The name Brose is widely known in the international automotive industry – a synonym for mechatronic components and systems in car bodies and interiors. The Brose Group has over 16,000 employees at 46 locations in Europe and overseas.

Who were the people who brought about this extraordinarily successful growth in the course of the past hundred years? The founder, Max Brose, led the company through two world wars, building up a regionally based, mid-size enterprise over a period of some 60 years.

In the space of three and a half decades his grandson Michael Stoschek developed Brose into an international corporation that today leads the market in technology and quality. In this period he was confronted with the oil and energy crises of the seventies and eighties. In the era of globalization it was important to meet the challenges of an increasingly demanding international market.

The Era of Max Brose

When Max Brose was born on January 4, 1884, the automobile had not yet been invented. Two years later, Carl Benz patented his “motor car.” In Elberfeld, Max Brose’s parents ran a “special factory for automobile lanterns, bodies and fittings,” and the young man observed how motoring with its high speeds was ousting carts and buggies from the streets. He was fascinated by this revolutionary invention.

It was thus no coincidence that Max Brose opened a trade company for automobile and airplane accessories in Berlin after completing his training as a businessman at the age of 24.
After the First World War, Brose decided to produce automotive parts inhouse. In Coburg (Upper Franconia) he founded Metallwerk Max Brose & Co. together with the chemist Ernst Jühling, whom he had met in World War I.

In the beginning, there was a product that drivers can no longer imagine doing without: the window regulator. In 1926, Brose patented his “crank drive for lowerable windows.” Using a so-called wrap spring brake, which Max Brose acquired a license for, it was possible for the first time to hold the vehicle’s window in any position.

Serial production of the “Atlas window regulator” began in Coburg in 1928, and it was accompanied by an unparalleled success story interrupted only by the Second World War. Due to its technological superiority and a great demand, Brose in a short time became the market leader in this product area.

The window regulator technology was developed further in later years. In 1956 Brose presented the professional world with an upgrade: “the window regulator with electric drive.” In 1963 the first electric window regulator was built into the BMW 3200 Coupé series.

At this time Max Brose already had a new business field in sight that was going to make the operation of vehicles even more comfortable: seat adjuster technology. In 1968, Brose pioneered seat fittings for adjusting the backrest that were then built into the “new class” of BMWs. Within a few years the seat adjuster business developed into the second strongest piece of the enterprise. Max Brose greatly valued the advice and commitment of his daughter Gisela. She entered the family business in 1939, and in 1952 she was appointed to management. After the death of
her father in 1968, she ran the business until it was transferred in 1971 to her nephew Michael Stoschek.

When Max Brose died at the age of 84, he left behind a substantial life’s work. The company employed nearly 1,000 persons and achieved a business volume of DM 55 million.

**Dynamic and Systematic**

For Brose, the 1970s were a decade of upheaval and reorganization, setting a course for the future. The trigger for this was the second change of generation in the enterprise’s history: on October 1, 1971, the management of the company was transferred to Michael Stoschek, age 24.

In 1974, an independent board was established to advise shareholders and management on all decisions and to make decisions whenever there was a tie vote. At the same time, the shareholders’ meeting formulated corporate principles which stipulated that the well-being of the enterprise and the employees were always to take priority over shareholder interests. In addition, a substantial part of the profits was to be left for financing future growth of the company. This management policy, emphasizing unity of purpose and long-term planning, is the basis for the successful development of the family business. The most important decisions of the 70’s were to develop the export business and expand the product range. Apart from window regulators and seat adjusters, headrests, fittings, rear spoilers, and bumpers made of thermoplastics and polyurethane were also produced between 1975 and 1989.

In 1979, Brose was the first manufacturer in Europe to manufacture multifunctional power seats and introduced them in the Mercedes Benz S
Class, opening up the European market with this technology. Today, electrical seat adjusters are standard equipment on midrange cars. After decades of experience in mechanical systems and electrical connections, Brose added electronics in the eighties. In 1983 it brought electrical seating position memory to the market – a further milestone in automotive engineering, providing more comfort and security. Three years later, Brose’s window regulator electronics celebrated its world premiere in an Opel Senator. With this product, the enterprise set a worldwide standard, making the opening and closing of auto windows more comfortable as well as safer by preventing injuries due to trapping. The expansion of manufacturing capacities at home and abroad and the associated construction of new production plants were characteristic of the next two and a half decades. Brose developed further growth potential in its core business fields by offering a larger range of products such as door systems and seat structures.

An international group of companies grew out of the Coburg metal works, including development and marketing companies as well as production locations and headquarters in Europe, America and Asia. Between 1988 and 2005, four new locations were established annually on average in all the significant growth markets.

In Hallstadt in 2001, Brose commenced with the development and manufacturing of electronic components for window regulators, door systems and seat adjusters.

In November 2002, Brose acquired the closure system business of Robert Bosch GmbH, thereby adding to its competence in vehicle doors.

When Michael Stoschek stepped down as CEO at the end of 2005 and passed his responsibilities to Jürgen Otto after 34 years at the helm, he was able to look back on the most successful financial year in the firm’s history. Brose had an annual turnover of 2.2 billion euros, employing
approximately 9,000 coworkers at 37 locations in 19 countries. With the appointment of Jürgen Otto, who has 15 years of experience in different leadership functions of the enterprise, there is for the first time no family member heading the business. This nevertheless documents the continuity and long-term orientation of the Brose group, which in the future can count on the backing of shareholders of the third and fourth generation.

**New Horizons**

In 2008, the growth of the Brose Group achieved a new high point. With the acquisition of the electric motor operations of Continental AG, the number of persons employed rose to over 15,000 and the consolidated business volume reached more than 3 billion euros.