

THE TESLA CAR

by

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Information about an invention by Dr. Nikola Tesla, which is said to have harnessed cosmic energy

The following is a summary of an interview on 16 September 1967 of Peter Savo, a nephew of Dr. Nikola Tesla, by Derek Ahlers, an Aeronautical Engineer. An attempt was made to record Peter's answers to 36 questions prepared in advance. However, Peter talked very freely, in a somewhat rambling fashion, and repeatedly provided the answers before the questions were asked. In addition, since Mr. Savo and Mr. Ahlers have known each other for some ten years, the subject had previously been discussed and some of this earlier information is included.

Peter Savo was born in Knin, Yugoslavia, just before the turn of the century. As Yugoslavia was then a part of Austria, he entered the Austrian army and learned to fly at the military flying school at Wiener Neustadt. After World War I he emigrated to Italy.

Dr. Nikola Tesla was Peter's uncle, on his mother's side. It was he who suggested that Peter come to the U. S. He met Peter at the boat on arrival and seems to have taken a fatherly interest in him until his death. Peter lived in New York for a number of years when he first arrived and then moved on to Detroit. He became well established in the Yugoslav community there and at one time rallied their vote behind some political figure who, in turn, got Peter a job as foreign trade specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade and later in Bucharest. Peter was captured by the Nazis, interrogated and later repatriated. In the post-war years he lived in New York.

Sometime in 1931, Dr. Tesla took Peter to Buffalo, New York, for the unveiling and final testing of a new kind of automobile. Dr. Tesla acted somewhat mysteriously about it, would tell Peter nothing in advance, and, even after he had seen the car, answered some of his questions with: "Don't ask any questions".

The car turned out to be a standard Pierce Arrow, with the engine removed and certain

other components installed instead. The standard clutch, gear box, and drive train remained installed. Under the hood, there was a brushless electric motor, connected to the engine. The engine was said to measure 40 inches long by 28 inches diameter. However, some of these figures may be estimates. Tesla would not divulge who made the motor.

Set into the dash was a "power receiver" consisting of a box measuring about 24 inches long by 10 inches wide by 6 inches high, containing 12 radio tubes. Three of these tubes were model 70-L-7. A vertical antenna, consisting of a 6 ft. rod, was installed and connected to the power receiver.

The receiver, in turn, was connected to the motor by two heavy, conspicuous cables. Two "spindles" (rods?) about 1/4 inches diameter, by 3 inches long protruded from the receiver toward the driver. Tesla pushed these in before starting and said: "We now have power". These spindles were in line with the two power cables coming out of the back of the unit and presumably worked two separate power switches.

There was a 12 volt Willard battery installed in the car, but it was for the lights only and much too small to run the car. In any case, the motor was an AC motor.

Peter said that Dr. Tesla built the power receiver himself in his hotel room, and carried it to Buffalo. The motor was built for him by some unknown company. The motor was completely enclosed and when Peter first saw it, it was stopped. Later, after the engine was running, Dr. Tesla asked Peter to look under the hood to check whether the fan was running. Peter asked what the fan was for and was told that "the engine is running pretty hot". Maximum engine speed was 1800 RPM. Power rating was 80 Hp.

To start the car, Dr. Tesla handed Peter an ignition-type key. Peter inserted and turned it and a green light came on, on the dash. Dr. Tesla thereupon said: "The engine is now in motion". The engine could not be heard from the driver's seat at all. When listening under the hood with engine on, there was a slight hum. The standard accelerator pedal was used to control engine speed. Clutch, brake, and

gearshift were unchanged.

The instruments on the dash appeared to be standard ones. However, there was a voltmeter which was used to measure power output of the receiver. Dr. Tesla commented that the receiver had enough reserve power so that you could drive the car next to a house, connect the wiring, and light up the whole house. There was also some kind of hydraulic pressure gauge on the dash. Peter asked its purpose but Dr. Tesla would not tell him.

Peter drove the car for about 50 miles at speeds up to 90mph. (The speedometer was calibrated to 120 mph). Power seemed at least as good as the normal Pierce Arrow engine. Acceleration in second gear seemed particularly good. Shifting gears seemed somewhat smoother than with a normal engine.

Dr. Tesla seemed enthusiastic on the first test ride and said "Peter, this day will make history!" When Peter questioned the source of the energy to drive the car, Dr. Tesla said: "It is a mysterious radiation that comes out of the ether (an expression of the 1930's referring to what is now called "outer space"). He said that he did not know where it came from but that it seemed to be available in limitless quantities and that mankind should be thankful for it as it would soon drive boats, cars, trains and planes. Dr. Tesla and Peter spent eight days in Buffalo, testing the car. Peter described one incident where they stopped the car at a traffic light and a bystander commented that he could see no smoke coming from the exhaust. Peter replied to him: "We don't have an engine". When they left Buffalo, Dr. Tesla removed the "ignition" key and the radio tubes and took them with him. The car was left at a farm house some 20 miles from Buffalo, not far from Niagara Falls.

The car was kept under tight security and this was the reason for keeping it at such a remote spot. Peter heard a rumor that a secretary of Tesla broke security and told General Electric about it and promptly got fired. Dr. Tesla acted somewhat mysterious and would not answer many of Peter's questions. However, Peter considers this merely part of security measures and categorically ruled out any possibility of a hoax or practical joke.

Peter knows of no specific persons to whom

the car was shown. However, about a month after the Buffalo trip he got a phone call from Dr. Lee DeForest who asked him: "How did you like that car?". Peter expressed his enthusiasm and De Forest then called Tesla one of the greatest living scientists.

A few years later Peter was approached by a Yugoslav diplomat then at the United Nations who asked him if he could find the engine and power receiver of that car. He dropped the name Rockefeller and said that they "could make millions" if they had this engine to copy. Peter made some attempts to comply, but without results. Peter is very anti-Tito and probably did not try very hard. The diplomat died later.

Asked whether he knew of any other applications of this type of power, Peter said that Tesla was negotiating with some big shipbuilding concern to build a boat with such an engine. However, when he asked questions about this Dr. Tesla got annoyed and Peter never found out who the company was.

When asked whatever happened to the car, Peter said that he had heard that it had been shipped to Yugoslavia. However, he has written to friends in Yugoslavia about this and they replied that nothing ever arrived.

Upon being asked whether there was any possibility that drawings of the car might be in existence somewhere, Peter said that there was a man in some town in Pennsylvania who might just have some such information.

This investigation was left unfinished due to insufficient funds.
