

VW Beetle History...

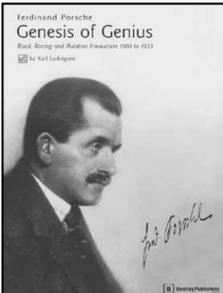
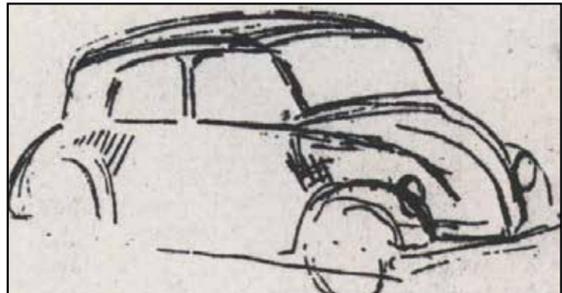
Disputed Origins of the "People's Car"

While Ferdinand Porsche undoubtedly brought the Beetle to fruition, there are differing opinions as to whose ideas sparked the people's car. Was it a sketch by Adolf Hitler, Porsche's design ideas, influence from the third oldest car maker in the world: Tatra, or the design of a lesser-known Jewish engineer, Josef Ganz?

Josef Ganz's May Bug



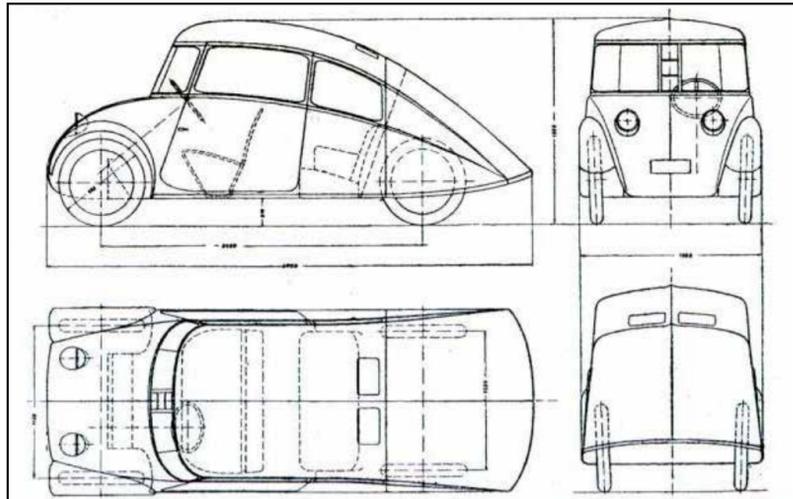
There is no question that Ferdinand Porsche designed the project that would become the early Beetle. However, a recent article published in the UK newspaper "Daily Mail" on January 15, 2012 suggests that a Jewish engineer, Josef Ganz, was exploring the idea of a people's car as early as 1928. In fact, Ganz's car, on display at a car show in 1933, was much closer to Hitler's sketch, said to be given to Porsche in 1934.



Hitler's original Sketch and Ferdinand Porsche

According to Daily Mail Reporter, Emma Reynolds, "The Nazi leader has always been given credit for sketching out the early concept for the car in a meeting with car designer Ferdinand Porsche. His idea for the Volkswagen - or 'people's car' - is seen by many as one of the only worthwhile achievements of the genocidal dictator.

"But Paul Schilperoord's book, The Extraordinary Life of Josef Ganz - the Jewish engineer behind Hitler's Volkswagen, may change that forever." Reynolds' article goes on to note that Hitler stipulated that the vehicle would have four seats, an air-cooled engine and cost no more than 1,000 Reichsmarks. This was the same price point that Ganz planned to use.



Bauvorschlag für einen viersitzigen Gebrauchswagen von Dipl.-Ing. Ganz. Radstand 2450, Spur vorn 1150, hinten 1050, Gesamtlänge 3700, größte Breite 1385, Gesamthöhe 1550, Bodenfreiheit 210 mm. Jaray-Stromlinienkörper-Vollschwingachser mit querliegendem Heckmotor.

Ganz's Design

Ganz was driving a car he designed and called the Maikaefer, or May Bug, some 3 years before Hitler had his fateful meeting with Porsche to describe an idea for a new vehicle. Ganz's lightweight vehicle rode low to the ground and resembled Porsche's Beetle. It turns out that Ganz had been researching ideas for a car that the masses could afford since as early as 1928 and had already made several sketches of his design.

Reynolds reports that "Hitler saw the May Bug at a car show in 1933 and made sketches. Within days of the meeting between Hitler and Porsche in 1934, Ganz's car magazine was shut down and he was in trouble with the Gestapo."

Ganz fled Germany for Switzerland and later died in Australia in 1967. Today, there is no mention of his possible involvement in the development of the iconic Volkswagen Beetle. However, Schilperoord strongly believes that Ganz played a pivotal role in the car's creation.

"So many things were the same in Hitler's sketches," Schilperoord said. "Hitler definitely saw his prototype and I'm quite sure he must have read Ganz's magazine. It's quite clear Ganz had a big influence on how the idea was

developed by the Nazis. Ferdinand Porsche drove Ganz's prototype in 1931. I found a lot of evidence that all similar rear engines in the 1930s can be traced back to Ganz."

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2086663/Hitler-copied-idea-iconic-Volkswagen-Beetle-Jewish-engineer-historian-claims.html#ixzz3G8jffXOe>

This interesting new theory will no doubt get VW enthusiasts talking! But there was yet another influential design source for the Beetle that has become so well-loved around the world.



The better known Tatra History

Tatra, a vehicle manufacturing company in Kopřivnice, Czech Republic, is the third oldest car maker in the world, behind Daimler and Peugeot. Tatra Chief Designer, Hans Ledwinka, was responsible for creating the T97, a smaller alternative to the company's T87 used by German officers during WWII for its superior speed and handling on the Autobahn.

Hitler had ridden in other Tatras during political tours of Czechoslovakia and had even spent time with Ledwinka. It is reported that, in a meeting with Porsche after visiting Ledwinka, Hitler remarked that the Tatra was the kind of car for German roads.



Porsche and Ledwinka had several meetings to collaborate and discuss their design ideas. Porsche once noted, "Well, sometimes I looked over his shoulder and sometimes he looked over mine," in reference to designing the Volkswagen.

Tatra launched a lawsuit, which was halted when Germany invaded Czechoslovakia. It was also at this time that Tatra stopped production of the T97. After the war, the matter was revisited and in the end, Volkswagen paid Ringhoffer-Tatra 3,000,000 Deutsche Marks in a settlement. This was the equivalent of \$752,000 at the time in 1961 and would be \$5.7 million today.



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