

The Volkswagen Factory in the City of Wolfsburg: Scrap Yard for Damaged VW-Beetles (1947)

Abstract

Founded in 1938 for Volkswagen factory workers, Wolfsburg was known as the “City of the KdF-Car.” Built by Ferdinand Porsche, the *Volkswagen* [People’s Car] was a symbol of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* [national community]. The idea was to produce a car that would be affordable to a broad segment of the population. Potential buyers were even given the option of participating in a savings plan, whereby they could save 5 Reichsmark a week until they had reached their goal – 990 Reichsmark, or the price of a Volkswagen. By the end of the war, aspiring car owners had paid about 300 million Reichsmarks into this savings plan. The problem, however, was that only a few hundred VWs had actually been built by that point; instead, the VW works had focused on producing for military use about 50,000 jeeps [*Kübelwagen* or “bucket cars”] and 14,000 amphibious vehicles – and had employed approximately 20,000 forced laborers in the process. In July 1945, two months after the initial occupation by American troops, British military authorities assumed responsibility for the VW factory in Wolfsburg. The manner in which occupation authorities implemented Allied dismantling policy in Wolfsburg differed from the approach they took with Krupp in Essen. In Wolfsburg, the policy was implemented in a constructive and pragmatic way: under the supervision of British control officers, especially Major Ivan Hirst, production of the VW Beetle started on a mass scale. At first, the cars were produced to meet Allied troops’ need for vehicles, then they were produced to sell abroad to earn money to defray occupation costs. The VW factory was transferred to the government of the Federal Republic in October 1949. Shortly thereafter, the Beetle became an export sensation and a general symbol of the West German “economic miracle.”

Source



Source: Stockpile with "VW Beetles" destroyed during the war at the Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg.
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