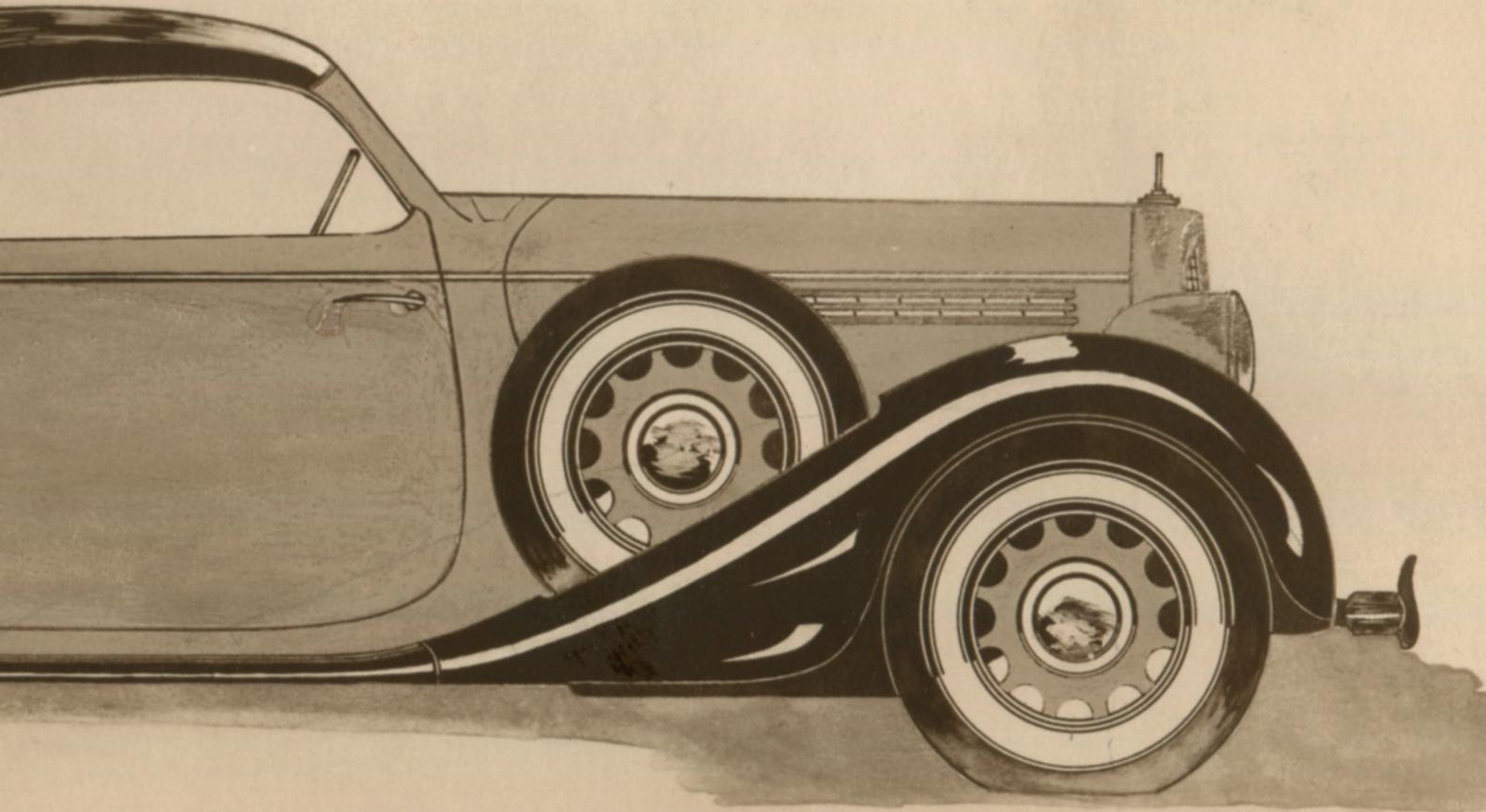


Maybach, the Third Reich and the Shah of Iran

Review copy with excerpts from the illustrated book
“Maybach, the Third Reich and the Shah of Iran”.

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Maybach SW 38

Hans-Jürgen Tücherer

Maybach, the Third Reich and the Shah of Iran

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Maybach, the Third Reich and the Shah of Iran

According to original documents of
the Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H.

A book by Hans-Jürgen Tücherer

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Editorial

Dear reader!

If, like me, you are able to look back on more than four decades of professional experience in the world of journalism, you know how often chance intervenes in life. Both positively and negatively.

I was interested in cars from an early age. Later, I loved everything that drives. Even at school, I loved writing, but from the fifth grade onwards I was at war with maths. So what could be more obvious than becoming a journalist after luckily just passing my A-levels? In my job, it helps enormously to be curious. To go through the world with open eyes and not barricade yourself behind thick, high walls. To recognize a chance and to take advantage of it, sometimes more, sometimes less consistently.

For decades, I drove to the post office every morning to collect my mail. Today, mail arrives on my monitor 24 hours a day and night via the Internet. The SPAM filter on my e-mail account has turned quiet, which leads to astonishing insights with absolute regularity: How do these incredibly “helpful” spirits from all over the world know that beauty surgery would be just as advisable for me as the diligent insertion of stimulants of questionable provenance? I prefer to rely on my antivirus scanner here ...

In the summer of 2024, a message from a good friend unexpectedly landed in my mailbox. Nice to hear from this brilliant person again! I immediately classified the content as „BREAKING NEWS“! While clearing out his parents‘ house, he had come across a box of old folders in the cellar! Thanks to his smartphone, he sent me a few photos of the contents attached. Internal Maybach files. From the pre-war period. Almost 90 years old! They opened the door to a world that I had previously only known in a very rudimentary way: the car industry in the „Third Reich“, in the final years just before the Second World War.

At that time, Maybach was not only an engine manufacturer, among others for the Zeppelin airships, but also an independent automobile manufacturer in Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance. With its luxury models, it courted the buyers of the powerful, rich and aristocratic. In Germany, it competed with Mercedes-Benz and Horch, and internationally with other luxury brands such as Rolls-Royce and Bentley.

It is well known that to this day, hardly any company can afford to be overly selective when it comes to its customers. In this respect, Maybach was of course no exception in the period from 1935 to 1939, which I examine in this book.

The bundle of nine original order folders from this period, which I was fortunate enough to acquire after making contact, proved to be not only historically extremely valuable, but also extremely exciting.

The files not only document the extensive correspondence between the manufacturer, customers and subcontractors during the construction of these fine automobiles. They are also a fascinating portrait of the automotive industry in an era that we have fortunately long since left behind us.

My study of the files ultimately led to the title of this book: „Maybach, the Third Reich and the Shah of Iran“. This illustrated book not only tells the fascinating stories that developed around the purchase and construction of these automobiles.

The high-resolution photographic reproductions of selected documents from these processes document the resistance - in some cases almost unimaginable today - with which the parties involved had to contend when building a brand-new, automotive status symbol of the Maybach brand.

This book also shows that excessive bureaucracy is by no means a newfangled invention of the Federal Republic of Germany or the European Union. But it also documents how clerks rebelled against powerful Nazi henchmen in ridiculously petty details and ultimately actually prevailed.

And that even Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer SS, who was known to be absolutely unscrupulous, attached the utmost importance to ensuring that his future luxury convertible complied down to the last detail with the applicable road traffic regulations, which were of course strictly German.

Which police officer would have dared to inspect or even object to the mass murderer's vehicle on the road? But law and order obviously had to be maintained even back then!

What you are holding in your hands is anything but a simple documentation of the fascinating Maybach SW 35 and SW 38 automobiles. No, there is also a surprising amount of humanity in these pages. Comedy features are just as much a part of it as a touch of crime thriller in the style of One Thousand and One Nights. As well as power games that any screenwriter would have been proud of.

I was astounded to learn that even powerful captains of industry were not allowed to spread their butts on fine leather seats, but had to drape themselves on shabby fabric covers. Because they were already arming themselves for the war looming on the horizon. The production of boots for soldiers was considered much more important than the satisfaction of personal luxury desires.

It was an incredibly exciting pleasure for me to sift through the material for this book, to research it and to work my way into this unfamiliar subject matter. I have processed the extract into this informative and entertaining work.

I am happy to admit that, time and again, I have not succeeded in reporting in a strictly factual manner. No, I have always taken the liberty of evaluating and commenting ironically. I hope that I have succeeded in this challenging balancing act!

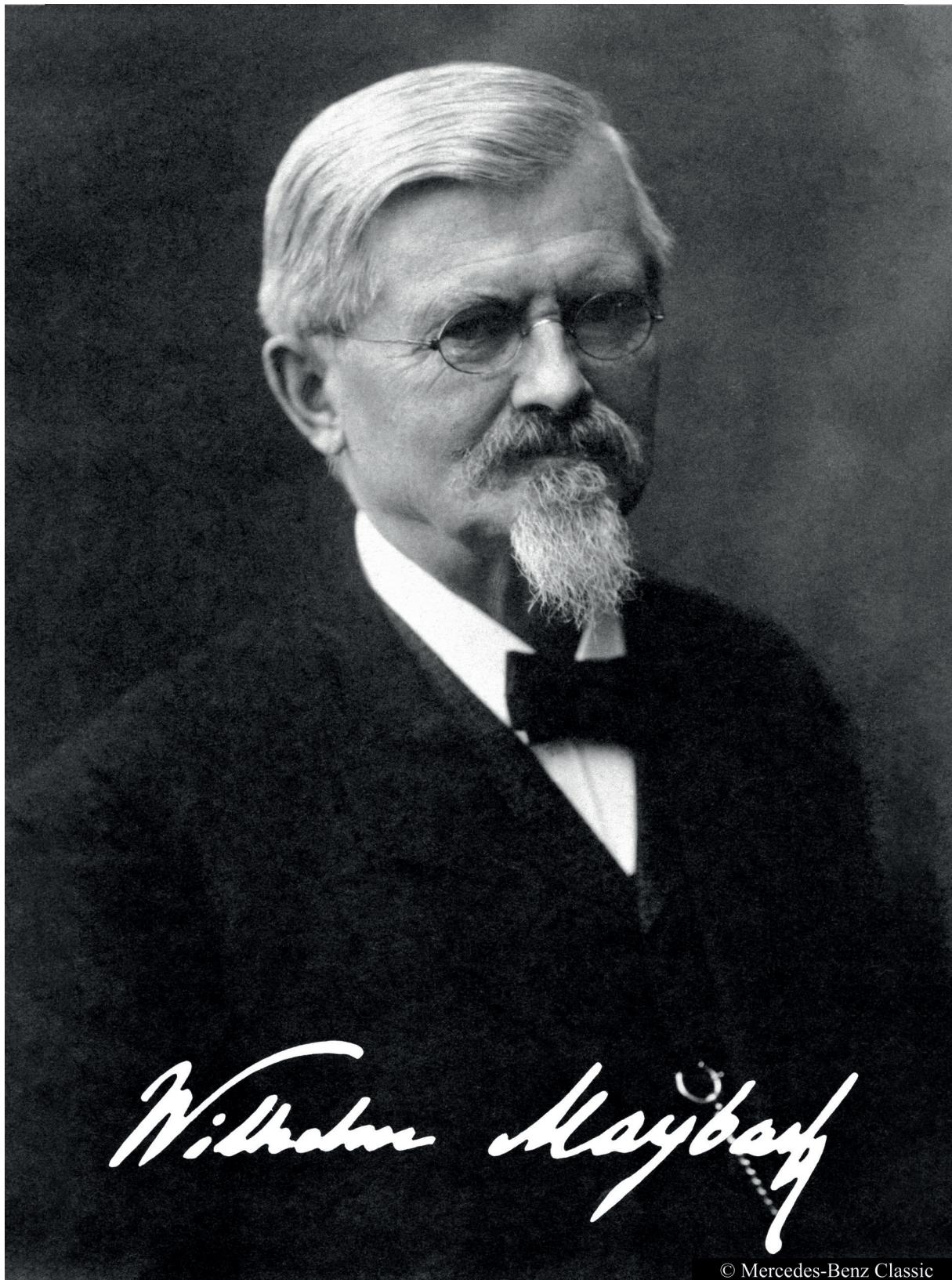
In the German-language version, I have quoted the passages from the Maybach sale files that I cited, which were of course written in German, in their original form. This includes the numerous spelling mistakes and sometimes unfamiliar phrasing contained therein. Unfortunately, this was not possible for the English-language book you now hold in your hands.

But I believe that I made this essential decision in your interest, for the sake of better comprehensibility! After all, by buying this book, you have demonstrated your interest in the Maybach brand as it had flourished before the Second World War.

I hope you enjoy studying this book!

Yours

Hans-Jürgen Tücherer
Journalist and author



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The Genius 1.0

The story of Wilhelm Maybach

Heilbronn, February 9, 1846. Nowadays, this would probably be called a typical Swabian model career: August Wilhelm Maybach, the later co-founder and namesake of Maybach Motorenbau G.m.b.H., was born on February 9, 1846 in Heilbronn as the second eldest son.

Five years later, his family moved to Stuttgart for professional reasons, where his father Christian Karl Maybach, a trained master carpenter, found new work with the piano manufacturer Schiedmayer.

But this time was not only hard for the family economically: His mother Luise Barbara Maybach developed increasingly serious heart problems and died in 1853. Just three years later, on March 8, 1866, his father fell victim to an accident, leaving Wilhelm, as he was known for short, and his four brothers as orphans. The distant relative who had helped Christian Karl Maybach with the daily care of his children after the death of his wife came up with an idea that was as unusual as it was effective.

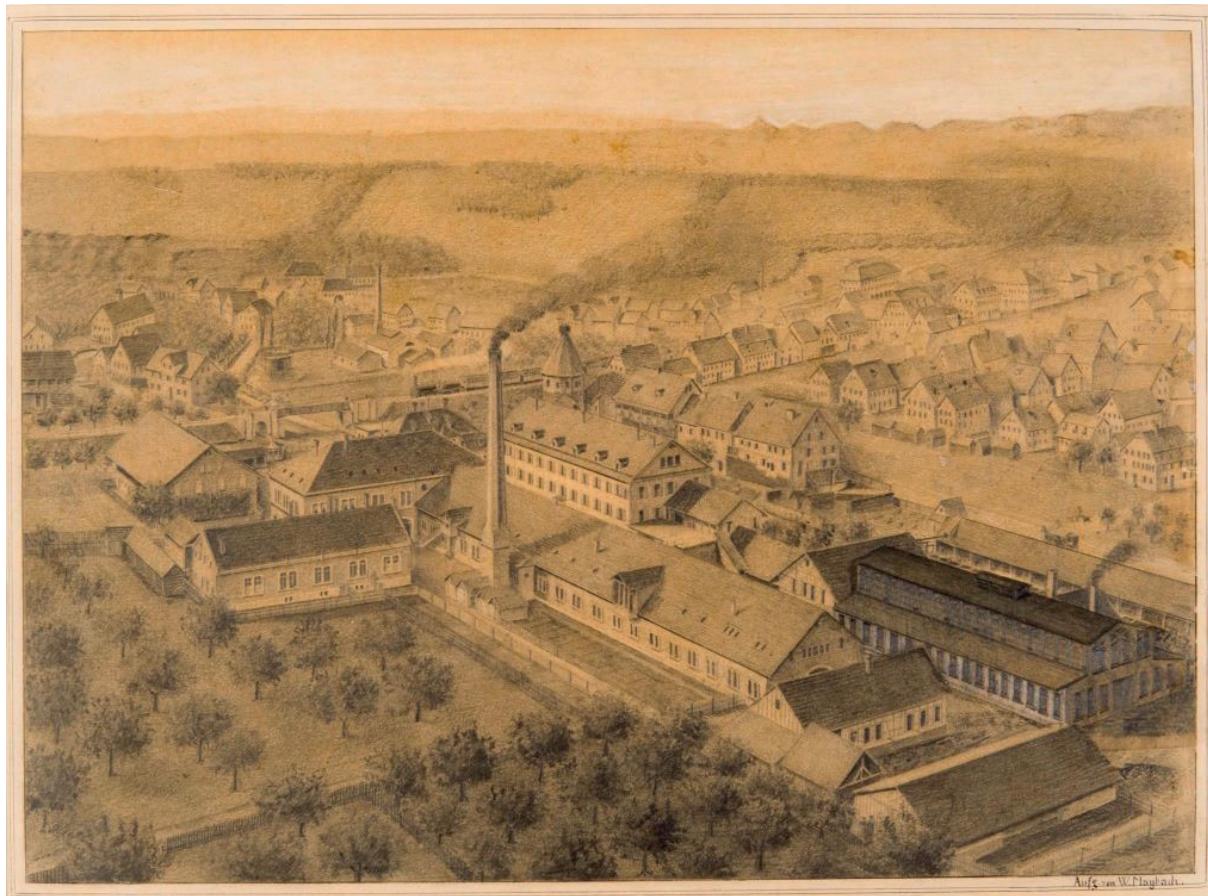
Barely two weeks after the death of the head of the family, she published this advertisement in the „Stuttgarter Anzeiger“ newspaper: „As they now have no means at all for their upkeep, and are also very deprived of clothes and whites, we therefore make a heartfelt request to charitable people to take care of the poor children with gifts of love, even the smallest gift is welcome.“

This initiative quickly led to success: all five children were placed in orderly circumstances, albeit separated from each other. Wilhelm was taken in by the Protestant pastor Gustav Werner at the Bruderhaus orphanage in Reutlingen, which he had founded.

The clergyman's philosophy was not only to bring up the children entrusted to him and his staff in a Christian manner, but also to give them a proper education.

Fate in the person of Pastor Werner also ensured that he did not train as a baker and confectioner in this institution, as was originally intended: Wilhelm Maybach's talents did not go unnoticed, and his extraordinary talent for drawing inspired the clergyman to let him do an apprenticeship as a technical draughtsman and designer in the attached machine factory from spring 1861.

This obviously paid off, as his drawing of the “Bruderhaus” shown on the next page, which he drew during this time, shows. He successfully completed his apprenticeship in the summer of 1865. Maybach was now employed as a technical draughtsman, where he had another fateful encounter in the fall of 1865: Gottlieb Daimler, who was only twelve years his senior, took over the management of the Bruderhaus machine factory and soon came to appreciate Maybach's great talent. As a result, the two worked ever more closely together.



A relationship that was not only successful professionally: he first met Bertha Habermaß, a friend of the bride, at his superior's wedding in 1867. However, it was several years before they met again, and a total of eleven years before the couple finally tied the knot on September 5, 1878. Less than a year later, on July 6, 1879, their son, who was christened Carl Wilhelm Albert, was born. Under the simplified name of Karl, he soon discovered the fascinating world of his father's design office. The next generation of Maybach was getting ready!

A lot had happened for the young engineer in the meantime: After thirteen extremely valuable years for his personal development, Maybach, aged just 23, followed his friend Gottlieb to his new place of work, the Maschinenbau-Gesellschaft Karlsruhe, in September 1869.

It is certainly worth mentioning for both of their development that they had each received their first patent during their time in Reutlingen. There they joined forces to combine their respective talents: Maybach, the man with innovative design ideas. Daimler as a genius in manufacturing and organizational matters. Their successful collaboration did not go unnoticed: in 1872, Eugen Langen poached the two and transferred them to the Rhineland to the Gasmotorenfabrik Deutz in Cologne. With a time lag, Maybach came first, who pushed ahead with the overdue expansion of the company according to his mentor's plans. He then handed over the expanded production to Daimler after he had served his notice period in Karlsruhe and joined the management of his new employer. Maybach then became head of the design office at the age of just 26.

From the very beginning, the infernal twosome from Swabia left no stone unturned in their new workplace. However, a certain Nikolaus Otto, who was also employed as a developer at this company, did not like this at all.

Which was strange, because it was precisely these two new colleagues who played a decisive role in helping him to perfect the “four-stroke gas engine with compressed charge” he had invented and make it ready for series production. Their joint pioneering work still serves as the basis for our combustion engines to this day.

Wilhelm Maybach was the man with the brilliant ideas, while Gottlieb Daimler ensured perfect production conditions. With their qualities, they drove out the teething troubles of the petrol engine, which made its presentation at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1878 a resounding success.

The engine was a hit, the order books filled to bursting point! After heavy losses during the development phase, the company’s dividend rose to as much as 96 percent in the 1882/83 financial year!

However, none of the parties involved were able to overcome a wide gap: While Otto preferred to build a large, stationary engine, Daimler and Maybach saw the future in a compact, high-speed engine for use in vehicles.

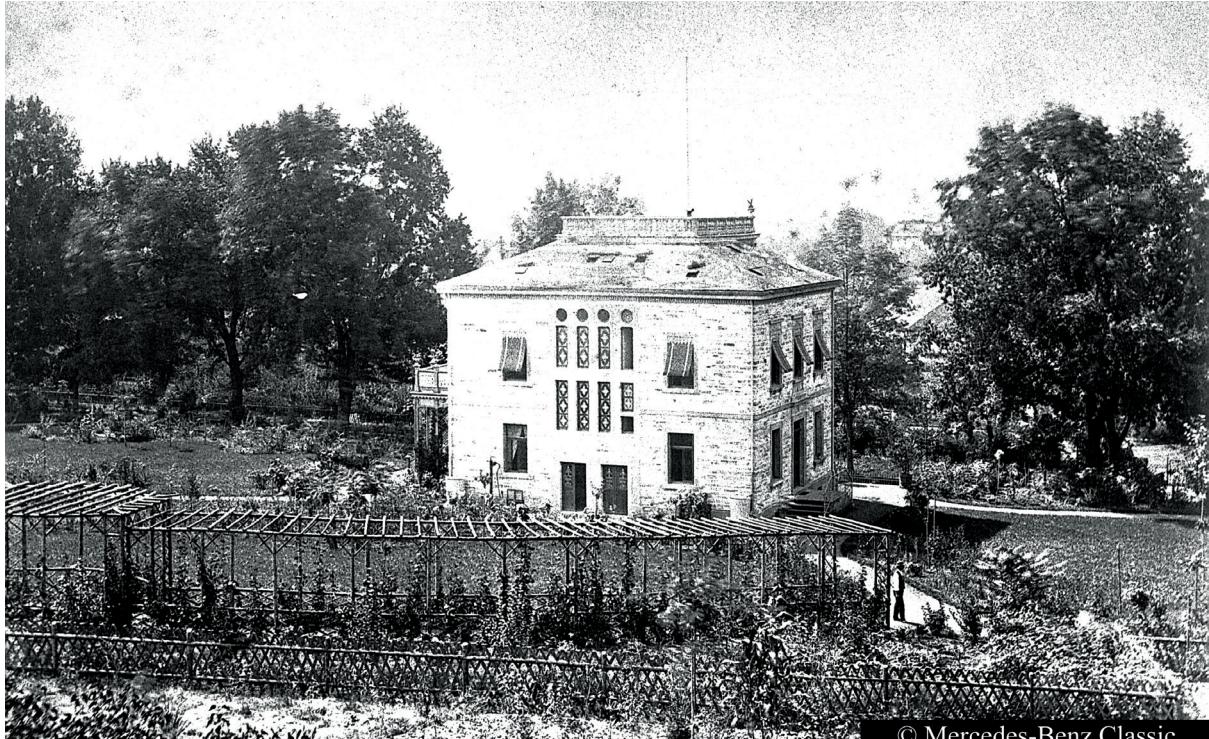
The permanent conflicts between these three men on the engineering side and the Board of Management, which always had its eye on the finances, led to the company’s dismissal of manufacturing genius Gottlieb Daimler on December 28, 1881.

Wilhelm Maybach’s reaction to this new development was not long in coming: he left the company of his own accord and signed a new employment contract with his trusted companion less than four months later.

It stated succinctly that Maybach would „take up the position of engineer and designer with Mr. Daimler in Cannstatt for the development and practical implementation of various projects in the field of mechanical engineering which Mr. Daimler assigns to him.“

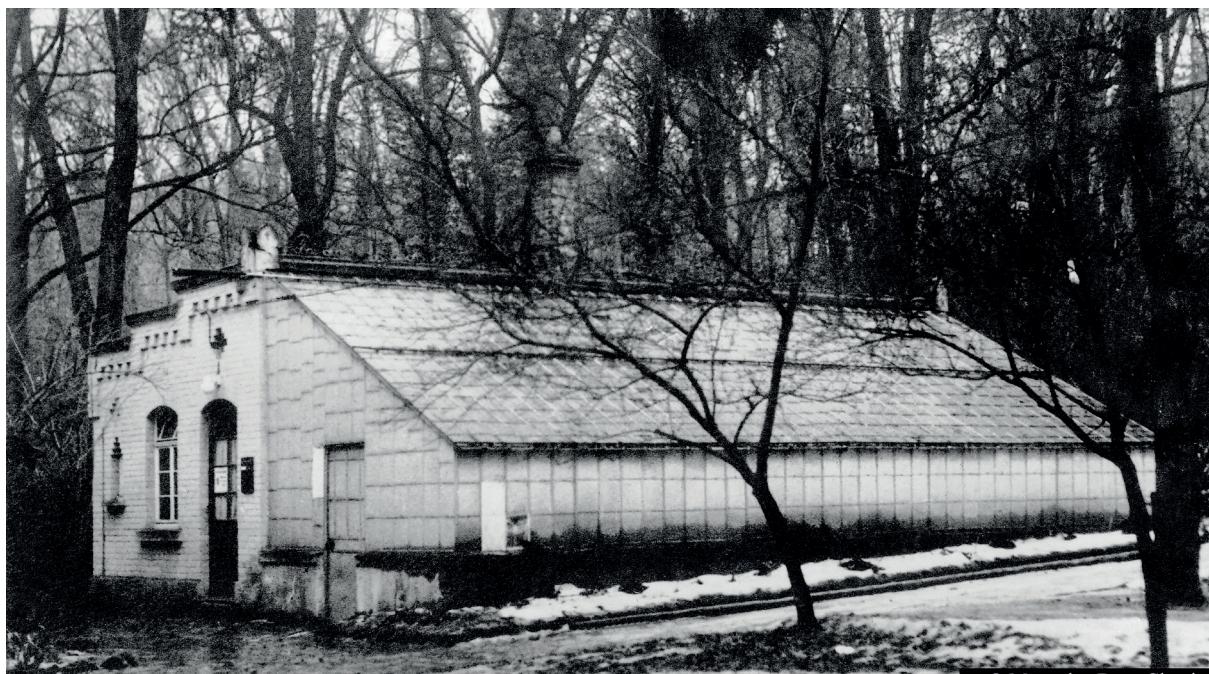
A monthly salary of 300 Mark was agreed, bearing in mind the currency conversion. In addition, a further 100 Mark per month from the interest on the capital that Daimler had invested for his technical genius and recorded in the written agreement: „In order to permanently combine the interests of Mr. Maybach with those of Mr. Daimler, Mr. Daimler shall set aside a sum of 30,000, in words thirty thousand, Mark for the special purpose of Mr. Maybach’s participation in a manufacturing business resulting from the above projects in such a way that for the time being, during his own period of service, Mr. Maybach shall receive 4% interest annually from the above sum of 30,000 Mark, that is 1,200 Mark, until the participation with this sum is made possible in part or in full, depending on the development of the business to be established.“

If Maybach were to die within five and a half years, „in addition to the salary and profit share due, Mr. Daimler must pay his family the sum of 10,000 Mark once, and 5,000 Marks once in cash after a further five years.“ An agreement that not only documented in writing how important Maybach was to Daimler, but also how convinced he was of his new plans for independence.



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Immediately after his six-month notice period expired, Gottlieb Daimler and his family moved into a house he had bought in Cannstatt in July 1882. There was a greenhouse in the garden, which he had converted into a workshop.



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After the end of his own employment contract, Wilhelm Maybach followed him to Stuttgart two months later. Together with Daimler's assistant Karl Linck, he was one of three people who had access to this new „development center“. The outstanding new component of their project at the time was the fuel: gasoline instead of gas, for which a pit was subsequently dug in the garden for a large tank.

The German author Dr. Kurt Rathke described this arrangement in his biography of Wilhelm Maybach, published in 1953, as „the first filling station and the first garage in the world“.

On the way to mass production of a small, high-speed engine, the development of a perfectly functioning ignition turned out to be the biggest hurdle. Their solution was a so-called „glow tube“, which automatically ignited the mixture at top dead center of the piston. The patent for this was granted under the number 28 022 on August 24, 1884. A principle that would go on to dominate the design of high-speed petrol engines for around 15 years.

Nowadays, it would probably be called a „home office“: Back then, it was a makeshift solution because the new workshop had not yet been completed: at the beginning of the Stuttgart era, Wilhelm Maybach worked on the design of their new, compact petrol engines in his apartment on the Ludwigsburger Strasse.

To build the first prototypes, the company worked with Heinrich Kurtz, likewise based in Stuttgart, a firm which normally produced bells in its metal foundry. The first finished single-cylinder four-stroke engine was delivered to Maybach's home on August 15, 1883. Mounted on a wooden block. Not really beautiful, but functional!

Three months later, the next, somewhat larger sample arrived. Maybach's speed was enormous: in January 1884, the next evolution finally arrived in his home office, for the first time with a round, closed housing. Its upright shape quickly earned this small engine the nickname „Standuhr“, which translates into English as “grandfather clock”.

Finally, it was time to move the experimental engines into the glass house of the Daimler Villa. This is where the first practical tests took place. However, it became increasingly clear how different the characters of the two partners were: Gottlieb Daimler was always at full throttle and looking ahead to mass production. Wilhelm Maybach, the sober designer, concentrated on optimum technical function and flawless reliability. Tough but always constructive discussions were part of their daily routine.

While Maybach wanted to continually optimize his engine, Daimler pushed to sell the new development as quickly and widely as possible. His goal was to maximize profits; after all, his own money was also invested in this project. He imagined how it could be used to power not only carriages, but also agricultural equipment, two-wheelers, commercial vehicles, locomotives, boats and much more! He also had the vision that their new drive would replace horses and cattle as a means of traction in agriculture.



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Karl Maybach

The engineer and his luxury car brand

Köln-Deutz, July 6, 1879. There were and still are quite a few children whose attempt to follow in the footsteps of a brilliant father fails miserably. But this was undoubtedly not the case for Karl Maybach, the son of Wilhelm Maybach. This was probably due in large part to the fact that his father took his offspring into the company at an early age and thus familiarized him with technology from an early age.

But let's go back to the beginning: on July 6, 1879, almost exactly ten months after her marriage to the designer Wilhelm Maybach, his wife Bertha gave birth to their first son Carl Wilhelm Albert in Cologne-Deutz. However, his name was then spelled with a „K“, except on the birth certificate. The family did not stay in the Rhineland for very long. Just as Wilhelm Maybach had followed his protégé Gottlieb Daimler to the Deutz gas engine factory in 1872, they also decided together around ten years later to quit there and return to Swabia.

A decision that was influenced not only by ideas regarding the future direction of the company that differed strongly from those of the company management, but also by the constant and annoying disputes with Nikolaus Otto, who was also employed as a design engineer at Deutz. And did not want to tolerate any other gods of technology next to him.

The duo moved to Cannstatt, which was given the title „Bad“ after the Nazis seized power on January 30, 1933 because of its 19 mineral springs and is now a district of Stuttgart. Wilhelm Maybach's new employer Gottlieb Daimler had bought a villa there with a large greenhouse in the garden, which they converted into their „development center“. Before they were able to move into their new company, the inventor Maybach had not remained idle and had developed their first own internal combustion engine in his home not too far away in Ludwigsburger Strasse, which was often called the „grandfather clock“ due to its vertical design.

His son Karl was there right from the start. From an early age, he loved accompanying his father to the office of the gas engine factory, which was practically his first adventure playground. Which is why in the fall of 1886, at the tender age of just seven, he was one of the earliest co-drivers of the first Daimler automobile, which was still based on a converted carriage. At first they rolled up and down the garden of the Daimler villa, followed by test drives on the roads in and around Cannstatt. Karl's future development was undoubtedly also predetermined by these fascinating experiences.

Wilhelm Maybach knew from his very own experience how important a good education was, so he sent his son to secondary school in Cannstatt, where he graduated with a middle school diploma in 1897. He had already started his first work-related internship at Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft. The son was fortunate in his examination for the then compulsory military service, which he was spared due to unfitness.

On November 1, 1897, he began a two-year internship at Maschinenfabrik Esslingen, a leading manufacturer of steam locomotives and heavy machinery at the time. In the spring of 1900, Karl Maybach began his training in the mechanical engineering department at the Königliche Baugewerkschule in Stuttgart, where he earned further valuable qualifications for his future career as a technician. His graduation there with the grade „good“ was not outstanding, but proved that he was on the right track.

He was undoubtedly strongly influenced by his extremely close relationship with his father, who allowed his son to participate in all his developments at close quarters. Hadn't practice always been a much better teacher than theory? Above all, because he was able to learn from a true master of his trade, who was constantly inventing new things that could not yet be found in any textbook. Karl Maybach experienced the development of engines and the vehicles powered by them first-hand. What could have been better for him?



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Karl Maybach (left) with his parents and siblings at home in Cannstatt.

His father had meticulously planned the wide-ranging training and soon sent his son out into the world, first in 1902 with a barely dried mechanical engineering diploma to the arms and machine manufacturer Ludwig Loewe & Co. in Berlin. Where he spent the next six months learning industrial production according to the principles of the leading models in America at the time.

His next stop was Neubabelsberg near Potsdam in 1902. Max von Duttenhofer, the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft, had co-founded the Centralstelle wissenschaftlich-technischer Untersuchungen there at the turn of the year 1888/89.

Even then, standing still meant falling behind, and so the eager young talent's next stops were Lausanne in Switzerland and Oxford in England. At these two locations, the young Maybach acquired language skills in French and English, which he continued to cultivate throughout his life.

In 1904, the junior returned to his Swabian homeland. Karl returned to work at Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft and thus in his father's company, where he worked for three years as a test engineer and, after Wilhelm Maybach's return from his long convalescence, also as his direct assistant. Naturally, he was also involved in his father's pioneering designs of the time.

Through his work, he also came into contact with motorsport, which was already so important for building up the brand at the time. In his first year of service, he accompanied his father, who was still convalescing at the time, to the most prestigious car race of the era. Their journey was comparatively short because the Gordon Bennett race that year was held in the hilly Taunus region of Germany. The reason for this was that the annual competitions were always held in the country from which the previous year's winner's racing car came. In 1903, a year earlier, the Belgian Camille Jenatzy had won the race in Ireland in a Mercedes-Simplex 60 hp entered by Daimler dealer and racing team owner Emil Jellinek.

Their competitors had much more powerful engines, because just three weeks before the race, there was a huge fire at the Daimler factory on Seelberg in Cannstatt. Not only did the fire destroy all the workshops and production facilities, but it also wiped out almost 100 cars in various stages of production, including all three race cars with 90 hp four-cylinder engines that were built especially for this competition. This forced the Mercedes factory drivers to compete with three significantly inferior racing cars borrowed from customers, with only 60 hp engines. Jenatzy was not deterred by this, however, and completed the 592.72-kilometer course in just 6:39 hours in his Mercedes racing car borrowed from American Gray Dinsmore. This corresponded to an average speed of 89.184 km/h, which was enormous for that time. It was a convincing triumph over the competing vehicles, which were up to 40 horsepower stronger.

At their home race in Germany on June 17, 1904, Emperor Wilhelm II and his wife, along with a large delegation of German aristocrats, appeared at the start in Bad Homburg. All spectators, including father and son Maybach, naturally expected a superior Mercedes victory. But they were far off the mark: Camille Jenatzy lost a lot of time twice with refueling problems, which cost him much more time than the approximately eleven minutes he lost to French winner Léon Théry in a Richard-Brasier with ten horsepower less at the finish line.

At the latest one year later, when they attended the last race held under the name of American newspaper publisher Gordon Bennett, the two Maybachs realized even more impressively that they urgently needed to upgrade their technology: their three Mercedes cars had only crossed the finish line in fifth, seventh, and tenth place. A new, more powerful engine was urgently needed!



The Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft factory in Untertürkheim.

After Wilhelm Maybach resumed his work at Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft at the end of 1904, he and Karl set about developing a more powerful six-cylinder engine with a displacement of eleven liters for the Mercedes racing cars in the new year. Their goal at the time was 120 horsepower. Once the engine was running and installed in the vehicle, Karl took over the test drives with great enthusiasm. Obviously, the new power pack worked as expected: During a test drive in the northern Black Forest, a policeman caught him speeding in the municipality of Dobel. At least in his opinion, because he estimated that the Mercedes had been thundering through the small village at a „massive“ twelve kilometers per hour. The police officer literally considered this to be a „speeding orgy“ and imposed a fine of twelve marks. Alternatively, the young speeding Maybach was threatened with two days in prison. Unfortunately, it is not known what punishment the dynamic driver opted for at the time ...

The two engineers were extremely successful with their six-cylinder in-line engine, even though the short-stroke engine, with a stroke of only 120 millimeters and cylinder bores of 140 millimeters, fell short of the originally targeted performance goal by more than ten percent, delivering “only” 106 hp at 1,500 rpm. By the fall of 1906, testing of this engine was mostly done.

Because Karl Maybach had experienced firsthand how his father’s relationship with the management of the company they both worked for had steadily deteriorated, he sought a new field of activity in consultation with him. Thanks to his language skills, this led him to Saint-Ouen near Paris in September 1906.

He joined the Société d'Atelier de Construction, which had enticed him with what was, at the time, the perfect challenge for the heart and mind of an engineer: "Build a car engine with at least 150 hp!" He threw himself into the task with great enthusiasm! And with the active support of his father! A task that would be much easier today thanks to telephone, email, and Zoom conferences than it was at the beginning of the 20th century.



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Karl Maybach test driving a prototype of the Société d'Atelier de Construction.

At that time, their correspondence lessons were still conducted by letter. It is said that the two generations exchanged more than 250 letters at the time. And not just about technical details and ideas for perfecting engine production.

Karl Maybach deeply hated having to learn from afar how badly his father was treated at home in the company for which he had conceived so many groundbreaking ideas. The son could not bear to see how badly the genius, who was praised in France as the „king of designers“, was treated.

All this did not pass unnoticed by his son, which in turn did not escape his father's attention. He had a keen sense of analyzing the regular letters from Paris word for word. He pulled the emergency brake before his own problems could also wear down his son Karl's nerves. He and his wife already had enough to suffer from the mental disability of their younger son Adolf.

Wilhelm Maybach had therefore devised a new plan for himself and Karl in the meantime: he believed that Opel was the right address for their ideas, and so he asked his son to return home as soon as possible in a letter dated June 4, 1908.

The Maybach SW series

A success story in three acts

Berlin, February 15, 1935. The 25. Internationale Automobil- und Motorrad-Ausstellung (25th International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition) in Berlin, or IAMA for short, was the perfect stage to present the new Maybach SW 35 to the public for the first time.

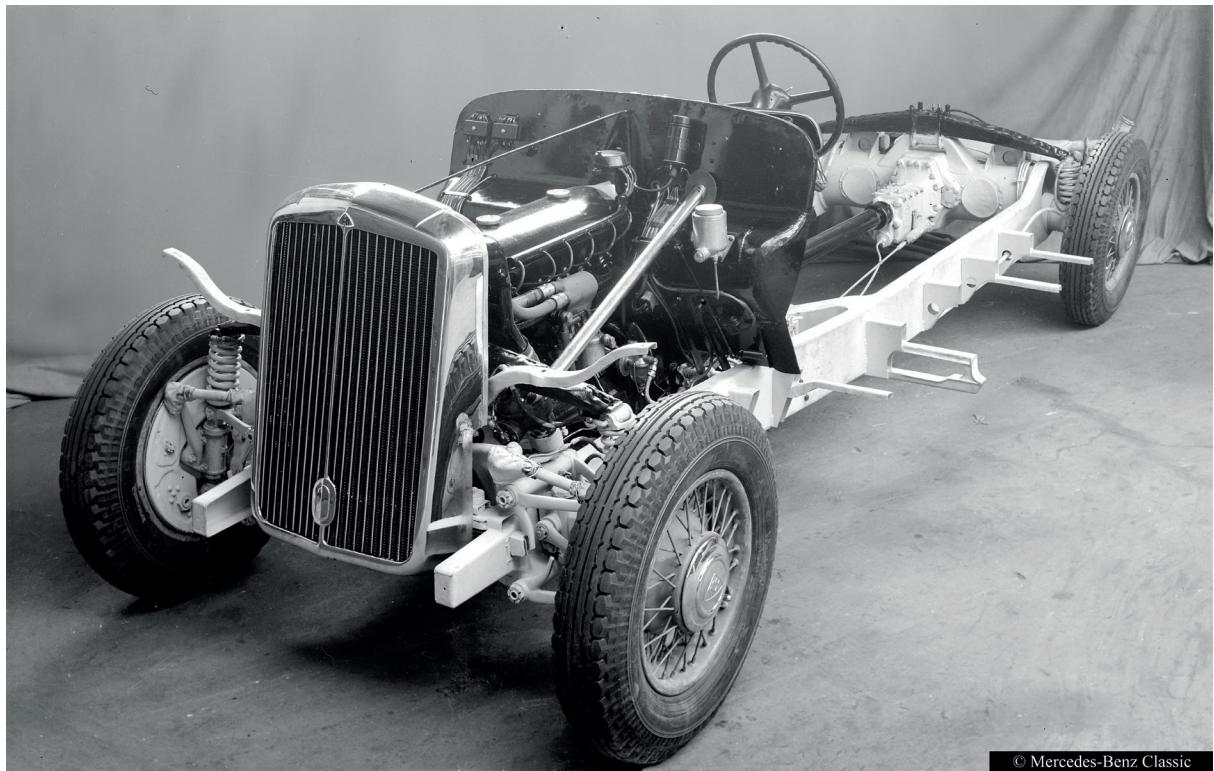
As I was able to tell you in the portrait of Karl Maybach on the previous pages, the boss and namesake of the Friedrichshafen luxury manufacturer was never suspected of having made a pact with the Nazis. But of course, as a businessman and pragmatist, he was also intelligent enough to recognize the realities of the time and understand that the representatives of this unjust regime were also potential and financially powerful customers for his automobiles. Above all because, as you will see in the following pages of this book, the Nazis knew how to make the German Reich pay for their noble, mobile vehicles.

As the trade fair was held at the Kaiserdamm exhibition grounds in Berlin, the self-confessed car fan Adolf Hitler naturally took the opportunity to personally open what was probably the world's most important motor show in 1935. Unfortunately, I do not know whether his visits to the stands of the German car manufacturers, which of course attracted a lot of attention, were as meticulously timed back then as they are today for a German Chancellor at the International Motor Show, which has long been held only every two years.

Well, let's be honest: hasn't what is now called the IAA degenerated into a modern joke of the automotive industry? Imagine it's the IAA in Munich, spread all over the city. Hardly any of the major manufacturers are still exhibiting, and car fans are staying at home en masse! Missed the point, set, grade six!

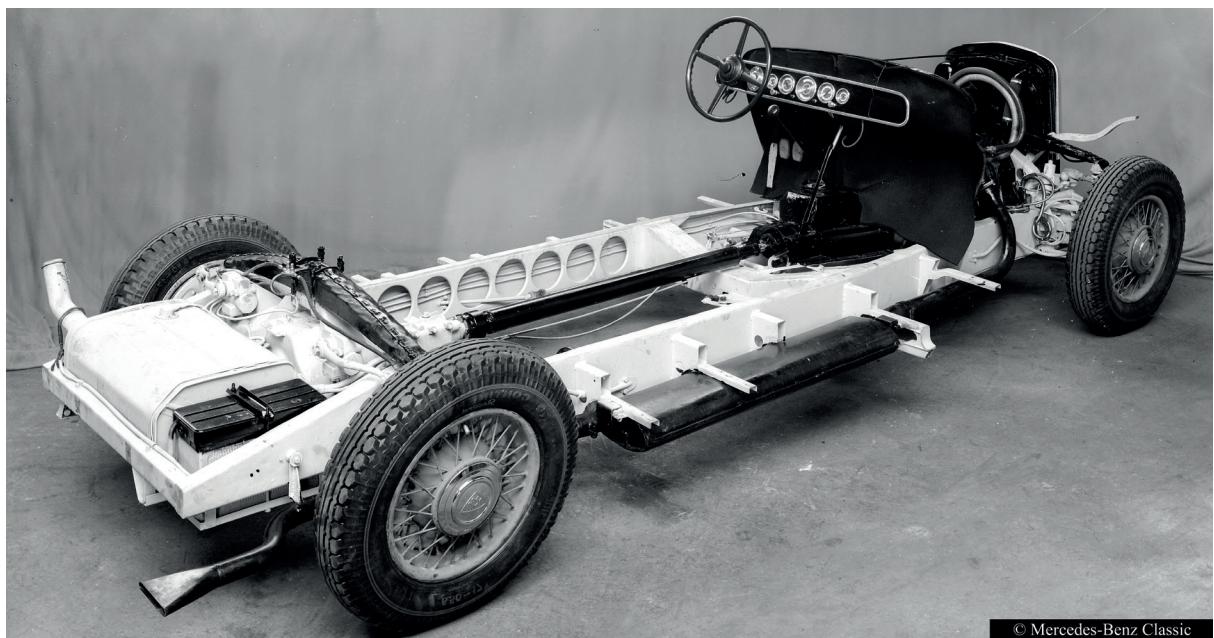
I digress, because I wanted to tell you that the „Führer and Reich Chancellor“ also paid a visit to the Maybach stand this year and had Karl Maybach explain the exhibits to him, including, of course, the new SW 35. Incidentally, the photo on the left is from the „Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe“, or NAC for short, the „National Digital Archive“ in Poland, where around seven million contemporary historical documents and photos are scanned every year. What a great job! Many thanks for this unique document of contemporary history, which of course I didn't want to withhold from you!

However, Adolf Hitler remained loyal to his personal favorite brand with the star on the radiator grille even after the presentation of the new Maybach automobiles by the company boss. He is probably most often associated with the Mercedes-Benz 770K in the „Large Open Touring Car“ body variant from 1939, which was his preferred car for public appearances on the roads of Germany. With a gigantic 7.7-liter in-line eight-cylinder engine with supercharging and 230 hp. The body was armored, with the exception of the folding top made of fabric, of course, and a 30-millimeter-thick armored glass windshield.



© Mercedes-Benz Classic

A Maybach SW 35 rolling chassis from 1935 (above and below).



© Mercedes-Benz Classic

But back to the new Maybach model series with the designation „SW“, which was primarily due to the perseverance of development engineer Eugen Stump. Since 1932, he had been working hard on the idea of a new, „small“ model series, which was to be positioned below the company’s twelve-cylinder models. His unwavering commitment finally paid off when the Board of Management finally gave the green light for this new development, which featured a number of technical innovations.

First of all, there was the move away from the previously used conventional rigid axles to „Schwingachsen“ („swing axles“). However, this special type of independent suspension was not a Maybach invention, but was also used by competitors Mercedes-Benz and Horch. At the front, there were double wishbones with coil springs and a transversely mounted leaf spring. The rear axle relied on independent suspension based on the „swing axle“ principle with a robust cross tube with a transverse leaf spring mounted above it and one coil spring per wheel.

The Maybach engineers refined this design on numerous test drives, many of them in the nearby Alps, thereby achieving greater driving comfort. However, it is said that the suspension tuning was far from perfect at the beginning.

The first SW 35s allegedly followed every rut in the road and required a quick-reacting driver when braking hard from high speeds, because the vehicle tended to skid sideways if the pilot did not countersteer immediately. This was a delicate problem, which may have been caused by the fact that Maybach still relied on cable-operated brakes, which were quite tricky to adjust.

Much less controversial, however, was the new low-bed box frame, which was designed for significantly greater torsional rigidity and whose core was made of wood and then encased in sheet steel. There were variants with two different wheelbases for the various body types, either 338 or 368 centimeters long. As with all other Maybach series before, Friedrichshafen continued to focus on offering a ready-to-drive rolling chassis with engine, transmission, and electrical system ex works at prices starting at 13,800 RM.

The customer could then select a coachbuilder of his choice for the bodywork or have one suggested by the Maybach sales offices in Berlin, Dresden, Frankfurt/Main and Cologne.

Most of the cars in the SW model series were probably fitted by Hermann Spohn Karosseriebau in neighboring Ravensburg. The range of possible variants was quite impressive: the customer could have a two-seater convertible or coupé built as well as a four-door convertible with up to four seats.

The range of saloons extended from the simple saloon with four to five seats to the long Pullman variant with a total of six seats, with an optional partition to the driver’s cabin, to the Landaulet with a folding top over the last row of seats. Even beyond this, there were virtually no limits to the imagination of the clientele, as can be seen in the following chapters on the individual orders for SW-Class vehicles.

In the 1930s, there were more than 100 companies of various sizes in Germany alone that specialized in making bodies from sheet metal according to the wishes of the future owner and, last but not least, having the interior fittings made by their own saddlers. There was usually less of a limit to the variety of ideas here than in the choice of materials: The closer the time moved towards the world war, the more restrictive the specifications were. Leather for seat upholstery had to be approved by the state. After all, this material was needed in large quantities for the production of soldiers' boots, rifle straps and much more armaments
...

In addition to Spohn, Autenrieth in Darmstadt, Deutsch in Cologne and Erdmann & Rossi in Berlin, who were of course the obvious contact for diplomats, high officials and Nazi functionaries in the capital, were also sought-after addresses for the design of a Maybach. Gläser in Dresden specialized in high-quality convertibles with technically sophisticated and easy-to-operate folding roof designs. Hebmüller in Wuppertal also built particularly luxurious and spacious Pullman limousines in addition to convertibles. The Sudetendeutsche Karosseriewerke Ig. Th. Petera & Sohne in Hohenelbe in the Giant Mountains (Krkonoše), today Vrchlabí in Czech Bohemia, appear in the files available to me as the executive coachbuilder for a convertible for one of the absolutely most important Nazi celebrities.

Accordingly, almost countless different body variants were produced during the six-year production period of the Maybach SW models. This number increased even further after the Second World War, as many a badly damaged car was rebuilt with a completely new body. There were also the two Maybach limousines that Karl Maybach had built in the 1950s with SW 42 components that had survived the war. One of them even had a self-supporting pontoon body.

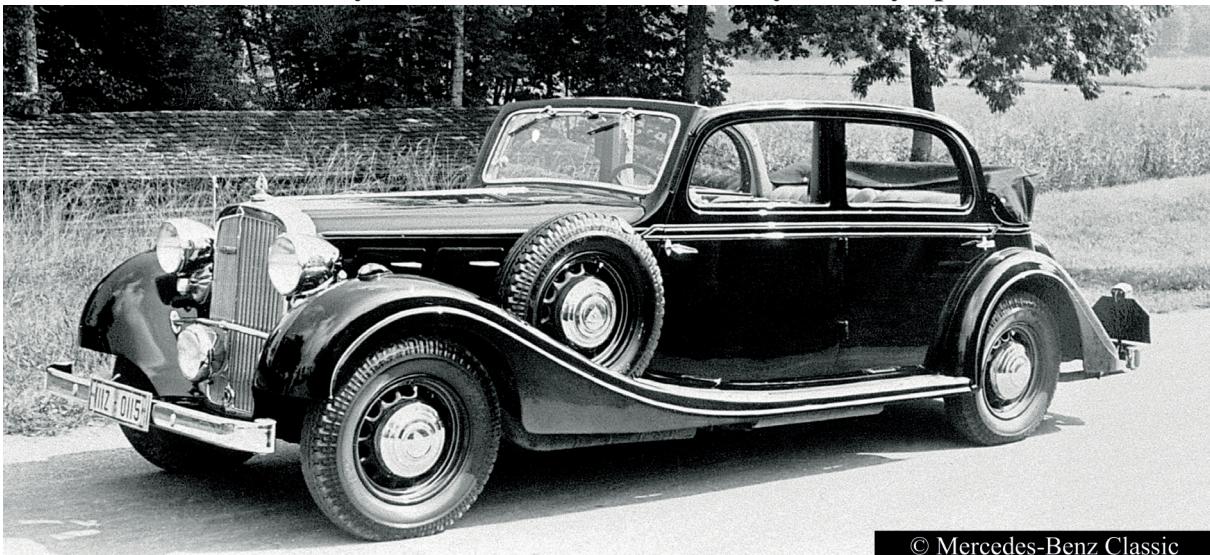
Back to the technology of the time: some customers of the predecessor models had often expressed their displeasure with the six-cylinder engines with 6,992 cc in the W 6 DSG, of which around one hundred were built. It was followed by the even more unsuccessful DSH, which stood for „Doppel-Sechs-Halbe“ („Double-Six-Halves“), with only 40 units sold. Its 5,181 cm³ engine tended to overheat under full load.

Karl Maybach and his engineers therefore decided to develop a new, „small“ engine called the HL 35 for the new SW series. With 140 hp at 4,500 rpm, this new six-cylinder engine with a square 90-millimetre bore/stroke ratio nevertheless produced 20 horsepower more than its two predecessors, despite its comparatively small 3,434 cc cylinder capacity. And thus delivered a liter output of 40 hp, which at the time was usually reserved for thoroughbred sports engines. The design was based on the company's own proven Maybach aircraft engines. An eight-bearing crankshaft rotated in the cast iron cylinder block with „wet“ cylinder liners. Ten liters of engine oil, for which a consumption of 0.2 liters per 100 kilometers was estimated, provided the pressure circulation lubrication. The cylinder head had spherically shaped combustion chambers with overhead intake and exhaust valves, which were actuated by an overhead camshaft. Two Solex 35 MMOVS dual updraught carburetors were selected for the mixture preparation at that time.



© Mercedes-Benz Classic

A 1938 Maybach SW 38 saloon with bodywork by Spohn.



© Mercedes-Benz Classic

A Maybach SW 38 sedan built by Spohn with a roll-top.



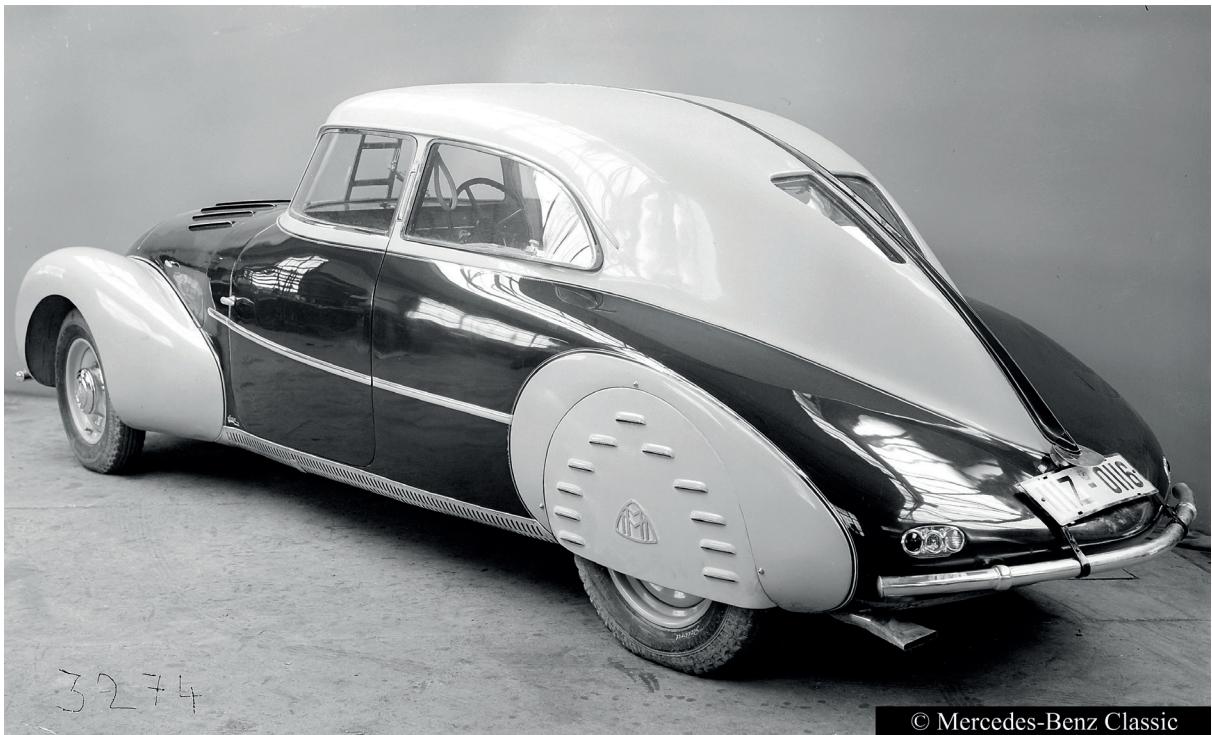
© Mercedes-Benz Classic

A 1936 Maybach SW 38 convertible with bodywork by Gläser.



© Mercedes-Benz Classic

Maybach SW 35 with streamlined bodywork by Spohn (above and below).



© Mercedes-Benz Classic

MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU G. M. B. H.
FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A. B.

Eingegangen:

4 - OKT. 1935

Beantw.: *Grafe*

BESTELLSCHEIN

Herr Graf Berghe von Trips in Burg Hemmersbach bei Horrem
bestellt bei der MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU G. M. B. H., FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A. B. Bez. Köln,
durch: V. B. Köln

Ein Maybach- 6 Zylinder- 3,5 Liter- Touren -Chassis
Type "SW 35"

Eine 6-sitzige Standard-Pulmann-Limousinen-Karosserie

(falls nicht gewünscht, bitte durchzustreichen)

Eine 4-sitzige, 4-fenstrige, 4-türige Cabriolet-Karosserie
Fabrikat Spohn

(falls nicht gewünscht, bitte durchzustreichen)

Ausführung des Chassis:

140 PS 6 Zylinder-Motor

Lenkung ~~rechts~~ ~~links~~ links

6 Scheibenräder mit Artillerie Felgen und 6facher Bereifung, Fabrikat:

Reichhaltiges Werkzeug.

Sonderausführung (Chassis): Die Wagen und Chassis unserer
(nur gültig, wenn vom Werk bestätigt) Type "MAYBACH SW 35" werden
serienmäßig mit Artillerie-Rädern
geliefert.

Ausführung der Karosserie:

4 Türen, 4 Fenster, 4 Sitze

Lackierung: dunkelblau

Polsterung: Leder

Reifenhalter seitlich oder hinten: seitlich

Sonderausführung (Karosserie): Vorrichtung für Anhängerbefestigung,
(nur gültig, wenn vom Werk bestätigt) Reisekoffer mit 2 Einsätzen, Gepäckbrücke,

Lieferzeit: Dezember 1935/Januar 1936.

Preis: des ~~Chassis~~ karossierten Wagens RM. 20.850.-

in Worten Reichsmark Zwanzigtausendachthundertfünfzig.

für Sonderausführungen: RM. --

in Worten Reichsmark --

Zahlungsbedingungen:

Alle Preise ab Werk Friedrichshafen a. B.

Anzahlung RM. 10.000.-

(RM. 5.000.- Ende Oktober, RM. 5.000.- Ende November 35)

Restzahlung bei Lieferung des Wagens.

Der Bestellung liegen die auf der Rückseite abgedruckten Liefer- und Garantiebedingungen zugrunde.

Unterschrift des Bestellers:

Burg Hemmersbach, den 28. September 1935.

Graf Berghe

VIN 1660: Maybach SW 35 Cabriolet for Graf Berghe von Trips

Horrem, September 28, 1935. „Graf Berghe von Trips in Burg Hemmersbach near Horrem, Cologne district, orders a Maybach = 6 cylinder = 3.5 liter = touring = chassis type „SW 35“ from MAYBACH MOTORENBAU G.M.B.H. FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A.B. through V.B. Cologne. A 4-seater, 4-window, 4-door convertible, bodywork made by Spohn.“

This was written on the above-mentioned date on the order form, which the company's own sales office in Cologne forwarded to the Maybach headquarters on Lake Constance. This is the oldest order in the collection of files from the Swabian automobile manufacturer that I have taken over. The German aristocratic title “Graf” is translated into English as “Count.”

No first name, no birthday. „Data protection“ in the Third Reich or perhaps simply respect for the nobility? The name of the buyer is probably familiar to you as a car fan, but in this case it was not the racing driver Wolfgang Graf Berghe von Trips. He collided with his rival Jim Clark in a Lotus at the Italian Grand Prix in Monza on September 10, 1961, with the Formula 1 World Championship title right in front of him.

On the straight to the Parabolica curve, which still exists today. In a merciless high-speed duel at around 240 km/h. Was the German post-war racing idol perhaps over-motivated as the world championship leader at that moment? At the last Grand Prix of the season, leading the overall standings? It was also the home race of his Ferrari racing team.

The rest is sad racing history: the German crowd favorite was thrown out of his monoposto. Broken neck, dead! The debris from the racing cars involved in this crash could not, of course, be kept out by the wire mesh fence along the track. They hit 15 spectators and 60 others were injured. The most serious accident in Formula 1 history to date.

Von Trips' team-mate, the American Phil Hill, became the winner of this Grand Prix on Sunday, one point ahead of the German and probably the saddest world champion of all time ...

However, the Maybach Cabriolet mentioned in this chapter was of course not ordered by the German racing legend von Trips, who incidentally came from the same area as a certain Michael Schumacher decades later.

When the purchase contract for the SW 35 Cabriolet was signed in the early fall of 1935, Wolfgang was still a young boy at the tender age of just seven. It was his father, Eduard Reichsgraf Berghe von Trips, who had decided to purchase this piece of jewelry. Despite extensive correspondence, not once on the 61 pages of this file is the first name of the aristocratic buyer noted, who in turn only signed his order briefly and succinctly as „Graf Trips“.

-7.OKT.1935*04176

Verkaufsbüro Köln a. Rh.



Herrn Dir. Bernhardt

Wagenverkauf

Erledigt 8.10.35

EB/Te

Firma

Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H.

Friedrichshafen a.B.

Schließfach 25

Ihre Zeichen

Ihre Nachricht vom

Unsere Zeichen

Köln a. Rh., den

WV/EB/Te.

2.cr.

4.Oktober 1935.

Betreff: Wagenauftrag SW 35,
Graf Berghe von Trips, Burg Hemmersbach.

Wir empfingen Ihr Schreiben vom 2.cr. und senden Ihnen anbei den unterschriebenen Bestellschein. Der Kaufpreis setzt sich, wie folgt, zusammen: Wagen, serienmäßig, RM. 20.250.-, Mehrpreis für Lederpolsterung " 150.-, Koffer mit 2 Einsätzen " 450.- Summa RM. 20.850.-

Es hat langer Verhandlungen bedurft, ehe wir zum Abschluss gekommen sind, dies nicht so sehr wegen des Geschäfts an sich, sondern weil sich der Kunde erst nach langem Zögern und anhaltendem Ueberreden hat entschliessen können, einen solch hohen Betrag für ein Fahrzeug auszugeben. Wir waren denn auch gezwungen, ihm ein kleines Entgegenkommen zu bieten, indem wir ihm die kostenlose Mitlieferung einer Vorrichtung für Anhängerbefestigung zusagten, ferner diejenige einer umklappbaren Gepäckbrücke und die Anordnung der Vordersitze so, dass sie nach hinten umlegbar sind, so wie man es jetzt an vielen Serienwagen sieht. - In anbetracht des erzielten vollen Katalog-

mit
M. 850

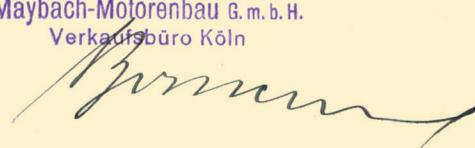
Blatt 2 zu Brief Köln vom 4.10.35. betr. Graf Trips.

preises hoffen wir gern, dass Sie sich mit dieser Zusage einverstanden erklären, zumal diese Extras u.E. kaum 1 % des Preises ausmachen, und der Kunde trotz der langen Lieferzeit die Anzahlung leistet.

Lackierung und Polsterung werden Ende dieses Monats festgelegt, wenn Herr Graf Trips von einer längeren Reise zurückgekehrt sein wird.

Durchschlag unserer Auftragsbestätigung fügen
wir bei.

Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H.
Verkaufsbüro Köln



A book like this, which dives deep into history, takes a lot of puzzle work and wouldn't be possible without the help of insiders and helpful people in the right places. My first contact was the "Gräflich Berghe von Trips'sche Sportstiftung" (Count Berghe von Trips Sports Foundation), which has been cherishing and nurturing the memory of the German racing hero for decades. Jürgen Schneider and Jörg-Thomas Födisch were extremely helpful, with the latter recalling having once seen a photo of Count Eduard in this convertible.

His tip to contact the archives of the city of Kerpen in the Rhineland was worth its weight in gold. There, I came in touch with city archivist Susanne Kremmer and her assistant Paul Ziegler, who are extremely passionate about their work and contradict every prejudice that circulates about public service!

On the same day, at 5:52 p.m. to be precise, I received an email from Mrs. Kremmer with a scan of a "liability claim report by Eduard Graf Berghe v. Trips" documenting that he had been involved in an accident at the wheel of his Maybach at 12:30 p.m. on May 18, 1936. Mystery solved! Chapeau!

However, the Swabian luxury car manufacturer was far more concerned with the transfer of the advance payments than with the complete naming of its client. The first 5,000 Reichsmarks, abbreviated to „RM“, had to be transferred to Maybach's account one month after the purchase contract was signed, and the same sum was then due as a second installment another month later. The remainder of RM 10,850 was agreed as payable on delivery, which was agreed for December of the same year or January 1936.

On the way to the finished luxury car, however, there was still a lot to be arranged, as the equipment of the open-top four-seater was only listed in very general terms in the order: Dark blue paintwork, leather upholstery. Which of course left plenty of leeway for both parties.

Let me remind you at this point that there were no smartphones or e-mails back then. Although telex machines were introduced in Germany as early as the 1930s, the documents in my possession do not contain a single telex in the correspondence of Maybach Motorenbau G.m.b.H., and faxes were only tentatively introduced by the German postal service in 1979.

But what is written endures, and so the sales file for this vehicle contains numerous documents that would cause our slick, cell phone-loving car salespeople today to gasp in astonishment, just as much as the discerning buyers.

Letters and documents were sent by post, which at that time probably took no longer than a letter within Germany often does today. If it was very urgent, it was sent by courier, or occasionally there was a short telegram, because every word in this form of communication cost extra money!

Graf Berghe von Trips was obviously a tough negotiator. In modern call center jargon, his name would probably be accompanied by a „Difficult customer!“ note in the computer.

At that time, internal correspondence between the sales office in Cologne and the head office stated: „It took long negotiations before we came to a conclusion, not only because of the deal itself, but because the customer was only able to decide to spend such a high amount on a vehicle after long hesitation and persistent persuasion. We were therefore forced to offer him a small concession by promising him the free delivery of a device for trailer attachment, a folding luggage rack and the arrangement of the front seats so that they can be folded back, as can now be seen on many standard cars. - In view of the full catalog price achieved, we hope that you will agree to this promise, especially since these extras hardly account for 1% of the price, and the customer makes the down payment despite the long delivery time.“

Let's build a bridge to the present, lean back in our reader's chair, and be a little surprised! Let's assume that, as a fortunate contemporary with a generous budget for your personal fleet of vehicles, you were to order a current Maybach limousine in the year 2025.

In plain language, this is a Mercedes S-Class from the W 223 series. However, it does not feature the star emblem, but instead has Maybach emblems all around, a different radiator grille, and a wheelbase that is 18 centimeters longer than the extended S-Class version. This not only creates wider doors for easier access to the two rear seats and, crucially, a third window on each side of the vehicle, but also, of course, even more space in the rear seats in a superbly exclusive interior.

But then you wouldn't be able to pick up your new jewel on four wheels, built down to the very last detail according to your wishes, just four to five months later at the exclusive Center of Excellence at Mercedes-Benz in Sindelfingen, Germany. Despite state-of-the-art production methods, powerful manpower and enormous know-how! And all kinds of state-of-the-art software and communication options that make the usual dictation and typists obsolete.

In 1935, on the other hand, this comparatively short production time was entirely possible, which was partly due to the production processes used by car manufacturers at the time. „Do what you can really do yourself!“ This was the prevailing motto at the time. Maybach produced the engines, gearboxes and differentials at the Friedrichshafen plant. These were then „married“ there to the steel low-slung box frame, which was also welded there, including the bulkhead, water cooler and other necessary units. In addition, the fuel tank including all lines, ready laid and connected, as well as the vehicle electrics including lights, permanently wired.

The SW models described here had the new swing axles that gave the series its name, which offered improved handling and significantly more ride comfort compared to the rigid axles used in the previous models. Brakes, wheels and tires were fitted and the ready-to-run rolling chassis could be transported to a company specializing in the construction of car bodies. Where there were tinsmiths who were true artists in their trade. Where there were tinsmiths who were true artists in their field. And most craftsmen in this field today can only dream of their sheet metal working skills.

VIN 1693: Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet for General Wilhelm Liese

Berlin, February 18, 1936. When Graf Berghe von Trips picked up his Maybach, the history of which I have told you about in the previous chapter of this book, he complained that his convertible, delivered in February 1936, was still a Type SW 35 with a “mere” 3.5-liter inline six-cylinder engine of equal power. Quite obviously, the switch to the successor model with a larger engine that he had mentioned was already a present reality at that point.

In a letter dated February 18, 1936, the offer for a four-door, six-seater SW 38 Cabriolet of the new model with a long wheelbase was sent to the Reichskriegsministerium (Reich War Ministry), Department Wa B 6 3a, in Jebensstrasse in Berlin-Charlottenburg. „Price of the car ex works Friedrichshafen, unpacked: RM 18,640.“

As can be seen from the new type designation, the engine was upgraded in the course of this model update with a newly developed crankshaft with a ten-millimeter longer stroke, increasing the displacement from 3,434 cm³ to 3,815 cm³. In addition, the compression ratio was reduced from 7.1:1 to 6.5:1 in this redesign, probably because it was already obvious at the time that fuel quality would deteriorate due to raw material shortages.

This may explain why the new engine’s rated power output remained unchanged at 140 hp despite its larger displacement. The maximum torque specifications for engines, which are increasingly promoted today, did not exist at that time.

On March 12, 1936, a letter from their sales office in Berlin prompted the Maybach sales department in Friedrichshafen to open an order file for a new SW 38 Cabriolet with a six- to seven-seat body for General Liese from the Reich War Ministry (RKM). Without having a written order in hand at that time, the factory immediately got to work after receiving this letter.

They relied on the assurance given by Hauptmann (Captain) Wider at RKM, who, in a personal conversation with Director Steinbach, who was negotiating on behalf of the Berlin sales office, had assured him “that the order would definitely be placed and that it had already been finalized in writing at the office.”

This would certainly not have been the case for every customer, but the General was by no means a lightweight in the armament machinery heading for the next war. After all, he served as head of the Weapons Office from January 1, 1934, to February 28, 1938. In this undoubtedly very powerful position, he was apparently also allowed to order an open luxury-class official car for himself.

ABSCHRIFT.

Maybach-Motorenbau

GESELLSCHAFT MIT BESCHRÄNKTER HAFTUNG

FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A.B.

KONZERNFIRMA DES LUFTSCHIFFBAU ZEPPELIN FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A.B.

REICHSPOSTMARK

TELEGR:ADR.: MAYBACHMOTOR
CODES: RUDOLF MOSSÉ
ABC 5TH EDITION 5 LETTERS



DEUTSCHE BANK UND DISCONTOGESSELLSCHAFT
ZWEIGSTELLE FRIEDRICHSHAFEN
REICHSBANKGIRO-KONTO FRIEDRICHSHAFEN
POSTSHECKKONTO: STUTTGART 24935

An das
Reichskriegsministerium,
Abt. Wa B 6 3a

Berlin-Charlottenburg.
Jebensstrasse 1.

IHRE ZEICHEN

IHRE NACHRICHT VOM

UNSERE ZEICHEN

St/Ni.

Berlin-Tempelhof

DEN
18. Februar 1936

BETRIFFT:

Angebot für einen "MAYBACH" Typ SW 38.

Unter höflicher Bezugnahme auf unser heutiges
Schreiben gestatten wir uns, Ihnen folgendes Angebot zu un-
terbreiten:

Ein 140 PS 3,8 Ltr. Sechszylinder-Fahrgestell
des neuen "MAYBACH" Typ SW 38

in nachstehender Ausführung:

Motor:

6-Zylinder-Motor / Leistung 140 PS /
Gesamthubinhalt 3435 ccm / Hub 100 mm /
Bohrung 90 mm / max. Drehmoment 24 mkg /
Spezial-Vergaser /
Dreipunktlagerung, schwebende Aufhängung.

Fahrgestell:

Tiefbettkastenrahmen / Vollschwingachsen /
Radstand 3680 mm / 3680 mm
Lenkung links oder rechts nach Wahl /
hydraulische Stoßdämpfer /
Maybach-Getriebe (Doppelschneilgang-Getriebe) /
Vierradbremse mit Bosch-Demandre-Servo-Einrichtung /
Lichtmaschine / Anlasser / Batterie / 2 grosse
Scheinwerfer / 2 Standlampen / Schlüsselampe mit
Stopp- und Rückfahrtlicht / Bosch-Dreiklanghorn /
6 Tiefbettfelgen mit 6-facher Bereifung, ~~xxxxxx~~ /
reichhaltiges Werkzeug.

Versehen mit einer

BERLIN-TEMPELHOF
FRIEDRICH WILHELMSTRASSE 57/61
FERNSPR. G 5 (SÜDRING) 8465, 8466

BERLIN W 62 LUIZOWPLATZ
FERNSPR. LUIZOW 1172, 1173

Drucksache Nr. 40 10000. 6. 34.

VERKAUFSBÜROS:
DRESDEN A 1, ALBRECHTSTR. 9 FRANKFURT A. MAIN, GUTLEUTSTR. 296
FERNSPR. 22175 FERNSPR. 32325
TELEGR.-ADRESSE DER VERKAUFSBÜROS: MAYBACHMOTOR

KÖLN A. RHEIN, DEICHMANNHAUS
FERNSPR. 223169

BETRIFFT

M A Y B A C H - M O T O R E N B A U G. m. b. H.

EMPFÄNGER

TAG

BLATT

Reichskriegsministerium, Berlin.

18.2.36.

-2-

6-sitziaen, 4-fenstriagen, 4-türigen

Cabriolet-Karosserie

mit Trennwand

hergestellt unter Verwendung ausgesuchter Rohmaterialien.

Die Karosserie stellt ebenso wie das vorstehend genannte Chassis erste deutsche Werkmannsarbeit dar.

Wir haben uns gestattet, hier eine Karosseriebeschreibung beizufügen, der Sie bitte Einzelheiten über deren Ausführung entnehmen wollen.

Preis des kompletten Wagens ab Werk Friedrichshafen, unverpackt

RM. 18.640. --

Lieferzeit: 6 - 7 Wochen nach Erhalt Ihres sehr geschätzten Auftrages und Klärung aller Einzelheiten, wenn irgend möglich auch schon früher.

Dem Angebot liegen unsere Allgemeinen Liefer- und Garantiebedingungen sowie die Lieferungsbedingungen des Reichsverbandes der Deutschen Fahrzeug- und Karosserie-Industrie zugrunde.- Änderungen unseres Angebotes, auch ohne vorherige Anzeige, bleiben vorbehalten.

Es wäre uns eine besondere Ehre und Freude zugleich, Ihren Auftrag entgegennehmen zu dürfen, dessen sorgfältigste und gewissenhafteste Erledigung uns eine angenehme Pflicht sein wird.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung

Anlagen.

Wilhelm Friedrich Maximilian Kurt Liese, born on May 6, 1882, had chosen the open-top Maybach as his perfect car in early 1936. As documented in the extremely comprehensive file on this order, the then 54-year-old officer, who at that time held the rank of Generalleutnant (Lieu-tenant General), or simply general for short, proved to be an extremely demanding customer from the outset. He had special requests and a clearly defined delivery date: May 15, 1936! From the very beginning, he made it uncompromisingly clear to his staff that his new official vehicle had to be delivered to him by that date at the latest.

This was an extremely ambitious delivery deadline, because at that time the Maybach factory did not even have a finished rolling chassis with a long 3,680 millimeter wheelbase and fully assembled drivetrain in stock. This could have been sent directly to coachbuilder Spohn in Ravensburg, where work on the bodywork could have started immediately.

Just as non-negotiable for the customer as the delivery date was: maximum seating comfort on all seats, even on the front passenger seat, right in front of the partition wall to the rear, which was rather unusual for a convertible but absolutely desired by the General! For those sitting in the front row, was this even the forerunner of the wind deflector that was actually only established in the nineties of the last century?

According to the extensive correspondence, the soldier, whose position was highlighted by gold-colored shoulder straps with a silver star on his uniform, loved to sit in the front, next to his driver. Naturally, it was also very important to him that the passenger seat was not only as comfortable as possible, but also as adjustable as possible

„Urgent“, „Important!“ This was stamped in capital letters on the letter from the Maybach branch in Berlin, which was sent to the headquarters on Lake Constance on March 14, 1936. Four pages of details about the General's future automobile, mentioning the offer made on February 18 of the same year, which is illustrated at the beginning of this chapter. The front windshield was to be made of safety glass, while the other windows were to be made of Sekurit glass.

The desire for “fresh air heating with two air vents” and independently operating windshield wipers is entirely understandable. Because smoking was not as widely condemned at the time as it is today, ashtrays and cigar lighters naturally had to be fitted in the driver's and rear seats.

Mr. General obviously liked to travel by car, which naturally raised the question of how to stow his luggage safely: „Well-organized luggage storage, including drivers.“ Apparently, the officer wasn't just thinking of himself!

„The RKM is expecting suggestions from you. The idea is that there should be two inner suitcases for the general and a small suitcase for the chauffeur. As the inner cases in our vehicles are fortunately large enough, this point is perhaps easiest to solve by taking one large case and providing two smaller ones underneath. But perhaps you have better suggestions.“

16.MRZ.1936 * 03425

Verkaufsbüro Berlin

Dringend

Wichtig!



Wagenverkauf
4 Motorwagen
4 Pferde

Firma

Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H.

Friedrichshafen a. B.

Ihre Zeichen
WV/Be/Rö.

Ihre Nachricht vom
12.3.36.

Unsere Zeichen *St/Ni.*

Berlin, den
14. März 1936

Betrifft: SW 38-Auftrag RKM/General Liese.

Ihr obiges Schreiben haben wir erhalten. Gestern nachmittag führte Herr Steinbach erneut längere Verhandlungen mit Hauptmann W i d e r, im Verlauf deren die Sonderwünsche bekanntgegeben wurden.

Was nicht zum Lieferungsumfang unseres Angebotes vom 18. Februar gehört muss selbstverständlich extra berechnet werden. Durchschlag dieses Angebotes haben Sie ja seinerzeit erhalten. Nachstehend geben wir die Sonderwünsche wie folgt auf:

Frontscheibe nicht Sekurit (gemeint ist die Windschutzscheibe, die wahrscheinlich aus Siglas hergestellt sein soll. Die übrigen Scheiben sollen aus Sekuritglas sein.)

- ✓ Frischluftheizung mit 2 Ausströmtrichtern.
- ✓ Zigarrenanzünder im Führer- und Fondsitz
- / Aschenbecher, -dto-
- ✓ Zwei Scheibenwischer, unabhängig voneinander arbeitend
- ✓ Zwei Nebellampen,
- / Bosch-Dreiklanghorn.

MM / Bosch-Dreiklanghorn,

Maybach-Motorenbau G. m. b. H.

Betrifft:

Empfänger:

Tag:

Blatt

SW 38-Auftrag
RKM/General Liese. Fr' hafen. WV.

14.3.36.

-2-

Gutorganisierte Gepäckunterbringung, einschl.

Kraftfahrer. Hierüber erwartet des RKM Vorschläge von Ihnen. Gemeint ist die Sache so, dass viell. zwei Innenkoffer für den General vorgesehen sein sollen und außerdem noch ein Kofferchen für den Chauffeur. Da die Innenkoffer bei unseren Wagen erfreulicherweise reichlich gross sind, ist dieser Punkt viell. am einfachsten so zu lösen, dass man einen grossen Koffer nimmt und darunter zwei kleinere vorsieht. Vielleicht haben Sie aber auch noch bessere Vorschläge.

Frostschutzscheiben-Leitung mit Schalter legen, damit dann im Winter die Frostschutzscheibe angebracht werden kann. Das RKM denkt hierbei an spätere Anbringung einer durchgehenden Frostschutzscheibe.

Sucher mit Rückblickspiegel,

Eingegebauter Säbelhalter. Ob diese Frage durch Anbringung einer Mulde an der Führersitzrückwand gelöst wird, oder lediglich durch eine Schlaufe, durch die man die Säbel aufrecht durchstecken kann, bleibt Ihnen überlassen.

✓ Zwei Pendelwinker mittlerer Grösse (sonst eigentlich nur bei Autobussen üblich.)

✓ Gut abgedichtete Türen,

✓ Doppeltes Schlüsslicht,

✓ Wetter- und Regenfester Lack, der nach längerem Stehen des Wagens keine Wassertropfen zeigt,

✓ Zwei Sonnenblenden mit Kugelelenk,

✓ Elektrische Uhr im Fond. Hierzu bemerkten wir, dass die Anbringung vielleicht Schwierigkeiten machen könnte und gegebenenfalls nur eine gewöhnliche Uhr angebracht werden würde.

✓ Zwei Stifte für Fahnenstangen, abnehmbar, im Kotflügel. Müssen bestellt werden bei der Firma F r e y , Nürnberg. Jakobinerstr. 28.

Maybach-Motorenbau G. m. b. H.

Betrifft:

Empfänger:

Tag:

Blatt

SW 38-Auftrag RKM
General Liese.

Fr' hafen. WV.

14.3.36. -3-

M |

Reifen sämtlichst gesommert.

Mt. Neur 21-
proj

x

Sondersitz vorn neben Führer nach Angabe des General Liese. Es wird vermutet, dass der General häufig vorn sitzen will und deshalb einen besonders bequem gehaltenen Sitz haben will.

✓ Einbau einer Haltevorrichtung für einen Total T 1 - Schaumlöscher, Inhalt 1 ltr.

✓ Scheinwerferkappen auf allen Lampen, Fabrikat Frey, Nürnberg,

x

✓ Stabilus-Einbau. Hierzu bemerkten wir, dass dies bei der Konstruktion unseres Schwingachstyps nicht nötig wäre, und wir auch garnicht wüssten, ob dies bei diesem Typ überhaupt möglich sei. Hptm. Wider will dieserhalb noch Rücksprache nehmen, und wird wahrscheinlich hierauf verzichtet.

✓ Elektrische Benzinuhr,

Nirona-Beschlagschutz bei den vorderen Scheiben. Hiermit ist, die sicher auch Ihnen bekannte Papiermasse gemeint, die man auf die Scheiben aufklebt. Mit "vorderen Scheiben" meint das RKM die Scheiben der Führersitztüren. Die Anbringung bzw. das Aufkleben dieser Blätter geschieht tunlichst nicht in der Mitte der Scheibe, sondern möglichst weit vorn nach der Windschutzscheibe hin, damit bei beschlagenen Scheiben das Gesichtsfeld des Fahrers nach der Seite hin vergrössert wird.

....

Wegen der mit x bezeichneten Sonderwünsche baten wir das RKM, hierüber schnellstens eine Klärung herbeizuführen, da erst dann unser Stammhaus in der Lage sei, das ausführliche Preisangebot zu übermitteln, wenn sämtliche Sonderwünsche festliegen und die Art des Lieferungsumfanges bekannt ist.

Maybach-Motorenbau G. m. b. H.

Betrifft:

Empfänger:

Tag:

Blatt

SW 38-Auftrag RKM.
General Liese.

Fr' hafen. WV.

14.3.36. -4-

Hptm. Wider übergab uns noch die üblichen 2 Formulare in je 5-facher Ausfertigung, und wir bitten Sie, dieselben auszufüllen und dann zur Weitergabe an das RKM an uns zu senden. Von den Formularen benötigt das RKM je 3, während das eine für Ihre, das andere übrigbleibende für unsere Akten gedacht ist.

Maybach-Motorenbau

G. m. b. H.

Verkaufsbüro Berlin

Reinhard Doll

Anlagen.

A saber is good for rattling, and so the general also wanted a built-in holder for this light cutting and stabbing weapon typical of officers. The Maybach representatives in Berlin replied to Friedrichshafen: "Whether this issue is resolved by attaching a recess to the rear wall of the driver's seat or simply by a loop through which the sabers can be inserted upright is up to you."

„Two medium-sized pendulum indicators (normally only used on buses).“ Watch out, here I come! From the perspective of the 21st century, the desire for „well-sealed doors“ reads just as strangely as the demand for „weather and rainproof paintwork that does not show water droplets after prolonged exposure to water.“

„Electric clock in the rear.“ Maybach identified this as a potential problem and decided that „if necessary, only an ordinary clock would be fitted.“ The fenders, presumably the front ones, were to be fitted with „two pins for flagpoles, removable“.

„Stabilus installation“. I am happy to admit that I had never heard of this term before, but my research quickly revealed that this brand name refers to a renowned German manufacturer of suspension components that still exists today. It was founded in Koblenz in the 1920s and conquered the market from 1934 onwards, primarily with its innovative suspension stabilizers.

General Liese had apparently heard good things about this development and wanted this innovation for his new Cabriolet. However, Maybach was not very convinced by this idea at the time: „We remarked that this would not be necessary for the design of our swing-axle model and that we did not even know whether this was possible at all for this model. Hptm. (Cpt.) Wider wants to consult us about this and will probably do without it.“ German language, difficult language!

For this reason, the Maybach sales department also omitted this option from the written announcement of the impending order to coachbuilder Spohn. However, all other items were forwarded to the subcontractor virtually unchanged in order to inquire about the additional costs incurred.

The answer from Ravensburg was not long in coming. On four pages, the Spohn company, which at the time advertised the „SPECIALTY: PREPARATION OF INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIONS“ in red on its letterhead, worked through each of the 19 points in detail and priced them in, minus a 20 percent discount for Maybach Motorenbau GmbH, of course.

However, there was still a need to discuss the comfortable seat design for General Liese. Where were the details of his body measurements from Berlin?

MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU G. M. B. H.
FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A. B.

BESTELLSCHEIN

W. P. Gemeinschaft Kraft ddr. Freunde ^{für Reisen, Wandern u. Urlaub} in ^{Blau-Wolfsburg, Kaiserstraße}
bestellt bei der MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU G. M. B. H., FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A. B.
durch: Steinbach

Ein Maybach- 6 Zylinder- 3,8 Liter- Chassis

Type SW 35

Eine 4-5 sitzige Cabriolet Karosserie

Fabrikat Berlin, Passenbrück,

Ausführung des Chassis:

140 PS 6 Zylinder-Motor

Lenkung rechts oder links

6 Scheibenräder mit Felgen und 6 facher Bereifung, Fabrikat: Lenti oder

Reichhaltiges Werkzeug. Die Wagen und Chassis unserer

Sonderausführung (Chassis) serienmäßig mit Artillerie-Rädern

(nur gültig, wenn vom Lieferwerk bestätigt) geliefert.

Der Auftrag hat nur dann
gültigkeit, wenn die Maße
des Fahrzeugs wie verein-
bart eingehalten werden.
Linkes Sitzal wird verlegt.
Karaoscher, 2 Innentüpfel,
Verchrombeläge, Rückblinks-
piegel, Parkfahrtshinweisen.

Ausführung der Karosserie:

4 Türen, 4 Fenster, 4-5 Sitze

Lackierung: verschließbar schwarz

Polsterung: St. Muster

Reifenhalter seitlich oder hinten: seitlich

Sonderausführung (Karosserie):

(nur gültig, wenn vom Lieferwerk bestätigt)

Lieferzeit: ca. Ende Juni 1936.

Preis: des Chassis + karossierten Wagens RM 19.035,-

in Worten Reichsmark Neinachthaus und fünf und zwanzig,-

für Sonderausführungen: RM

in Worten Reichsmark

Alle Preise ab Werk Friedrichshafen a. B.

Zahlungsbedingungen:

Gesamtbetrag im bar bei Lieferung

Der Bestellung liegen die auf der Rückseite abgedruckten Liefer- und Garantiebedingungen zugrunde.

Berlin, den 6. Juni 36

Unterschrift des Bestellers:



VIN 1698: Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet for N.S. Gemeinschaft Kraft durch Freude

Berlin, June 6, 1936. Was this what was known at the time as anticipatory obedience? Or simply total trust in the “National Socialist system”? On the aforementioned date, the authority with the meaningful name “Kraft durch Freude” (Strength Through Joy) signed the order for a Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet. This in itself would not raise any eyebrows, because we already learned in the previous chapter that Nazi representatives liked to have fancy luxury cars at the expense of the state. Did the “monetary advantage” for the private use of a company car have to be taxed even back then?

The truly astonishing thing about this order, however, is that Maybach was already going full throttle with this car weeks before the ink was dry under the written order. As early as May 12, there was a lively correspondence between the manufacturer in Friedrichshafen and its preferred coachbuilder Spohn in nearby Ravensburg concerning chassis number 1 698. To give you a better understanding of this, let us first take a closer look at the adjacent order.

On June 6, 1936, the N.S. Gesellschaft Kraft durch Freude, department „Amt für Reisen, Wandern und Urlaub“, ordered a four- to five-seater SW 38 Cabriolet from Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H., which was originally supposed to be dark blue. At any rate, this is what can be seen from this order, which interestingly, with the exception of the signature of the official representative, was filled in by hand in pencil. This addition, which was also handwritten, can certainly be considered extremely unusual: „The order is only valid if the dimensions of the driver’s seat are adhered to as agreed. Left pedal will be relocated.“ There are also details such as the lateral positioning of the two spare wheels on the front mudguards or the request for two interior suitcases, a Bosch fog lamp, a „rear-view mirror“ and a reversing light.

Of course, the price of RM 19,035, which was defined as payable in cash on delivery, was also of particular importance. And then something else that you can’t even dream of as a new car buyer today: „Delivery time: approx. end of June 1936“, i.e. just over three weeks after the contract was signed! A thoroughly optimistic promise, but this was probably due to the fact that the production machinery had already been fired up around three weeks before this purchase agreement was ratified, as described at the beginning. After all, the future owner was a big name in the NSDAP. Bodo Lafferentz was born in Kiel in 1897, where he completed his doctorate 31 years later at the local university on the subject of „Economic Plan and Price Regulation“. Five years later, on May 1, 1933, with his party membership number 2,594,441 hot off the press, he was appointed head of the „Amt für Reisen, Wandern und Urlaub“ („Office for Travel, Hiking and Holidays“). This was a subdivision of the National Socialist organization „Kraft durch Freude“, or „KdF“ for short, which was founded in the same year. This in turn was subordinate to the even more powerful DAF, the „Deutsche Arbeitsfront“ („German Labor Front“).

In the years that followed, Dr. Lafferentz's office developed into the largest tour operator in the world. Which, of course, had absolutely nothing to do with a free market and a superior offer. Despite its success, this state-owned company was not self-supporting, although every employee, employer or civil servant organized in the „Deutsche Arbeitsfront“ was automatically a member of KdF, for which they had to pay a monthly fee of at least RM 0.50.

Their manpower was just as welcome: more than 100,000 volunteers kept the business running at the time. But it still had to be subsidized by the Reich with a lot of money.

This meant that the wealthy bigwigs at the top, such as Dr. Bodo Lafferentz, were able to spend taxpayers' money on luxurious official cars, which in the mid-1930s easily represented the equivalent of four to five single-family homes or a luxury villa in the capital.

In contrast to today's generation of politicians and top officials, it is striking that the elite at that time loved to be seen in open-top cars. And their special requests demanded a great deal of flexibility and patience from suppliers, even though the delivery deadlines were usually extremely short.

For example, the SW 38 Cabriolet described here with chassis number 1 698 was initially specified in dark blue in the order, then a paint finish in oxide green was planned, but this was changed to black by hand when the order was placed in writing on June 6, 1936. Only the leather color for the interior could not be changed due to time constraints, so the green originally ordered for this car was retained.

As already mentioned, the obviously tall customer had made the order dependent on the seating position being made to measure for him. Which was specified in a letter from coachbuilder Spohn to the Maybach sales department in Friedrichshafen „mit deutschem Gruß“ (“with German greetings”): „The prescribed dimensions can be achieved by modifying the following parts of my bodywork: Installation of a new extended platform as a support for the front seats. Manufacturing of new seats to achieve the lower dimensions; other running rails must also be installed. Fabrication of a new dashboard frame. As mentioned above, all dimensions are achieved, with the exception of one: from the bulkhead to the lower edge of the dashboard, this is only 490 instead of 510.“ Do you understand that?

Unfortunately, it is not clear from the following lines whether a mobile team of panel beaters from the Maybach factory was sent to nearby Ravensburg to carry out the necessary modifications.

In any case, Spohn expected active assistance from the factory in order to implement the new seating position: “On your part, you would have to make the following changes: Raise the steering wheel and dashboard by 2 cm. Make the rear transmission tunnel as low as possible so that the seats can be moved forward far enough.”

Hermann Spohn

KAROSSEERIE BAU

SPEZIALITÄT: VORNEHME
EINZELAUSFÜHRUNGEN

FERNSPRECHER NR. 2578
POSTSHECK-KONTO: STUTTGART 13885
BANKKONTO: GEWERBEBANK ULM
FILIALE RAVENSBURG

Ravensburg 1. J.

WÜRTTEMBERG

Sa.

Firma

Maybach - Motorenbau G.m.b.H.

Friedrichshafen a/B

H. Ebner
Auftrags-Mappe

Betr.: NS Gemeinschaft Kraft durch Freude.

Bezugnehmend auf das mir übergebene Schreiben Ihres Verkaufsbüros
Berlin, teile ich Ihnen höfl. mit, dass dieser Wagen
Komm. Nr. 1698 morgen in die Lackiererei kommt und ohne wei-
teres noch die betreffende Farbe in schwarz bekommen kann.

Das für diesen Wagen vorgesehene grüne Leder ist hier und bereits
zugeschnitten.

Die übrige Ausstattung muss bleiben.

Die Masse, die vorgeschrieben sind können von meiner Karosserie
durch Abänderungen nachstehender Teile erzielt werden:

Einbauung eines neuen verlängerten Podiums als Auflage für die Vor-
dersitze.

Anfertigung neuer Sitze zur Erreichung des tieferen Masses, ebenso
müssen andere Lauf-Schienen angebracht werden.

Neuanfertigung der Armaturenbrett-Umrahmung.

Es werden wie oben erwähnt sämtliche Masse erreicht, mit Ausnahme
des einen: von der Spritzwand bis Unterkant-Armaturenbrett, dieses
wird an Stelle von 510 nur 490

•/•

Hermann Spohn
KAROSERIE BAU
RAVENSBURG
WÜRTTEMBERG

Blatt 2

zum Brief vom 5.6.36. an Firma: Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H. Friedrichshafen a/B

Von Ihrer Seite aus hätten Sie nachstehendes zu ändern:

Das Lenkrad incl. Armaturenbrett um 2 cm höher legen.

Den Getriebetunell hinten so niedrig machen, damit die Sitze genügend weit vorgeschoben werden können.

Durch meine Arbeit entstehen Änderungskosten von RM 110.--

Ich werde diese Arbeiten vorerst stoppen und Ihren telefonischen Anruf abwarten, damit die Arbeiten so ausgeführt werden können, wie Sie verlangen.

Es ist jedoch nicht möglich, den Wagen länger zurückzuhalten, da sonst das Lieferprogramm wieder gestört wird und durch weitere Umstellungen dann ein anderer Wagen ausfällt.

Ich hoffe gerne, dass Sie mir diesen Wagen verkaufen können und zeichne in Erwartung Ihrer diesbezüglichen Rückäußerung

mit deutschem Gruss!

HERMANN SPOHN



N.B. Ihre Unterlagen gebe ich Ihnen anbei wieder zurück.

These changes were not free of charge, of course, as can be seen in Spohn's letter: "My work will incur modification costs of RM 110." He also pointed out that time was extremely tight: "However, it is not possible to hold the car back any longer, as this would disrupt the delivery schedule and further changes would result in another car being cancelled."

This was, of course, immediately forwarded to the sales office in the capital, which sent a telegram the very next day stating that the "Arbeitsfront deal was settled" and that the car was now to be painted black.

In a letter dated the same day, the future owner's expectations were further clarified, including several digs at the competing market-leading car manufacturer from Zwickau: „Dr. L a f f e r e n t z insisted that the order form should again state that the order would only be valid if the dimensions could actually be achieved. This is a precautionary measure on the part of the customer, as he had encountered considerable difficulties with the previous Horch purchase years ago.“

At the same time, the concept of "Kraft durch Freude" was extended even further on the buyer side by coming up with the idea of making even more intensive use of the demonstration car provided by Maybach, as the Berlin office explained in another letter dated the same day. This approach clearly demonstrates the extent to which these people were using the power they had been given.

You can read about this in the letter shown in full on the next page. In short, the request was to be granted use of the vehicle provided for a trip from Berlin to Friedrichshafen, where "Dr. L," as he was abbreviated in this letter, was invited together with a Mr. Tschentscher to enjoy a Zeppelin flight to Frankfurt am Main the following day.

But that wasn't enough: they also expected the car to be driven from there to the Hessian state capital, from where the two gentlemen then wanted to drive back to the river Spree, of course in this borrowed car. However, Maybach Berlin was anything but pleased with this and submitted an objection.

In response, the other side brought out the "big Horch axe." Allegedly, the much more generous competitor had provided them with its 100 hp model free of charge for eight days a year before. At the time, the Arbeitsfront allegedly only had to pay for the fuel itself to drive the car.

With the mediation of Maybach Berlin Director Steinbach, the two parties finally agreed that the fine gentlemen could drive the Maybach to Friedrichshafen, but that the car should be transported back to the capital immediately because it was urgently needed in Berlin for further customer demonstrations and test drives.

MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU G.M.B.H. FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A.B.

BESTELLSCHEIN

J.G. Farbenindustrie Akt.-Ges. in Berlin - Treptow

bestellt bei MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU, G.M.B.H., FRIEDRICHSHAFEN a. B.

durch: *VB Berlin*

Ein Maybach- 6 Zylinder- 3,8 Liter- 140PS Schwingachs Fahrgestell

Typ SW 38 Radstand 3680 mm

Einen *Pullman - Limousinen* -Aufbau, Fabrikat *Spohn*

6-7 Sitze 4 Türen 6 Fenster

Ausführung des Fahrgestells / Wagens:

Lenkung ~~rechts~~ oder links; 6 Artillerie-Räder mit 6facher Bereifung, Fabrikat deutsch.

Reichhaltiges Werkzeug; Reifenthalter seitlich oder hinten: seitlich

Lackierung: schwarz

Polsterung im Führersitzabteil: Leder in passender Farbe } Muster sind noch
im Fondszitzabteil: Stoff dunkel - russisch - grün } vorzulegen

Sonderausführung:

Trennwand, Hydronaliumleiste, Lederpolsterung des Führersitzes, Jrenausschlag Stoffpolster dunkel-russisch-grün, Bosch-Breitsrahler, Frischlufttheizung "Sonne", Spezialtrittbretter, besonderer Werkzeugkasten, 2 passende Jungenkoffer, Rückblickspiegel auf dem Reserverad, zweite Sonnenblende, Gummimatte hinten, 2 Kristall-Aschenbecher, kombiniertes Numernschild, Rückfahrt - Scheinwerfer, elektrische Reserve - Brennstoffpumpe, Edelholzleisten an den Türen einschl. Kästchen an der Zwischenscheibe, durchgehende Frostschutzscheibe.

Lieferzeit: schnellstens ca. Ende November schreibe.

Preis: des Fahrgestells / karossierten Wagens RM 19.434.50
in Wörtern: Reichsmark Neunzehntausendvierhundertundvierunddreissig 50
für Sonderausführungen: RM
in Wörtern: Reichsmark

Zahlungsbedingungen: Alle Preise ab Werk Friedrichshafen a. B.
in bar bei Lieferung des kompletten Wagens.

Falls der Wagen nicht durch uns selbst überführt wird, vergüten wir Ihnen Ihre Ueberführungskosten mit RM 200.--

Der Bestellung liegen die auf der Rückseite abgedruckten Liefer- und Garantiebedingungen zu Grunde.

Berlin S.O.36 den 17. Aug. 1937 1. G. FARBENINDUSTRIE AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT

Unterschrift des Bestellers

D. 145. 2. 37. 10

VIN 1984: Maybach SW 38 Pullman Limousine for I.G. Farbenindustrie Aktiengesellschaft

Berlin, August 17, 1937. In the 1930s, the clientele for Maybach's luxury cars naturally consisted not only of aristocrats and Nazi dignitaries. Industrial magnates also enjoyed driving one of these status symbols from the shores of Lake Constance. Or being driven, as is more likely to be the case with the car that is the subject of the following story.

The I.G. Farbenindustrie Aktiengesellschaft in Berlin had ordered a four-door SW 38 Pullman Limousine with six to seven seats, six windows, and a partition wall with an opening and closing window between the driver's compartment and the passenger compartment for its director Otto. The designated passenger was thus a "recurring user," having previously used a Maybach, although the exact model is not revealed in the documents available in this file.

But first of all, I would like to introduce you to I. G. Farbenindustrie AG. Even back then, the abbreviation „I. G.“ normally did not stand for "Industriegemeinschaft" ("Industry Association"), but for "Interessengemeinschaft" ("Interest Group"), which was not really correct, as it was actually a German chemical and pharmaceutical group established in 1925, which was made up of six industry giants that were also anything but small: Agfa, BASF, Bayer, Chemische Fabrik Griesheim-Elektron, Chemische Fabrik, formerly known as Weiler-ter Meer, and Hoechst.

In the era of German National Socialism, this company developed into the largest company in the whole of Europe, not least due to many expropriations, or, as it was called at the time, above all the „Aryanization“ of Jewish companies. The merger also became the world's largest chemical and pharmaceutical group, which at the time ranked fourth in the list of all global companies behind the American industry giants General Motors, Standard Oil and US Steel. In Germany alone, the almost-monopoly operated around 200 plants at that time. In addition, it held stakes in 400 German companies and, surprisingly, in 500 other companies in allied countries. From a historical perspective, however, the German mega-corporation is primarily associated with its involvement in Nazi crimes, whether in everyday life or in military operations during World War II. The number of employees, which rose to around 189,000 by 1944, included an ever-growing, huge number of forced laborers.

The deadly products produced by the gigantic company in its various factories spread throughout the "Reich" included the poison gas Zyklon B, which was used to kill millions of people in the concentration camps, and the chemical warfare agents mustard gas, tabun and sarin. Nitrates for the production of explosives as well as metals, rubber and plastic were also extremely important for armaments. Due to the huge shortage of crude oil in Germany, their hydrogenation plants for the production of synthetic fuels also played an important role.

Because of their largest production plant, this gasoline was called “Leuna gasoline” at the time. Among the many crimes was the shocking fact that I. G. Farbenindustrie AG not only built the Buna plants for the production of synthetic fuel in Auschwitz, but also invested its own money in the construction of the Auschwitz III Monowitz concentration camp to house the involuntary workforce for the construction and operation of the fuel manufacturer.

The „Eastern Tax Aid Ordinance“ of December 1940 also provided a tax credit of around 600 million Reichsmark (RM) for these investments in Auschwitz. However, the plant was unable to resume production in many areas. In this context, it is also interesting to note that the original Buna plant in Auschwitz is still in operation today and is by far the largest synthetic rubber factory in Poland.

Another financially lucrative line of business for I. G. Farbenindustrie AG during the Nazi era was supplying the German Wehrmacht with uniform items, steel helmets, and mess kits.

In order to cultivate relations with the Nazi leadership, which today would simply be called “lobbying,” the company established a “Wirtschaftspolitische Abteilung” (WiPo) (“Economic Policy Department) in 1933, which was intended to exert as much influence as possible on legislation, tax laws, and foreign trade policy.

This is consistent with the fact that, immediately after the Nazis seized power, 400,000 RM were paid into the NSDAP party coffers. By the way, this happened exactly one day after the Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933.

And because it was well known that “full pockets are good for stinking,” another 500,000 RM were paid into the SA’s industrial donation account, which was called the “black fund.” And to ensure that the brown vassals did not have to freeze, I. G. Farbenindustrie AG also donated 200,000 RM in the winter of 1933/34 for the purchase of coats.

As is well known, one hand washes the other and so, in return, a sales and minimum price guarantee for 350,000 tons of synthetic petrol was agreed with the new government, which saved this „poor“ company from a loss of around 300 million RM.

One of the absolutely unselfish quid pro quos was that the private company also acted as a kind of „think tank“ for the Third Reich, providing it not only with plans but also with princely paid employees who were able to exert their influence in the government in favor of their company.

It was therefore no surprise that all I. G. Farbenindustrie AG plants were classified as war-essential and life-supporting businesses and thus enjoyed special privileges. It was not without reason that the company had acquired a 25 percent stake in „Wirtschaftliche Forschungsgesellschaft“ (WIFO) (“Economic Research Society”). As a kind of “kickback,” construction costs for new production facilities were refunded and lucrative license fees were granted for future armor production facilities.

Around two thirds of all products manufactured by the Group were classified as „essential to war effort“ at the time. And the company continued to grow rapidly as a result, as numerous companies in the occupied territories were „incorporated“ into I. G. Farbenindustrie AG.

At that time, the company also operated its own department for combating industrial espionage and illegal trading, which is hardly surprising. As historical documents show, its employees were known to have been aware of the gassing of Jews in Auschwitz.

Another shocking facet of I. G. Farbenindustrie AG is the fact that prisoners in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp were used in the so-called “shoe runner commando” to test shoes. They had to repeatedly march a 700-meter route with different surfaces, often covering a distance of 40 kilometers a day. Those who collapsed from exhaustion were then mercilessly executed.

After the war, the group was then divided into twelve independent companies, of which BASF, Bayer and Hoechst still operate successfully worldwide today. It was not until 1952 that the legal winding-up proceedings began, which were to continue for more than six decades. Although bankruptcy was filed at the end of 2003, it took until October 31, 2012 for I. G. Farbenindustrie AG to be deleted from the commercial register.

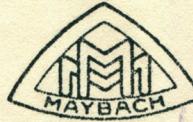
But let's go back 75 years and take a look at the history of how a black Maybach SW 38 Pullmann was created for this company, which was still highly respected at the time. What stands out at first glance on the order form shown before is the detailed list of special requests, of which I would like to repeat just a few selected items here: “Hydronalium strip, leather upholstery for the driver's seat, dark Russian green fabric upholstery for the interior, Bosch wide-beam headlights, ‘Sonne’ („Sun“) fresh air heating.” Whatever the latter may have been exactly...

And as an additional unit, an „electric reserve fuel pump“ so that the noble saloon did not break down on the road. There was also a clause on delivery: „If the car is not delivered by us, we will refund you RM 200 for the delivery costs“.

What is also striking about this order is the comparatively long estimated delivery time of around three and a half months compared to the vehicles described in the previous chapters. And all this at a price of 19,343.50 euros. Which seems quite reasonable compared to the convertibles presented so far.

As can be read in the letter from the Berlin sales office accompanying this order, Maybach Director Jean Raebel was also directly involved in this process. But that is not actually the most surprising fact about this high-profile deal.

19. AUG. 1937 * 41770
Verkaufsbüro Berlin



Auftrags-Mappe

Wagenverkauf

H. Ebner

Erledigt 11.8.37 M. K. E.

Zentrale.

Ihre Zeichen

WV.

Ihre Nachricht vom

Unsere Zeichen

Gr. Ky.

Berlin, den

18. August 1937.

Betreff: J.G. Farbenindustrie / SW 38 - Auftrag. / Agfa, Berlin.

Wie kürzlich Herrn Direktor R a e b e l schon am Telefon mitgeteilt, ist es uns gelungen, an die J.G. Farbenindustrie, Berlin S.O., einen weiteren SW 38 - Wagen zu verkaufen. Sie erhalten in der Anlage den Bestellschein über eine Pullman - Limousine Fabrikat Spohn, deren Gesamtpreis von RM 19.434.50 sich wie folgt errechnet:

Grundpreis der Limousine ✓	RM 18.100.-- ✓
Trennwand ✓	200.-- ✓
Hydronaliumleiste ✓	140.-- ✓
Lederpolsterung des Führersitzes ✓	75.-- ✓
Innenausschlag Stoffpolster dunkel-russisch-grün ✓	
Bosch - Breitstrahler ✓	91.-- ✓
Frischluftheizung "Sonne" ✓	200.-- ✓
Spezialtrittbretter ✓	60.-- ✓
besonderer Werkzeugkasten ✓	26.-- ✓
2 passende Innenkoffern ✓	140.-- ✓
Rückblickspiegel auf dem Reserverad ✓	22.-- ✓
zweite Sonnenblende ✓	22.-- ✓
Gummimatte hinten ✓	38.-- ✓
RM 19.114.--	

BERLIN - TEMPELHOF
FRIEDRICH WILHELMSTRASSE 87/81
FERNSPR. G 5 (Südring) 8465, 8466

VERKAUFSBÜROS:
DRESDEN A 18, FRANKFURT A. MAIN, GUTLEUTSTR. 296
BLASEWITZERSTR. 26 FERNSPR. 82325
FERNSPR. 65176
TELEGR.-ADRESSE DER VERKAUFSBÜROS: MAYBACHMOTOR

KÖLN A. RHEIN, DEICHMANNHAUS
FERNSPR. 223168

Maybach-Motorenbau G. m. b. H.

Betrifft: J.G. Farbenindustrie Empfänger: WV.
Agfa, Berlin

Tag: 18.8.37 Blatt 2

Uebertrag: RM 19.114.--

✓ 2 Kristall - Aschenbecher ✓	15.-- ✓
✓ kombiniertes Nummernschild ✓	18.50 ✓
✓ Rückfahrt - Scheinwerfer ✓	34.-- ✓
✓ elektrische Reserve - Brennstoffpumpe	70.-- ✓
✓ Edelholzleisten an den Türen einschl. Kästchen an der Zwischenscheibe ✓	150.-- ✓
✓ durchgehende Frostschutzscheibe ✓	33.-- ✓

RM 19.434.50

Muster für Leder- und Stoffpolsterung wollen Sie uns bitte vorlegen. Die Lackierung des Wagens soll schwarz oder dunkelblau ausgeführt werden mit passendem Innenausschlag, worunter auch ein Stoff in dunkel - russisch - grün vorgelegt werden soll, ähnlich wie Sie vor kurzer Zeit einen SW 38 - Wagen an die J.G. Farbenindustrie Frankfurt geliefert haben.

Die Verhandlungen wegen dieses Wagens gehen seit Ende Juli. Damals glaubten wir noch, einen Liefertermin ab Ende November zusagen zu können. Die formale Bestätigung hat sich bei der J.G. Farben sehr verzögert, so dass wir erst heute den Bestellschein erhielten.

Wir bitten Sie höflichst, für diesen Auftrag unser Fahrgestell 1978 vorsehen zu wollen. Dieses Fahrgestell ist für den 25.10. eingeteilt. Auf diese Weise dürfte es Ihnen möglich sein, den geforderten Liefertermin wenigstens annähernd zu halten.

Die Lieferung des Wagens ist für die J.G. insofern etwas eilig, als bis zur Neulieferung der SW 38 von Herrn Direktor Otto noch weitergefahren werden soll. Sie wissen, dass dieser Wagen recht

.1.

Maybach-Motorenbau G. m. b. H.

Betrifft: *J. G. Farbenindustrie* Empfänger: *WV.*
Agfa, Berlin.

Tag: *18.8.37* Blatt 2

überholungsbedürftig ist und uns eigentlich schon im August zur Reparatur überlassen werden sollte. Wir haben inzwischen noch verschiedene Reparaturen ausgeführt und hoffen, dass er zunächst bis zur Lieferung der jetzt bestellten Limousine noch in Betrieb bleiben kann.

Nachdem nunmehr das Chassis 1978 für obigen Auftrag und das Chassis Nr. 1984 für den Ihnen gestern vorgelegten Auftrag für die Allgemeine Baugesellschaft Lorenz & Co., Berlin - Wilmersdorf, verwendet sind, ist das nächste freie Chassis für uns Nr. 1990, dessen Liefertermin zum 10.11. eingeteilt ist.

Maybach-Motorenbau
G. m. b. H.
Verkaufsbüro Berlin

Bestellschein.

I was more surprised that the partition wall, which ensured privacy in the passenger compartment, only costed an additional 200 RM. The same amount was charged for the aforementioned heating system. Two chrystral ashtrays cost only 15 RM at the time, and the end-to-end windshield only 33 RM.

Of course, we don't know how carefully or carelessly I. G. Farbenindustrie AG treated its executive cars, but this note suggests something rather unpleasant: „The delivery of the car is somewhat urgent for I. G. in that Director Otto is to continue driving it until the new SW 38 is delivered. You know that this car is in dire need of overhaul and should actually have been handed over to us for repair in August. We have since carried out various repairs and hope that it can remain in service until delivery.“ Which does not necessarily sound very optimistic to an observer like me.

And then a little bit of chess for those in the know: “Now that chassis 1978 is being used for the above order and chassis no. 1984 for the order presented to you yesterday for Allgemeine Baugesellschaft Lorenz & Co., Berlin – Wilmersdorf, the next available chassis for us is no. 1990, which is scheduled for delivery on November 10.” Everything sorted out?

Command back, was the message from the headquarters in Frie-drichshafen on August 21, 1937. As in the German card game “Schafkopf”, the upper hand prevailed over the lower hand in the real world of car sales, the top also trumped the bottom, as can be seen from this passage in the letter accompanying the order confirmation to the Berlin sales office: „According to the agreement made with you on the telephone, chassis no. 1984 will now be used for this order, contrary to your explanations, after chassis no. 1978 has already been allocated to “Reichsminister” (“Reich Minister”) Dr. G o e b b e l s .“ Which makes it clear that the unscrupulous propaganda chief was also a customer of the luxury manufacturer Maybach.

The next setback came on page 2 of the vehicle specifications, when it came to the desired leather upholstery for the driver's seat: “However, leather can only be used for the driver's seat compartment if we receive approval for this from our supervisory authority. Otherwise, the entire vehicle must be upholstered with Corduroy fabric.”

Now, we would all assume that a bit of leather would not be a problem for one of the Nazis' favorite companies, right? Far from it, as was explained just a few days later in a letter from coachbuilder Spohn, who had been awarded the contract to build this Pullman car: „To my regret, I must inform you that the “Überwachungsstelle für Lederwirtschaft” (“Leather Industry Supervisory Authority”) has again rejected my application for approval of leather upholstery in the driver's compartment of the above vehicle, as it is a limousine, so that the entire vehicle must now be upholstered with corduroy. I kindly ask you to inform the customer accordingly. With German greetings! Hermann Spohn.“

MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU G.M.B.H. FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A.B.

BESTELLSCHEIN

Herr Reichshauptamtsleiter Fritz Tittmann in Truenbrietzen i. d. Mark
M.d.R.

bestellt bei MAYBACH-MOTORENBAU, G.M.B.H., FRIEDRICHSHAFEN A.B.

durch: VB Berlin

Ein Maybach- 6 Zylinder- 3,8 Liter- 140 PS Schwingachs-Fahrgestell

Typ "SW 38" Radstand 3680 mm

Einen Sport - Cabriolet -Aufbau, Fabrikat Gläser

4-5 Sitze 4 Türen 4 Fenster

Ausführung des Fahrgestells / Wagens:

Lenkung rechts oder links; 6 Artillerie-Räder mit 6facher Bereifung, Fabrikat deutsch

Reichhaltiges Werkzeug; Reifenhalter seitlich oder hinten: seitlich

Lackierung: Wagenkörper: tiefdunkelblau; Kotflügel: schwarz

Polsterung im Führersitzabteil: schwarzes Leder; Verdeckstoff: schwarz-grau.
im Fondensitzabteil: schwarzes Leder; Verdeckstoff: schwarz-grau.

Sonderausführung: ohne Trennwand, Lederausschlag, verlängerte Kofferhülle mit 3 Innenkoffern, Hydronaliumleiste, Trittbretter mit Gummileisten, Boschbreitstrahler mit Kippsspiegel, Rückblickspiegel, Rückfahrscheinwerfer, verlängerte Lenkung und verlängerte Haube, Innenstauversucher, Landstrassentriophon, Dreiklanghorn, Radioanlage Telefunken einschl. Einbau und Entstörung, kombinierte Nummernbeleuchtung, Kartenleselampe mit Drehschirm, zweite Sonnenblende, durchgehende Frostschutzscheibe, Liegesitze, Reserve-Brennstoffpumpe, zweiter Scheibenwischer, Tropfblech für rechten Kotflügel, Tankverschraubung u. Reserveräder abschliessbar, Werkzeugkasten unter der Motorhaube, Materialkasten im Kofferboden.

Lieferzeit: schnellstens, ca. 3 Monate.

Preis: des Fahrgestells / karossierten Wagens RM 21.748.50 ✓
in Worten: Reichsmark Einundzwanzigtausendsiebenhundertachtundvierzig
für Sonderausführungen: RM ---
in Worten: Reichsmark ---

Zahlungsbedingungen:

Alle Preise ab Werk Friedrichshafen a. B.

Anzahlung: RM 6.000.-- bei Bestätigung,
Rest bei Abnahme.

Der Bestellung liegen die auf der Rückseite abgedruckten Liefer- und Garantiebedingungen zugrunde.

Treuenbrietzen, den 29. X. 37.

F. Tittmann
Unterschrift des Bestellers

VIN 2007: Maybach SW 38 Sport-Cabriolet for Reichshauptamtsleiter Fritz Tittmann

Treuenbrietzen, September 28, 1937. You've never heard of this small town in Brandenburg? But perhaps you know its most famous and, in the truest sense of the word, most hard-hitting son! Henry Maske was born on January 6, 1964, in Treuenbrietzen and won the International Boxing Federation (IBF) light heavyweight world title on March 20, 1993, with a unanimous points victory over American "Prince" Charles Williams. The athlete, dubbed the "gentleman boxer" by the media, subsequently defended this belt ten times until his defeat against Virgil Hill in 1997.

Nevertheless, it casts a negative light on Wikipedia's editorial methods that another resident of this town is not listed on the online encyclopedia's website, even though he has undoubtedly achieved a certain, rather dubious amount of prominence: Fritz Tittmann, member number 12225 of the NSDAP since July 25, 1925, moved from Saxony to Brandenburg after losing an internal party power struggle in the late 1920s.

In March 1933, he was elected first councilor and thus deputy mayor in Treuenbrietzen. However, because the mayor who had actually been elected did not exercise his office, Tittmann was appointed provisional honorary mayor of this municipality, located about 60 kilometers southwest of Berlin, in April 1934. He held this office until 1941 and was also a member of the Reichstag from 1933 to 1945.

After Adolf Hitler came to power, he also became "Reichsbeauftragter" ("Reich Commissioner") of the NSDAP for Berlin, Kurmark and Silesia, and was thus a member of the staff of the Führer's deputy Rudolf Hess. At the same time, he was also "Reichshauptamtsleiter" ("Head of the Reich Main Office") of the "Deutsche Arbeitsfront" (DAF) ("German Labor Front"). As if all this had not been reprehensible enough, on April 20, 1938, the Führer's birthday, the career Nazi rejoined the SS, to which he had already belonged for two years from 1930 with the membership number 3925. As "SS-Oberführer", he acted as „Bevollmächtigter für Volksdeutschenfragen und Vertreter der Volksdeutschen Mittelstelle in der Reichsorganisationsleitung der NSDAP“ („Plenipotentiary for Ethnic German Affairs and Representative of the Ethnic German Central Office in the Reich Organizational Leadership of the NSDAP“) and was also „Special Plenipotentiary for Ethnic German Affairs“. On July 1, 1941, Heinrich Himmler, "Reichsführer SS", appointed Tittmann „Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (RKFDV)“ („Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationality“) for the NSDAP and the DAF. On October 22, 1941, Tittmann was appointed "SS and Police Leader" (SSPF) for the Nikolayev General District in occupied Ukraine. There he recruited ethnic German deserters from the Romanian army on his own initiative and put together his own battalion with them. An unauthorized action that deeply angered the Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu and led to Tittmann's transfer as SS leader to the staff of the "Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer" ("Higher SS and Police Leader") (HSSPF) for Southern Russia, Hans-Adolf Prützmann, in August 1942.

There, too, he developed a life of his own that was frowned upon, and in September 1944, because he had allegedly used SS personnel for his own private purposes, he was dismissed by Himmler and sent to Italy to organize the construction of fortifications against the Allied forces. However, he never began this deployment due to health reasons and returned to his hometown in Brandenburg, where he allegedly died on April 25, 1945, at the age of 46.

Various versions circulate about his death: The official announcement was that he fell fighting the Red Army for his town. However, it is also said that he blew himself up in his house in the Frohnsdorf district together with his wife, three children, mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Allegedly, the bodies were never found, so the legend circulates that he and his family managed to escape from the Russians and disappeared forever.

However, he was obviously still very much alive when he ordered an SW 38 Sport-Cabriolet from Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H. on September 28, 1937. He had chosen the variant from Gläser in Dresden for its body-work, but that was not the only point in which Fritz Tittmann's order differed from other open SW 38 models whose order folders are available to me.

On a „long“ chassis with a wheelbase of 368 centimetres, he wanted a body in a two-tone paint finish with a „deep dark blue“ body and black fenders. The body was not only to have a longer hood with steering extending further to the rear, but also a special rear section with a luggage compartment extended to the rear to provide space for customized luggage, which was also part of this order.

However, my investigations into the previous vehicles raise the question for me what the desired black leather upholstery in the interior was all about. Wasn't this luxury already taboo at that time?

What is even more striking about this order form, however, is that it was not issued to the office, but directly to „Herr Reichshauptamtsleiter Fritz Tittmann“ in, misspelled, „Truenbritzen i.d.Mark“. However, this was already put into perspective with the next document in this file: On the stationery with the swastika of the „Reichsleitung der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei“ (“Reich Executive Committee of the National Socialist German Workers' Party”) followed a written order dated October 1 from the adjutant of „Fritz Tittmann, M.d.R. (Member of the Reichstag), Reichsinspekteur (Reich Inspector)“.

So even back then, there were plenty of orthographical errors on both sides of this business, just as there was obviously a general lack of clarity in the truest sense of the word as to what title this Nazi figure actually held that week...

What is interesting about this letter is not so much the request that “the car should be delivered immediately,” but rather the passage stating that “the contract should be concluded on the same terms as the contracts you have already concluded with the offices of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront.” I noted with a smile that either the customer himself or his assistant wanted the latest Maybach brochures to be sent.

-4OKT1937*47819

Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei

Reichsleitung

Reichsgeschäftsstelle:
München, Briener Straße 45
Briefanschrift: München 43, Brieffach 80
Telefon-Nummern: 54901, 58344 und 56081
Postcheckkonto: München 23319



Kampfzeitung der Partei: Völkischer Beobachter
Geschäftsstelle der Zeitung: Thierschstraße 11
Telefon-Nummer 20647
Schriftleitung: Schellingstraße 39
Telefon-Nummer 20801, Postcheckkonto 11546

Fritz Tittmann, M.d.R.
Reichsinspekteur
T.-K/R.

Aufm. Dir. *M*
An die
Maybach-Werke A.-G.
Verkaufsabteilung

Friedrichshafen
a. Bodensee

Auftrags-Mappe

Wagenverkauf

H. Elsner

6.10.37

Bell Me.

Im Auftrage des Reichsinspekteurs bei Dr. Ley Fritz
Tittmann bestelle ich hiermit

ein vier-bis fünfsitziges 3.8 Ltr. Maybach-Cabriolet.

Die Lieferung des Wagens soll umgehend erfolgen. Der Vertrag
soll zu den Bedingungen geschlossen werden wie die Verträge,
die Sie bereits mit den Dienststellen der Deutschen Arbeits-
front abgeschlossen haben.

Weiterhin bitte ich Sie, nach hier einen Prospekt über den
3.8 Ltr. Wagen sowie einen weiteren für die stärkeren Wagen
zu senden.

Fernerhin erteile ich in Vollmacht des Herrn Tittmann den
Auftrag, in den 3.8 Ltr. Wagen ein Rundfunkgerät einzubauen,
ihn mit einer Dreiklanghupe und mit einem beleuchteten Natio-
nalitätszeichen zu versehen, sowie Kotflügelampen, Rückfahr-
lampe und eine Leselampe am Sitz neben dem Führersitz anzu-
bringen. Der Sucher soll von innen zu bedienen sein.

Heil Hitler!

i.A.:

D. Körner

Adjutant.

5
Reg.
WV
Verw.
VB Berlin
Kontr.
F. Buchh

Herrn
Fritz Tittmann,
Reichshauptamtsleiter
und M.d.R.,
Truenbrietzen
in der Mark.

F. Buchh. Kl/Ml. 6. Oktober 1937.

Zahlung.

Sehr geehrter Herr Tittmann!

Wir bestätigen Ihnen hierdurch mit verbindlichem Dank
den Erhalt der uns über unser Verkaufsbüro Berlin über-
mittelten Zahlung in Höhe von

RM 6.000.—

welchen Betrag wir Ihrem Konto gutgeschrieben und als
vereinbarte Zahlung auf den uns freundlichst erteilten
Auftrag zur Lieferung eines

"MAYBACH-Wagens Bauart SW38"

verwendet haben.

Wir empfehlen uns Ihnen

Heil Hitler!

VB Bln

M

Whether it was a thirst for news, propaganda, or music, a “radio” was on the wish list, along with a three-tone horn and an illuminated nationality badge. The writer, whose signature was illegible, concluded with a firm “Heil Hitler!”, which was probably less due to the admittedly rather small imprint in Gothic script at the bottom of the letterhead, which reads: “Formulae of politeness are omitted in all official party correspondence.” Would anyone really have expected anything like decent, human manners in the NSDAP at that time?

However, a letter from Maybach’s accounting department dated October 6, 1937, is truly astonishing: „Dear Mr. Tittmann! We hereby confirm with sincere thanks the receipt of the payment of RM 6,000 transmitted to us via our sales office, which amount we have credited to your account and used as the agreed payment for the order kindly placed with us for the delivery of a ‘MAYBACH car, model SW38’.“

According to a memo dated November 4, 1937, Tittmann had handed over a check for this amount to the Berlin sales office, which was cashed at the Reichs-Kredit-Ges. Berlin in favor of the Maybach factory and was obviously good. A considerable partial payment just one week after the order was placed? The thrifty Swabians in Friedrichshafen certainly popped the champagne corks to celebrate this joyful moment!

On October 20, 1937, the first order confirmation was finally sent to the customer - to his private address! It not only listed the price for this sports convertible at RM 21,748.50, but also some interesting details. For example, an additional RM 500 was charged for the production of the body by Gläser instead of Spohn, as was usually the case. An extra RM 1,000 was charged for the chassis with a wheelbase of 368 centimetres and hood and steering in correspondingly longer versions.

The desired Telefunken radio system, including installation and interference suppression, was also not cheap, costing RM 470 at the time. The „Landstrassentriophon“ („country road triophone“), i.e. the three-tone horn, costed a further RM 200. In addition, they obviously had a premonition that it would not be easy to fulfill the special wishes of the demanding customer regarding the modified luggage compartment with its custom-made interior trunks.

In a letter dated October 29, the Berlin sales office then sent the final confirmation, which once again named the buyer in person: „You are receiving the official order form from the buyer today, but please note that this order is in the name of Mr. Tittmann personally and not in the name of D.A.F.“ Which raises the perfectly legitimate question of where this man got so much money to buy a luxury car. At that time, you could have bought several single-family homes for the same amount...

On November 2, Gläserkarosserie G.m.b.H. was asked to provide the net prices for the various special requests “by express courier!” and included a sketch of the extended rear variant on the vehicle with chassis number 1797, which had previously been built for a certain Dr. Hupfauer.

VIN 1641: Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet for the Oberkommando des Heeres

Berlin, Mai, 27, 1938. I am probably not alone in thinking that just about anything was possible in dictatorships like the Third Reich, and still is today. But I had never heard the term „Montan-Schema“ („Montan scheme“) before I started reading the sales file for this used, white Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet with Adriatic blue fenders, dark blue soft top and gray-green leather interior. Do you feel the same way? In short, a “Montan scheme” in Germany in the 1930s served to conceal armament activities that were strictly prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles.

A considerable number of new companies were founded specifically for this purpose at that time. Officially, they were privately owned, but in reality they were completely controlled by the Nazi regime, which also generously financed them. One of these companies was “Nordbau – Norddeutsche Motorenbau GmbH,” founded on July 18, 1935, in Niederschöneweide, a suburb in the southeast of Berlin. This factory produced high-performance engines that were declared for civilian use.

Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H. acted as the official owner, and of course they also brought in the engineering know-how for the six- and twelve-cylinder engines that would actually power tanks. A win-win situation for all involved! However, it can be assumed with certainty that this “branch” of the Swabian company was in fact controlled by the “Heereswaffenamt” (“Army Weapons Department”) and thus by the “Oberkommando des Heeres” (OKH) (“Armed Forces High Command”).

How did I discover this interesting fact? Of course, it was not unusual in itself that the vehicle sold had previously been used as a demonstration car by the Maybach sales office in Berlin and was offered to the “Oberkommando des Heeres”, Department Wa B 4, in a letter dated May 27, 1938. What puzzled me, however, was the subject of this letter: „Business car for the company Nordbau - Norddeutsche Motorenbau G.m.b.H.“ Why would the OKH want to order a luxury car, even if it was second-hand, for a company? Bribe payments generally worked in the opposite direction even back then, didn’t they?

My research on the internet then led me to find the name of „Nordbau“, with details of its shareholders from Lake Constance, on the Wikipedia page that deals with the „Montan-Schema“ phenomenon described at the beginning. This nickname is derived from the „Verwertungsgesellschaft für Montanindustrie m.b.H.“ (“Society for the Utilization of the Coal and Steel Industry Ltd.”), which had already been founded in 1916 and was taken over by the Bavarian steelworks „Maxhütte“ six years later. In turn, after the Nazis seized power, 95 percent of the share capital of the company acquired years earlier was transferred to the Geräte- und Apparate-Handelsgesellschaft mbH, which then managed these shares as an unofficial trustee in the interests of the Heereswaffenamt (HWA).

Reg.
~~WV~~
~~Uml.~~
Angebotsmappe
VB. Berlin

Aufträge-Mappe

An das
Oberkommando des Heeres
Wa B 4,
Berlin W. 35.
Tirpitzufer 72-76.

Weg zu mir

WV/EB/Te. 27. Mai 1938.

Geschäftswagen für die Firma Nordbahn - Norddeutsche Motorenbau G.m.b.H., Berlin-Niederschönweide, Berliner Str. 139.

Auf Veranlassung unserer Berliner Zweigniederlassung erlauben wir uns, Ihnen folgendes Angebot zu unterbreiten:

Ein gebrauchtes 4-5 sitziges Innensteuer-Cabriolet
unserer Vollschnellachstypen " MAYBACH SW 38 "
3,8 Liter, 140 PS, 6-Zylinder, Radstand 3480 mm

Lenkung links /
6 Artillerieräder mit 6-facher Bereifung /
Lackierung: Karosserie und Räder weiss, Kotflügel adriablau /

Polsterung: graugrünes Leder /

Verdeck: dunkelblauer Gummistoff /

angebaute Metallkofferhülle /

seitliche Chromzierleiste /

zum Preise von

netto Reichsmark 9.800.--

ab Standort Berlin.

•/•

Angebot.

Oberkommando des Heeres, 27.5.38. 2
Berlin.

Die Lieferung kann in ca. 8 Tagen erfolgen. - Zwischenverkauf vorbehalten.

Wie bereits kurz erwähnt, ist der Wagen gebraucht. Er wird jedoch augenblicklich von uns vollkommen generalüberholt und wir sind deshalb auch in der Lage, für den Wagen die von der Deutschen Automobil-Treuhand-Gesellschaft festgelegte Höchstgarantie von 4 Monaten zu gewähren.

Wir würden uns freuen, wenn Sie uns Ihren Auftrag überschreiben würden und empfehlen uns Ihnen mit

Heil Hitler!

The company, often referred to as “Montan GmbH” for short, officially specialized in leasing industrial properties that were, of course, also suitable for the production of weapons. But that was only the publicly visible cover for its top-secret business: in reality, it was organizing the restructuring of Germany’s weapon industry, which was still officially subject to strict restrictions.

After I had identified this company and its background, and also discovered its close links with Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H., I also recognized the real reason for this order: „Nordbau“ obviously needed a representative vehicle for its management. They understandably resorted to a model from the official shareholder.

It was also very fortunate that this „demonstrator“ was quickly available: „Delivery can be made in approx. 8 days.“ And with a net price of 9,800 Reichsmark, which was about half the former new price, it was a real bargain.

It can be assumed that Maybach was anything but unhappy to be able to sell this presumably well-used demonstration car to the state for good money. With a net and a double bottom, of course: „As already briefly mentioned, the car is used. However, it is currently being completely overhauled by us and we are therefore in a position to grant the maximum guarantee of 4 months stipulated by the Deutsche Automobil-Treuhand-Gesellschaft for the car.“

On June 30, the Berlin sales office of Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H. then received a file note on „Order No. 6/Vb 214-0110/38“ for „1 used convertible type Maybach SW 38, 4-5 seats, 4 doors, 4 windows, 3.8 liters, 140 hp, with chassis no. 1641, 6 tires, with leather upholstery. Paintwork as standard“. And don’t forget the important addition due to the scarcity of raw materials at the time: „No iron and steel will be supplied.“

A standardized form for the „Offer for delivery of motor vehicles“ was also sent as an attachment. There were four copies, three of which were to be returned to the OKH, meticulously completed by Maybach with all the relevant details, while one copy, as shown here, was filed in the sales folder.

Equally interesting are the ten pages entitled “Special conditions for the delivery of chassis and superstructures for motor vehicles, motorcycles, trailers, and tractors.” Like the file note itself, they were also printed in the “Fraktur” font, which was still heavily promoted by the regime in Germany at the time.

Oberkommando des Heeres

Wa B-6 1 Rm 6 Vb

Scho.

Berlin, den 30. Juni 1938

30. Juni

193⁸

Aftenvermerk

1. Die Firma **Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H.** hat die auf der Rückseite vermerkten Aufträge zu erwarten.
2. Die Ausführung erfolgt nach den Allgemeinen, Besonderen und Technischen Bedingungen.
3. Bei der Fertigung sind alle bis zur Fertigung von der Firma ~~ausgeführten~~ vorgenommenen Verbesserungen zu berücksichtigen.
4. Ob die Aufträge tatsächlich erteilt werden können, hängt von der Möglichkeit, Rohstoffe zuzuteilen, ab. Hierüber erhält die Firma durch besondere Übereinstimmung einer Kontroll-Nr. Bescheid.
~~Die Firma erhält die Kontroll-Nr. durch die Übereinstimmung der auf der Rückseite vermerkten~~
5. Angebotsunterlagen beiliegend.
Die Angebote sind in dreifacher Ausfertigung — davon einmal ohne Preisangabe — an das OKH, Wa B 6 ^{Vf}, einzureichen.
Der Preis ist frei Eisenbahnwagen Bahnhof des Herstellungsortes zu nennen. Der Fahrgestellpreis hat die Kosten für Verladung, Tantfüllung und bahnähnige Verpackung (jeweils zu Selbstkosten) zu enthalten.
6. Preisprüfung bleibt vorbehalten.
7. Bereifungsart und -fabrikat werden auf besonderem Vordruck durch Wa B 6, VI bekanntgegeben. Die Eintragungen im Vordruck sind zu prüfen (Stückzahl und Reifengröße) und zu ergänzen (Auftrag-Nr. an die Reifenfabrik). Eine Ausfertigung ist möglichst umgehend zurückzusenden, die zweite ist für die Alten der Fahrzeugfabrik bestimmt. — Mit Rücksicht auf die Rohstoffbeschaffung der Reifenfabriken sind diese bei der Auftragserteilung die Auftragsnummern des Heereswaffenamtes bekanntzugeben.
8. Etwaige Unstimmigkeiten und Zweifel sind sofort bei Wa B 6 ^{Vf} zur Sprache zu bringen.
9. Es gelten die bekannten Bestimmungen hinsichtlich der Arbeitszeit, der Verwendung von Sparmetallen, der Zuteilung von Blankleder usw. Die Firma ist verpflichtet, Sparstoffe nur da zu verwenden, wo der betr. Zweck nicht anders zu erreichen ist.
10. Die Vergabe unterliegt als Vergabe einer öffentlichen Stelle den Bestimmungen der Verordnung zur Ergänzung der Verordnung über Preisbindungen und gegen Verteuerung der Bedarfsdeckung vom 29. 3. 35 (R. G. Bl. I, S. 488/89).

Im Auftrage

J. Brewster

Anlagen.

Auftrag-Nr.	Anzahl	Art	Anstrich	Lieferzeit	Bemerkungen
6/Vb 214-0110/38	1	gebrauchtes Cabriolet Typ Maybach SW 38, 4-5 sitzig, 4-türig, 4-fenstrig 3,8 Ltr., 140 PS, mit Chassis-Nr. 1641, 6-fach bereift, mit Lederpol- sterung	serien- mäßig	sofort	Ausrüstung serienmäßig, mit Bosch- Nebellampe, Kühlerschutz- haube und Frostschutz- scheibe

Eine Eisen- und Stahlzuteilung findet nicht statt.

17

Firmenstempel

Friedrichshafen den 5. Juli 1938

W

Auftrags-Mappe

WV

An das

Oberkommando des Heeres

Berlin W 35

Tirpitzstr. 72/76

Borg.: Nr. 6/Vb 214-0110/38

Betr.: Angebot auf Lieferung von Kraft-
fahrzeugen.

1. Unter ausdrücklicher Anerkennung der allgemeinen, technischen und besonderen Auftragsbedingungen des Oberkommando des Heeres verpflichten wir uns zu liefern den Typ:

**"MAYBACH SW 38", karossiert als 4-5
sitz. Cabriolet Chassis Nr. 1641 gebraucht**

Der Preis gilt frei Eisenbahnhof — Bahnhof — des Herstellungsortes und setzt sich wie folgt zusammen:

a) Preis des Fahrgerüsts (ohne Bereifung) RM

b) Preis der Karosserie RM

c) Preis zusammen (a + b) RM

d) ab Preis-Nachlass

bis 5 Fahrzeuge . . . % = RM RM

6-10 . . . % = RM RM

11-20 . . . % = RM RM

über 20 . . . % = RM RM

e) Preis der vollständigen Bereifung

für 1 Rad RM

für . . . Räder = RM

Hersteller der Bereifung

Art der Bereifung . . . Preis des kompletten Wagens netto
ab Standort Berlin mit 4-monatiger
Größe der Bereifung . . . Fabrikgarantie RM 9.800.—

Felgenart

Ventilart

f) Preis der Sonderausrüstung lt. Anlage b*) RM

Gesamtpreis des bereiften Kraftwagens nach den technischen
Lieferungsbedingungen beim niedrigsten Nachlass (d) RM

Listenpreis des Kraftwagens in handelsüblicher Aus-
rüstung 18.435.— RM

*) In dieser Anlage sind sämtliche Gegenstände aufgeführt, die über die serienmäßige Ausstattung hinaus geliefert werden.

2. Wegen Brauchbarkeit der von mir — uns — angebotenen gebrauchten Cabriolets unterwerfe ich mich — wir uns — dem Urteil der mit der Abnahme beauftragten Stelle

3. Die Ablieferung erfolgt in ca. 8 Tagen ~~ca. 10-12 Tage~~
die verlangt
bis zum
in folgenden Zeiten und Mengen

4. Die von mir — uns — angebotenen Kraftfahrzeuge werden mit eigenen Arbeitern und Einrichtungen im eigenen Betriebe gefertigt — aus dem Auslande bezogen — aus dem Auslande werden ca. 2-3% des Erlöses bezogen — unter Verwendung ausländischen Rohmaterials, im eigenen Betriebe gebrauchsfertig hergestellt.

5. Die Verpackung ist auf meine unsere Kosten zurückzuführen, oder:
die Verpackung ist nicht zurückzuführen.

6. Es wird ausdrücklich bestätigt, daß Preisvereinbarungen oder Kartellabreden gemäß Ausschreibungsbestimmungen mit anderen Firmen nicht getroffen sind.

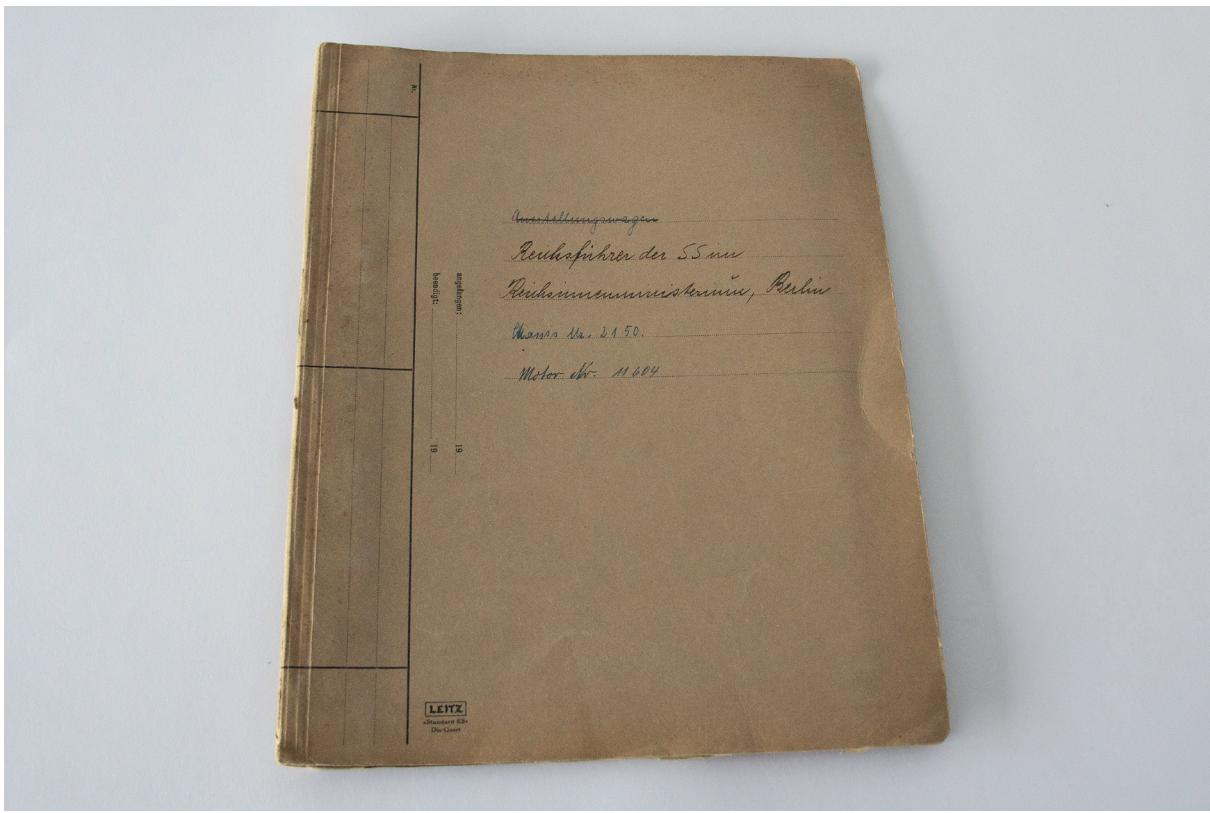
7. Die Bescheinigung des zuständigen Finanzamtes, daß aus steuerlichen Gründen keine Bedenken bestehen, mir — uns — öffentliche Aufträge zu erteilen, ist beigelegt, liegt dort bei Wa/B Wa/Pry

8. Beigefügt sind:
a) Ausstattungsnachweisung und Angaben über die serienmäßige Ausstattung (Ordnungsvorschriften der Firma).
b) Preisvorschläge der Sonderausstattung.
c) Ausführliche Angaben über die angebotenen Kraftfahrzeuge.
d) Verzeichnis der Abweichungen.
e) 1 Ersatzteiliste.
f) 1 Stoff bzw. Ledernprobe.

9. Ich — Wir — erklären hiermit, daß ich meiner — wir unseren — gesetzlichen Pflichten zur Zahlung der Landes- und Gemeindesteuern, der Beiträge zur Arbeitslosenversicherung und zur Reichsversicherung sowie unsrer — unser — Verpflichtungen aus den Tarifordnungen, der Betriebsordnung und dem Schwerbeschädigtengesetz ordnungsgemäß nachkomme(n).
Ich bin mit — Wir sind uns — bewußt, daß eine wissentlich falsche Abgabe der vorstehenden Erklärung den Ausschluß von weiteren Leistungen und Lieferungen wegen Unzuverlässigkeit zur Folge hat.
Gleichzeitig verpflichte(n) ich nich — wir uns — zur Erfüllung dieses Auftrages keine aus landwirtschaftlichen Betrieben stammenden Arbeitnehmer einzustellen.

Das Angebot muß an dieser Stelle unterschrieben und mit Firmensteinpfeil versehen werden.

^{a)} Nichtzutreffendes ist zu durchstreichen.



The Maybach sales department file on the order from Reichsführer SS Himmler.



© Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler.

VIN 2150: Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet for Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler

Berlin, September 29, 1938. Manufacturers of luxury cars such as a Maybach are known to be not able to choose their customers. This was just as true during the Nazi era as it is today, because in Untertürkheim, Mercedes CEO Ola Källenius probably bit the top of his office desk in anger when, on August 10, 2024, photos and film footage of North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un were released around the world, showing him, despite years of UN sanctions, in a highly polished black Mercedes-Maybach GLS 600 facelift version, which had only been available since September 2023.

He had the luxury SUV rolled out of his armored luxury train during his visit to the Uiju region, which had been severely devastated by flooding. This was an entirely understandable choice, as it is reasonable to assume that the then 40-year-old autocrat did not want to get his feet soaked during his inspection of the suburbs and therefore decided against using his two other Maybach luxury limousines of the armored S 600 Guard type, admittedly older models, in favor of greater ground clearance and wading depth. He had previously used these vehicles to be chauffeured through his capital Pyongyang with his equally unscrupulous colleague from Russia, Vladimir Putin.

In fact, there should be no Maybach cars in that country, except perhaps in the form of model cars. This is because UN Resolution 1718 has explicitly prohibited all the member states from exporting luxury goods of any kind, including cars, to North Korea since October 14, 2006. But as we all know, where there's a will, there's a way...

Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H. did not have to struggle with this kind of problems in the 1930s, because their Berlin sales office was, so to speak, at the pulse of the times and, of course, also served the Nazi henchmen in the German capital. Whether willingly or not is open to question. This also included the absolute top echelons of this oppressive regime, which, in the truest sense of the word, included "authorities" such as Reichsmarschall ("Reich Marshal") and passionate art robber Hermann Göring, as well as "Reichspropagandaminister" ("Reich Secretary of Propaganda") and the nation's loudmouth Joseph Göbbels.

Their „Führer“ Adolf Hitler, on the other hand, preferred the Mercedes-Benz brand. However, there is also a legend that His Excellency Bhupinder Singh, the Maharaja of Patiala in India, was personally presented with a Maybach Zeppelin DS 8 by Hitler during a visit to Berlin. The story of this expensive gift is told by his grandson Raja Malvinder Singh in his book "The Automobiles of the Maharajas": „My grandfather Maharaja Bhupinder Singh traveled to Germany in 1935 and asked to see Adolf Hitler, who very reluctantly granted him ten to fifteen minutes. They struck up a conversation, one thing led to another, and 15 minutes turned into 30, then 60. The Führer asked my grandfather to stay for lunch and asked him to come back the next day and then on the third day.“ But that's not all!

On the third day, he gave him German weapons like Lignose, Walther and Luger pistols and a magnificent Maybach.“ Back in India, the Maybach was kept in the ruler’s huge garage along with a fleet of other expensive cars, including 27 Rolls-Royces, at his Moti Bagh Palace residence in Patiala and was re-gifted in 1957.

In return, the German potentate probably hoped that the regent of this province in British India would stop supporting the British and could persuade other rulers to do the same. However, there is also a legend that this vehicle was not bequeathed to him by Hitler himself, but by the German Wehrmacht command.

Whatever may be true, it seems that this Maybach was later followed by three SW 38 models on the subcontinent. It is said that Hitler also donated to other rulers who could benefit him: he allegedly gave two more Maybach luxury cars to the King of Nepal and King Farrukh of Egypt. This was also done in order to derive political benefit from these gifts.

But let us now leave these distant sideshows and turn our attention to one of the greatest butchers of humanity of all time: Heinrich Himmler, “Reichsführer SS” (“Reich Leader of the SS”), head of the German police, and undisputedly one of the main architects of the Holocaust, which alone cost more than six million people their lives. Born on October 7, 1900, in Munich, little Heinrich grew up in a middle-class, Catholic home.

During the First World War, he volunteered for military service but did not see action on the front. After the war, he studied agricultural sciences and became active in nationalist circles. Early on, he developed a deep aversion to anything „foreign“, especially Jews, Slavs and other minorities - coupled with an almost esoteric preference for Germanic myths, occultism and a racist-biologicistic world view.

A world view that made him attractive to the National Socialists. Himmler joined the NSDAP in 1925, and in 1929 Hitler appointed him Reichsführer of the SS, which at the time was still a small sub-organization of the SA. Subsequently, the Bavarian consistently developed the SS into an elite organization - fanatically loyal to Hitler, racially indoctrinated and militarily disciplined.

After the „Nacht der langen Messer“ („Night of the Long Knives“) from June 30 to July 1, 1934, in which the SA was eliminated, the SS rose to become the dominant power within the National Socialist security apparatus. Himmler subsequently took control of the entire police force, including the “Gestapo” (“Secret State Police”) and the “Sicherheitsdienst” (“Security Service”) (SD).

As early as March 13, 1933, as acting police president of Munich, he had ordered the installation of the Dachau concentration camp, followed by others throughout the Reich, all of which were under his command and, thanks to his ruthless organizational skills, became a fundamental tool in the implementation of the so-called „Endlösung der Judenfrage“ (“Final Solution of the Jewish Question”), the industrially organized genocide of European Jews.

But that was far from satisfying Himmler's hunger for power. In 1939, he initiated the formation of his own military units, which were not subordinate to the Wehrmacht. The much-feared Waffen-SS not only provided the guards for the concentration camps, but was also deployed on all fronts. By 1945, this force had grown to no less than 38 divisions with 915000 men!

What made Himmler particularly sinister was his banality. He was anything but a charismatic speaker like Hitler or a decadent bon vivant like Göring. He was a pale, inconspicuous man with rimless glasses, a sensitive stomach and a pedantic sense of order. He did not drink alcohol, did not smoke, was a vegetarian and liked to talk about herbal medicine.

In his diaries, notes about mass shootings are mixed with private remarks about his chicken farm or his feeling unwell after eating—a ghostly normality amid systematic murder.

His contempt for humanity was of a cold, rationalized cruelty. He had millions deported, imprisoned, enslaved and murdered, but at the same time spoke in his speeches about „decency“, which supposedly meant carrying out such „difficult tasks“ not out of personal hatred, but „out of a sense of duty“.

On August 25, 1943, Hitler also appointed him “Reichsinnenminister” (“Secretary of the Interior”). When the Third Reich was finally collapsing in the sixth year of the war, Himmler attempted to position himself as a mediator between the Allies and a “new Germany” – without Hitler’s knowledge. When the Führer found out, he publicly dismissed his former companion. After Hitler’s suicide on April 30, 1945, Himmler tried to hide and escape persecution by the Allies. On May 22, 1945, he was recognized and arrested by British soldiers in Bremervörde. To escape responsibility, he committed suicide with a cyanide capsule the following day.

Compared to other leading Nazis, relatively little is known about Himmler’s personal fleet of vehicles, which was in keeping with his unassuming, almost bourgeois personality. Nevertheless, for him, as for many Nazi officials, the ownership and use of prestigious vehicles was part of the public display of power.

He liked to use a Mercedes-Benz 770 W150, also known as the „Big Mercedes“, as his official car. This armored, luxurious vehicle was popular with the Nazi leadership and was also used by Hitler, among others.

The 770 was regarded as a status symbol and was produced in small numbers - with bulletproof windows, reinforced chassis and often as a convertible to show off to the people at parades. The fact that Himmler also used this type of car demonstrated his proximity to the insignia of power, despite his emphatically ascetic self-presentation. But he and the departments under his command also owned various Maybach automobiles. And I don’t want to put any blame on this brand for that. As I mentioned at the beginning, inhuman potentates around the world have themselves chauffeured around in cars of practically all luxury brands or sometimes even drive them themselves.

It may be some consolation to outsiders that they live in constant fear. No, not of a potential breakdown, but rather of an assault. Even today, there is no armor that can withstand every attack! Regardless of the protection class, it's all just a question of the caliber used...

It is therefore all the more surprising that, despite the constant threat of assassination, Heinrich Himmler also had the German people buy him a convertible. On September 29, 1938, the Maybach office in Berlin confirmed the order for an open-top, four-door, four- to five-seater SW 38 for Himmler, who was 38 years old then.

At that time, its bodywork was already under construction at Gläser in Dresden, where the interior was also to be manufactured on behalf of the Maybach factory. The price for the complete vehicle had previously been set at 19,607 Reichsmarks (RM), with delivery promised for the end of the following week or the beginning of the week after.

A maximum of two weeks to build a Maybach? That would have been simply impossible if this order had not been tackled more than two months earlier. As an “exhibition or stock car.” With a short 338-centimeter wheelbase. But obviously already designed as a ministry car, as this note in the “equipment instructions” dated July 23 of the same year for “chassis no. 2150” reveals: “A flagpole is to be delivered to Gläser for assembly.”

This was the start of the sales file for the „Reichsführer der SS im Reichsinnenministerium, Berlin“ (“Reich Leader of the SS in the Reich Ministry of the Interior, Berlin”). It was addressed to Gläserkarosserie G.m.b.H., which, according to its letterhead, specialized in „luxury car bodies · series production · one-off production · repairs“. Established in 1864 as the company „Heinrich Gläser, Sattlerei und Wagenbau“, the Saxons also produced car bodies under the direction of Emil Heuer from 1903.

Alongside coachbuilder Spohn in Ravensburg, which was the most obvious outsourcing option for the bodywork production of Maybachs due to its proximity to the factory in Friedrichshafen and thus took a large proportion of the orders, Gläser was also one of the most popular suppliers for German Maybach buyers, presumably due to the much shorter distance to the capital Berlin.

In a letter dated July 27, the equipment for the rolling chassis, which was to be delivered from the factory in Friedrichshafen to Dresden in mid-August, was specified in more detail: „Paintwork: dark blue as per attached sample / trim: silver / upholstery: red leather as per sample A 3391 SZ / soft top: black rubber fabric as per sample Herzog-Coupé 872 / headlining: beige cloth.“

On September 17, the Berlin sales office received the message that this convertible was to be completed around a week later and then picked up from Gläser. The car was not even finished when it was offered to Himmler ten days later. He was obviously very keen on this convertible be-cause, as mentioned earlier, his office turned this offer into an order with-in just two days.

Kopie für
FR'HAFEN

Auftragserfolg

An den

Herrn Reichsführer der SS
und Chef der Deutschen Polizei
im Reichsinnenministerium,

Berlin NW.7.

Unter den Linden 72/76.

?

Berlin W.50.

B6/Ni.

29. September 1938

Maybach-Personenwagen.

Wir bestätigen den heutigen telefonischen Anruf
Ihres sehr geehrten Herrn Oberstleutnant Fuchs und
danken Ihnen verbindlichst für den uns hierbei erteilten
Auftrag auf einen Wagen unserer Type " SW 38 ", den wir
Ihnen unterm 27. ds. Mts. angeboten haben. Es handelt sich
um ein

4-5 sitziges, 4-fenstriges, 4-türiges Cabriolet
unserer Type " MAYBACH SW 38 " 3,8 Ltr. 6-Zyl.

140 PS Chassis Nr. 2150, Fabrikat Gläser,
Dresden

Preis : RM. 19.607 .--

ab Werk Friedrichshafen a.B.

Berlin

zuzüglich Überführungskosten Friedrichshafen-~~Berlin~~

Wir haben hiervon unserem Stammhaus sofort Kenntnis
gegeben und werden dafür Sorge tragen, dass das Cabriolet
entweder Ende nächster Woche oder Anfang der übernächsten
Woche zur Ablieferung an Sie gelangt.

Der Ordnung halber bitten wir noch, uns den anliegenden
Bestellschein zu unterschreiben, wobei ein Exemplar
für Ihre Akten bestimmt ist.

Reichsführer der SS, Berlin NW.7.

29.9.38

-2-

Indem wir Ihnen verbindlichst für den uns erteilten Auftrag danken, sehen wir der Übermittlung des unterschriebenen Bestellscheines noch gern entgegen.

Heil Hitler!

P.S. In der Anlage übersenden wir Ihnen noch 2 kleine Lederproben und bitten um Ihre Entscheidung, ob anstelle des roten Leders eines von den beigefügten Ledern in Frage kommt. Ihre Entscheidung hierüber erbitten wir bis morgen Vormittag 10 Uhr, da es nur bis zu diesen Zeitpunkt noch möglich ist, eine Umänderung des Lederauschlages an dem Wagen vorzunehmen. Wir bitten um Ihren freundlichen Anruf.

Anl.

Bestellschein.

2 Lederproben.

7

A u s r ü s t u n g s a n w e i s u n g .

Chassis Nr. 2150

Verwendungszweck: Ausstellungs- bzw. Vorratswagen.

Type: "MAYBACH SW 38" / Gläser-Ausführung

Radstand: 3380 mm

Lenkung: links

Beleuchtung: Bosch-Scheinwerfer

Aufbau: 4-5 sitz. Innensteuer-Cabriolet der Firma Gläser, Dresden

Bereifung: 6-fach der Grösse 7,00 x 17

Sonderausführungen: Bosch-Breitstrahler der Type N.E.170 mit Kippspiegel.

Komm. 977/173
Der Firma Gläser ist eine Fahnenstange zur Montage anzuliefern.

Lieferzeit: wie vereinbart!

~~WV/Ts~~
23. Juli 1938.

BD
~~Wagenverkauf~~
~~H. Stiebel~~
~~Wagenmontage~~
~~Rep.-Büro~~
~~TB. Stump~~
~~TA~~
~~Versand~~
~~Vorkalkulation~~
~~H. Halder~~
~~PK~~

gez. Schöbinger

VIN 2182: Maybach SW 38 Pullman for Kaiserlich-Iranische Gesandtschaft

Berlin, March 7, 1939. Were they half pushed, half fell, or can this renunciation simply be called an act of *raison d'état*? Whatever the case, Maybach presented itself at the 29th International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition (IAMA) in Berlin in Hall 1 in 1939. The six- to seven-seater SW 38 Pullman limousine on display at booth 26 was sold during the exhibition to Hackethal-Draht- und Kabel-Werke AG in Hanover for 21,509 Reichsmark (RM).

This order was not only welcomed by the luxury car manufacturer in Friedrichshafen, but also by its general agent for northern Germany, J.A. Schlüter Söhne in Hamburg, who had earned a respectable commission of RM 3,243. Unfortunately, the documents available to me do not reveal how this was made up of an 18 percent commission on an order value of RM 13,800 and 10 percent on a further RM 7,590. What I find absolutely hard to understand, however, is the fact that on February 24, 1939, the broker was charged 171.12 for the export promotion surcharge "HANDEL" ("trade"). But the Hamburg agent was only responsible for selling this car to Hannover, wasn't he? Which was definitely in Germany at the time and not abroad.

But in the end, this car ended up in different hands: Hackethal director Reusch himself traveled to the agreed pickup location at the Maybach sales office in Berlin on March 7, 1939. After a discussion with the Maybach representatives, he authorized the resale of the new black Pullman. This happened even though the head of the transport company Berlit & Happe was already on site to ship it to Hannover.

However, this change of heart was not because the industrialist suddenly no longer liked the car that had been intended for his personal use. A letter sent on the same day to the Maybach factory in Friedrichshafen explains this somewhat surprising change of plan: "After we had once again outlined the situation we found ourselves in as a result of the envoy's persistence, Mr. Reusch agreed to unblock the car in the interests of German exports."

The "Kaiserlich-Iranische Gesandtschaft" ("Imperial Iranian Legation") in Berlin, the embassy of this country in Germany, insisted on the immediate delivery of precisely this Maybach SW 38 Pullman limousine for its then 19-year-old Crown Prince Mohammad-Reża Pahlavī. He was later crowned Shah of Persia on September 17, 1941, after his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, had been forced to step down by the British occupiers of Iran and sent into exile in Greece.

In March 1939, the son had married the Egyptian princess Fausia of Egypt, chosen for him by his father, in Cairo. At the age of just 17, she was considered the most beautiful woman in her country. The wedding ceremony was later repeated in Tehran according to the Shiite rite and one of the wedding gifts was to be this German luxury limousine.

Wol
Firma
J. A. Schlüter Söhne
Hamburg 13
Rennbahnstrasse 44-48

24. Februar 1939.

15027 Schi.

213592/77

Betr.: SW 38 Maybach-Wagen, Fahrgest. Nr. 2182-
Fu. Hackethal-Droth- u. Kabelwerke
Aktiengesellschaft, Hannover -
Unsere Rechnung Nr. 12111 vom 24.2.39.

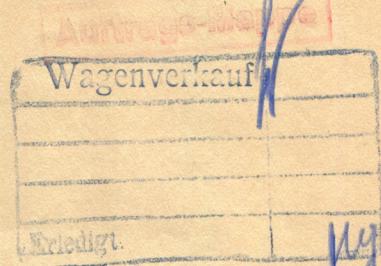
Gutschrift für Provision :

18 % aus RM. 15 800,--- =	RM. 2 484,--
10 % aus RM. 7 590,--- =	759,--
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RM. 21 390,---	RM. 3 243,-- <i>R</i>
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Vorgenannten Betrag haben wir Ihrem Provisions-
rückstellungskonto gebracht und werden densel-
ben nach Vollzahlung der Rechnung zur Verrechnung
bringen.

-9.MRZ.1939 43337

Verkaufsbüro Berlin



Firma

Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H.

Friedrichshafen a. B.

Ihre Zeichen
WV.

Ihre Nachricht vom

Unsere Zeichen
Gr./Wa.

Berlin, den
7. März 1939.

Betreff:

Ausstellungs-Pullman-Limousine Wagen-Nr. 2182.

Bei Ihrem heutigen telefonischen Anruf beauftragten Sie uns, noch einmal an Herrn Direktor R e u s c h der Firma Hacketal, Hannover, heranzutreten zwecks Freigabe des Wagens, nachdem der Iranische Gesandte vom Auftrag zurückzutreten drohte trotz der ihm inzwischen von uns angebotenen beiden Wagen aus Genf und aus Köln.

Wir konnten dieses Gespräch mit Herrn Reusch in zufälliger Gegenwart von Herrn H a p p e der Firma Berlit & Happe, Hannover führen, der hierher gekommen war, um vorgenannten Wagen bereits abzuholen. Bei nochmaliger Schilderung der Sachlage, in die wir infolge der Hartnäckigkeit des Gesandten gekommen sind, erklärte sich Herr Reusch im Interesse des deutschen Exportgeschäftes dazu bereit, den Wagen freizugeben. Er brachte hierbei zum Ausdruck, dass es ihm schliesslich ebenso lieb sei, den Wagen gebaut zu erhalten, weil er dann eine etwas einfachere Ausstattung wählen könne. Der auf der Ausstellung gekaufte Wagen Nr. 2182 sei ihm ohnedies etwas zu reichlich ausgestattet. Auf Radio und Schiebesitze sowie noch auf einige andere Kleinigkeiten wolle er verzichten. Herr Reusch machte jedoch zur ausdrücklichen Bedingung, dass der von Ihnen angebotene Liefertermin von 8 Wochen für diesen neuen Auftrag keinesfalls überschritten werde. Wir haben ihm dies zugesagt, nachdem uns Herr Schobinger ausdrücklich hierzu ermächtigt hatte. Gleichzeitig erbat Herr Reusch den Besuch der örtlichen Vertretung zwecks Durchsprache

Maybach-Motorenbau G. m. b. H. Friedrichshafen a. B.

Betrfifit:
Wagen-Nr. 2182.

Empfänger:
MM WV Fr-hafen.

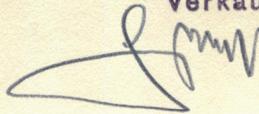
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der Ausstattung des neuen Auftrages. Herr Happe wird sich
dementsprechend mit dem Kunden in Verbindung setzen.

Über die weiteren Massnahmen, die notwendig sind, um nunmehr
obigen Wagen für die Iranische Gesandtschaft fertigzumachen,
(Kraftfahrzeugbrief und bereits erfolgte Zulassung ändern,
Kolben kürzen etc.) berichten wir Ihnen morgen noch gesondert.

Maybach-Motorenbau
G. m. b. H.
Verkaufsbüro Berlin



Kopie an : J.A.Schlüter Söhne, Hamburg;
Berlit & Happe, Hannover.

The vehicle, showcased as an attraction at the Maybach booth in Berlin, was equipped with everything that could possibly be packed into a SW 38 Pullman. The exact specifications were documented in the order file, available in two versions: the detailed invoice from the coachbuilder Spohn in Ravensburg, who handled the body construction and the entire interior with numerous custom requests. They charged exactly 6,110.50 RM to the Maybach factory for this work. The manufacturer's calculation listed a selling price of 20,800 RM. By the time of the presentation in Berlin, the price tag had increased by an additional 709 RM to the aforementioned 21,509 RM.

Unfortunately, there is no record of what concessions were made to the wire manufacturer, now suddenly a second-ranking buyer, in return for his willingness to cooperate. Perhaps he was granted a discount and/or other benefits as compensation for the additional waiting time for the next Pullman, which was specially made for him. However, he was also reportedly happy to have an SW 38 Pullman built entirely according to his personal wishes, as reported by Berlin to the factory: „The car no. 2182 purchased at the exhibition was, in any case, a little too generously equipped for him. He wanted to do without the radio and sliding seats, as well as a few other minor details. However, Mr. Reusch made it an explicit condition that the delivery date of 8 weeks offered by you for this new order would not be exceeded under any circumstances.“

And then there was also a special detail in the same letter regarding future trips for this Maybach in the Middle East: “We will report to you separately tomorrow on the further steps that are necessary to prepare the above-mentioned car for the Iranian legation (to change the vehicle registration document and existing registration, shorten the pistons, etc.).” To cut the pistons to further reduce the compression ratio from the normal 6.5:1? Because Tehran is located at an altitude of almost 1,200 meters above sea level, while Friedrichshafen is only 400 meters above “normal sea level,” as it is correctly called today? Because the oxygen content of the air is lower for this reason? Or because of the quite different outside temperatures?

According to the internet, the average annual temperature in the Iranian capital in 2024 was 18.3 degrees Celsius. In Friedrichshafen, the average temperature during the same period was 11.3 degrees. Almost 90 years ago, long before significant global warming, it may have been colder, but the difference was probably similar... Or was this precautionary measure based on the assumption that Maybach considered the fuel quality in the country of the big crude oil producer to be inferior and wanted to protect the engine from damage caused by knocking or pinging under heavy load?

Back then, it seemed totally logical to retrofit the 3.8-liter inline six-cylinder engine with shorter pistons for lower compression. To avoid dangerous problems caused by poor-quality fuel, electronic engine management was not yet available at that time. This technology allows our current cars to be “fed” with special mappings to delay the ignition timing and enrich the mixture, which helps to prevent engine damage. And, of course, there were no sophisticated sensors in the past that would have automatically taken such safety precautions on their own.



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From left to right: Göring, Keitel, Himmler and Hitler.

VIN 2192: Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet for General der Artillerie Wilhelm Keitel

Berlin, March 23, 1939. In this final chapter, I will tell you about an order that Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H. was able to secure at the last edition of the „Internationale Automobil- und Motorrad-Ausstellung“ („International Automobile and Motorcycle Exhibition“) (IAMA) in Berlin at the beginning of 1939. It was for an SW 38 Cabriolet with four doors and four to five seats, which was delivered to the Oberkommando des Heeres (Army High Command) on April 6, 1939. It was to serve as the new, prestigious official car for the highest-ranking soldier in the German Wehrmacht.

General der Artillerie (General of the Artillery) Wilhelm Bodewin Johann Gustav Keitel, as he was known by his full name, was born on September 22, 1882, in Helmscherode near Gandersheim, as the oldest son of Lower Saxony landowner Carl Keitel and his wife Apollonia, and grew up in the bosom of his family. Because his father did not yet want to give up farming, the young man decided to pursue a military career. After graduating from high school in 1901, he joined the Prussian army, as was customary for the sons of landowners in the region. However, unlike many other young men from good families, the young Keitel did not choose the cavalry, but rather the horseback field artillery.

In 1909, he married Lisa Fontaine, whose parents owned the Wülfel manor and brewery in Hannover, and had six children with her, one of whom died at an early age. In 1910, he was promoted to first lieutenant. At the beginning of World War I, he was hit by a shrapnel fragment in his right lower arm. After his recovery, he returned to his regiment as a captain and battery commander. In the spring of 1915, Keitel joined the General Staff without having undergone the usual training. In 1916, he became First General Staff Officer of the 19th Reserve Division, and in 1918 he was transferred to the Flanders Naval Corps, also as 1a. He served on various battlefields in the west and east and received twelve honors during the war, including the Ritterkreuz des Königlichen Hausordens von Hohenzollern mit Schwertern (Knight's Cross of the Royal House Order of Hohenzollern with Swords).

After the war ended, Keitel remained in the military and was transferred to the Reichswehr of the Weimar Republic. In 1923, he was promoted to Major, and four years later, Keitel was appointed „Kommandeur der II. Abteilung des 6. (Preußischen) Artillerie-Regiments“ („Commander of the II Division of the 6th (Prussian) Artillery Regiment“) and promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1929. Until October 1933, he was deployed in the “Reichswehrministerium” (“Reichswehr Ministry”), where he played a key role in the illegal restructuring of the Reichswehr.

Due to illness, he followed Hitler's ascent to power on January 30, 1933, from a sanatorium in what was then Czechoslovakia. After his recovery, Keitel returned to active duty. Although officers were officially required to remain politically neutral, he sympathized with National Socialist ideology.

He met Hitler in person for the first time in July 1933, but surprisingly did not join the NSDAP until 1944, even though he had been awarded the “Golden Party Badge” already in April 1939. The disadvantage of his late entry into the party was corrected by backdating the entry date of the party member No. 7,039,699 Keitel to March 1, 1939.

Exactly five years earlier to the day, he had been promoted to Major General and, in October of the same year, he was commissioned to form the 22nd Infantry Division. From October 1, 1935, he served as “Chef des Wehrmachtamts im Reichskriegsministerium” (“Chief of the Wehrmacht Office in the Reich War Ministry”). There, Keitel wanted to optimize cooperation between the army, navy, and air force through a joint command staff. However, his plan failed due to resistance from the generals of these three branches of the armed forces, who did not want to see their power restricted. Despite this failure, he was promoted first to Lieutenant General on January 1, 1936, and then to General of the Artillery on August 1 of the following year.

The Blomberg-Fritsch crisis in February 1938, which was also mentioned in the chapter on General Liese’s Maybach SW 38, ultimately led to a fundamental change in the command structure of the Wehrmacht, as the Reichswehr had been officially named since 1935. Keitel’s ideas had not been forgotten, and so in 1938 he was made „Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht“ („Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht“) (OKW). This office replaced the office of the „Reichskriegsminister“ („Reich Minister of War“), which Hitler had pro forma taken over himself. As Chief of the OKW, Keitel reported directly to the Führer and worked closely with „Oberst“ („Colonel“) Alfred Jodl, who organized the „Wehrmachtführungsstab“ („Wehrmacht Command Staff“).

The officer’s responsibilities included recruiting soldiers and procuring military equipment, espionage, caring for prisoners of war and wounded soldiers, and the administration of the Wehrmacht and the territories in which it was active. He carried out the Führer’s orders and acted as the executive interface between Hitler and the Wehrmacht throughout World War II.

As head of the OKW, Wilhelm Keitel, who was promoted to “Generalfeldmarschall” (“General Field Marshal”) in 1940, was part of Adolf Hitler’s inner circle of power. He was the ideal tool for the regime, a frighteningly loyal executor who took orders and carried them out ruthlessly.

During the Second World War, he signed numerous criminal decrees, including the “Kommissarbefehl” („Commissar Order“) in 1941, which instructed that political commissars of the Soviet Red Army were not to be treated as prisoners of war, but were to be shot immediately without trial by a court martial. Or the “Nacht-und-Nebel-Erlass” (“Night and Fog Decree”) of the same year for the prosecution of crimes against the Reich and resistance against the German occupying power in the occupied territories. Keitel’s signature appeared on numerous documents that caused the deaths of millions of people through the Wehrmacht.

He probably signed his last official document on the night of May 8-9, 1945. At the Soviet headquarters in Berlin-Karlshorst, he signed the un-conditional surrender of the German Wehrmacht together with Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg, “Oberbefehlshaber der Kriegsmarine” (“Commander-in-Chief of the Navy”), and Colonel General Hans-Jürgen Stumpff, representing the wounded „Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe“ („Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force“), Ritter von Greim.

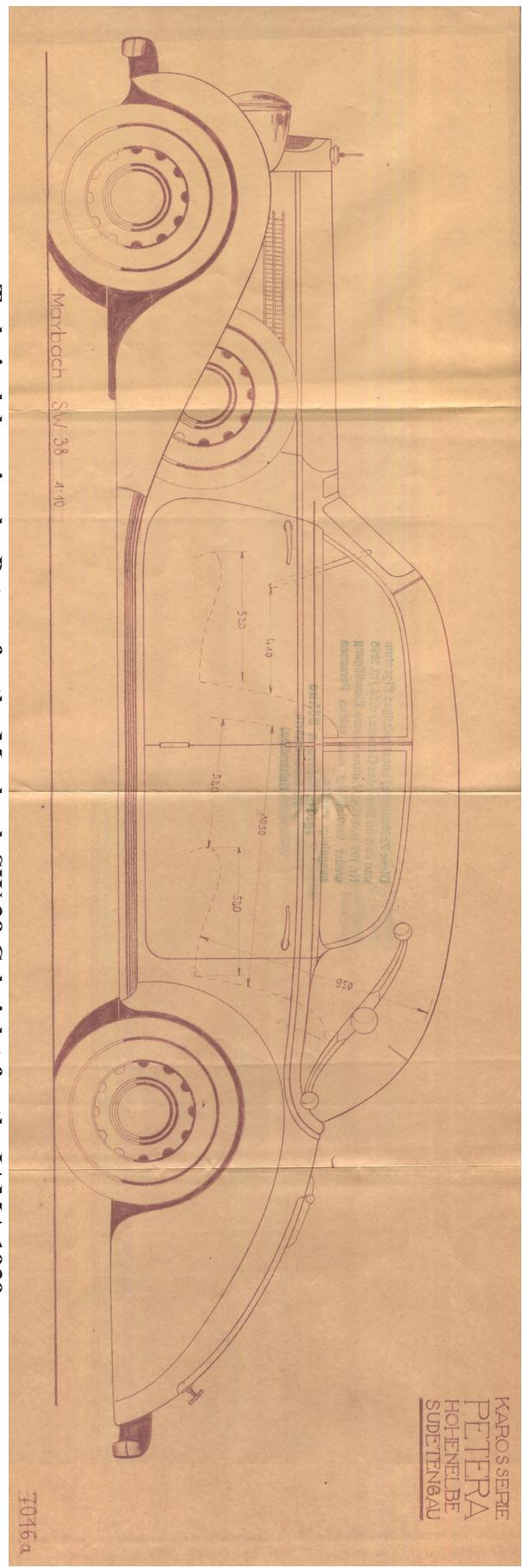
On May 13, 1945, soldiers of the British army arrested Keitel in Flensburg and took him, together with other high-ranking Wehrmacht officers and representatives of the NSDAP hierarchy, to POW camp no. 32, also known as Camp Ashcan, in Bad Mondorf, Luxembourg.

In August 1945, he was transferred to Nuremberg, where he wrote his memoirs while in custody. These were published later in 1998 under the title “Mein Leben – Pflichterfüllung bis zum Untergang” (“My Life – Fulfilling My Duty Until the End”) and are considered highly controversial due to his lack of acknowledgement of guilt.

After the end of the war, Keitel was indicted along with 23 other major war criminals in the Nuremberg Trials before the International Military Tribunal. On October 1, 1946, the former highest-ranking soldier in the German Wehrmacht was found guilty on all counts and sentenced to death by hanging. Together with nine other convicts, Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm Keitel was executed in Nuremberg on October 16, 1946.

But the then 56-year-old head of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces) certainly had no idea that his end was on the horizon when he treated himself with a new car in 1939. Interestingly, however, it was ordered by the Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH), founded in 1935, which had not been subordinated to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), established only three years later, but was only authorized to pass on Hitler’s directives to the OKW. Keitel commanded this agency, which was already in the process of being dissolved, only at the end of the war, from May 1 to 13, 1945, to be precise.

The explanation for the cross-agency purchase transaction is provided by the letter from the Maybach office in Berlin dated March 23, 1939, shown at the beginning of this chapter: “The formal processing of the or-der will be handled in the usual manner by the „Heereswaffenamt“ („Ar-my Weapons Office“).” In peacetime, this was still subordinate to the “Oberkommando des Heeres”, which is probably why all correspondence relating to this Keitel convertible was not conducted with the “Oberkommando der Wehrmacht”. Perhaps the OKW did not have its own de-partment for motor vehicles at the time and therefore delegated their pro-curement to another authority ... It is also worth mentioning in this context that Keitel’s organization had set up a command center for the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht in the “Maybach II” bunker complex. This shelter was built on the grounds of the so-called “Forbidden City” in Zossen, Brandenburg. Could this name explain their commander’s possible passion for the luxury Swabian brand and the decision to choose this new car?



Technical drawing by Petera for the Maybach SW 38 Cabriolet for the IAMA 1939.

Wilhelm Keitel was not known to be a car enthusiast in the classic sense like Göring, for example, who allegedly owned several custom Maybachs, or Hitler, who had made the „Volkswagen“ one of his most important civilian projects, but naturally preferred to be chauffeured in luxurious Mercedes-Benz limousines and convertibles. For official trips within Berlin or to the Führer's headquarters, General Keitel preferred to use a Mercedes-Benz 320 Pullman limousine from the W 142 series, comfortable but not overly luxurious. This model was the standard motorization for many high-ranking officers at the time.

There is no evidence that Keitel also drove this car himself, as his position naturally gave him a driver at his disposal at all times. In contrast to today, open-top vehicles at that time were rarely used for leisure purposes, but were utilized for presentation purposes at parades and for troop visits.

The story of this cabriolet began with a request from the coachbuilder IG. TH. PETERA & Söhne to provide it with a Maybach SW 38 rolling chassis. On this basis, the coachbuilder, which had never been used by the factory before and which had been founded as a coachbuilder in the 19th century, wanted to build a redesigned version of the SW 38 open-top model.

It was then presented at Petera's own stand at the 29th edition of the IAMA in Berlin, which was held from February 17 to March 5, 1939. This was the first time the manufacturer had collaborated with this company, which was based in the small town of Hohenelbe in what was then the Sudetenland, which had belonged to the "Reichsgau Sudetenland" since the invasion of German troops in 1938. The aim in Friedrichshafen was to test a potential new subcontractor for coachbuilding.

In a letter from Maybach-Motorenbau G.m.b.H. to the potential partner, dated November 12, 1938, we read: „We have not yet had the opportunity to work with your esteemed company and are unable to form an opinion about the quality and design of the bodies you manufacture, which is why we ask you to agree to the reservation we have made. We hereby give our consent for you to exhibit the assembled car at your own stand at the Berlin Motor Show at the beginning of next year.“

The conditions were clearly defined: "We will, of course, endeavor to sell the car as soon as possible, and we also request that you try to sell the entire car, whereby the price we have set as the final fixed price must be respected under all circumstances. We reserve the right to finalize the sale ourselves."

Since, of course, everything was about money even back then, the price was also fixed in advance: „The selling price will be our chassis price of RM 13,800 plus the body price, which must include a 20% discount for us. We will determine the final price after you have specified all optional extras to be included at net cost and taking into account the price you quoted in a.) for the 4-seater convertible without a partition wall.“ And because Swabians are known for not giving anything away for free: "We will pay you for the body after the car has been sold."

Review copy with excerpts from the illustrated book
“Maybach, the Third Reich and the Shah of Iran”.

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“Maybach, the Third Reich, and the Shah of Persia”
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