

# Tatra-Heritage

(sees new direction...)

At the beginning of the year, I found a message from the Austrian club of Tatra brand supporters "Tatra-Friends International / TFI", according to which there is newly founded Association of Tatra Heritage in the Czech Republic, which is seeking closer cooperation with clubs related to the Tatra brand, their car companies, museums, the town of Kopřivnice and similar institutions. It allegedly offers, in different times, two-day events in Kopřivnice with the same programme highlights. Unfortunately, our "Tatra-Register Deutschland" club didn't get this piece of information. However, I was interested in this offer and asked various people in the neighborhood, if interested in participation. It all sounded too promising to such an offer could remain unnoticed.

As the date was in the business week, namely, April 14 and 15, Thursday and Friday, for many people, it wasn't quite simple to plan the trip. Eventually, the three friends of Tatra were found: Jens Keufner, Oliver Marx a Max Trebing, who had a desire to participate. In addition, we took one more Tatra driver from Brandenburg, who wasn't a member of the Club, but he wanted to join our group. Jens Keufner took care of payment, that was no problem. It was € 150 per person, including two-day programme, without any additional expenses. Accommodation in the Tatra hotel (where else!) was already included in the price.

The arrival was planned a day in advance, so we could see a little bit of Prague, for example, we wanted to visit the National Technical Museum, which was newly opened after the reconstruction. Comments on this topic, see the section "Neues aus der Tatra-Welt" or the responses in the Czech press news, in the section "Pressespiegel" (see chapter XIX).

Since the program organized by the Tatra Heritage Association began in Kopřivnice on Thursday at lunch time, we could slowly arrive in advance and familiarize ourselves with the town of Kopřivnice, the Tatra hotel and nearby surrounding areas. Long before the trip, we all were wondering what we are about to see and who is going to participate. Despite

various contacts at the Tatra scene, I still wasn't quite clear who all was going. Everyone I've contacted, refused. It had different reasons. Mostly the problem was in the event time over business week, but also in the distant journey. Due to the German language, the event was likely to be less targeted to the local.

During the journey, unfortunately, there was a rainy weather in Kopřivnice, too. Summer temperatures from the previous week, unfortunately, completely disappeared. So we first did the comfort in Fifty Fifty café at the Tatra hotel, that maybe we'll find out more. Then we met with Petra, a young teacher from Brno, which presented itself as an interpreter for the next two days and that has been already waiting in the cafeteria. Neither she did know how large the group for which to resolve is going to be, and how many people will be there. Having coffee and refreshing drinks in our company, however, she soon lost the last doubts if the group will meet her. This has already happened...

Soon the organizer of the event and the President of the Association of Tatra Heritage, Josef Kasperkevič, came to us to greet us. He informed us that three more guests from Austria are to participate, that should be met on our first point of the programme, at Kopřivnice Town Hall. There, a minute later, exactly at 12:30 pm, the programme officially started. At first, we all in the group met and we knew immediately that the next two days we'll be having fun. Petra, our interpreter, find out about a minute earlier. Mr. Kasperkevič and his colleague, Jan Hrubý, who served as photographer documenting every detail were also in a joyous mood.

First, we briefly greeted in the building of city administration - former administrative building of Tatra car manufacturer, that ceded its premises in the context of the reduction of production and business streamline several years ago to the city and moved to a smaller, more convenient building of the factory site. Then we went to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor where we were officially welcomed by the city representatives. Even the Mayor, Mr. Jakub Jalůvka, joined our company and was very pleased by our visit. Unfortunately, he soon had another, more important, appointment so he had only a limited time during which he could speak with us and answer our questions. Although he stressed that unlike before, Kopřivnice does not consist only of the Tatra, but on the edge of its range

a variety of businesses from the area of the automotive supplier industry emerged in recent years, yet he admitted that his love is the Moravian car brand and that he privately owns, for sure, one Tatra vintage car, too.

Spokesperson introduced us to the history of the city, its attractions, environment, local figures and other interesting things, while the atmosphere of the interpretation was visually supplemented by image presentation. After a good hour that has passed very quickly, we had to say goodbye. In memory of this visit, we were provided with a gift bag with interesting content.

Then we went to – for most of us familiar - Tatra Technical Museum, located right next to our hotel. There we were welcomed by Radim Zátpek, who has prepared for us an exclusive tour over the entire exposition in perfect German. It went a time off for Petra, our interpreter, so even she could fully concentrate on displayed vehicles. We could hear all kinds of Radim Zátpek's stories almost to each exhibit. In the winter season, the museum closes at 4 pm instead of 17 pm. However, it was not true for us! Nearly till 18 pm. we were the only guests in officially closed Museum. It was allowed to take photos, what who's content, and we were also let beyond the placeholders, and after politely asking, we allowed to sit in some of the vehicles. The top exhibit, for me personally, was the automobile T 815 GTC with a huge residential area, famous for the way around the world. The dividing of its interior space with all the facilities, I rather felt like on a luxury yacht. Once again, I want to thank here Radim Zátpek for such a great tour, in which the concept of the "timetable" as if it didn't exist.

There was still time for dinner time, so we had one excellent Radegast beer in the hotel restaurant. To our surprise, we found the representatives of the Veteran Car Club Kopřivnice Association sitting there, which have been respectably represented by their longstanding President Alena Čípová. It was a pleasant surprise. About an hour later, they said good-bye and left. In the meantime, suddenly, Ulrich Platzek, the President of the Austrian Club Tatra-Friends International / TFI, arrived to join us. Neither him didn't want to miss this event, for reasons of time, however, he could come in the evening.

Anyway, we could – everyone together - enjoy our dinner-styled three-course menu, served specially for us in a newly reconstructed hotel lounge in the first floor. Who would have thought that from now on it will be "a while off", that was wrong. What was not mentioned in the programme, an upcoming movie night with screenings. And of course, to see were the movies only with Tatra or about it, one more interesting than the other. The offer was a nice mix of older and newer films on cars and lorry's, among them also, for example, extracts from the films of Hanzelka and Zikmund or a short film "Bon voyage!", which amuse us every time again. It ended so late that there was time only for one drink at the hotel bar.

And climax came on the next day? According to the programme, we started in the morning after breakfast at the entrance of the administrative building of the automakers, which was moved to the factory site a few years ago. After a few photo shots, we went inside, where we found ourselves in the "directorial floors", having a seat in some kind of conference or reception room. The representatives of the Tatra company came to greet our little group and they welcomed us warmly. During the next hour, we were through various video and film contributions clearly and with great willingness getting familiar with the history and with the current situation and the company production. Watching skilfully filmed shots of a Tatra truck that looks to go through and pass everything, always fascinate us.

Several years of continuing cooperation with the French car manufacturer Renault was highlighted in particular. As a result of this cooperation, the new medium lorry T 810 became a major part of Tatra's production. It is used mainly in the army, but gradually even in the civil sphere, however it, unfortunately, means a departure from the concept of Tatra. It means: no backbone chassis, no air-cooled engines. Not even the typical Tatra-style cabin. All this with six-cylinder liquid cooled engines come from Renault. What happens if one is (only) after a successful concept, Volkswagen had in the 60s. and 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it almost ruined it! From this perspective, it should look more forward - just on the bow of the vehicle still stands bold TATRA and is manufactured in Kopřivnice. And, perhaps, it is even a return to the roots, since those very first Tatra cars and other Kopřivnice predecessors have

been manufactured exactly according to this concept...

The responsible representatives of Tatra were given also questions concerning the new lorry T 158 and also the cooperation with the DAF company (see the report in the section "Neues aus der Tatra-Welt", chapter IV). IV). No mention about it in the lecture. Unfortunately, the responses didn't make the problematics more clear, only indicated that also cooperation with DAF is probable but we cannot be given more information on this. We could see they would rather like to avoid this topic. However, we've already had some internal information.

After an informative lecture on "directorial floor" we were invited for the tour through the whole factory. Another Tatra staff person guided us through the final assembly line and, on the specific wishes, through the production of engines and transmissions. It seemed that time plays no role; We could thoroughly examine everything and about anything. Although I've already had an opportunity to visit several production plants, always fascinates me again, as the whole vehicle comes into existence in a short moment just by assembling individual parts (engine, transmission, large tubes, half-shafts, suspension, brakes, wheels, and additional parts). And not just mere "vehicle" but with its six axles almost monster truck! And on the edge, two cabins from the DAF company stood quietly, and also their engines, still not packed out from transportation crates. The guide, however, provided no specifics...

To the conditions in the automotive manufacturer it should be noted that the quantity of the production on the pieces seems to be quite low. We were told numbers about 1 500 vehicles a year. When you do the math, you could roughly cover the work we saw. And, of course, was Friday noon, which means the end of a week shift.

Speaking about noon, All of this running (about two hours), we were slowly getting hungry and after the end of this tour, extremely interesting for all of us, we went back to the Tatra hotel where, in a lounge, reserved specially for us, three-course lunch was served. This refreshment was also needed, because there was, of course, afternoon program ready, that wasn't mentioned in the original event schedule.

We got permission to take our cars together to the polygon of Tatra test lines. We parked there on a calm place and we admired a number of five differently designed Tatra trucks from the current production, among them also the chassis with a wall-bar frame type 810. In addition, everyone was given one ride in a wagon type T 815-7 with 8x8 axles in the army style. While the term "wagon" is somewhat misleading. The T 815-7 model looks as extremely brutal truck with a lot of potential. At the moment it came in handy that the rain had stopped and the Sun showed more and more.

This vehicle has simply elegant armoured cabin and thanks to its low construction perfectly crosses terrain, and is ideal for transporting mainly in aircraft, trains, etc. Low and without cargo also light design is a fundamental advantage of this vehicle. And in addition, eight wheels, though moulded for the toughest terrain, ensure good adhesion. Personally, I've experienced all sorts of rides in a variety of trucks at Tatra polygon but what we saw here, was a total blast to me!

The young driver of theirs probably wanted to show foreign visitors all what Tatra really can. Something like that I can hardly describe, if one doesn't know the terrain or if wasn't there with us. Most of all to me was the casualty with which this mnohonožka confidently moving on and on across all the different types of surfaces, and also how seamlessly it handled banks and ascents. In the section with the lengthwise inclined ground (up to 45 degrees), it seemed that Tatra was going to flip with us for real, but nothing like that happened. It was on the wall as stuck. The wheels as the suckers.

I had no doubt that Tatra will overcome even the steepest slope in the terrain reaching 22 degrees (which corresponds to 45%) in the direction from the bottom up. The slope was reinforced as I've seen many times on the shows. I was somewhat surprised when the driver, after a small round through the forest at the top, wanted to return to get the same way down again. What came next, I was totally stunned. Not that he would have been slowly getting familiar with the top edge and then was carefully tumbling forward. He, more or less, just drove off the cliff (no other word came to my mind in this context).

Sometimes it was just the sky and below there was a deep chasm. I felt like Jens Weisflog on a large ski jump in Zakopane in the Vysoké Tatry mountains. And in that moment, the Tatra had to take off, which it also really did. When vehicle with 8x8 axles is passing over the edge a passenger in the front cabin necessarily hovers in the air for a brief moment. Then, when the center of gravity moves over this edge, a vehicle literally falls forward. A feeling that probably no roller coaster in the world can beat...

Even our interpreter Petra had to sit in the vehicle and take a ride through the track. After, her expression then was something between joy and shakiness, to say the least. She imagined the course of the day probably differently when accepting this contract.

At about four o'clock, the event was over – unfortunately! Everybody got a Tatra automaker gift bag with various information to the current production and a few other little things. Finally, the drawing of nice model of Tatra car among the participants took place. In addition, each received a charter to commemorate the participation at this wonderful event. In short, it took forever...

Big thanks and recognition goes to Mr. Kasperkevič and Mr. Hrubý of the Tatra Heritage Association for the organization and implementation of such a busy programme. No one of our group regret. I look forward to future events!

*Roland Henkel*