



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Wellington

Press Release

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“A Trabant’s” Journey to New Zealand

Germany is one of the worlds leading car producers and home of the six manufacturers AUDI, BMW, Daimler, Opel, Porsche and VW. In 2010, some 12 million cars were manufactured in Germany which corresponds to a share of over 18% of total world production. But today we would like to focus on one of the more peculiar specimens of German car production:

Just in time to celebrate the 125th birthday of the invention of the first automobile in Germany and 21 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the German Embassy will host the handing over of a car which - with its lack of comfort, long delivery time and frequent repairs - used to be a symbol for life in the former GDR before it became a style icon – the Trabant.

The official hand over will take place **on Wednesday 9 November 2011, at 11.30 a.m. at the Southward Car Museum in Paraparaumu.**

The small sedan, only built in the former GDR between 1957 and 1991, quickly became what the VW Beetle was in the west: A car for the people. The plastic- bodied product of Soviet handicraft was loud and polluting; but obtaining one was something to celebrate

anyway, considering a waiting time of, on average, some ten years. The “special” quality of the car was, therefore, subject to reams of jokes, for instance: “Why do some Trabants have heated rear windows? To keep your hands warm when pushing.”

One of the latest models, a fancy green “Trabi” from 1988, was brought to New Zealand by the Goethe-Institut to front the first German Film Festival and to bring to life the anniversaries of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany for school students all over New Zealand. Mr. Bernd Schliephake, national German adviser with ILEP and the Goethe-Institut in Wellington, accompanied by various young assistants then took to the road. Visiting schools throughout New Zealand, their aim was to let young New Zealanders explore interesting aspects about Germany and its history, by using the German language.

The vehicle already had over 100.000 kilometers on the clock when its stamina was tested for a last time, being driven from Dunedin to Auckland and back to Wellington over a total distance of several thousand kilometers. The entire road trip, including the time lost due to one major breakdown, spanned one and a half years.

Its final ride lead the Trabant to Paraparaumu where it will be officially handed over by the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Thomas H. Meister, to the Southward Car Museum. There it will find a home together with 350 other vehicles, including Marlene Dietrich’s 1934 Cadillac Town Cabriolet, Mickey Cohen’s 1950 gangster Cadillac and a stunning 1955 gull-winged Mercedes 300 SL “Coupé”.

During 34 years of production, more than 3, 8 million Trabants were built. Even today, there are still over 36.000 Trabis registered plus thousands more awaiting restoration. Even in New Zealand one can find four other Trabants, among others in Dunedin and Auckland.

If you are interested in attending the official hand-over, please let us know by e-mail L-Vz1@well.diplo.de or Tel.: 04-473 60 63