

Carrosserie Sodomka

by Marian Suman-Hreblay



A Skoda dating from 1929 wearing Sodomka four door saloon coachwork.

Just over a hundred years ago, in 1895, a cartwright workshop of Josef Sodomka was founded in Vysoke Myto (about eighty miles north-east of Prague in Czechoslovakia). Celebrating the centenary, we also commemorate that the first passenger car bodies on Praga and Laurin and Klement chassis were made in the coachbuilding factory in Vysoke Myto seventy years ago. This sort of production was connected, from

the very beginning, with the name of Josef Sodomka Jr, son of the firm's founder.

Many interesting passenger car bodies which are much sought-after by connoisseurs and collectors now were manufactured by the firm of Sodomka during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1928 even the first bus was built on the Skoda chassis. One year later, convertible passenger car bodies started being designed and manufactured, becoming a

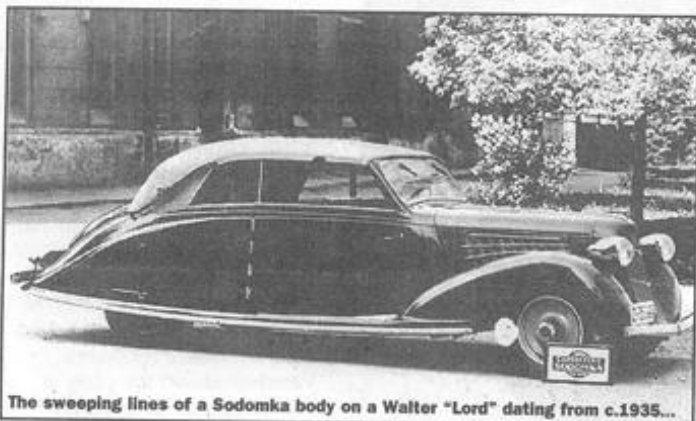
domain of Sodomka's coachworking factory in following years. At the beginning of the Thirties, round forms, elongated mudguards, recessed headlights and other streamline elements began to feature in the sporting look of Sodomka's bodies.

The quality products of Vysoke Myto quickly became reputable, and many Czech motor works were highly interested in co-operating with the Sodomka establishment in the same way as private customers were. Car builders Jos. Walter & Spol of Jinonice, who were in business from 1908 to 1936, ordered bodies for their "Junior" model from him, and Jawa and Aero were also among Sodomka's customers. Sodomka also created a fashionable dress for many Tatra 52s, and many movie stars of that time were proud possessors of one of Sodomka's perfectly made creations.

Bodies built on higher class passenger car chassis also bore the label "Carrosserie

Sodomka". Convertible bodies on the Walter "Regent" of 1934/5, for instance, became respectable rivals of then-renowned French car bodies. Sodomka's works were also made on chassis of American Ford, Nash, Graham, Studebaker and La Salle cars, not to mention the fact that they graced cars manufactured by important European car producers as well - Bugatti, Lancia and Rolls-Royce to name just a few.

Numbers of trophies which were won in "elegance" competitions were increasing, and in the second half of the 1930s Sodomka's cars were successful even in Budapest, Le Baule, Nice or Monte Carlo. Experts declared they could be compared with the top Italian and French firms. Several Sodomka luxury car



The sweeping lines of a Sodomka body on a Walter "Lord" dating from c.1935...

Sodomka Utility and Sodomka Passenger Car Body Production 1930 - 1939

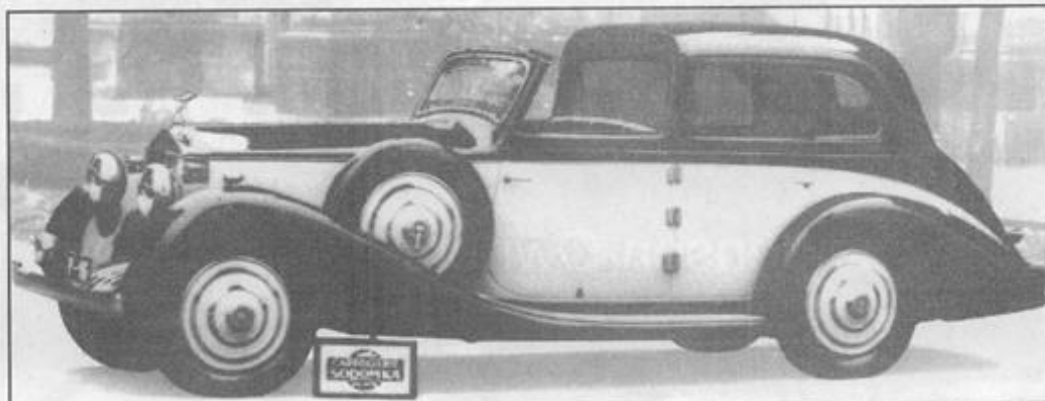
Body Type	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Passenger	11	19	27	65	53	46	95	207	46	140
Truck	14	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Bus	9	-	9	-	2	5	-	2	21	23
Special	4	9	5	4	-	1	5	1	6	2
Repair only	114	100	75	70	45	53	71	100	85	82

bodies on Aero 50 chassis, with drop-like mudguards covering completely both front and rear wheels, belong to the zenith of Czech coachworking production between the wars.

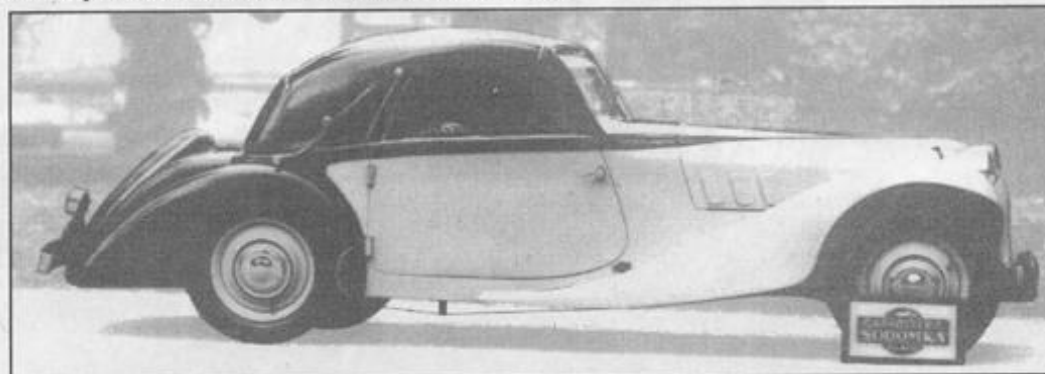
After 1939, in the war years, the production of passenger car bodies was reduced, and buses, trolley buses and lorries on Praga, Skoda, MAN, Bussing and Mercedes-Benz chassis were built only. The only exception was a luxurious body on a Maybach SW 42 for the President of the Slovak Republic. After World War II, however, Sodomka prepared some attractive bodies on chassis of Skoda 1101, Tatra 57, Aero Minor II and the luxurious convertible Skoda Superb, all of which were exhibited at the Prague Motor Show in 1947.

In 1948, Sodomka's factory was nationalised and its name changed to Karosa. One of the latest car creations, but surely the best-known, was the special-bodied Tatra 600 Tatrplan with rear-mounted air-cooled engine, first exhibited in 1949 at the Geneva Motor Show and later presented to J V Stalin on the occasion of his 70th birthday. In the Fifties, some vehicles for government purposes were made, and in 1956 the fibre-glass body on Skoda 440 chassis ended the famous era of passenger coachbuilding in Vysoke Myto. **CCM**

Karosa from the 1950s to the 1980s belonged to the greatest bus producers in Europe. Here are some figures depicting production:



Sodomka also bodied cars from other countries, including Bugatti, Lancia and Rolls-Royce. This is a 25/30 Rolls-Royce of 1938 with unusual sedan de ville coachwork.



Aeros were among Czech manufacturers who favoured Sodomka coachwork, and this attractive coupe body graced their "30" model ...



... whilst this streamlined example of 1939 was mounted on a "50".



...and a very different style on the "Junior" model of the same manufacturer, this time dating from 1937.

The 1949 Tatra 600 by Sodomka which was presented to J V Stalin on his 70th birthday.

Karosa Production 1948 - 1994

Skoda 706 RO	1948 - 1957	2,872 bodies
Tatra HB 500	1954 - 1957	256 bodies
Skoda 706 RTO	1958 - 1971	14,451 bodies
Karosa S 11	1965 - 1981	26,544 bodies
Karosa 730/740	1980 - 1994	34,944 bodies (production continues)

