a man with years of practical experience, who comes to Fiege from the firm of Dachser and knows everything there is to know about the forwarding business. He is a man with a gift for discovering talent and for promoting people from the ranks. Now in his mid-fifties, he backs the



1980 – the Fiege team outside the new building



expansion with determination and moves things forward at a new pace. Heinz and Hugo Fiege give all due credit to their adviser: "It was Klaus Sachs who taught us how to earn money."

1984 In summer 1984, an unexpected opportunity arises which, in view of the good earnings situation, can be seriously considered. In Bocholt, a town with 70,000 inhabitants in the western Münsterland, there is the firm of Bernhard Klein-Wiele GmbH & Co. KG, a forwarding company with a name known throughout Germany, employing 500 people and with foreign subsidiaries in France, Belgium, Holland and the UK. Through mistakes on the part of the owner, the business is in difficulties and in danger of being wound up. Together with their advisers, Heinz and Hugo Fiege analyse the technical and commercial aspects of the situation. Klein-Wiele is a first-rate forwarding business which can be turned around given the right concept. This basically consists of three steps: first, to cut the disproportionately high EDP



Klein-Wiele truck in the port of Rotterdam

costs; second, to renew the ageing vehicle fleet; and third, in the medium term, to relocate the business to the industrial estate at Bocholt-Mussum. In the negotiations, it is specified that the firm must be taken over as a complete unit,



Fiege Klein-Wiele in Bocholt – the third phase of building

that there will be no redundancies, and that Klein-Wiele will continue to exist as a legally and organizationally autonomous entity.

Conclusion of the purchase agreement is, after the new premises in Reckenfeld, the second milestone on Fiege's road to success. They have, at one stroke, increased the payroll to over 1,000 people, gained additional long-distance transport permits, and also doubled the annual turnover volume.

"But the important thing was not doubling the size of the business," Hugo Fiege emphasizes, "but acquiring the forwarding know-how and skills. The important thing was the name of Klein-Wiele and their reputation also in other European countries. It was a leap into a new world. Together, after the takeover of Klein-Wiele, we were a leading forwarding company."

So exactly ten years after the Fiege brothers set about saving the business they inherited from their father from bankruptcy, they are now entering a new world, are among the leading forwarding companies in Germany, and have proved that Ferdi Schade's faith in them was not misplaced.



FI

Ten years that have not always been easy. There have been setbacks, mistakes that have cost money, and also occasional rows between the brothers themselves. After all, they differ strongly in their dispositions, and often also in their views. But the division of labour between them – "one mainly looks after the technical side, the other the commercial side, but all important decisions are taken jointly" – has worked. Even if sometimes tempted to follow their own ideas, they always find common ground in the end. Neither would have got so far on his own. And especially as a negotiating team, they are unbeatable. The elder is energetic and thrusting, the younger careful, courteous and diplomatic. Both can use their Westphalian charm in their own individual way, and both have a nose for external effect. Which other company would have its trucks painted in such an impractical colour as white? But the Fiege trucks make a distinctive appearance – and more and more of them can be seen on the roads in their conspicuous snow-white livery, bearing the distinctive hexagonal logo with the red chevron inside, which the brothers have designed themselves.

"It would have cost a lot of money to have it designed by a professional," says Heinz Fiege, with satisfaction. "We based it on the six-sided shape of the building in Greven, and the two rhombuses are from Klein-Wiele. We combined them to make up the new logo, which also documents a step in our company history."

1989

In 1989, five years after the takeover of Klein-Wiele and two years after the purchase of the forwarding firm of Wilken in Berlin and Munich, which above all allows better coverage of southern Germany, the following article appears in the "Westfälische Nachrichten" newspaper on 11th October, under the headline "Fiege turnover up more than ten percent":



Sunday evening – the Fiege fleet hits the road

"Josef Fiege GmbH & Co. KG, the Greven-based international forwarding company, increased its turnover to DM 218 million in the 1988 financial year, a rise of more than ten percent over the previous year. As the company reports, investments amounted to DM 9.1 million. The development in the current year is also positive, the company states. More than 30 percent of total sales are already accounted



Logistics Centre for Nestlé in Hamburg

for by logistics packages which, if desired, can include the entire warehousing and distribution on behalf of manufacturers and retailers. Together with the firm of Klein-Wiele in Bocholt, which also belongs to the group, Fiege operate 22 branches in Germany with altogether 200,000 square metres of warehouse space. Of the altogether 1,200 employees, only a quarter now work in transport, the other three-quarters in national and international logistics."





Bridgestone Tyre Depot in Hamburg

The newspaper report therefore documents not only the company's success, but also its business strategy – a gradual reduction in the transport activities, and development of the company into a provider of modern logistics services. The firm has at last discovered its new territory – admittedly more by chance at first through the cooperation with Bridgestone and Nestlé in Hamburg, but now as a field of activity with future promise, to be explored and conquered with determination and imagination.

For Fiege, logistics – originally an expression taken from the military sphere and referring to the organization of supplies – means organizing the procurement and distribution of goods on behalf of industry and retailers, and managing the logistics supply chains, which include not only transport and forwarding, but equally also warehousing, packing and order handling.



Even in the German Ministry of Research and Technology it was already recognized by the start of the 1980s that for German industry to stay competitive, it is essential to promote the development of modern methods in this field, and therefore a research project is initiated and put out to tender, the title of which is: "Information systems in goods transport chains". And as word has evidently even got round to Bonn that in rural Westphalia there is a highly innovative company with an imaginative management who are exploring new solutions, the project is awarded to Josef Fiege GmbH, selected from a large number of other competitors.

Hugo Fiege takes charge of this project, whose purpose is to investigate, both in theory and practice, the possibilities of data transfer between trade and industry on the one hand and forwarders, transport and logistics service providers on the other.

"The aim was to transmit a transport order automatically," Hugo Fiege relates, "enabling the consignee of the goods to receive all the information before the actual physical goods themselves arrive, so that the factory can prepare its production processes or the retail company its sales processes. I showed that with such advance information it would be possible to achieve enormous benefits in the fields of cost reduction and profit improvement. The aim was that the information systems should result in integration of the production and transport processes. This research project triggered a cultural revolution. And it was us who were given the opportunity to do it."

The results really do cause a sensation in the industry, and the ministry is highly satisfied. The professor responsible for overall control on the project-supervising committee congratulates Hugo Fiege and also makes a suggestion to him:

" You've done a really great job. You already have a degree in Business Administration, so wouldn't you like to do a doctorate on it as well?"

The idea has appeal, but in view of the size of the business and the daily work load, where is Hugo Fiege to find the time and the additional energy needed to write a dissertation? He hesitates at first, but then decides to do it, especially as the academic title of Dr. can only be good for the image of the firm. In particular his wife Lisa supports him in this activity, which repeatedly threatens to come to a standstill. To produce the final draft of the manuscript, she orders her husband two months in isolation on the North Sea island of Juist. The final result is a dissertation whose main proposition that "the information should precede the goods" becomes a central guideline for the Fiege logistics business.



11

■ Up among the leaders –

The first ecological
goods service centre in Europe



On the threshold to the last decade of the 20th century, Josef Fiege GmbH & Co.KG is in splendid shape. Within just a few years, a conventional road haulage company has been turned into a highly modern logistics service provider, is in the process of becoming a market leader in Germany, and has its nose ahead of the field in the development of new concepts. Among the competitors, the speed and determination with which the two brothers at the head of the constantly growing business embark on major new logistics projects is a cause of respectful astonishment.

The first step into brand article logistics with the tyre manufacturer Bridgestone in Hamburg is followed in by industrial goods logistics. A pioneering first in this field is the joint venture with Gerresheimer, Europe's biggest maker of hollow glass. Together, they found FGT – Fiege Gerresheimer Transportgesellschaft – initially with seven depots, later increased to eleven, and managing 250,000 square metres of warehousing space. The success of this first industrial goods project is also in large part due to the efforts of co-Managing Director Gerhard Hilsbecher.

At the same time, the range of services is also extended in the field of beverages. With European Beverage Logistic, the Fiege Group with its central depot in Greven-Reckenfeld becomes one of the biggest distributors of wine.

But also the relocation of the Klein-Wiele business, planned as part of the restructuring programme at the time of takeover of the firm, can finally be put into effect. The new goods distribution centre, designed along the same lines as the facility in Greven, located on an 87,000 square metre site in Bocholt-Messum Industrial Park and providing 60 places for loading and unloading, is inaugurated at the end of October 1990. It also has its own workshop for the care and maintenance of the large fleet of vehicles.





However, the speeches on the official opening day also make it clear that further building activity will be needed straight away to cope with the volume of orders, which has already increased by nearly 25 percent.

The reason for this unusual rate of growth lies in world politics. This is the opening of the border between the two Germanies, the miracle of reunification, and the creation of the new federal states in the former East Germany. Heinz and Hugo Fiege recognize the opportunities at once. Without hesitation, they decide to invest in the eastern part of Germany and increase the network of branches, also as their contribution to help in rebuilding the region's economy.

1991

From 1991, seven new facilities are opened in the new German states, including Dresden as the headquarters of a new subsidiary, Fiege-Druck-Logistik GmbH & Co. KG, or FDL in short, which is responsible for ensuring that every day 650,000 newspapers are available to their readers throughout the State of Saxony in time for breakfast.

By the early 1990s, the Fieges have identified their goal and made it the core of all their activities: namely, to be a provider of logistics services of highest quality, setting standards through continuous innovation, and optimally putting logistic ideas into action by "making the right quantity of the right goods available at the right place and the right time in the right quality at the right costs."

"Logistics as understood by Fiege means organizing the distribution or procurement of goods by applying a holistic approach. Each part of this holistic activity is a function of a kind which has always existed," Dr. Hugo Fiege explains. "Through logistics, complex systems are created which work much more efficiently than the uncoordinated addition of the individual functions would." And his brother



Heinz adds: "Unfortunately, the word 'logistics' is not a patented expression, so it gets very much watered down because people use it for all kinds of things that we would not describe with that word at all. By logistics, we mean the separate management of logistic chains comprising different functions. That includes, for instance, the procurement of goods for industry and the retail sector, as well as sales from industry to the consumers. The logistics chain also includes warehousing, packaging, the added value of the goods, where price labelling is carried out and goods are checked; it also involves shelf restocking and other services, but the actual transport itself, which used to be the main aspect, is now of only subordinate importance."

But the brothers have also read the other writing on the wall. They are not satisfied with merely making sure that the right goods are in the right place at the right time using the right means of transport; they also want to do this with the minimum effect on the environment, and in this way they become the founders of ecological logistics, which they call "ecologistics".

The 19th November 1990 can be seen as the birthday of "ecologistics" in Germany. This is the day on which, after a planning phase lasting two years, an agreement is concluded between Karstadt, the department store group based in Essen, and the Fiege Group. As a joint product of the management of both companies, it is planned to create something which is unique in Europe: a goods service centre, or GSC in short, to be operated by an independent commercial service provider and through which Karstadt will market the special offer goods for its 167 outlets. To do this, the most advanced technology is installed. The cash desks of all the branches of Karstadt and Hertie are linked up to the



logistics centre so that, for example, the moment a pair of trainers are sold in Nürnberg, a supply order is automatically issued via electronic data line to the depot several hundred kilometres to the north, triggering dispatch of the necessary restocking quantity. But an even more unusual specification is that the DM 90 million project must be planned on strictly ecological lines.

Within a building time of only ten months, a huge new complex rises from the ground at a 200,000 square metre site in Ibbenbüren-Hörstel, directly adjacent to the Mittelland Canal, in the northern Münsterland.

Dr. Hugo Fiege explains: "As far as at all possible, we designed this centre on ecological lines, but always on the



The Fiege Mega Centre in Ibbenbüren



principle of 'ecology to the extent which is economically justifiable, but never ecology simply for its own sake'. Because, to put it plainly, if we had done otherwise, it would have lost us customers."

Nevertheless, the results are impressive. The foundations of the buildings, which rise to a height of 15 metres, are made of spoil from the coal mine in Ibbenbüren. Because of the large area of land that is covered by the building, the rain-water that collects on the 115,000 square metres of roof is not allowed to flow into the drains, but instead is returned to the ground through a complicated system of pipelines. Heating is provided by the waste heat from a nearby oxygen plant. The electricity for the battery-operated industrial trucks and the 4,000 strip lights comes from the facility's own wind generators, and to save energy, the whole interior lighting system is controlled by computers according to the amount of daylight available.

The goal of protecting the environment is also achieved through the specified work procedures. In dispatch, 50 per cent of the packaging employed is re-usable – folding plastic boxes that are returned from the department stores. As many products as possible are shipped to the retail outlets without packaging, for example trainers, which are sent to their destination in cloth holders suspended on the walls of the trucks.

The most effective, and at the same time most pioneering aspect is in the area of transport. Priority is given to shipment by rail and canal, which in the opinion of the Fiege brothers will in any case offer the only medium-term solution to the chronically overcrowded motorways. With four kilometres of railway tracks, the GSC Ibbenbüren also includes the biggest roofed goods station in Germany, hand-



Mega Centre Ibbenbüren

ling 70 to 80 percent of the outgoing goods. 1,500 metres of track – room for 80 freight cars – are even inside the heated part of the building, in this way avoiding unnecessary energy losses.

The location of the GSC has been carefully chosen: close to the motorway and the nearby Lotte Intersection, so providing access to the European road network, the direct rail connection to the main line routes of German Rail, plus the excellent position at the junction of the Dortmund-Ems Canal and the Mittelland Canal, which following German reunification offers a transport link to Berlin.

1992

On 24th June 1992, the day of the official opening, 400 invited guests assemble in the huge, festively decorated building. Among others, speeches are given by Heinz Dürr, Chief Executive of German Rail, and German Economics Minister Jürgen W. Möllemann, who underlines the fact that "improvements in economic efficiency can very well go hand in hand with positive effects for the environment". All the speakers are unanimous in their praise for the enormous entrepreneurial achievement and the courage in embarking on a model project of this scale.

On touring the centre, the guests can take a look behind the scenes and see for themselves what an extraordinary facility has been created in a rural, structurally weak region, how perfectly the computer-aided systems control the warehouse capacity, and how automatic monitoring systems guarantee the constant availability of stocks in the required quantities and qualities. And the visitors are also given another message: Traffic avoidance strategies mean practical protection for the environment.

The goods service centre in Ibbenbüren/Hörstel is a pioneering project on a scale and of a kind never seen before. It





Heinz Fiege, German Rail CEO Heinz Dürr, Hugo Fiege, German Economics Minister Jürgen W. Möllemann (from left to right)

causes a stir throughout the industry, and for the company itself is a kind of "big bang", providing the model for a whole chain of subsequent goods service centres and thus laying the foundations for the company's rise to the very top rank in Europe.

This first GSC, located only 30 kilometres from the head office in Greven-Reckenfeld, employs 300 to 500 people, handling special offer goods for the 240 branches of Karstadt and Hertie. After completion of the second phase of building, the GSC also takes in a second customer, the wallpaper firm of Rasch in Bramsche, located 50 kilometres to the north, for whom it handles 3,500 different articles as well as worldwide deliveries. At the time of the opening ceremony, the Fiege Group, with more than 2,000 employees and over 60 branches and contract partners, is one of the biggest international logistics enterprises in Germany. To meet the needs of retailers and industry even better,



Fiege develops full service systems, conceived as a modular design to allow either individual parts or the complete system to be used.

For the automotive industry and their suppliers, these are nationwide just-in-time concepts, and for the beverage and food industry, complete stock management including packing, repackaging, labelling and quality control. And Fiege also provides full service activities for the wallpaper and interior decoration industry, from import handling, through central stock management to Europe-wide delivery.

With its space, staffing and technical resources, what was formerly a locally operating family firm has, under the leadership of Heinz Fiege and Dr. Hugo Fiege, now moved into a new dimension with an uncompromising orientation to the future, and in the field of logistics has become a pathbreaker and pioneer. As the temporary culmination and fruit of untiring hard work, the new GSC at its site beside the Mittelland Canal is visible proof that financial success and responsibility towards the environment are not mutually exclusive, and that a combination of ecology, economy and logistics know-how is the right way forward.

1992

The reward for this achievement is not long in coming. On 22nd October 1992, Heinz and Hugo Fiege are awarded the "German Logistics Prize" in the festively decorated reception hall of the Zeughaus in Berlin. 1,200 invited guests from business and industry are able to witness a first. The prize, awarded by the "German Logistics Association" (BVL) for the first time in 1984, had previously always gone to major companies such as BMW or Siemens; now, for the first time, it is given to a service provider.

In his laudatory address, Dr. Peer Witten, a member of the board of Otto-Versand, the major German mail order com-



The award winners

pany, and chairman of the BVL jury, emphasizes: "The Fiege concept has convinced the jury. In summary, the economic benefits of the Fiege concept lie in the concentration of stock handling, but above all in the pooling of transport flows. And it is here, in particular, where the ecological relevance of the Fiege concept lies."

The prize is presented by Kurt Biedenkopf, Prime Minister of the State of Saxony. In his speech entitled "Alliance for Logistics and Society", he highlights the economic and ecological imperative of shifting transport from road to rail in view of the collapse of traffic on the roads which can be foreseen in the coming decade. So the course they have embarked on and the pioneering work of the two brothers from Westphalia is now not only recognized by the industry but has also been confirmed by a politician.

In his speech of thanks, Dr. Hugo Fiege sums up the situation as follows: "What we don't do voluntarily today, we





The prize, entitled »Discourse« – a bronze statuette by Waldemar Otto

will be compelled to do tomorrow, but then at higher cost." And he warns: "Logistics is in a crisis; the only chance for the future lies in a successful harmony between ecology and logistics."

For all the members of the company, for the managers and the two owners, the "German Logistics Prize" is more than just public recognition of their work, it is a kind of "knight-hood", the culmination of years of effort, and it has the gratifying side-effect that the media now also begin to take an interest in their ideas and their operations.

On the day after the prize-giving, a two-page article appears in the weekly business magazine "Wirtschaftswoche" that begins by stating: "The priority requirement for a logistics company is reliability, not speed. This simple



Peer Witten, Heinz Fiege, Ingrid Biedenkopf, Kurt Biedenkopf, Hugo Fiege, Hanspeter Stabenau (from left to right)

philosophy has brought the brothers Heinz and Hugo Fiege, Managing Directors of Josef Fiege Internationale Spedition in Greven near Münster, not just business success but also the reputation of being the inventors of 'ecologistics'. They like this expression so much that they plan to patent it." Which, after overcoming many obstacles, they ultimately succeed in doing.

A few months later, on 28th January 1993, the daily business newspaper "Handelsblatt" also runs a half-page article, under the headline: "Logistics experts from the Münsterland booming despite the recession".

The six-column article writes: "Everybody is talking about recession, all except some providers of forwarding services – and especially those who are able to sell complete logistics packages. The brothers Heinz (47) and Hugo Fiege (43) are



among this breed. The two owners of Fiege Logistik GmbH & Co. are also able to provide an explanation for the anti-cyclical success of their business: 'When the economy slows down, industry and trade start to look carefully at their costs. And they then often find that materials procurement, stock management and shipment performed in-house is more expensive than outsourcing such services to professional logistics specialists.' And the two also have an explanation for this: 'To ensure smooth logistics handling, the capacities in the various areas always have to be dimensioned in such a way as to enable seasonal fluctuations to be easily coped with. Measured against the average annual requirements, the resources that usually have to be maintained for do-it-yourself solutions tend to be much too high, uneconomical, and therefore too expensive. Only we, as neutral service providers with many customers, are able to make constant use of both our vehicle and warehousing capacities throughout the year.' The logistics specialists at Fiege can currently not complain of shortage of inquiries and the resulting contracts for complete logistics services. According to management figures, the consolidated sales turnover of all the companies in the Fiege Group exceeded DM 500 million in 1992. Other contracts are due to be concluded in the near future and will result in investments at Erfurt and Berlin and in Alsace in France, so double-figure growth rates can also be expected in the next few years. They are both well aware that they are not just anybodies in the business. As the first service company to receive the German Logistics Prize of the German Logistics Association, which was awarded to them last autumn by a jury made up of representatives of retailers, industry and transport, their company has acquired an even stronger external profile. (see Handelsblatt of 22.10.92). Major forwarders with similar ambitions give

their full due to the Münsterland firm, because compared to what they were until 1982, namely a conventional haulage firm, their success has been quite unparalleled."

So even the renowned "Handelsblatt" cannot hide a certain admiration for the achievements of the two brothers. And they can both proudly report: "Following the award of the German Logistics Prize, Fiege was No. 1 on the German logistics market."



12

■ On the way to becoming
market leaders –

Alsace ▪ Erfurt ▪ Berlin



After being awarded the "German Logistics Prize", the company develops an even greater dynamic, as if wanting to re-confirm its worthiness to receive it. New ideas are developed, new fields of business identified, further cooperations agreed, and substantial resources invested in ambitious, large-scale projects. Besides the east of Germany, the company now sets its sights on the European market as a whole, though without neglecting the central headquarters in the Münsterland.



Bordeaux wines being prepared individually for shipment

At the goods distribution centre in Greven-Reckenfeld there are now 300 people working in three shifts round the clock to ensure that 3,000 individual consignments a day reach their destinations throughout Germany within a time of 18

hours, in line with the company's claim: "Delivered to us today – with the consignee tomorrow." The centre has space for 35,000 Europallets, and every day at least 5,000 such pallets are moved and 100 trucks are loaded, with the battery-powered industrial trucks rolling silently through the aisles of the high bay warehouse. The driver reads the order and the pallet position on a monitor; address stickers are automatically printed out; and the shortest route to the loading ramp is worked out and displayed by the central computer.

To satisfy the needs of the major retail chains such as Metro, Rewe and Edeka, the specifications are for "speed, quality, low price". In the special "Wine" section alone, more than 10,000 articles have to be stored in the required manner, picked and dispatched. Containers with the precious, fragile freight arrive not only from the wine growing regions of Europe, but also from California, South Africa, Chile and Australia. On request, particularly exquisite wines can even be delivered individually.

In the direct vicinity of the GDC, the old repair workshop has been turned into a separate subsidiary, "Fiege Fahrzeug Service GmbH & Co.", or FFS in short, with 50 employees and an annual turnover of DM 40 million. Naturally, it continues to service Fiege's own fleet of trucks, but this has now shrunk to around 220 vehicles so they account for at most 10 percent of FFS's business, with a falling trend.

The Fiege company is consistently pursuing its maxim of "off the roads and onto the railways and waterways". Operating since 1991, "Fiege Fahrzeug Service" (Fiege Vehicle Service) sees its main activity as a niche producer for special vehicles, offering unusual, intelligent solutions and designing such things as fast rehitching systems for inter-

changeable truck platforms, system bodies for sensitive goods, or special trucks for coal-fired power stations.

In nearby Münster, the administrative capital of the Westphalia region, there is another Fiege subsidiary, "Fiege Engineering GmbH & Co.". With a staff of 50, the business of this company is to sell the experience acquired in the field of warehouse building design and fully automated high bay warehouse systems to third parties. This also includes information on the special details of logistics management:



New technologies – material flow control

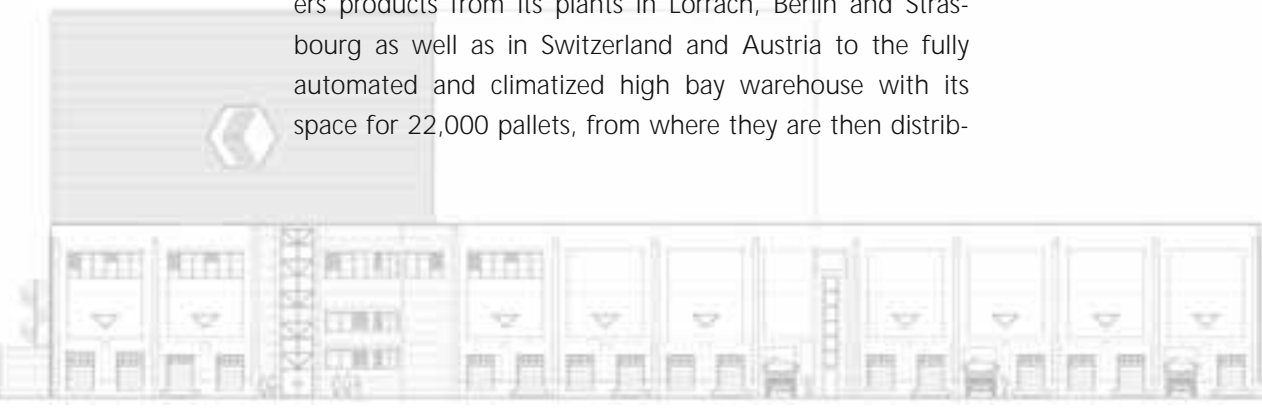
goods management, warehouse administration, material flow control, consignment tracking or worldwide systems networking. Development, research, the sale of engineering services and consulting – these are new fields of activity, all with the goal of making Fiege a provider of logistics services in the most comprehensive meaning of the word.

Münster was chosen as the site for this new activity because highly qualified scientific staff can only be attracted to a city that offers a high quality of life, a wide range of cultural activities, and the presence of a major university. The new buildings, located just off Schiffahrter Damm on the outskirts of the city, also provide the opportunity to develop and test the business of city logistics, i.e. the fast transfer of goods from big trucks to small vehicles which are suitable for use in the cities.

In the same year, the parent company also changes its name. Josef Fiege GmbH & Co. becomes Fiege Logistik GmbH & Co. – a step which is really long-overdue, because the old haulage business associated with the name of Josef Fiege has long since become a group of companies with a broad range of business activities and an astonishing impetus for growth.

The next years see a storm of activity. Heinz and Hugo Fiege embark on a programme of investment that is unprecedented in scale in the whole previous history of the firm. The main focus is on setting up three new goods service centres.

The first is at the meeting point of the borders of France, Switzerland and Germany, on a site of 40,000 square metres at Huningue, on the French side of the Rhine. This location fulfils all the Fiege requirements: access to waterways, access to the motorway network, and access to the Basle–Mulhouse railway. It is a project costing DM 30 million, and is built exclusively for the Kraft-Jacobs-Suchard Group, which delivers products from its plants in Lörrach, Berlin and Strasbourg as well as in Switzerland and Austria to the fully automated and climatized high bay warehouse with its space for 22,000 pallets, from where they are then distrib-





Alsace Mega Centre



The Alsace Mega Centre with fully automated high bay warehouse

uted in the whole of Germany, and subsequently also throughout the European market.

For the Fiege Group, the business of handling the products with the "Purple Cow" wrapper is not only "sweet", it is above all a technological challenge. The requirement is to network the stock administration computer at the GSC to the production and order management IT systems of Jacobs-Suchard in such a way as to allow the transport chains of supply and delivery to be optimally managed. After a building time of only ten months – a time considered by many people as virtually impossible in view of the sophisticated technology involved – the new GSC Alsace is opened in March 1994. So now, refrigerated, double-



The Fiege Mega Centre in Alsace – unloading a shuttle truck

decker chocolate transporters can be seen travelling from Lörrach to Huningue; there, they are unloaded in a space of three minutes, the goods are registered with barcode scanners, and then automatically put into stock in the high bay warehouse, waiting to be called forward by the customers.

1994

Even before this French goods service centre goes into operation, the foundation stone is laid on 25th January 1994 for the second or, if the original model in Ibbenbüren is counted, third and biggest facility of its kind.

The project planned at Apfelstädt, west of Erfurt in Thuringia, the geographical heart of Germany, is of huge proportions. The site has an area of 300,000 square metres, and with an investment volume of DM 185 million will provide 150,000





Erfurt Mega Centre



The Fiege Mega Centre in Erfurt

square metres of indoor space and employment for 1,000 people. The choice of this location was due both to the wish to contribute to rebuilding the economy of the east of Germany as well as to strategic considerations for the future.

In an interview given in September 1993, Heinz Fiege talks about the European Single Market and the opening of the markets of Eastern Europe, and states: " Even if the economic situation in the east of Germany and the neighbouring countries of Eastern Europe have not yet fulfilled the hopes placed in them by German industry, we are nevertheless already investing strongly in the east of Germany because we regard it as essential for strategic reasons to have a presence in Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, the Zwickau/Chemnitz region, etc., and because the neighbouring countries to the



east are also set to develop, albeit with a time lag. So from that point of view it is important to already establish logistical bridgeheads to the former Comecon states."

The project at Erfurt can rightly be called a Mega Centre. On a site the size of 35 football fields, Fiege and the Kaufhof Group jointly plan a central depot where goods can be called forward to supply all the stores of the Kaufhof and Horten retail group throughout Germany.

The local administration of Apfelstädt and the Economics Ministry of the Federal State of Thuringia immediately recognize the significance of this unique opportunity and issue all the necessary approvals so quickly that at the ceremony to mark the start of building, which symbolically is done by a huge digger instead of the traditional spade, Heinz Fiege is able to state in his speech in the presence of the minister "that the unconventional cooperation between the ministry and the municipality of Apfelstädt were in the truest sense of the word the foundation stone for such speedy implementation. And it also clearly indicates that the politicians fully recognize the importance of establishing modern logistics systems."

While the GSC for the Kaufhof Group is taking shape near Erfurt, the next project is already on the drawing boards. This will be located on the edge of Berlin, though more precisely in the rural district of Nauen in the State of Brandenburg, and the aim this time is to try out something completely new. Together with Westdeutsche Landesbank in Düsseldorf and Münster, Heinz and Hugo Fiege have founded a property development company by the name of "WWZ Immobilien Havelland", the object of which is to purchase and develop land and in this way trigger an investment volume of some DM 500 million.



This commercial estate, which offers excellent rail, road and water connections, is also planned to include a Fiege goods service centre to handle the goods for Neckermann Versand AG, the major German mail order company. Work on the first phase of construction of the GSC Berlin begins in autumn 1995, but soon threatens to come to a standstill because of the severe cold weather. Only by using anti-freeze agents and pre-heated concrete is it possible to proceed more or less within schedule.

But even without the weather problems, investments in the new federal states of Germany involve many unforeseen and additional difficulties, even if, after successful completion, some of these take on the character of amusing incidents that provide material for anecdotes.

One such is the first of Fiege's ventures in the east of Germany, immediately after the Wall has come down. Pepsi-Cola requires the distribution of its products through-



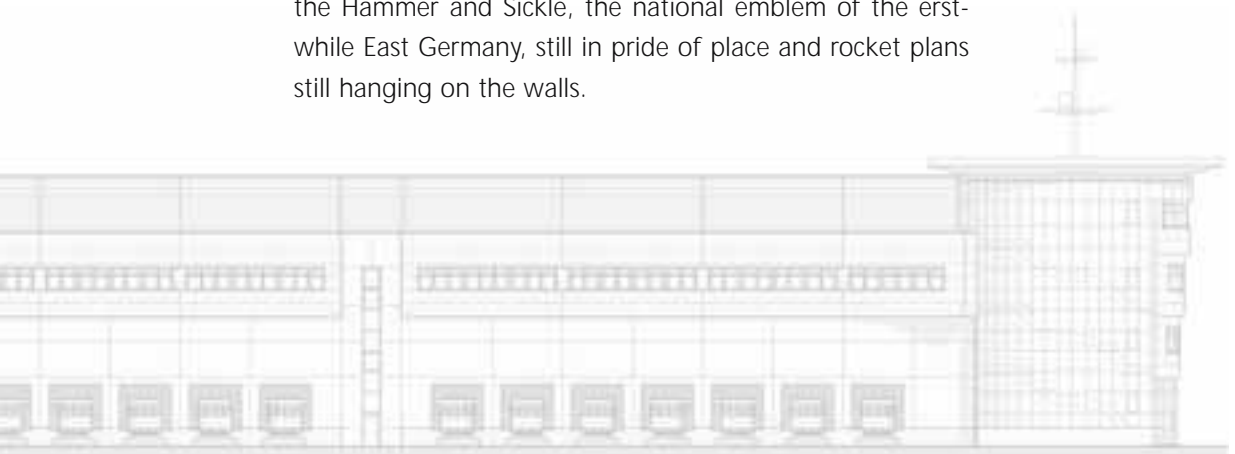
Gross-Behnitz – the former rocket base used as a Pepsi-Cola depot





Formerly »top secret« – after the fall of the Iron Curtain a warehouse for beverages

out the territory of the former East Germany. In the search for suitable warehouse space, the Fiege scouts succeed in renting most unusual premises. These are a rocket base of the former NVA, the East German Army, located in Gross-Behnitz, some ten kilometres outside of Berlin. And so that operation can start straight away, they also take on the 20-man team of soldiers who are still there. This results in a most memorable situation, whereby former East German soldiers, still in their uniforms though without their insignia of rank, are engaged in stacking pallets of Pepsi-Cola, with the Hammer and Sickle, the national emblem of the erst-while East Germany, still in pride of place and rocket plans still hanging on the walls.



In the case of the new building projects, the most complicated task is very often clarifying the questions of ownership. The GSC Erfurt, for example, is built on the site of a former farm cooperative, with 40 different plots of land recorded in the land register. The questions of who owns what, and where the former owners are, most of whom were forced to flee from the former GDR, are ones that employ whole teams of lawyers and experts. Instead of 40 agreements, as originally thought, altogether 320 have ultimately to be concluded with individual people or communities of heirs who have to be traced throughout the world. This involves costly and time-consuming visits to places as far afield as Canada and South Africa.

One particularly memorable scene in connection with the land purchases for the GSC Berlin is the following: After extensive research, an elderly woman is finally traced who 40 years previously was dispossessed of land she had inherited and who now has to supplement her pension of DM 800 by working in a snack bar selling French fries. She is now entitled to a cheque for DM 1 million, which she comes on her bicycle to collect in person, and asks with concern: "I can't take it to the bank today. Will it still be alright tomorrow?"

Also in the former West Germany, Heinz and Hugo Fiege are able to win important new customers, such as Apollinaris & Schweppes GmbH & Co. in Bad Neuenahr, whose chief executive, Lambert Leisewitz, announces in July 1995 in Hamburg: "As of 1st April, we have entrusted all our logistics activities to Fiege Logistik in Greven. The railways and waterways will be increasingly used for transport, so that in the medium term this will mean 36,000 fewer transports by road. To deal with this, the railway siding to the Bad Neuenahr plant is being reactivated."



A few months later, Hugo Fiege agrees a joint venture with "OBI Bau- und Heimwertermärkte", one of the biggest European franchisers operating in the field of building materials and DIY equipment and with annual sales of more than DM 6 billion, which will initiate a new era in the supply of goods to the sales outlets. They found a joint company, "BM Logistic GmbH & Co.", which has the task of managing the flow of goods from 13,000 deliveries to 450 building material and DIY stores all over Europe. This is above all a challenge for the IT specialists in Greven, as it is not a concept which works as a closed system, but one which is open to the whole industry and which has to take account of both customer and supplier interests. The industry speaks of a revolutionary concept which will trigger the long overdue restructuring within the market segment of building material and DIY stores.

Also in the development of this project, the tried and tested Fiege principles have absolute priority: "Pooling the flows of goods between the suppliers and the individual DIY outlets – Compliance with ecological principles through giving precedence to alternative means of transport such as rail and water – Reduction in road traffic volumes through delivery outside of store opening times, combined with merchandising functions – Advance information systems (paperless communication) using the most advanced IT systems."

Another important step in the field of procurement logistics is the REWE project. Also in this case, Fiege are entrusted with the task of pooling deliveries to all REWE stores by means of a holistically designed logistics system. The importance of this is underlined by Hugo Fiege in the statement: "Alongside competence at European level, procurement logistics will be the most important challenge of the coming years."



Berlin Mega Centre

1995

In December 1995, the press are informed that the Fiege Group is restructuring its business divisions at the start of the new year, with contract logistics – meaning the logistics



Fiege Mega Centre in Berlin – paperless material flow control

for major individual customers at the existing goods service centres – being separated off from the general logistics and forwarding activities and with the formation of new operating divisions, namely Logistics, Engineering, Contract Logistics and Forwarding and Distribution Logistics. An important element in this restructuring process is the transfer of the distribution logistics and forwarding activities of the Greven and Schüttorf centres to Klein-Wiele Logistik GmbH. Apart from the name, this does not mean any changes for the 220 Fiege employees at Greven, and also the town elders of Greven are relieved to hear, with their income from business tax in mind, that the firm will be domiciled in their municipality.

But at the same time, they are also receiving ever louder calls from the board of the Fiege Group for support in what is apparently an unavoidable step, namely a relocation of the headquarters building.

In the last few years, the company has grown by leaps and bounds. With a full-time workforce of 3,500 people, the company has an annual turnover volume of DM 700 million. The office space of only 600 square metres in the building that was opened in 1980 is much too small, and there is no room for enlargement.

"We urgently need a new administration building," Fiege executive Heinz Gräber tells journalists on 20th December 1995, giving them to understand that other locations like Düsseldorf, Frankfurt or Berlin could also well be in mind. For the municipal leaders in Greven, the idea of losing the old family firm is inconceivable. However, Heinz and Hugo Fiege have also expressed a clear wish as to where they would like the new building to be: on a top site which is still within the boundaries of Greven, namely adjacent to the control tower at Münster-Osnabrück Airport. The only difficulty is that the 20,000 square metre site is not covered by the urban development plan submitted to the authorities for approval. So the local politicians in Greven are forced to spend Christmas with the worrying thought in their minds that the town may be about to lose one of its most dynamic and important businesses.



13

■ Harvest – From Greven to the world



1996

In the more than 120-year history of the firm, the year 1996 is seen as a time of harvesting. Many fruits – the results of hard work and careful planning – become ripe. A chain of visible successes reinforces the firm's reputation not only as one of the biggest but also as one of the most progressive logistics companies in Europe.

It begins in February with the good news that in the town council of Greven, against the opposition of the Greens, the two bigger parties, the SPD and CDU, have agreed to enlarge the urban development plan. So this means the go-ahead for the new head office, internally also known as the "System Headquarters", at FMO, Münster-Osnabrück International Airport. Which means in turn that Greven is now no longer in danger of losing Fiege. And with their decision, the two brothers have made it clear that their loyalty to the town of their birth and to their rural roots is not mere lip service, since on purely objective grounds other solutions would also have been perfectly feasible.

"When we were considering the new building at the airport, we had a study carried out," says Hugo Fiege. "The result was that the best place for our company would in fact be Frankfurt Airport, being one of the main hubs in Europe. It would allow easy accessibility, both internally for all the managers of the Fiege Group, as well as externally, in terms of us reaching our customers and our customers reaching us. Also from a symbolic point of view, Frankfurt would have been good because it is the centre of air traffic in Europe. But we decided against it, because we said to ourselves that it would mean losing our identity. Our roots are here in Greven in Westphalia, so this is also where the head office of Fiege has to stay."

Double-figure growth rates make centralization, and a new building, essential, because only in this way is it possible to



reduce the costs of coordination arising from having the central functions spread over Greven, Münster and Ibbenbüren, and in some cases with several different addresses at each of these locations. Moreover, space has become so short in the existing premises that even basements have had to be turned into office space. But there is also another, more psychological and symbolic reason, which Heinz Fiege explains:

"For us, the headquarters represents the culmination of how we present ourselves to the outside world, documenting the fact that we have emancipated ourselves from the profile of international freight forwarding and the hybrid mixture of forwarding and logistics that we had in Greven. That was something completely new when we did it in 1980, and now, by separating the headquarters, where all the systems are developed, controlled and accounted for, from the operative business, we are taking another quantum leap. It symbolizes independence from the various production methods and the operating branches, and also neutrality towards other firms."

Heinz and Hugo Fiege receive further backing for their relocation plans from Wolfgang Clement, Minister of Economics and Transport of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, who visits the GSC Ibbenbüren on 17th February to see "one of the most innovative and exciting companies in the field of logistics" for himself, but also to talk with the top managers of the company about their plans for increasingly changing over to transport by rail. Because at this time, Fiege, together with Münster Chamber of Industry and Commerce, is seriously working on an integrated goods transport concept designed to offer an efficient alternative to transport by road, which is becoming increasingly problematic through overcrowding and congestion. This concept



is known in the business by the abbreviation CLT, or combined load transport, and means an intelligent combination of transport by road and rail with the aim of shifting as much goods traffic as possible onto the railways.

Wolfgang Clement, who two years later will become Prime Minister of Germany's biggest federal state, also highlights the positive effects that the decision of Greven town council, enabling the Fiege head office to be built at FMO, will have for the airport's infrastructure perspectives.

While the planning for the new headquarters is already in progress, a further step is taken towards expanding the business and to entering the new markets in Eastern Europe. The goal which the company now has in its sights is Samara, the most populous province of Central Russia. On 8th May 1996, Heinz Fiege and the governor of Samara, Dr. Konstantin A. Titov, sign an agreement providing for the building of a logistics centre at Samara Airport by the Fiege



Samara – top level talks in the Government Palace

Group. The operating and maintenance personnel, as well as the middle management, will be trained by Fiege staff. So this is a first: development aid in the field of logistics.



The Fiege Mega Centre in Erfurt with a pond to supply water for fire fighting and the wetland biotope

The biggest fruit to ripen this year, however, is the completion of the goods service centre at Erfurt. On 7th June 1996, 17 months after the first sod was turned at the site on the edge of the village of Apfelstädt, the new centre can be officially opened on time, despite difficulties through flooding just when building had started. Over 1,000 invited guests are assembled in Hall 1 to witness the official inauguration of the splendid new facility, a central depot from which goods will be called forward and supplied to all the branches of the Kaufhof and Horten retail chains throughout Germany.

1996

Chancellor Helmut Kohl has agreed to come as the main speaker, intending through his presence to highlight the importance of investment in the eastern part of Germany. And the project is indeed an excellent example of this. With an investment volume of more than DM 180 million, the first phase alone will give jobs to nearly 1,000 people, working in a plant with the most advanced technical equipment. Given the high level of unemployment among women in the region, an important aspect is that they in particular will be able to work here. Also the ecological specifications are impressive: environment-friendly fire extinguishing systems, rainwater collection on the roofs, the water then being returned to the groundwater via a biotope, materials which are free of mineral fibres for the suspended ceilings of the offices and corridors, natural products such as linoleum for the floors and rubber sheeting on the roofs. Additionally, the whole complex of buildings is surrounded by a belt of



The village of Apfelstädt



green planted with over 10,000 trees and shrubs. For the village of Apfelstädt with its 800 people and for Werner Gernat, the mayor, who has vigorously supported the project from the very beginning, the opening is a genuine cause for celebration. At last, it means secure jobs for every one in ten of the population.

On the big day, the whole village with its onion-towered church is festively decked out. In the great hall, the guests are assembled, seated at round tables and entertained by music bands. Sniffer dogs have gone over all the grounds and buildings to check there are no bombs; the heavy lectern for the Chancellor's speech arrived from Bonn the day before; and also the dignitaries at the table for the guests of honour have submitted their curriculum vitae to Bonn in good time, as requested by the Chancellor's Office. The radio reports that the helicopter has landed. But the assembled throng wait in vain, for the Chancellor is prevented from coming. And this would have been such an excellent



Regional Prime Minister Bernhard Vogel, Heinz Fiege, Hugo Fiege (from left to right)



Erfurt Mega Centre

opportunity for him to prove that the "flourishing landscapes" he once promised to the citizens of the eastern part of Germany are now on their way. But urgent affairs of state have unexpectedly kept him in Bonn, so that Dr. Bernhard Vogel, Prime Minister of the State of Thuringia, has to stand in for him. He does this with visible pleasure, congratulates everyone involved on behalf of the Chancellor, and emphasizes in his speech the enormous importance of this investment in the heart of Germany as a contribution to rebuilding the economy of the east of Germany. Dr. Vogel thanks the Fiege family with a quotation from Dante, which he paraphrases as follows:

"'One man waits for the time to change; another seizes it and acts'. For the Fiege family, it was always the second part that counted. They are not the 'one', but the 'other'. Had they waited for times to change, their company would not have a history of more than 120 years to look back on and would not have experienced the dynamic development that has made it one of the most important companies in the logistics industry in Germany and Europe."

And he continues: "You recognized at an early stage the opportunities offered by the central location of Thuringia both for Germany and within the growing Single European Market."

With the opening of the GSC Erfurt, the Fiege brothers have once again achieved something remarkable. Following the DM 60 million building for Karstadt in Ibbenbüren to handle that company's special offer goods, they have now invested three times that amount for Kaufhof-Horten, to handle their whole range of more than 70,000 articles. And in doing so, they have also become the business partners of Metro – the biggest retailer in Europe – who are the owners of Kaufhof-Horten and who are therefore their new customer.

A few weeks later, in July 1996, the Havelland Goods Service Centre starts work without ceremony, this time for Germany's third biggest retailer, the mail order company Neckermann Versand AG. The first phase of the new GSC Berlin handles the warehousing, picking and delivery of upholstered and case furniture and all other kinds of bulky items, while wall to wall, the further buildings are already in progress or planning.



The Fiege Mega Centre in Berlin

Anyone reading the press reports of those days can only be astonished at the almost frightening speed of growth and must almost have the impression that the Fiege brothers are doing nothing but travel around from one foundation stone laying ceremony to the next.

But as Dr. Hugo Fiege points out: " That would be an entirely wrong impression, because people don't see all the work that goes on in-between. To put that in figures: the average growth rate over the last five years, which has been the fastest period of growth in our history, was 17.8 percent. That is a very great deal in a time of general economic



stagnation, where other firms have been recording zero growth, but on the other hand it is not so much as to get out of control. We always make very sure that our company does not become dependent on outside investors and banks, and we only grow as fast as our balance sheet will allow. We pay very close attention to having a sound equity base and a sound earnings situation."

Also the logistics industry itself is evidently impressed by the achievements of the Westphalian entrepreneurs. In June 1996, at its 18th general meeting, the German Logistics Association (BVL) elects Dr. Hugo Fiege as a new member onto its four-man executive board.

At home, he decides with his brother Heinz to give the Fiege Group a new image, focussing on dynamism, professionalism, strength and orientation to the future as the main characteristics of the company. The core statement is: "Fiege – Reaching goals." This slogan has a double meaning: it means not only reaching the logistic goals, the transport destinations, and complying with legal standards or requirements, but also the high-flying goal of becoming one of the leading – and if possible, the best – providers of logistics services in Europe.

That this is not just image hype is demonstrated by the firm's other expansion activities. In July, a wholly owned subsidiary, FILOG, is founded in Italy, with its head office in Milan and charged with the task of establishing logistics activities for retailers and industry in that country.

In September, Fiege are able to win another interesting customer: United Distillers (U.D.) of Great Britain, a company that sells such well-known whisky brands as Dimple and Johnny Walker and for whom Klein-Wiele is now entrusted with handling the entire beverages logistics in the German-speaking countries and the Benelux area.

And what has already been a highly successful year now culminates in yet another, unexpected, event:



On 27th November, in the Art and Exhibition Gallery of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, Heinz and Hugo Fiege receive the distinction of "Ecomanagers of the Year 1996", an award given every year by the World Wildlife Fund Germany together with the business magazine "Capital". In his laudation, Ralf-Dieter Brunowsky, editor-in-chief of the magazine, pays tribute to the achievements of the founders of "ecologistics", and outlines the three principles that have led to "success for Fiege and for the environment":





- » – The concept of the Fiege brothers is to pool transport. That reduces the number of journeys and allows more goods to be sent by railway
- They are responsible for the entire transport chain and can therefore often make use of re-usable packaging or at least reduce the amount packaging and allow it to be optimally recycled.
- In the design and operation of their goods service centres, they make the most sparing use of natural resources.«

He underlines this last aspect with concrete figures: By shifting transport from the roads to the railways, at Ibbenbüren alone they have used 700,000 litres less diesel fuel and in this way avoided the emission of 1,843 tons of CO₂ into the environment. The use of re-usable packaging has saved the use of 190 tons of plastic film and 577 tons of cardboard. By their use of wind and solar energy to generate electricity they have set an example for others.

For the Fiege brothers, the award of the prize by Carl-Albrecht von Treuenfels, the Chief Executive of the WWF Germany, in the presence of numerous representatives of trade and industry, including Hans-Olaf Henkel, the President of the Confederation of German Industry, and August Oetker, head of the major food group, this is the second public honour, after the Logistics Prize, in recognition of their extraordinary achievements.

Looking back, Heinz Fiege says: "Being made 'Ecomanager of the Year' was the crowning achievement of our work", and he once again sums up the company's approach: "We were the first to say that logistics has to gain and maintain acceptance by society. The situation today is that normal consumers and citizens want to have their rolls and jam on





Ecomanagers of the Year 1996

the table at breakfast time, but they don't want to see lots of trucks outside. Now obviously, not every bakery has its own rail connection. So that is where we come in. We said to ourselves: If it is becoming more and more difficult to get building approval for a logistics centre, we not only have to do something to improve people's understanding, we also have to change the message. We have to make it clear that logistics does not mean more traffic, but less, while still ensuring the same standard of service for the consumers. Our philosophy is to achieve the same standard of living with less transport nuisance. From this we developed our corporate strategy, which we have also put into practice. The award we were given was for this achievement, and we see

it as confirmation for the whole Fiege team. Naturally, we have used the award for image purposes, on the motto of 'Do good, and shout about it'. We use it for marketing when we approach new customers, and it is obvious that many firms work with Fiege not just because we produce the best logistics; they also want us as partners because we are seen as acting with ecological responsibility."



14

Fiege – The World of Logistics



1997

"Fiege – a medium-sized family-owned business, now being run in the fourth generation" is how the company still describes itself in the late 1990s. But can a company with 4,000 people on its payroll, 40 subsidiaries, 80 cooperations in nearly all the countries of Europe and annual sales of DM 1.3 billion really be called a family business?

Legally speaking, the answer is clearly yes, because the company is owned and run by Heinz and Hugo Fiege, they alone bear responsibility, and they determine the course that it follows. But how can a sense of Fiege identity exist among such a large workforce at so many different places?

Heinz Fiege says: "Obviously, the personal touch like there was when I started working in the firm is something that is only possible within a smallish team. You clearly can't know all the 4,000 people, and you can't be constantly visiting all the different branches in the various countries. So it is difficult to set a personal stamp on the whole thing. But through our arrangements, the nature of our communication, our style of leadership and decision-taking, we do try to put our common goals across to our employees and to give the company a personal touch. At any rate, in competition with comparable firms of similar size, we are faster, more agile, more able to take decisions, and so in many respects better."

Employee motivation is one of the most important self-imposed tasks called for by the company's core statement of "Fiege – reaching goals".

"One of our goals is to pay focal attention to our employees," says Heinz Fiege, "ensuring that they receive proper training, that their work should give them enjoyment through a human climate at the workplace, and that they should feel happy working with us. We seek to ensure fair pay and also in that way to give the firm a strong inner



structure. We have introduced a high level of profit sharing for the top management and the two levels below, and this has had a very positive effect. So the profitability of the company is important, as is letting the employees share in the profit. This is oriented to the results and to specified goals, including rationalization. For us to survive in the long term, it is essential for us to achieve significant advantages and to pass these advantages on to our customers. As laid down in our company statutes, we strive for a profit principle that pleases many partners because they share in it."

"Fiege – The World of Logistics" is the slogan that now appears below the distinctive logo, referring both to the know-how and also to the highly ramified but carefully interlocking structure of the company, with all its goods service centres, special facilities, participating interests and scientific think tanks. It is a world in which an outsider can quickly lose track.



Preparing trainers for dispatch

Consequently, it is the visible achievements that determine the public perception of the unusual family business from Greven.

For example the »Fiege Railrunner«, a project developed in cooperation with the firm of Windhoff AG in nearby Rheine. The "Railrunner" is a kind of truck on rails, a self-contained transport unit, 90 metres long and capable of a speed of 120 km/h. Between two diesel-powered drive units, there is room for ten trucks. The advantages of the "Railrunner" are that it does not spend a lot of time at shunting sidings, does not run empty, and is not sent from one place to another before setting off to its actual destination. It also reduces fuel consumption by 35 percent, and offers a considerably higher payload as compared to a normal goods train. It is an innovation on rails, and an answer to the imminent collapse of traffic on the roads. The idea of the designers and users is that the "Railrunner" will travel unhindered to its destination, simply passing all the trucks as they stand in traffic queues on the roads.

It has been claimed that a total breakdown of traffic on the roads is inevitable. Forecasts predict an increase in transport volume of 40 percent by the year 2010. That would effectively mean an end to all just-in-time concepts, to the fine tuning of logistics chains.

"We will see an enormous increase in the number of goods transports," says Hugo Fiege. "That has to do with the increasing division of labour within Europe and also the introduction of the Euro. Consumers will become 'virtual', able to buy their Golf just as easily from Italy as they can today from their local dealer in Germany, and the production companies are also increasingly working towards division of labour. Not just the car industry, but all big companies are working on so-called platform concepts. Through-





Railhandling in the Mega Centre Erfurt

out the world, so also in Europe, a particular engine or rear axle will only be produced in one place and then assembled with other modules at some other place. This is what is known as modular production. As is so often the case, the car industry is leading in this field, but other manufacturing companies will follow. And this development naturally means a dramatic increase in the amount of transport. On top of that there is the opening-up of Eastern Europe, with new markets in Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine, and sooner or later even Russia itself will be a perfectly normal market . So one day a tin of Nivea Cream will also be on sale in the shops in Chernobyl, but it has to get there somehow. But I don't see this as posing any threat to us. Fiege organizes

transport, and our business is to make sure that the costs stay low or go even lower. We accomplish this by ensuring the same level of availability of goods but with fewer journeys, i.e. by pooling. We are increasing the capacity utilization of the trucks by 20 to 30 percent. That is one of our responses to the forecast collapse of road traffic. We are shifting truck transport onto the railways and rail transports onto the waterways, in both cases in double-figure percentages. That means tens of thousands of truck loads every



Freight transport on the railways

year that don't have to be carried on the roads. We aren't the transport ministry, we are just a traffic user and a logistics company. Naturally, we can't turn the world on its head or change Europe, but there are a few more like us working successfully in this sector. I'm not a pessimist, so I don't believe that traffic will come to a complete collapse. I'm convinced that market forces with their powers of self-healing will work quite effectively in this area, too."



Referring to the traffic infrastructure in Germany and its effects on their own business activities, Heinz Fiege states: "The share of transport in the logistics activities that we organize is between 5 percent and 50 percent, depending on industry, or even as much as 60 percent when I think of roof tiles, or glass from Gerresheimer Glas, or the transport of mineral water. To this extent, therefore, the traffic infrastructure is of outstanding importance, because the whole logistics chain can't be optimized without the transport interfaces. If trucks find themselves stuck in the traffic, the



Outdoor track at the Fiege Mega Centre in Ibbenbüren

whole process becomes unpredictable. The costs are exorbitant, because only if the time factors are reliable is it possible to ensure a good chain and optimized costs. This is a traffic problem that still receives too little public attention. Some politicians are aware of this situation and think they can change everything by regulation. But the majority of

goods has to go by road; only long distances can be covered by rail or water, and air transport is only suitable for a few high price goods."

Heinz Fiege sees the danger that any advantages still held by Germany in competition with neighbouring European countries, some of which have significantly better traffic infrastructures, could be completely eroded. In the conurbations, however, the same critical conditions prevail everywhere, with trucks having no chance against the flood of cars and only imaginative city logistics concepts offering any hope of a solution. The Fiege goods service centres have therefore been mostly sited in rural locations, where railways and waterways meet and where there is reasonable motorway access. Like his brother, he is also convinced that division of labour and new markets will trigger a new dimension in transport.

"Logistics is a huge market that is only just starting to develop," says Heinz Fiege. "We have been working on this market in a big way for ten or twelve years now, and many colleagues have only climbed on board in the last few years. It is a Europe-wide or even worldwide market, and the opportunities offered by the new IT systems are enormous. It is only thanks to IT that the market has become manageable, and it is through this manageability that the new solutions and cost benefits, quality improvements, reductions in environmental burdens and flexibilization of costs are starting to develop today through mergers and integration of the regions of Europe and the world. In the same measure as the economy and business firms combine, merge and buy each other up, these structures will have to be created, and we are trying to carve a big share out of this for ourselves. Logistics is only just starting to get into its stride and to receive general recognition. Professorships have now been



established in it, and there are vocational qualifications and degrees in logistics. Alongside Britain, who started earlier than us, Germany is leading in this field. We therefore stand a good chance in Europe and the world."

1997

The Fiege brothers can provide proof for this claim in 1997. Further growth is planned, for rounding off and closing gaps. And once again, the names of cities serve as milestones. This time, the names are Basle, Beijing and Samara. First, however, in January of that year, a cooperation agreement is concluded with German Post. The core aspect of this is for



Order picking at the Fiege Mega Centre at Erfurt

Fiege to handle all freight shipments up to a weight of 31.5 kilograms, distribute them through the 33 German freight mail centres, and have them delivered to the addressees by the more than 20,000 freight mail staff. In other words: a complete solution for small freight customers, all organized by a single firm. What had proved a failure seven years previously in an initial trial with the old pre-privatized German Post Office now works so smoothly that over six million packages a year are handled.

At the end of January, the major business newspapers in Germany and Switzerland report, in some cases with front page headlines, that the Fiege Group has, with effect from the beginning of the year, acquired the logistics firm of Goth. Based in Basle-Münchenstein, the company was established in 1870, employs 400 people, and specializes in



Fiege Goth in Basle-Münchenstein – head office and logistics centre

warehousing, distribution and the integration of logistics chains for industrial and consumer goods. The new Swiss sister company is highly welcome, bringing in not only its good name but also its expertise, as well as branches in Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Taipei, Shanghai and Hong Kong. The takeover of this company, to continue operating independently under its existing name of "Goth Logistik-Services AG" and under its existing management, is an important step, whose goals Hugo Fiege describes as follows: "We are by our origins a German company. We have acquired European competence working from a German base, organizing distribution to all European countries on behalf of our customers, which we have done with great success. What we do not have is logistics in other European countries. But not least because of the Euro, the development is finally moving towards a genuine Single European Market – with the customers already speaking of a Europe of the regions. For cost reasons, they will no longer organize goods distribution according to historical national borders but solely on the basis of business and technical factors. That means, for example, that a company like Proctor & Gamble will organize distribution in such a way that one service provider handles the Benelux countries, France as far as Paris, the northern half of Germany and perhaps also Scandinavia. Another one will then cover southern Germany, Switzerland and Austria, while a third will be responsible for Italy and southern France, and a fourth for eastern France, the Basque country, Spain and Portugal. If the services are put out to tender on those lines, we have to have competence in every region of Europe. What is the quickest way to become European? The best thing is to buy a company that already has European competence, and Goth has that to an outstanding degree. So that is why we bought Goth."

This new acquisition also brings with it a successful Goth manager, Andres Bühler, who is able to provide exciting new impetus through his experience. Andres Bühler is in charge in Basle, and with his strategy of increased internationalization, manages to double the business within only a short time.



The most important strategic goal of the company is now "filling the house of Europe", which inseparably includes the countries of Eastern Europe such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Another tenet is to follow the customers to countries where they operate.



A newspaper headline appears on 10th May 1997, stating: "Fiege enters business with China in a big way". Heinz Fiege is in Beijing at the time as part of an economic delegation from North Rhine-Westphalia led by Economics Minister Wolfgang Clement, and is able to report from there that an agreement has been signed with "Shanghai J.Y. Company", which also includes a permit from the Chinese government to operate transport within the country. The first step in this is to be the building of a goods transport centre located between the cities of Shanghai and Nanjing. This will be along the same lines as the GSC Ibbenbüren, which made a deep impression on Chinese delegations during their visits to Germany.

The newspaper writes: "Part of the new activities will be a city logistics concept for the big Chinese cities, which are already severely congested and may only be entered by trucks during the night time. Fiege plan to supply the inner cities from depots on the outskirts using small container vehicles on rails. The 'CargoSprinter' needed for this is to be supplied by the engineering firm of Windhoff in Rheine. Heinz Fiege reports that 'the corresponding offer from Windhoff has already met with a positive response here.' He also draws attention to the huge quantities of goods that have to be transported in China. No other foreign company has so far received a permit to operate directly on this internal market."

This visit by Heinz Fiege to the Far East is followed in early September by one to another European country. This time, he accompanies German President Roman Herzog, together with a German industrial delegation, on a five-day visit to Russia, which also takes in Samara, a city of 1.3 million people on the middle Volga, where, in the presence of Herzog,



Samara – at centre: German President Roman Herzog

he is able to complete the negotiations which have already been in progress for some time with the signing of an agreement which gives the Fiege Group an order to build a major logistics centre. The first GSC in Russia is planned to be located right next to the airport in Samara, which is being developed into a hub for air freight transport to southern Russia. One of the main customers is intended to be the AvtoVas plant of the automobile manufacturer Lada, which employs 400,000 people, making it the biggest car firm in Russia, and which is centred not far from Samara in the city of Togliatti. The agreement also provides for the procurement and delivery of spare parts, as well as the internal logistics and restructuring of the sales system with a functioning dealership network. It also includes the preparations for logistics handling following the planned participation of the German car manufacturer Opel in AvtoVas.

This latter would be in line with Fiege's strategy of following the customers, for the company already handles the logistics



for General Motors – the parent company of Opel – in Italy and Switzerland. And also the signing of the next agreement is in line with the strategy of building "Fiege bridge-heads" in the East. One day after Heinz Fiege has been congratulated by the German President in Samara, who stresses the importance of the logistics centre project for the economic development of the region with its wealth of raw materials, he is already in St Petersburg. On 5th September, in the former residence of the Czars on the Neva, an agreement is concluded with Russian Railways and the firm of Transkom, providing for the infrastructure planning for a goods transport centre. The Russian projects are the first



The winning design in the architecture competition

steps towards a new market of the future. But for the time being, because of political conditions, they only remain goals, albeit planned in detail.

Back home from their trips to the East, Heinz Fiege and his brother now have a task which gives great pleasure to them both. They are members of the architecture jury which will decide on the winner of the competition for the "Building of a new Head Office / Headquarters at Münster-Osnabrück International Airport", in which seven renowned architects from the north of Germany have been invited to take part. The first prize out of altogether four prize-winning entries goes to Professor Josef-Paul Kleihues (Berlin/Dülmen), who has designed a distinctive ensemble of buildings with an office tower as its most prominent feature. This is architecture as a statement: Fiege – a company with success and self-confidence.



15

■ No standing still –

The Fiege Group at the end of the 20th century



1997

"The market drives us, and we are overwhelmed with business. The capital is one side, the management the other," says Heinz Fiege, and adds: "We are stepping on the brakes and trying to structure and consolidate our growth through strategy meetings so as not to outgrow our strength and to give our management the chance to keep up with the new structures and changes that come about. Every year, we experience substantial growth. On the one hand that is fantastic, but on the other it means an enormous challenge in terms of management capacities, time and planning."

In the district of Münster Chamber of Industry and Commerce, there is no other medium-sized company that is moving so dynamically, with its own staff and through cooperations, on the road to Europeanization and globalization as is the Greven logistics firm. No other is so strongly shaped by the personality of the owners, who have succeeded where so many others have failed, i.e. in specialization.

This success is the life work of the brothers Heinz and Hugo Fiege, whose abilities have ideally complemented each other over a period of a quarter of a century. Above all, they have jointly demonstrated the courage to take calculated risks. The imaginative thrusting vigour of the one is combined with the analytical gifts and strategic mindedness of the other, but both are constantly seeking to move forward and both are able to act quickly. It is precisely the difference between them that forms the strength of this partnership and is the key to the breathtaking pace of the firm's growth – especially for the many long-standing Fiege employees who still remember the days of sack trolleys and heavy trucks and trailers.

"The special thing in our firm is that by organizing in profit centres, we have achieved a high level of decentralization of



responsibility," says Dr. Hugo Fiege, talking about the undiminished upward trend of the business. "The firms that we have on the ground operate as small businesses with responsibility for themselves. The manager himself can hire people, and also dismiss them, if need be. He can, within certain



First European management meeting in Como, Italy

limits, take investment decisions himself, and also negotiate prices and contracts. He is an entrepreneur within the enterprise, with responsibility for marketing and controlling. We also manage the company in such a way that the day-to-day business running is not in the hands of the two owners

but in the hands of three general managers. My brother and I stand outside, or above. We are responsible for developing new business fields and corporate strategies. This kind of decentralization of responsibility produces a different type of manager, one who is more self-confident and more committed, and this is another important factor for our success."



Seminar at the Fiege Training Centre

Faith in the employees, in their professional capabilities and initiative, is a major feature of work at and between the firms of the Fiege Group. Team-oriented performance, which creates a motivating working climate, is expressly encouraged. After more than 18 months of internal discussion, the "Corporate Principles of the Fiege Group" are published in July 1997. The company's vision is outlined in ten points. The five most important are: "Fields of Activity", "Environmental Protection", "Corporate and Market Goals", "Approach to Customers", and "Social Dialogue".



Hugo Fiege, who in accord with his brother often assumes the role of spokesman, explains the carefully formulated statements in his own words:

"It was a difficult process to develop these corporate statutes. They are a statement of our principles, the most important elements of which are:

1. Our company will continue to be owner-run in the long term.
2. We strive to be among the leading logistic providers in Europe. Every word in this statement is important: Not in the world, and not necessarily the best, because that might also mean the most expensive, but we want to be in the top group of three to six firms.
3. We strive for a relationship of partnership with our customers. We do not want a typical customer-supplier relationship. Our aim is not profit maximization, nor do we want customers who are only looking for cost minimization; rather, working in cooperation with the customers, we seek to optimize the logistics process in terms of both costs and quality. Only then do we look at what we can earn. That is not just marketing hype, it really is one of our tenets. And our customers know that; after all, some of them have been working with us for 10 or 20 years, and they trust us."

Hugo Fiege emphasizes: "We also have a relationship of partnership with our suppliers. We produce services that we source from the market, not ones that we produce ourselves. Transport services are available everywhere, so we don't have to provide them ourselves with our own trucks or trains. We buy these services from professionals who are experts in their field, and then combine them into a logistics system. In this way, we are like a composer."

Composing, conducting, expanding – these are the key words that define all the activities at the board level of Fiege.

In the context of expansion, one of the top priorities continues to be Europe. Here, there is still some rounding necessary to achieve truly pan-European competence. The geographical "outer pillars" of the Union – Great Britain, Scandinavia and the Iberian peninsula – are still lacking. But the activities in Germany must not be neglected either. In autumn 1997, the Fiege holding concludes a cooperation agreement with Deutsche Bahn AG, the national German railway operator, making the 166,000 freight cars of DB Cargo available to the business. This will allow even more goods to be put onto the railways, in line with the company philosophy of "off the roads", to help lessen the strains on the environment and nature's resources.

Throughout Fiege, at the subsidiaries and in the specialist departments, things are constantly in motion, and there is frequent cause for satisfaction when the achievement of new goals can be reported.

1998

After completion of the third phase of construction, the GSC Berlin is officially opened on 24th June 1998. Full operations had in fact already started a year earlier, after completion of the second phase, with the business additionally handling so-called white and brown goods, meaning items such as washing machines, refrigerators and dishwashers on the one hand, and televisions and video recorders on the other. A "24-hour service" for the delivery of all goods is also introduced, followed a few months later by another special service, "same-day delivery".

The early summer of 1998 sees the laying of the foundation stone for another "Mega Centre", as the big goods service centres are now known. This time, it is located in the heart of the Ruhr district, on the site of the former "Fürst Harden-



berg" Mine, not far from the canal port in Dortmund. The business partner is a Fiege customer of many years standing, namely Bridgestone/Firestone Deutschland GmbH, who plan to make Dortmund the centre for distribution of three million tyres a year to dealers throughout Germany. The official ceremony, attended by local dignitaries and a secretary of state from the Economics Ministry, marks the first step towards the realization of a future-pointing project with the



The Fiege Mega Centre in Dortmund on the site of the former Fürst Hardenberg Mine

name "Hardenberg Logistics Park". The speakers applaud this entrepreneurial initiative and the positive effects it will have for the Ruhr district, which has suffered so badly from the decline in the coal and steel industry and is still in the throes of structural change, as on completion it will provide 500 new jobs on a site of 90,000 square metres.



1998 is a special year. It is the 350th anniversary of the Treaty of Westphalia, and the city of Münster is at the centre of attention both within Germany and, indeed, the whole of Europe. The celebrations bring a whole string of high-ranking events which culminates in a visit by 20 crowned and uncrowned heads of state, representing the European powers who through their negotiations in Münster and Osnabrück finally succeeded in bringing the horrors of the 30 Years' War to an end in 1648.

Besides this major historical event, there are naturally also festivities on a smaller scale. For the Fiege family, the anniversary of the Peace of Westphalia is also a special year for another reason. 1873–1998: the company has been in existence for 125 years. What does this anniversary mean for the two brothers?

"It is an outstanding event because we are now running the company in the fourth generation and have succeeded in steering it safely through all the ups and downs of the last years," says Heinz Fiege. "In the past 30 years, I have seen a number of big names disappear, especially in the textile industry. Very few firms in this region had the foresight to implement change in good time. Therefore I am especially proud that my brother and I, together with the family, have succeeded in taking our firm out of the transport business and into the service industry, with the prospect of success on a European scale."

The Fiege brothers would not be who they are if they did not give themselves and the company two birthday presents of a very special kind. Consequently, to add to the anniversary celebrations, the following article appears in the business section of the newspapers on 29th September 1998:



1998

" FIEGE GROUP EUROPEANIZES NETWORK. The Fiege Group (Greven) has taken over the Spanish logistics company Aser. Therefore, except for Scandinavia and the United Kingdom, the Fiege Group reports that it has now succeeded in extending its logistics network to cover the whole of Europe. Fiege can therefore now offer their customized, holistic goods management systems in the Iberian peninsula as well. Aser Operado Logistico s.a. has its head office in Madrid and a network of 21 branches in Spain and Portugal. The company employs 260 people and has sales of approx. DM 150 million. Under the Fiege umbrella brand strategy, the Spanish company will operate in future as Fiege Aser."



The Fiege Aser Logistics Centre in Esquivias near Madrid

With the impetus given by this important step, the 125th anniversary is celebrated on 10th September 1998. The great day gets off with a bang – the foundation laying cere-

mony for the new headquarters at Münster-Osnabrück International Airport (FMO), though thanks to modern sliding mould methods the building has already started to grow. After the successful expansion in Spain, the future headquarters is intended to send out a clear message: the Fiege Tower beside the airport control tower; the flagship building of a group with worldwide operations, employing 4,500 people in 40 companies, handling goods worth DM 19 billion every year and with annual sales of DM 1.5 billion; a mover of goods within sight of an airport runway.

1998

"The gateway to the airport," is how FMO managing director Gerd Stöwer describes the new building, "and the catalyst for the inter-municipal business park established jointly by Greven, Saerbeck and Ladbergen." In response to the teasing remark that, given the dominance of the new building, FMO is likely to become known as "Fiege Airport", Gerd Stöwer states that in his opinion a "Fiege Airline" would be more appropriate, and to underline this suggestion presents the Fiege brothers with a model jet bearing the Fiege logo.

Following the stone laying ceremony, a reception is held to mark the firm's anniversary at Schloss Wilkinghege, a hotel in the north of Münster, with invited guests, employees of the firm, the family, and prominent representatives from politics, business, the academic world and society. This also provides the appropriate festive setting for the announcement of the "Josef Fiege Foundation", whose object is to assist ecological and social organizations. The foundation's registration certificate is presented by Dr. Jörg Twenhöven, the President of Münster Regional Administration, to the two brothers, who are already able to announce its first act, the purchase of an emergency rescue vehicle for the town



of Greven. In his address, Dr. Hugo Fiege looks back on the history of the family, tracing the long and arduous road from the great-grandfather's beginnings with horse and cart to the logistics service provider of the year 1998, and underlining the fruitful tension between tradition and planning for the future. Among the guests of honour in the festively decorated hall is Anna Fischbach, née Fiege, Aunt Aenne, now aged 85, who nearly 40 years previously had, together with her husband, managed to keep the firm afloat through difficult times. Hugo Fiege refers in particular to the importance of the simple, Westphalian virtues: family-mindedness; dependability; and the ability to think in the long term, born of working in farming and forestry.

"A third characteristic we Westphalians are claimed to have is strength and courage. I think we have proved that we have this characteristic through our investments, which unquestionably sometimes stretch the strength of a family-owned company to its limits. But we have always undertaken them only after careful planning. Perhaps the most important characteristic of us Westphalians is sincere and lasting friendship. It doesn't grow on the first day, as it may do in some other parts of Germany, but once established, it lasts for a very long time. And it is of a material that produces very durable relationships. These form the basis of our company."

And as his anniversary day message, Heinz Fiege says: "We are proud of our tradition, but we will not rest on the successes of the past. For our company and its employees, looking forward is more important than looking back."

A photo outside the door of Schloss Wilkinghege shows a small group of happy-looking people. In the middle, standing shoulder to shoulder and with big beaming smiles, are Uschi and Lisa Fiege, two women who have played a major

role in the growth of the company. Even if they do not have a visible position within the firm, they are nevertheless always kept fully informed of all important developments.



Heinz Fiege, Rural District Officer Christina Riesenbeck, Chamber of Commerce Director Dr. Christian Brehmer, Uschi Fiege, Mayor Rudolf Steingrube, Lisa Fiege, Dr. Hugo Fiege, Chief Regional Administration Officer Dr. Jörg Twenhöven (from left to right)

Uschi Fiege, the wife of the elder brother, a graduate in Business Administration, is consulted in all the major matters. Also Lisa Fiege, a qualified teacher of French and History, discusses all forthcoming decisions with her husband. Her special interest is in modern painting; she assists young artists, has a word to say in the design of the offices and conference rooms, and is compiling the "Fiege Collection of Contemporary Art". Together, the two sisters-in-law are also involved in the public relations work of the company.



Through their friendship, which has lasted for decades, and with their circumspection and sensitivity, the two have ensured family harmony and in this way made an important contribution to the success of the firm and the productive partnership between their husbands. And both have almost completed the task of raising the fifth generation of Fieges, five boys and two girls.

The three sons of the elder brother, Hendric (1971), Jens (1974) and Marc-André (1977) have received what can only be described as an excellent international education. All have studied Business Administration, undergone training in leading firms, and acquired further experience and foreign language skills through long stays abroad: Hendric in the USA, China and South Africa, Jens studying European Business in Oxford, Madrid and Paris, and Marc-André in Melbourne, Australia. The youngest is the most sporty of the three and has inherited the Fiege passion for horses. Already promoted as a talent at the German Army Sports School, he won a third place in the German Young Riders' Three-Day Event Championships, and he and his younger sister Sonja were European Young Riders' Dressage Team Champions in 1996 in Copenhagen. Sonja (1979), who is studying Law in Münster, is the most successful rider in the family, having won the Westphalian Junior/Young Riders' Championships several times, the European Junior Team Championships four times, as well as medals at the German Championships.

All seven offspring of the two families are evidently on the right track. Is it also planned to have Fieges at the head of the company in future?

"The plans seem to be pointing in that direction," says Heinz Fiege. "We are trying to bring the fifth generation to the top. Hugo, just like me with my children. We want them

to have an international, independent education. The most suitable ones from the family will then be given a chance in the firm, if that's what they want and if they have the necessary abilities and have proved themselves outside the



A special gift from the Town of Greven – the road name for the new site

company. They have to show what's in them, and gain experience elsewhere. In your own company, especially a big one like ours, people don't always really say what they think, or they aren't objective enough, or they are too considerate of our feelings."

Also Hugo Fiege hopes the family chain will continue. "We're bringing up our children in this direction. That's all we can do. We are trying to motivate them. But whether or



not they come into the firm eventually is something we shall just have to wait and see. But I can say for sure today that at least one successor from each of the families will enter the firm in a responsible position, and we are preparing things in this direction."

This seems to be working in both families. All the children are receiving a careful, multi-lingual education and are preparing through long stays abroad for future management challenges. However, ideas of handing over to the next generation are currently only long-term planning, a perspective for the next ten or fifteen years. For the present, Heinz and Hugo Fiege are still full of zest and ideas for further expansion of the business. With their time- and energy-consuming input for the firm, there is the danger of private life being neglected. But besides the company, they both have other interests, some of them in common. Both ride, both are passionate hunters, and both have a keen interest in farming and forestry. One of them looks after the family farm in Greven, which over the years has grown to 135 hectares, the other has a country estate in Brandenburg. And both feel strong ties to the Catholic Church.

1998

At the end of 1998, the Fiege brothers come a decisive step closer to their goal of having a leading presence on the market in all the countries of Europe. Following the purchase of Aser with its 21 branches in the Iberian peninsula, they are able, after protracted negotiations, to take over the British logistics firm of Merlin, which has its head office in Bristol. The company has 1,500 employees and covers the whole of the United Kingdom. For outside observers, the leap across the Channel is further proof of the ability of the Fiege brothers to grasp opportunities with determination and to pursue a course which has been once set.

In doing so, they have their sights firmly set on the Fiege corporate concept: "If we were to name our strategic goals, we would say, first: Europe, second: globalization – but always on the proviso that the quality of our systems can be maintained – and third: stability, i.e. preserving our equity base and assuring the viability of the company in the long term."



16

■ "Reaching goals" –

Not just an advertising slogan but
a formula for success



1999

1999 – the last year of a century which has seen so many catastrophes, total breakdowns and new beginnings – is also a time for the Fiege Group to look back, take stock, review achievements and, in view of the forthcoming change to the new millennium, identify new goals and the ways of achieving them.

On the threshold to the new century, the company is in excellent shape. The years of successful cooperation and partnership with flagship companies in a range of industries – Europe's biggest packaging producer, the biggest retail company or the biggest tyre manufacturer in the world – have laid a firm foundation and brought the trust of many new customers.

Working on the principle of "quality and flexibility", the scope of services has been enlarged. Following chemical, pharmaceutical and hospital logistics, the company now also embarks on e-business activities.

But long-established business relationships are being given a new impetus, too. Exactly 20 years after the first tyre depot went into operation in Hamburg, the first phase of construction of the new "Dortmund Mega Centre" for Bridgestone/Firestone is ready to go into operation. In a space of 30,000 square metres, 450,000 tyres are stacked in so-called corlettes, and 70 staff are responsible for the storage, picking and country-wide delivery of the 2,000 different articles, for everything from small cars to giant building machines.

While the official opening is being celebrated on 28th October in Dortmund, with the original, bright red Williams Supertec Formula 1 racing car of Ralf Schumacher as the eyecatcher, another ceremony is taking place at almost exactly the same time 800 kilometres to the east. In Mszczonow, not far from Warsaw, a foundation stone with



the inscription "Fiege goth 2000" is being cemented in place. This is the starting signal for the construction of the first Mega Centre in Poland, which is being built to serve the needs of 3M, Pirelli and Opel, and in the final phase will provide 45,000 square metres of logistics space.



Laying the foundation stone for the Fiege Mega Centre in Warsaw

But a good six weeks previously, on 13th September 1999, another important event took place, giving highly visible expression to the importance and the remarkable transformation of the Westphalian family firm. This is the official opening of the new headquarters at Münster-Osnabrück International Airport.

The tower building, rising to a height of 41 metres and faced in mottled red brick, is of architecturally austere design. The architect, Professor Josef Paul Kleihues, has succeeded in masterly manner in creating a landmark of timeless simplicity. At the opening ceremony for the 150 staff who are to take up their workplaces in the "Tower" – the



"From horse and cart to the headquarters and the logistical skies"; cartoon in the Westfälische Nachrichten, 12th September 1998

first phase of building in what will eventually make up the overall complex of the "System Headquarters" – the architect expresses his thanks to the two Fiege families in the following way:

"Having to do with two lady clients and two gentlemen clients at the same time is unusual enough in itself. But even more unusual is that this never led to any differences of opinion, let alone dispute. On the contrary, both you, the ladies, and you, the gentlemen, always took your decisions with great clarity and assurance. The fact that your new company headquarters has turned out in the way we can admire today is in very large part due to you. The goal was to create a kind of corporate identity. In other words, the building was intended to symbolize the firm's policy, expressing solidity and clarity rather than extravagance, modesty, and at the same time high quality – with a touch of elegance inside, but paired with a light-hearted feel."





The architect – Josef Paul Kleihues

All this has been achieved by Josef Paul Kleihues. The foyer and entrance areas to the individual floors have an atmosphere of distinction, effectively underlined by a sensitive choice of modern, large-format paintings. The new headquarters has been created in the right place at the right



Welcoming the staff to the new headquarters

time, and is the architectural expression for an understanding of logistics as no longer primarily meaning warehousing and transport, but rather brainwork and management skills. Just as in 1980 the office in Greven-Reckenfeld stood separate from the physical operations, the Fiege Tower at the airport terminal is now the stand-alone control centre for the whole widespread European network of the company.



Foyer of the new headquarters

The floors directly below the top management are now occupied by "Fiege Engineering", a subsidiary company that deals with the areas of Architecture, Business Administration, Information Technology, and Construction and Transport Engineering. This also has symbolic significance. For only through constantly searching for new ways, through ideas, proposals and in-house competence for developing



systems to meet the needs of individual customers, will it be possible to survive in the competitive environment of the global market and continue to play a pioneering role, offering high-quality services.



Inside the new building, with modern art everywhere

Logistics has become a billion dollar market. In the face of keen price competition, more and more producers of industrial and consumer goods need the support of a system service specialist, a neutral organizer, who has complete mastery in understanding and managing the complicated network of procurement, warehousing and distribution structures. It is becoming increasingly important for logistics providers to make use of technical innovations, to foresee developments, and to turn these into concrete action as quickly as possible for the benefit of their customers.

What is therefore needed at the start of the new century, in the interconnecting offices of Heinz and Hugo Fiege on the 9th floor of the new headquarters, high above the airport radar and control tower, is continuing vision, the ability to recognize market trends, and the capability to respond to them proactively by offering new services.



Hugo Fiege and German Transport Minister Matthias Wissmann at the 50th anniversary celebrations of the DVZ, the German Transport Magazine

Both have to think forward, taking account, for example, of the revolutionary effects of electronic trading on the Internet or shaping the future structure of "virtual" logistics, when the flows of goods themselves become the warehouse, being slowed down or speeded up as needed.

Asked for an assessment of the situation as they perceive it in the year 2000, Hugo Fiege answers first: " Alongside biotechnology, genetic engineering and information technology,



logistics is the most important industry. It has the highest rates of growth. We are a leading company in this industry. Our aspiration of being one of the leading logistics providers in Europe has been largely fulfilled if we apply the following criteria: presence on the Europe market, logistics competence and integration. In terms of these three criteria,



»Log-Inn« – the personnel restaurant

Fiege currently stands as follows: The company has a presence in 16 countries, so we now cover most of Europe. France and Scandinavia are still gaps, but these will be closed as soon as possible. As far as our competence is concerned, the specialist press see Fiege as the most highly qualified supplier of complex logistics systems. Fiege can present many examples to prove that we have complete mastery of complexity. And regarding integration, as the third criteria for a leading European provider of logistics, we have reached a stage where several countries are now all networked with each other." And Heinz Fiege adds: "We find that logistics has become established faster than we

expected as an industry in its own right. There are now faculties of logistics at universities both in Germany and other countries. The stock exchange has discovered logistics as an area for investment. In England, for instance, the share prices in this sector have soared. But it is above all due to IT, the software for computers, that these holistic logistical control processes can be managed and improved and the enormous energy potentials and cost savings achieved. E-commerce through the Internet has brought an unbelievable dynamism into the industry."

Heinz Fiege gives an example of the speed with which the market is changing at the start of the 21st century, and the results of this process changes: "The postal organizations in



Kinetic sculpture by US artist George Rickey



2000

Europe, and especially German Post, are in the process of creating international, worldwide companies, with sales volumes today of between 20 and 60 billion DM. They have all the necessary systems at their fingertips, whether air, land or sea transport, package delivery services, and above all logistics. The result is that the whole market for services in the field of logistics and transport is in motion. Everybody is talking to everybody else, and lots of companies are merging. The smaller organizations that have no concept are struggling for survival, while the big ones – as far as their resources go and their strategies work – are regrouping and growing through acquisition."

The Fiege Group has to make sure that it can hold its place in this changing environment. Under the overall control of the headquarters, the Fiege subsidiaries in the different countries are able to operate with a high level of autonomy: »Goth« in Basle, »Aser« in Madrid, »Merlin« in Bristol and, from March 2000, »Kalf« in Amsterdam.

As one of the first companies to do so, Fiege has recognized the new opportunities offered by the virtual systems on the Internet, with the resulting possibilities for managing and accelerating the transport chains and flows of goods. Accordingly, it is already engaged in development work towards achieving integrated management of transport chains, instead of simply linking up various "isolated solutions".

Towards the end of the last century, the goods service centres such as Ibbenbüren or Erfurt were milestones and new territory. The new goal, however, is, with the aid of the most advanced technology, to manage the market even without central warehouses. The company intends to continue to be a creative powerhouse for the industry, being both a service centre and think tank and offering not only

logistics and engineering services, but also e-commerce and financial services.

To achieve this goal, the Fiege Group has started the new century by giving itself a completely new organizational structure. Since 1st January 2000, Fiege Holding GmbH & Co. has been restructured and renamed Fiege Deutschland GmbH & Co. KG. Under this umbrella, there are now four new divisions offering the complete range of services as one "product".

The "Fiege log" division concentrates on stationary logistics and warehouse management, together with the relevant IT systems, and is also responsible for all the subsidiary and affiliated companies. "Fiege net" carries on the activities of the former Fiege Logistik GmbH & Co., while "Fiege ecm" is responsible for electronic chain management for logistics applications in the e-commerce sector and virtual logistics, i.e. the exciting field of the new media. The fourth division, "Fiege Engineering", is itself divided into three sub-divisions, each of which has special tasks: "Fiege con" provides logistics consultancy; "Fiege red" operates in the planning and building of logistics centres and the development and reutilization of commercial land; while "Fiege tec" works in material flow systems, goods handling, vehicle service, and fleet management.

This deep-seated structural reform – line-up and positioning to use the business jargon – is designed to equip the company to meet the challenges of the new century.

Heinz and Hugo Fiege agree on the future course and also the short and medium-term goals: "We must raise awareness of the Fiege Group in other European countries, and eventually also in Asia and the USA, to a level where Fiege is generally accepted and recognized as a leading logistics provider. So far, that is only the case in a few countries.





Growth has always been one of Fiege's goals. It is planned that some of the subsidiaries or possibly even the whole company should go public. That would help to finance the necessary growth in such a way that we would still have a strong equity base. The assessment of high-tech logistics on the stock market offers excellent possibilities for this. However, one of our strict principles is that the capital majority must continue to be held by the family, because we intend to stay a family-owned and owner-managed company in the long term.

The two brothers will continue to need good luck, unorthodox ideas and the courage to take risks that has borne them to the lofty heights of their new headquarters building, with its wonderful view over the park-like landscape of the Münsterland and the airport with all its activity. Here, in the headquarters, they and their staff, backed by the personnel in so many other European countries, are working on ways of meeting the challenges implicit in their advertising slogan: "FIEGE – reaching goals" .



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Illustrations reproduced by courtesy of

Fiege Group Archives

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FIEGE Headquarters in Westphalia and FIEGE Subsidiary Companies to Serve the World.



The author

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»Anyone approaching Münster-Osnabrück Airport from the east will, after flying over the park-like landscape of the Münsterland and crossing the ribbon of the Dortmund-Ems Canal, see the highly modern glass and steel buildings of a smallish German airport. But while still only modest in terms of size, in terms of growth it is a giant... However, beside the terminal buildings and the control tower, located on the approach road to the airport, is another distinctive building, which reaches to a height of 41 metres. Who, the traveller may ask, can have commissioned such an ambitious project from a star of the architectural profession and raised such a highly visible landmark as this in such a distinctly rural location? The answer is provided by the building itself: FIEGE.«