

Caravanning in Socialist Czechoslovakia

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Karavanning v socialistickém Československu

Abstract: This study is devoted to the rise of caravanning in Czechoslovakia with emphasis on the period from 1948 to 1989. After introducing Czechoslovak caravanning in a broader context, it focuses on the production of caravans and their availability on the market. It then goes on to examine the legislative rules in force governing the production and operation of caravans. The focus is on the period of the 70s and 80s, when the accelerated development of caravanning in Czechoslovakia was restricted by the limited availability of caravans on the market, most of which had to be built individually on a DIY basis. The final part also takes a brief look at the development of motorhomes.

Keywords: history of the 20th century; motoring; caravanning; caravan

DOI: 10.14712/23363525.2022.9

Introduction

Caravanning is a special form of motor tourism (drive tourism), which combines the advantages of a motor vehicle with a ready home on wheels towed behind car. Finding the moment of the birth of the caravanning is very difficult to basically impossible. This follows from the very nature of this motoring phenomenon, which has its origins in horse-drawn occupiable vehicles. To a certain extent, this inspirational similarity also determined the development and perception of caravanning. It was the association with nomadic people and their position on the margins of the society of that time that associated caravanning in the European environment with negative connotations.¹ Despite these negative associations, however, caravanning has a long and fascinating history that begins in 1880s to 1890s, at the time still associated with special, horse-drawn recreational vehicles. The golden age of caravans started after 1900 and peaked with the establishment of the Caravan Club of Great Britain and Ireland in 1907.² The advent of motoring led to the receding of horse-drawn caravans, but the caravan as we know it today was still in its infancy. In the 1920s, the development of caravanning was slow and was transitioning to the single-axle caravan. We can consider the Anglo-Saxon countries to be the pioneers of caravanning in the second and third decades of the 20th century.³

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¹ Hall, Michael C. – Müller, Dieter K. [2018]. Caravanning and mobile second homes. In: *The Routledge handbook of second home tourism and mobilities*. New York: Routledge, p. 292.

² Bassett, Philipp [1980]. A list of the historical records of the Caravan Club of Great Britain and Ireland. National Archives. GB 2458 Caravan Club, p. i. [online]. Available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/download/GB2458%20CARAVAN%20CLUB> [2021-08-21]

³ McClymont, Hoda – Thompson, Michelle – Prideaux, Bruce [2010]. Understanding changes in the caravanning sector: a case study. In: *Drive tourism*. New York: Routledge, pp. 224–225.

Caravanning is closely associated with camping, a fact also demonstrated by the collaboration between the British Caravan Club and Camping Club, prior to World War I.⁴ Modern autocamping, like caravanning, was born in the interwar period. Autocamping went hand in hand with the expansion of the car in the lower classes in the United States, which could not afford hotel accommodation. In the 1920s, poorer motorists spent the night just along the roads in their cars. To prevent mayhem, the municipality set aside places to spend the night – autocamping.⁵ Thus, both forms spread from the Anglo-Saxon countries further to the European continent.

The aim of this study is to follow the development of caravanning in Czechoslovakia during the period from the end of World War II until 1989. It was during this period that Czechoslovakia embarked on the path of building socialism alongside the countries of Eastern Europe, which also influenced the approach to individual motoring. The focus will be on the availability of caravans on the market, legislative rules for their use and their social acceptance. The study is based mainly on material sources. The main source of information is period motoring literature, especially magazines. This literature not only contains key information about caravanning, but also allows you to follow the period discourse and period perception of the caravan. In the area of legislation, the source base is extended by archival sources from the Security Services Archive.

The Beginnings of Caravanning in Czechoslovakia

The birth of motor tourism in the Czech lands is coupled with the arrival of the first motor vehicles, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.⁶ The Czechoslovak motorist began learning about caravanning from the turn of the 1920s and 1930s. The novelty was presented as “super-luxury tourism”, “where a car pulls a two-wheeled car in the shape of a house, adapted for living and equipped with all needs and comforts”.⁷ This concept also aligned with the approach to caravanning in the United Kingdom, where it was first practiced by people with above-average incomes.⁸

Although the caravan brought the advantage of accommodation wherever it was located, was immediately ready for use and brought greater comfort than a tent, in the interwar Czechoslovak environment it however encountered a number of barriers. The main obstacles included the low degree of motorization,⁹ the lack of suitable premises for camping and the negative perception of this novelty.¹⁰ What was most likely the first Czechoslovak-produced caravan was presented at the Prague Motor Show in April 1934 by the Jasa

⁴ Bassett, P. [1980]. p. i.

⁵ König Wolfgang [2008]. *Kleine Geschichte der Konsumgesellschaft. Konsum als Lebensform der Moderne*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, p. 170.

⁶ See: Štemberk, Jan [2013]. Cestovní ruch a česká společnost na přelomu 19. a 20. století. *Historická sociologie / Historical Sociology*, No. 1, pp. 75–88.

⁷ Jezdinský, Jaroslav [1931]. Automobilismus a motocyklismus v rekreaci. In. *Rekreace v Československu, její úkoly a prostředky*. Praha: Masarykův lidovýchovní ústav, p. 155.

⁸ Bassett, P. [1980]. P. iii.

⁹ In 1933, there were 72 people per motor vehicle in Bohemia, 101 in Moravia and Silesia and 258 in Slovakia. In Western Europe, the average was around 30 people. Štemberk, Jan [2008]. *Automobilista v zajištění reality. Vývoj pravidel silničního provozu v českých zemích v první polovině 20. století*. Praha: Karolinum, p. 18.

¹⁰ Sabol, Miroslav [2020]. Počátky mototuristiky na Slovensku v prvej polovici 20. storočia. *Historická sociologie / Historical Sociology*, No. 1, pp. 131–145.

car factory of Chlumec nad Cidlinou. The Jasy-Standard 34 model had an aerodynamic shape and it was possible to attach it behind a car with 20 hp. Inside, it was furnished for 3 to 5 people. The price of an equipped caravan was comparable to the price of a regular cottage.¹¹ The caravan was to offer acceptable comfort at an affordable price and at the same time appeal to the middle classes, who only had smaller cars of lower capacity and power.

Caravan production came to Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s, when, in 1937, Josef Sodomka's body shop in Vysoké Mýto began producing caravans. The first type with the designation W 1 (Weekend Car) was followed by a smaller version called W 2 in 1938. The two-wheel trailers had a wooden frame covered with sheet metal. Production reached several dozen pieces and was stopped in 1941.¹²

Caravanning was also shaped by suitable long-term parking spaces. The emergence of the first official caravan parks in the Czech lands dates to 1939, when a general lack of accommodation capacity, caused by a fundamental reduction in tourism beyond the nation's borders forced the protectorate population to spend their holidays at home instead of abroad.¹³ In addition to the official camps, to the establishment of which the Auto club and Club of Czech Tourists were devoted in the late 1930s, there was still a wide range of possibilities for unofficial camping in nature.¹⁴ Czech travelers also took part in the promotion of caravanning. One of the most active was František Alexander Elstner, who went on vacations with his family and a recreational trailer in the late 1930s.¹⁵ The promising development was halted by the introduction of a gasoline rationing system and a ban on redundant and recreational journeys in September 1939.¹⁶

Motoring and Caravanning in the Post War Period

Controlled gas and tire management lasted until 1949 in Czechoslovakia. It was only in this year that all cars could get out on the road without the need for a permit. This was a necessary precondition for a return to caravanning. The renewed Auto club of the Czechoslovak Republic planned to build on the idea of constructing auto camps, which, however, were intended for spending a cheap vacation in nature, that is, camping.¹⁷ However, these plans were not realized due to changes in priorities. During the early 1950s, individual motoring – a prerequisite for caravanning – was viewed negatively. Owning a personal automobile was in itself considered a holdover from the former, bourgeois regime. This had an ideological and practical side. Only a few thousand new cars entered the market each year, and production was unable to meet demand: The ideological rejection of the car thus justified this shortfall to some extent.¹⁸ Collective forms of travel organized at large

¹¹ *Weekendový vůz [1933–1934]*. *Letem světem*, No. 29, p. 10.

¹² Hyan, Tomáš [2021]. *Obytné přívěsy nejsou u nás nové, Sodomka s nimi začal dávno*. [online]. Available at <https://www.garaz.cz/clanek/sodomka-karosa-obytne-privesy-21006228> [2021-08-21].

¹³ Jakubec, Ivan – Štemberk, Jan [2018]. *Cestovní ruch pod dohledem třetí říše*. Praha: Karolinum, pp. 184–185.

¹⁴ Štemberk, Jan – Jakubec, Ivan – Šalanda, Bohuslav [2020]. *Automobilismus a česká společnost*. Praha: Karolinum, p. 150–151.

¹⁵ Tuček, Jan [2014]. *F. A. Elstner. Muž činu*. Praha: Grada, pp. 101–102.

¹⁶ Štemberk, Jan – Jakubec, Ivan – Šalanda, Bohuslav [2020]. Pp. 150–151.

¹⁷ Archiv hlavního města Prahy (Prague City Archives), fund Magistrát hlavního města Prahy II – Spolkový katastr, box 594, XIV/0159, Stanovy Autoklubu Republiky Československé.

¹⁸ Štemberk, Jan – Jakubec, Ivan – Šalanda, Bohuslav [2020]. Pp. 36–37.

recreational facilities by the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement were preferred and supported.¹⁹

Even if we were to turn our gaze away from the above difficulties, the essential component was lacking, i.e., caravans. Their production was not resumed after the war and the few pre-war units could provide no relief to the situation. In 1950, the article “Will we have caravans?” appeared in the motoring magazine *Automoto*, which took a positive stance towards recreational vehicles. It contained recommendations for their production to be located in Czechoslovakia, starting with the indication that the workers would certainly appreciate them for their recreation.²⁰ However, production of camper vehicles, even in the form of recreational trailers, did not start up, and the Czechoslovak motorist had to wait for them for many more years while in the meantime settling for a tent or cottage. The only option was individual DIY production, which in the 1950s was rare.

In the 1950s, caravanning was neglected and, in the planned economy, non-existent domestic production was not even compensated with imports. Thus, it was left up to the Czech DIY enthusiast to perform various modifications of the interior of motor vehicles to improve the comfort of overnighing.²¹ In the western countries of the European continent, caravanning took off rapidly in the mid-1950s. This trend was fueled by the improvement of living standards and an interest in new ways of enjoying leisure time.²² However, this was not the case in Czechoslovakia. This was certainly also related to the whole concept of motoring and its function in a people’s democratic state. When it came to motoring, its civilian defense potential in the defense of the state was emphasized, which is why motorists were associated in car clubs of the Union for Cooperation with the Army (*Svazarm*), where they were to be ideologically indoctrinated as well. This affected the actual perception of caravanning. The Czechoslovak motorist has been sporadically encountering caravans since the second half of the 1950s, but the vast majority were foreigners from Western countries who came to Czechoslovakia on vacation.²³ From the point of view of *Svazarm*, there was no need to pay significant attention to caravanning in the second half of the 1950s, as a comfortable caravan did not fit into the idea of a hardened motorist who spends the night in a tent.²⁴

Renewal of Caravan Production

It was only in the late 1950s that the Karosa national enterprise, which had taken over the Josef Sodomka factory after nationalization, restarted the pre-war production of caravans in Vysoké Mýto.

In 1960, a caravan called the Dingo W 4 was introduced to the public. The caravan was a frameless shell construction made of polyester laminates with a thickness of 3 mm. This made it possible to achieve a low weight of the fully-equipped caravan (380 to 400 kg).

¹⁹ Čornejová, Alžběta [2014]. *Dovolená s poukazem. Odborové rekreace v Československu 1948–1968*. Praha: Academia, pp. 63–90.

²⁰ Budeme mať campingové vozy? [1950]. *Automoto*, No. 6, p. 94.

²¹ Franc, Martin – Knapík, Jiří [2013]. *Volný čas v českých zemích v letech 1957–1967*. Praha: Academia, p. 358.

²² See Kubisch, Ulrich [1998]. *Wohnwagen: Geschichte, Technik, Ferienzeit*. Berlin: Transit Buchverlag.

²³ Štemberk, Jan – Jakubec, Ivan – Šalanda, Bohuslav [2020]. P. 155–156.

²⁴ See: Ďurčo, Michal [2020]. *Cestovanie motorovým vozidlom ako voľnočasová aktivita a československé autokempingy začiatkom 60. rokov*. In: Zouharová Dyková, Sylvie – Fricová, Jana. *České století motorismu II. Motorismus jako prostředek volného času*. Brno: TMB, pp. 289–304.

Daylight was provided by five windows and a ventilation window in the roof. The passage of light through the roof laminate was also employed. The equipment was simple but practical. Comfort was definitely not a strength. The middle part was designated for overnight accommodation, providing a large bed for three people and could be used for dining during the day. An interesting feature was the use of air mattresses, which could also be used as swimming accessories. A gas cooker was only a future, planned feature at this point. Insulation was completely missing, so in principle only seasonal use was possible. The caravan was designed as a trailer behind an Octavia passenger car, made in Czechoslovakia by the Škoda company. The planned price of the trailer exceeded 20,000 Czechoslovak crowns, which was only slightly less than the price of a full-fledged car.²⁵ The factory-produced trailer was certainly not a cheap affair and its price neared the average annual income. This was also the reason that only a few dozen units were produced before production was stopped.²⁶ The APV-2 trailer by the District Industrial Enterprise in Vyškov offered a more affordable, though incomplete, replacement, equipped with the option of a fold-out tent extension structure, and was therefore not a standard-type caravan. The comfort of camping was also impacted, as two people were to sleep on fold-out seats in the car and two in the tent superstructure in the trailer. The equipment also included two air mattresses and lighting connected to the car's battery.²⁷

In the late 1960s, Karosa introduced its second post-war model, the Seagull 300 (type SW 1) and the larger, four-meter Seagull 400 (type SW 2). It already featured the 1960s "angular" design, which had a negative impact on its aerodynamics. The frame also changed, being based on a wooden skeleton covered with sheet metal on the outside. The problem was the increased weight, which did not allow the caravan to be attached to the most common domestic Škoda cars. The Karosa Hořice plant produced 600 Seagull 300 caravans and 6 Seagull 400 caravans. The reason for the low production was the low demand at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, combined with their high price. Production was finally stopped completely in 1971.²⁸ Nevertheless, it was most likely the Seagull 300 caravan that was behind the birth of Czech/Czechoslovak caravanning. In the late 1960s, self-help instructions and procedures for building a caravan began to appear in the pages of motoring magazines. The do-it-yourself constructions were supposed to help reduce the cost.

Another significant obstacle to the development of caravanning was the lack of suitable caravan camping sites, which began to reappear in Czechoslovakia in the late 1950s. However, most of them were places without the necessary infrastructure and sanitary facilities, and lacking electrical connections.²⁹

Legislative Rules Concerning Caravans

From the end of the 1950s until the 1970s, trailer construction was governed by the rules set out in the Decree of the Ministry of Transport No. 145/1958 in the Official Gazette

²⁵ Horák, O. [1960]. Obytný přívěs Karosa. *Svět motorů*, No. 319 (1), p. 21.

²⁶ Jakubec, Julius et al. [1983]. *Přívěsy za osobní automobil*. Praha: Nadas, p. 18.

²⁷ Přívěsný vozík za osobní automobil [1960]. *Automobil*, No. 11, p. 348.

²⁸ Budík, V. [1984]. Dějiny caravangu. *Svět motorů*, No. 22, pp. 24–25.

²⁹ Štemberk, Jan [2017]. *Pěšky, na lyžích, na kole, lodí či autem. K dějinám československé turistiky v letech 1945–1968*. Pelhřimov: NTP, pp. 175–183.

of the Czechoslovak Republic, on the conditions of operation of vehicles on the roads. The basic rule was that the weight of the trailer behind the passenger car must not exceed half the curb weight³⁰ of the towing vehicle. Trailers weighing up to 750 kg did not have to have their own brake.

It should be emphasized that, according to Decree No 145/1956 of the Official Gazette on the operation of road caravans, the caravan was not a separate vehicle, was not registered and did not have its own licence plate. The licence plate of the towing vehicle was placed at the rear of the caravan. However, it is impossible to imagine that just any caravan could be connected behind a passenger car. Every caravan, whether factory built or DIY, had to be approved for operation and allowed for use behind a specific car. In the case of DIY construction, a fee of around 100 Czechoslovak crowns was paid for approval. In this case, the documents for the purchase of material and professional work (e.g. welding of the structure) had to be presented. In the case of approval, the maximum speed at which the caravan set could travel was also set. For passenger cars, it could be a maximum of 80 km/h. In essence, this meant the caravan was dedicated to a specific motor vehicle. If a caravan was to be used behind more than one passenger car, it had to be approved for each use. This procedure, of course, significantly complicated the rental of caravans. A limiting factor was also the non-uniform connecting device between the towing vehicle and the caravan.

This approach to caravan paperwork was not reconsidered until the mid-1970s. By decision of the Czechoslovak Minister of Transport, it was established as of 22 June 1976 that the trailer for a passenger car is a separate vehicle and must have its own licence plate.³¹ The prerequisite was the unification of the connection device and the connection of the caravan lighting, which took place within the framework negotiations of the UN Economic Commission for Europe. This decision made it possible to attach to a passenger car any caravan which complied with the weight limit laid down for trailers for that type of passenger car. Approval of the new caravan was thus necessary only in the case of DIY construction.

Since 1976, it has been necessary to use a standard ISO 50 towing hitch for towing a trailer, and the maximum permissible ball load should not exceed 100 kg (Decree No. 90/1975 Coll.). The electrical wiring was only possible via a standard 7-pin socket. The standardization of the connection between the caravan and the towing vehicle was intended to facilitate their possible sharing.

Caravanning During the So-called Normalization Period (1970s–1980s)

In 1968, the first Czechoslovak caravan club was founded by 38 members in Hradec Králové within the Svazarm car club. Thus, the history of caravanning in Czechoslovakia can be traced from 1968 onward. Additional caravan clubs were gradually added. In September 1970, the Svazarm caravan club was established in Prague. Its establishment took place in connection with the Interkemping' 70 exhibition, which took place at

³⁰ The vehicle curb weight is the weight of the vehicle, including equipment and operating fluids, but excluding passengers.

³¹ Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Services Archive), fund A2/8, box 14, Inv. No. 141.

the Prague Exhibition Grounds from 11 to 20 September 1970. The exhibition centered around caravans, trends in their development in Europe and their accessories and was well received by the public.³² Without a doubt, it provided another important impetus in the promotion of caravanning in Czechoslovakia. The first Caravan Club in Slovakia was established in Žilina. Other clubs continued to be founded, and by the mid-1970s, there were caravan clubs already operating in each of the ten Czechoslovak regions.³³ By 1978, there were already 21 caravan clubs, bringing together over 3,000 members.³⁴ Three years later, there were now 29 caravan clubs in Czechoslovakia, of which 21 were in the Czech lands and 8 in Slovakia.³⁵ As can be seen, caravanning was more widespread in the Czech lands than in Slovakia.

The development of organized caravanning also brought about the organization of meetings and joint expeditions intended for caravan owners and thus further contributed to its popularization. In 1969, the first annual Caravan Rally took place. The Caravan Rally was devoted not only to competitions, but also to sharing experiences, and international participation in the Rally from Western European countries also made it possible to follow caravanning trends, take inspiration from them and thus overcome its considerable domestic isolation and backwardness.³⁶ These collective events (in 1976, 72 events of regional or national scope took place in Czechoslovakia) also had the support of the Svazarm leadership, as they gave caravanning the form of supported collective motorism. Svazarm's acceptance of caravanning was also reflected in the creation of a professional caravanning commission associated with the Svazarm car club. Caravanning proved to be a promising activity that could bring more motorists to Svazarm. The Commission was to focus on helping to build, modify and operate caravans. Furthermore, its task was to provide suitable instructions for the construction of caravans, providing the necessary parts for construction, including towing equipment and side mirrors. However, its activities did not end with an interest in just caravans. The equipment of most Czechoslovak caravan parks did not meet the needs of caravanning, especially when it came to the availability of electrical connections for powering caravan equipment.³⁷

In 1971, the production of caravans (Seagull model) was stopped and the successor type was still only being thought about in the mid-1970s.³⁸ In the 1970s, production shifted from large producers to small local enterprises. Beskydsport Bohumín earned a name for itself in the 1970s. It produced the Astra 300, a three-person folding caravan for motorists. At the close of the 1970s, its lineup was supplemented by the solid Astra 360 four-person fiberglass caravan with a weight of 550 kg. What was still mainly just piece production still did not meet demand. New producers were hard to find and had only limited capacity, something that also applied to the caravan manufacturer Turiec, the local Turčany industrial company in Martin. Domestic production thus fell far short of being able to meet demand (in 1980, 104 caravans were produced in Martin). The annual capacity of about

³² MG, Interkemping '70 [1970]. *Československé pohostinství*, No. 6, p. 87.

³³ Nagy, Štefan [2010]. *Zväzarm a caravanning*. *Svět motorů*, No. 26, p. 25.

³⁴ Libenský, Jan [1978]. 10 let svazarmovského caravanningu. *Svět motorů*, No. 39, p. 25.

³⁵ Pro caravanisty [1981]. *Svět motorů*, No. 49, pp. 24–25.

³⁶ Caravan Rallye '70 [1970]. *Svět motorů*, No. 30, p. 11.

³⁷ Nagy, Štefan [2010]. *Zväzarm a caravanning*. *Svět motorů*, No. 26, p. 25.

³⁸ Cibulka, Julius [1977]. *Automobil moja záluba*. Bratislava: Alfa, p. 122.

100 pieces endured even in the following years.³⁹ It was almost impossible to buy a caravan without the use of a network of acquaintances and having people on the 'inside'. In the case of buying a new caravan, the motorist had to be prepared to pay a high price, nearing 40,000 Czechoslovak crowns in the mid-1970s.

Sharing was supposed to increase the availability of caravans. However, caravan rental facilities were scarce and their offer was limited. Prioritizing caravan rentals only increased their shortage on the domestic market, because instead of going to the market, the products went to rental facilities, where caravans imported from Poland and Yugoslavia also ended up. Rental prices in the second half of the 1970s ranged between 62 and 72 Czechoslovak crowns per day.⁴⁰ Accommodation for a week's vacation could be purchased for 500 crowns, which was an acceptable alternative to a family stay in a country hotel. Of course, the greatest demand for caravan rentals was in the summer season, when supply failed to meet demand. A person who was interested in renting a caravan had to book it at the beginning of the year in January or February.⁴¹

The lack of foreign exchange made it impossible to import caravans from Western European countries. A small number were imported by the foreign trade company Tuzex, but they were unavailable to the average person. Of the socialist countries, caravanning was most developed in the German Democratic Republic. There were several caravan series in the production program of the East German companies.⁴² However, the production capacity and the structure of reciprocal trade did not allow imports. To a limited extent, caravans were imported from Poland.⁴³ The Czechoslovak foreign trade company Motokov, providing export and import of motor vehicles, carried out the import of Polish caravans under a 1975 agreement. The level of imports was negotiated for each year, according to the capacity of the production plant (at the turn of the 70's and 80's it amounted to 200 N 126 caravans per year).⁴⁴ Imports of caravans from what was then Yugoslavia numbered only in the dozens.

For most of those interested in this activity, the only way to acquire a caravan was therefore through informed DIY or amateurism.⁴⁵ Building instructions for caravans of various shapes and designs (including folding) with a description, approximate cost and time required for construction were also published in motoring magazines. Some do-it-yourselfers were willing to provide their followers with plans and working procedures. In 1972, Svazarm began researching caravan design, and in 1975 it introduced two prototypes differing in size. These caravans were to become the basis for further development. Considerations regarding their production directly by Svazarm were rejected. However, the plans for these models, meeting the conditions for road operation in conjunction with most passenger cars on the market, were available to Svazarm members. The lack of caravans on the market can also be seen as a motivating factor for people to join Svazarm. It was easier for a member of Svazarm to start building according to a pre-prepared project than

³⁹ Jakubec, Julius et al. [1983]. Pp. 53, 55, 62.

⁴⁰ Králík, Jan [1977]. Jak s karavany? *Svět motorů*, No. 11, p. 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴² See Röcke, Matthias [2012]. *Camping-Alltag in der DDR*. Königswinter: Hell.

⁴³ Jakubec, Julius et al. [1983]. Pp. 53, 55, 62.

⁴⁴ Králík, Jan [1977]. Jak s karavany? *Svět motorů*, No. 11, p. 9.

⁴⁵ See caravan construction instructions: Vitásek, Jiří – Libenský, Jan [1981]. *Stavíme obytný přívěs*. Praha: SNTL; Bocký, Vladimír. *Abeceda karavaningu*. Bratislava: Alfa 1983.

to invent everything on his own and face a number of difficulties. The companies Svazarm and the Czechoslovak Association of Physical Education also produced the necessary components for amateur construction, which, however, were only available to members of these organizations. Everything was better accessible to the organized motorist.⁴⁶ For the actual building, Svazarm members could take advantage of DIY workshops. As a result, the do-it-yourself construction of a caravan was even more advantageous. In the early 1980s, the idea that DIY caravan production should give way to factory products, which should provide greater safety and economy in operation, gradually prevailed.⁴⁷ However, this plan did not mesh with the reality of the situation, as production capacities and import opportunities were still unable to meet demand. However, DIY caravans were not only home-made replacements, but were often executed at a high grade of construction and were characterized by quality workmanship.

Gradually, the period view of the caravan also changed. There was a noticeable shift from simple convertible caravans to solid-body ones. The increasing comfort level of caravan equipment, of course, increased their weight, so, of necessity, a brake became part of the equipment. However, this ran into technical limits. Until 1980, the production of the brake was also DIY, as none were available on the market. However, in 1980, the Institute for Motor Vehicle Research stopped testing self-produced brakes, making things difficult for caravanists. The problem was not resolved until Svazarm began producing its inertia brake, but this inertia brake soon became a scarce commodity, available only to Svazarm members.⁴⁸

In the mid-1970s, a toilet cubicle with a washbasin began to appear in caravans.⁴⁹ The availability of equipment (e.g., refrigerators, portable TVs) improved only very gradually. The equipment of car camps and the range of services provided were also gradually improving, especially in the case of electrical connections. The use of insulation or equipping the caravan with independent heating, whether gas or electric, was meant to extend the caravanning season. The winter use of caravans became a supported activity within Svazarm, since it was viewed more in terms of its defense-related characteristics than caravanning during the summer on the shore of a pond. On the occasion of the Czechoslovak Spartakiad of 1980, the first national winter caravan meet took place.⁵⁰

It was mainly thanks to amateur builds that in 1983 there were more than 20,000 caravans of various designs and sizes registered in Czechoslovakia. Factory production accounted for only about one-fifth of this number. It was thus mostly comprised of caravans of individual domestic production, which made up for the shortage of caravans on the market.⁵¹

The advantages of the caravanning in socialist Czechoslovakia were also underscored by the fact that it could also be used for vacations abroad. Mostly, this involved visits to the accessible socialist states (usually Hungary or the Baltic coast in the GDR). When traveling abroad, a Czechoslovak citizen was only entitled to a limited allocation of foreign currency,

⁴⁶ Jakubec, Julius et al. [1983]. P. 62.

⁴⁷ Šott, M. [1981]. Výhledy svazarmovských karavanistů. *Svět motorů*, No. 13, pp. 24–25.

⁴⁸ Tůma, Petr [1984]. O semináři techniků caravan klubů. *Svět motorů*, No. 14, p. 29.

⁴⁹ Libenský, Jan [1975]. Národní sraz karavanistů. *Svět motorů*, No. 46, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Jareš, Karel, J. [1980]. Caravanning po celý rok. *Svět motorů*, No. 12, p. 24.

⁵¹ Jelínek, Rudolf [1983]. Obytné přívěsy – a co dál? *Svět motorů*, No. 37, p. 25.

depending on the length of stay.⁵² Being able to take your “accommodation with you” thus made it possible to save on accommodation costs.

Motorhomes

Significantly less attention was paid to motorhomes. The first step was to equip ordinary cars with sleeping modifications, i.e., folding backrests. From 1963, Škoda Octavia cars began to be supplied as standard with the possibility of bed conversion. The Škoda Octavia in the combi version was directly presented as a vehicle suitable for car tourism with a large luggage compartment that can be easily converted to comfortable beds.⁵³ However, the bed arrangement allowed only an overnight stay and not an all-day stay.

Until the early 1980s, the prevailing view of motorhomes was that this was an uneconomical solution that limited the use of the vehicle to only one purpose. They could only make sense if they were used regularly throughout the year. Unlike caravans, the production of motor homes in Czechoslovakia did not exist at all until the early 1980s. The only option was DIY conversions of cars with a box body, which, however, were in great shortage. Until the 1970s, it was not possible for Czechoslovak citizens to buy a car with a box body suitable for conversion into a motorhome at all. The Škoda 1203 was introduced in the early 1970s. Its dimensions made it possible to create a smaller motorhome suitable for overnight stays. The limiting factor was its low roof, which did not allow an upright position for an adult. To some extent, it was necessary to raise the roof, which involved tampering with the body and the need for official approval. The price of the new car was quite high and amounted to 83,000 Czechoslovak crowns in the early 1980s.

Other cars suitable for reconstruction could only be purchased used from socialist companies. The vehicles available in Czechoslovakia were Barkas (GDR) or ŻUK (Poland). Among the trucks, the Czechoslovak AVIA, the East German Garant or Robur were suitable. Legislation was not in favor of reconstructions. Each had to be officially approved before it began, and detailed documentation had to be submitted at the same time as the application for approval. If only the existing body was used, then the problem did not occur, but this was not common. When modifying the body and replacing with an occupiable construction, approval was uncertain. This was especially true for truck conversions (AVIA).⁵⁴

The first motorhome made in Czechoslovakia was introduced in 1982 and was based on the Škoda 1203. The car was rebuilt by the Trnava Automobile Plant. The version called Škoda 1203 Camp did not differ at first sight from the usual design of a minibus with glass windows. The only novelty was the retractable roof. This in itself signaled that the entrance would be through a low door and the interior would not be very big. The modest interior had a practical design. The interior included a kitchen table with a gas stove and a dining table. Accommodation was possible for two adults and two children. The fact that the Camp design only partially filled a significant gap in the motorhome market was

⁵² Rychlík, Jan [2012]. *Devizové přísliby a cestování do zahraničí v období normalizace*. Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, pp. 12–52.

⁵³ Kuba, Adolf – Schmidt, Jaromír [1963]. *Motoristé mládeži*. Praha: Naše vojsko, pp. 30–31.

⁵⁴ Jakubec, Julius et al. [1983]. P. 204.

pointed out even at the time.⁵⁵ However, it reflected the possibilities of the Czechoslovak automotive industry in the day.

Conclusion

The beginnings of caravanning in Czechoslovakia date back to the 1930s. However, these foundations were not built on after the end of the Second World War. This was mainly due to the period view of individual motoring and the lack of personal motor vehicles on the market. The caravan was also perceived as an excess convenience – a tent should be enough for the motorist. The production of caravans did not resume until the turn of the 1950s and 1960s and did not arouse much interest among motorists, especially due to the high price. A new experiment at the end of the 1960s had similar results, but it already appealed to smaller groups of interested people and created the conditions for the development of caravanning.

In the 1970s and 1980s, caravanning became increasingly popular. The limited capacity of domestic production was insufficient to meet demand and even limited imports did not improve the situation. The only solution thus became DIY production, shaped by the unavailability of the necessary components during construction. Caravanning became a fashion issue and also reflected the transformation of Czechoslovak society. Higher living standards and the availability of motor vehicles have enabled mass motoring. The caravan allowed for independence and provided a certain kind of freedom. Caravan park equipment also improved, increasing the comfort of caravanning.

It was only after 1989 that caravan imports from abroad grew, and we finally managed to cover the demand. However, this is another stage in the history of Czech caravanning.

The author would like to acknowledge the financial support of Ministry of Culture Czech Republic - project NAKI II České století motorismu (DG18P02OVV051), project is being implemented by Faculty of Humanities Charles University, Prague, The National Technical Museum and Technical Museum Brno during 2018–2022.

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⁵⁵ Budík, V. [1984]. Dějiny caravaningu. *Svět motorů*, No. 22, pp. 24–25.

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