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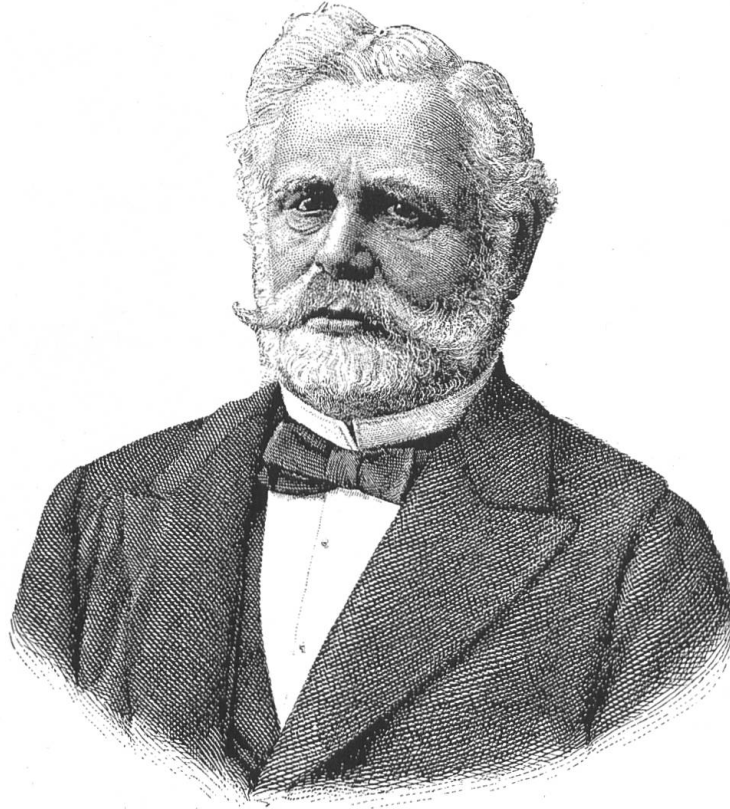
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The Rieter spinning mills in the new Federal State (1850–1914)



*Heinrich Rieter-Ziegler
(1814–1889), colonel
and federal senator*

The era of Heinrich Rieter, colonel and federal senator

With the lifting of numerous restrictions in the new federal state which had hitherto inhibited commerce and transport in Switzerland, and under the favourable influence of free trade, industry developed with undreamt-of rapidity. Between 1844 and 1872 the number of spindles operating in Swiss spinning mills increased from 662 000 to more than 2 000 000. Yarn production in Rieter's plants grew steadily, with peaks in the years 1864 to 1866, 1873 and 1885. Sea Island cotton was the main material processed; this was delivered to Winterthur from Liverpool via Rotterdam or Le Havre. Rieter purchased Egyptian Mako cotton direct in Alexandria or through middlemen in Trieste or Marseilles.

One problem already caused Rieter trouble in those days. On the one hand the quality of the spun yarns from Niedertöss was improving constantly, which promoted their sales and made them increasingly competitive with English yarns. On the other hand the machines manufactured in Switzerland were remarkable for their outstanding quality. This meant that the customers equipped with them near and far became increasingly keen competitors of spinning and weaving mills in Switzerland. Rieter continued to dominate the markets with his fine spinning mill, of course. The new proprietor, Heinrich Rieter – known as 'the Younger' – also strove continuously to adapt his operations to the latest technical advances. When the engineering workshops were transfer-



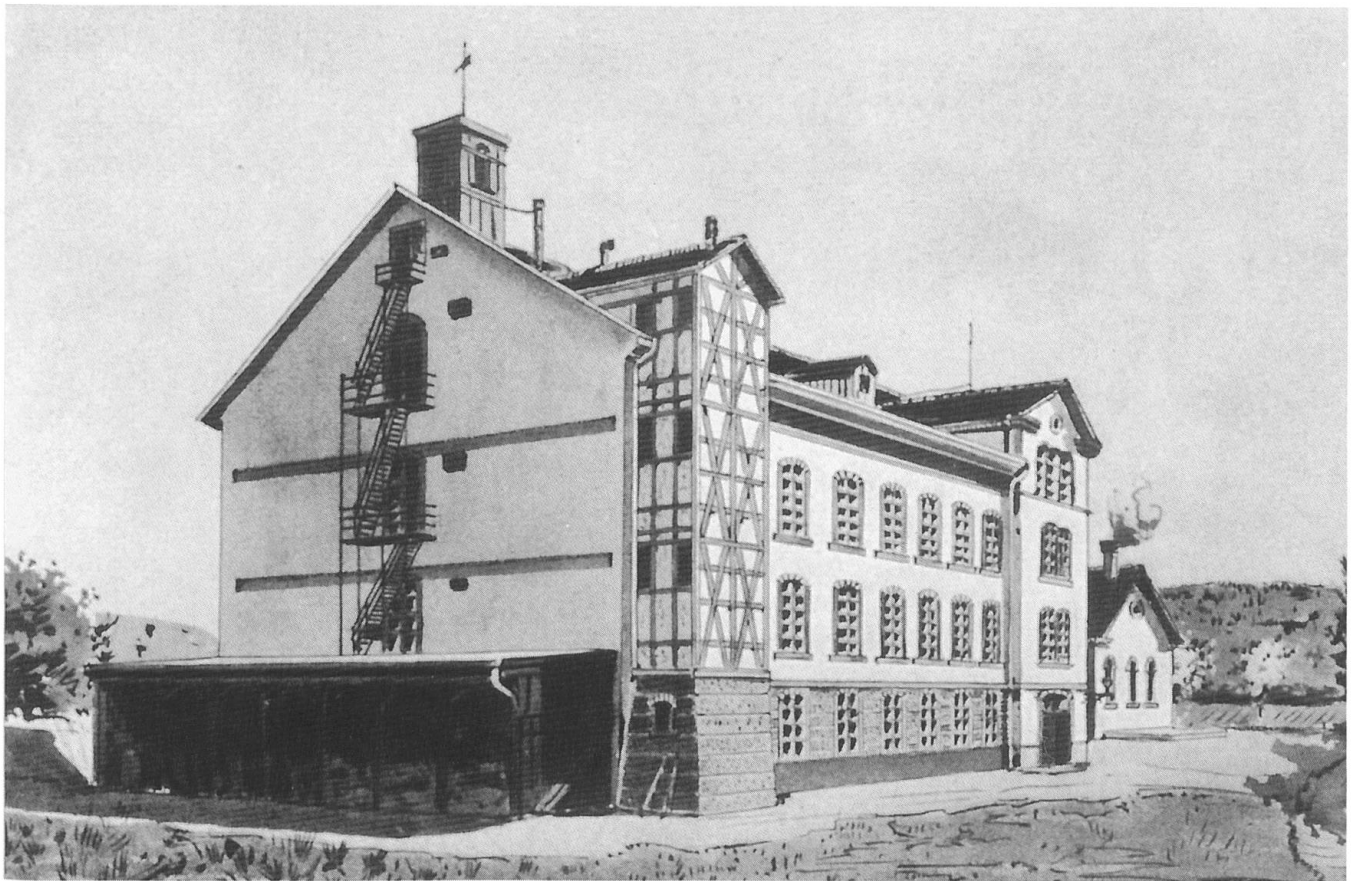
red to the former Töss convent in 1854, the installations in Niedertöss were expanded further. The coarse count spinning mill originally based at the convent was also relocated there. The development of the business was, of course, adversely affected by the various European conflicts, such as the Austro-Sardinian War of 1859 and the Franco-German War of 1870/71, as well as the American War of Secession (1861–1865), which shook the entire cotton industry to its foundations for some time. At that time Rieter had some 400 employees, 240 of them in Niedertöss, 90 in Buchenthal and 70 in St. Georgen.

In addition to owning these plants, Rieter also had an interest and capital invested in numerous other spinning mills in Switzerland. Among the more important of these was the Emmenhof spinning mill in Canton Solothurn, for

which the Töss workshops supplied the turbines, the transmissions, the equipment for the repair workshops and all the spinning machines. The Sulzer Brothers company supplied the steam heating and the lighting equipment. The mill commenced operations in 1863 with 7000 mule spindles. However, the company was really successful for only a few years: in particular the river Emme's lack of water power and the unfavourable location of the production facilities far from their potential customers made it prone to crises. Although it was expanded by Rieter to 30 000 spindles in the mid-nineties and technically and financially reorganized, the mill went bankrupt for the first time in 1904. It then kept its head above water with difficulty for some time, until the facilities were sold in 1925.

Rieter also took on many problems

From a pre-1890 advertising leaflet



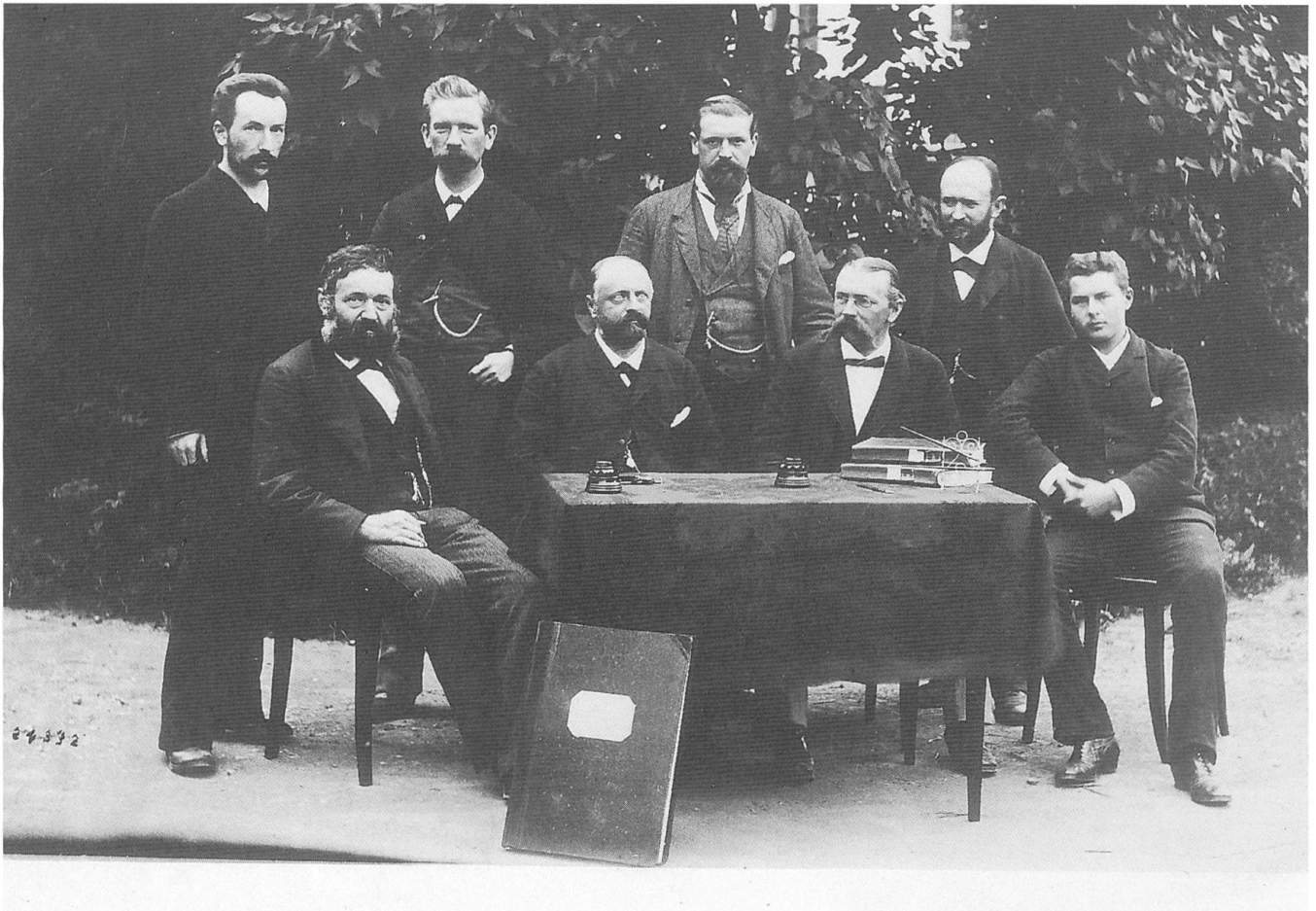
*Letten spinning mill
near Glattfelden
ca. 1880*

with the Letten spinning mill near Glattfelden, which had been founded in 1865 as Rieter, Ulrich & Cie., and utilized the water power of the river Glatt. Rieter had to write off his investment twice, in 1873 and 1885, before the company passed to Spinnerei Letten AG in 1922. However, he continued to pay most attention to his own spinning mills, which were expanded steadily, although the St. Georgen mill increasingly fell behind those at Töss and Buchenthal due to its special structure and operating power. The premises were finally sold to the Maestrani chocolate factory in 1886. As a result of this development the large companies – those of Heinrich Kunz with five mills and 92 000 spindles, the J. H. Bühler company in Winterthur with 47 000 spindles, and the Rieter spinning mills with a total of 30 000 spindles – gained steadily in importance. More and more smaller spinning mills fell victim to the unfavourable times, for example as a result

of the reintroduction of protective tariffs in Austria, Germany and France. The continued domination of overseas markets by English competitors, the rapid growth of new industries in the USA and finally the provisions of the new Swiss federal factory law, with a working day of only eleven hours, also played their part in making the battle to survive more difficult.

The joint-stock company

The last twenty years of the 19th century were not an easy time for Swiss spinning mills in general. Many millowners transferred their production to neighbouring countries, mainly to northern Italy, where adequate water power, cheap labour and assured markets offered good prospects of success. Rieter had no such plans, since in his company machine manufacture had long outstripped spinning operations, and he saw the Swiss spinning mills abroad primarily as good customers for his spinning machines. His own



well-designed, high-quality machines reduced the primary cost of producing yarn. The establishment of a twisting mill in Niedertöss (1880), a reduction in the number of his fine spindles and continuous technical re-equipment of his facilities reduced the risk. He was also able to retain a basic stock of local labour by providing his workers with low-cost housing. When Heinrich Rieter died in 1889, the 'AG vormals J. J.

Rieter & Cie.' was restructured, and three of his four sons Heinrich Rieter-Fenner (1838–1901), Oskar Rieter-Dölly (1844–1913), both engineers, and Max Rieter-Elmer (-Wilson) (1848–1907), businessman, held the office of board chairman in succession.

The company traded under the name of 'Actiengesellschaft vormals Joh. Jacob Rieter & Cie.' from De-

J.J. Rieter & Cie. «management and head office staff» on a photograph dated 1886. Seated behind the table are Heinrich Rieter-Fenner (left) and Oskar Rieter-Dölly (right)

Letterhead of the new joint stock company





Heinrich Rieter-Fenner (1838–1901)

ember 1891. According to the first annual report, the inventory was made up as follows:

- Obertöss engineering workshops 65.6%;
- Niedertöss and Glattfelden spinning mills 25.4%;
- Buchenthal spinning mill 9.0%.

In 1922 the little word ‘vormals’ (formerly) was deleted from the company name, and with the capital increase of 1960 the company’s name was changed to ‘Maschinenfabrik Rieter AG’.

With the retirement of the fourth generation, Benno Rieter (1870–1925) became the last holder of the Rieter name and the only member of the fifth generation to head the company. After studying in Dresden and England and gathering practical experience in Milan, the elder son of Oskar Rieter-



Oskar Rieter-Dölly (1844–1913)



Max Rieter-Elmer (-Wilson) (1848–1907)



Benno Rieter (1870–1925), the last representative of the Rieter family in the company

Dölly became executive vice president in 1899, a member of the board in 1901, and vice chairman in 1904. He presided over the board as chairman from 1918 to 1925.

Separation of the spinning mills

While textile operations developed favourably at the beginning of the 20th century, sales of spinning machinery encountered increasing difficulties. This discrepancy was the reason for separating the two distinct manufacturing sectors and thoroughly reorganizing the engineering workshops in Obertöss. A well-conceived restructuring plan came into effect in December 1914. First of all, this entailed taking all the premises which were not directly involved in factory operations and transferring them to the newly formed Töss Real Estate Company. This was liquidated in 1944 after all debts had been settled. The highly profitable spinning mills became an independent entity with the name of ‘Spinnerei und Zwirnerei Niedertöss AG’ under the

management of W. Merz-Rieter (who died in 1917), son-in-law of Max Rieter-Wilson. Benno Rieter died in July 1925 without any issue, whereupon the Rieter family finally lost its direct influence on the company.



Oskar Rieter-Dölly (seated) and Benno Rieter (standing) ca. 1890

Corporate management in the 20th century

We shall now turn our attention to the new ‘Actiengesellschaft Johann Jacob Rieter & Cie.’, whose origins stretch back to the early eighteenth century.

The transition from a craft-based company to an aspiring industrial

Members of the Board of Directors

from the formation of «Actiengesellschaft vormals Joh. Jacob Rieter & Cie.» in 1891 up to the present-day Rieter Holding Ltd.

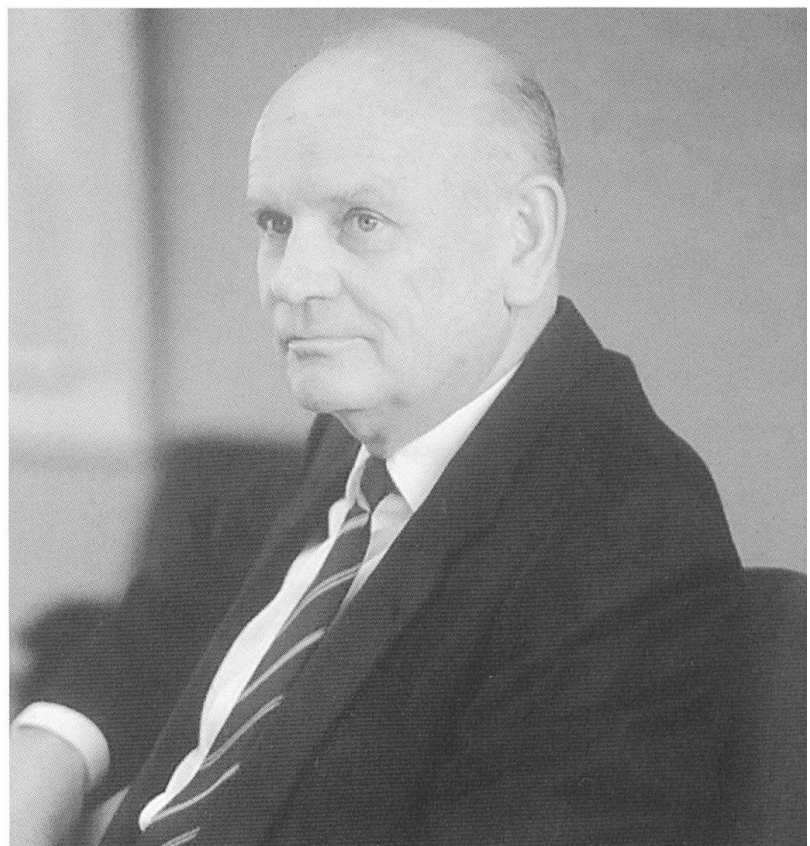
	Member	Chairman
Heinrich Rieter-Fenner	1891–1901	1891–1901
Oskar Rieter-Dölly	1891–1904	1901–1904
Max Rieter-Elmer (Wilson)	1891–1907	1904–1907
Benno Rieter	1901–1925	1913–1925
Johann Jakob Freimann	1904–1913	
Heinrich Sulzer-Rieter	1907–1913	1907–1913
Walter Merz-Rieter	1907–1917	
Dr. Robert Corti	1911–1955	1925–1955
Carl Bühler	1913–1961	1955–1961
Emil Bachmann	1914–1918	
Albert Sulzer	1914–1936	
Fritz Sulzer	1914–1921	
Jakob Heusser-Staub	1918–1939	
Ernesto Honegger	1920–1922	
Henri Daniel Gross	1925–1947	
Dr. Oskar Halter	1936–1939	
Emil Baumann	1940–1955	
Max Spoerry	1940–1967	
Emil Winkler	1946–1957	
Dr. Max Ziegler	1946–1970	
Heinrich Steiner	1948–1954	
Dr. Kurt Hess	1955–1982	1961–1982
Dr. Fritz Gubler	1955–1965	
Hans C. Bechtler	1955–1976	
Jakob Schärer	1959–1976	
Dr. Alfred Schaefer	1962–1977	
Dr. Hans U. Bühler	1967–1986	
Dr. Heinz Kundert	1967–1994	1982–1994
Dr. Hans Schaffner	1970–1981	
Dr. Andreas H. Bechtler	1976–1987	
Peter Dätwyler	1976–1993	
Dr. Robert Holzach	1977–1991	
Nicolas Henggeler	1981–1994	
Hans Rüegg	1982–1989	
Bruno Boller	1986–1994	
Rudolf Hauser	since 1987	
Dr. Konrad Eckert	since 1988	
Dr. Peter Spälti	since 1991	
Dr. h.c. Heinrich Steinmann	since 1991	since 1994
Dr. Ulrich Dätwyler	since 1994	
Kurt E. Feller	since 1994 as Managing Director	
Dr. René K. Ruepp	since 1994	

group began for Rieter after the turn of the century. In 1912, Winterthur lawyer Dr. Robert Corti joined the Rieter board, of which he was chairman from 1925 to 1955. During his 30-year chairmanship he purposefully pressed ahead with the modernization and focusing of the group on new structures in close cooperation with executive management. The lessons of the Corti era were followed up by his successor, banker Carl Bühler, who brought decades of experience on the Rieter board to his period of chairmanship from 1955 to 1961. Both these men had effective contact with operations through the chief executives and directors Heinrich Steiner and Dr. h.c. Kurt Hess. On the unexpectedly early death of Heinrich Steiner in 1954, Kurt Hess moved from his position as plant manager to that of chief executive and director in 1955; he was chairman of the board from 1961 to 1982. During this period he was also successful in organizing the transition to the next generation of management and his own succession. In this phase Fritz Preysch Sr., Dr. Oskar Denzler and Max R. Epprecht assumed the responsibilities of chief executive as *primus inter pares*.

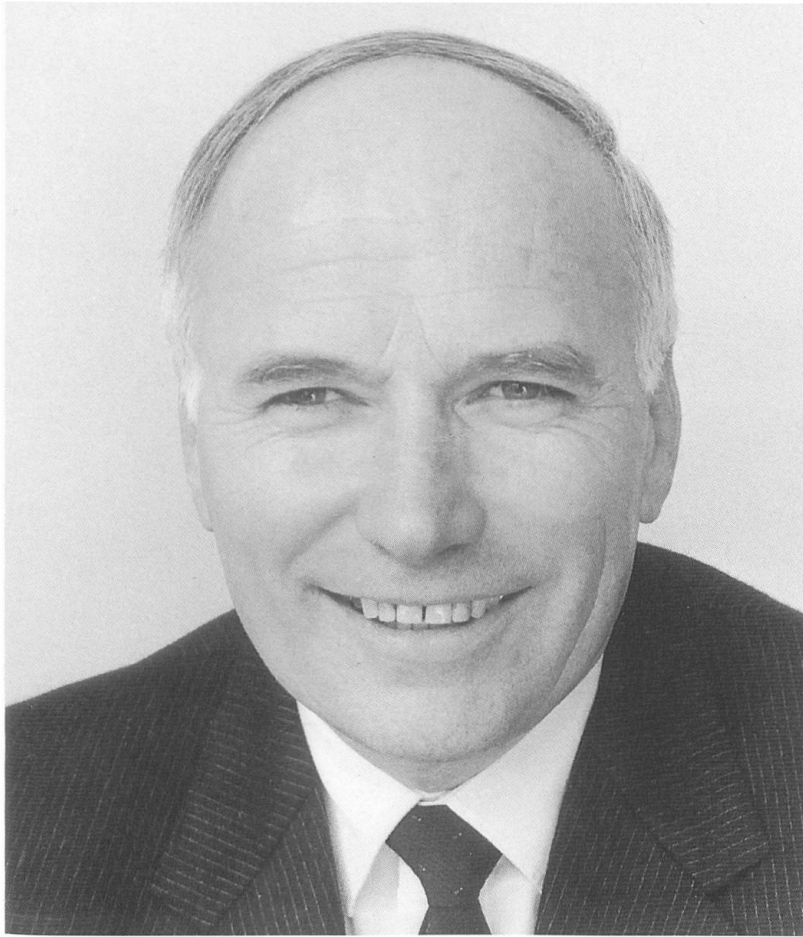
Nicolas Henggeler was appointed chief executive and a member of the board in 1981. He also served on this body as managing director until 1989. Dr. Heinz Kundert, lawyer and experienced Rieter director, became chairman of the board in 1982. In regular, active contact, Dr. Heinz Kundert and Nicolas Henggeler pressed on with the development of the group and holding structures and the transition from a monoculture to a diversified group in close partnership with their colleagues. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Heinz Kundert, Nicolas Henggeler handed over the office of chief executive in 1989 to Kurt E. Feller, who took on this assignment with long personal



Dr. Kurt Hess (1910–1985), member of the board of directors from 1955 to 1982 and its chairman from 1961 to 1982



Nicolas Henggeler (1923), member of the board of directors from 1981 to 1994

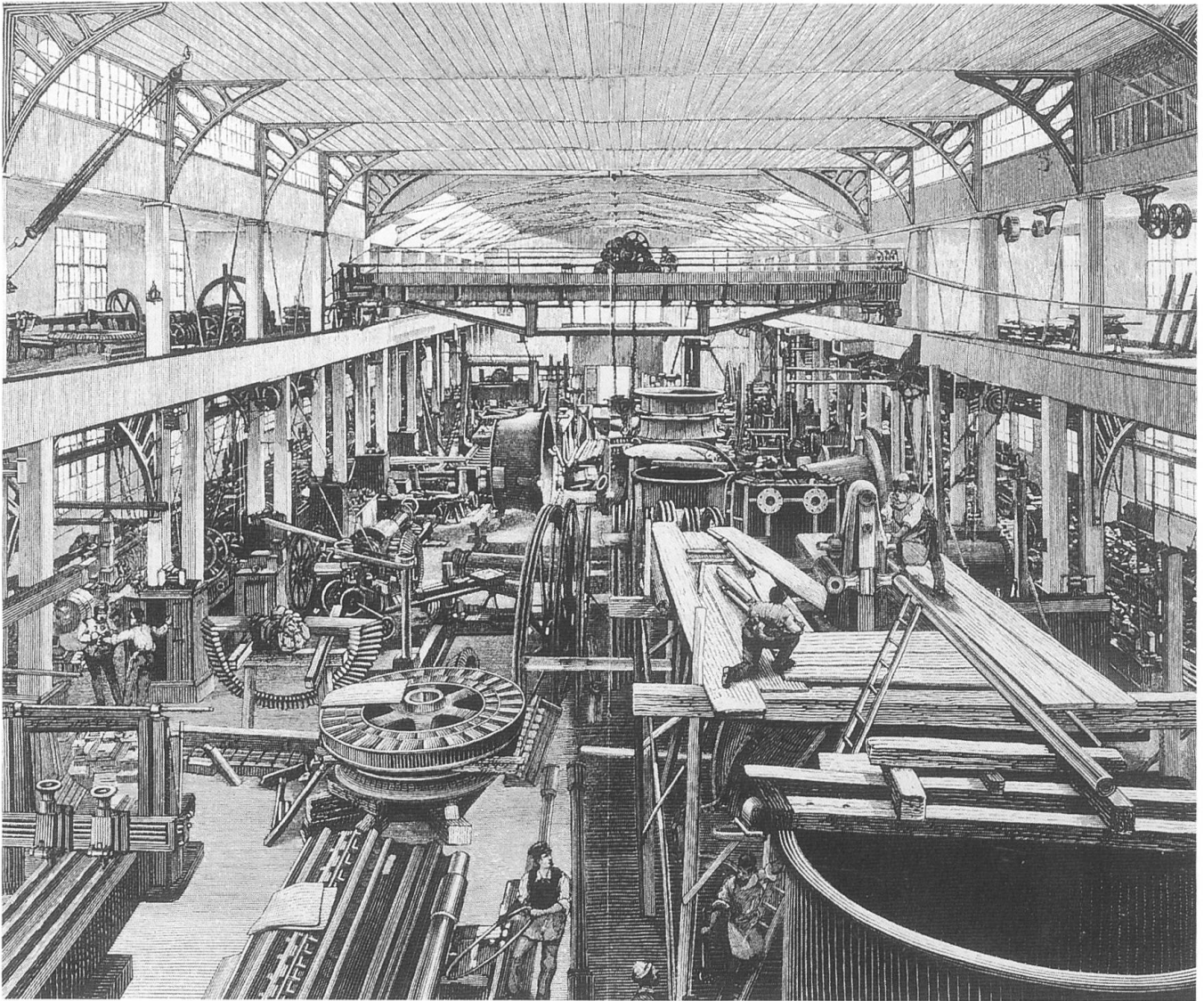


experience of Rieter. The cooperation between chairman Dr. Heinz Kundert and group chief executive Kurt Feller was therefore continued. In the spring of 1994, Dr. Kundert handed over overall management of the harmonized Rieter Group and the board chairmanship to Dr. h. c. Heinrich Steinmann.

*Kurt E. Feller (1937),
Managing Director
since 1994*



*Dr. Heinz Kundert (left)
and Dr. h.c. Heinrich
Steinmann, his succes-
sor as chairman of the
board, during the 1994
annual general meeting
of Rieter Holding Ltd.*



Assembly shop in the machine works ca. 1880