Electric Vehicle in Russia

Review by Correspondent Alla Pashova, Russia

The director of *EV* (*Electric Vehicles*) company located in Tolyatti (Russia), Alexander Mukhanov states: "If during 2 centuries intellectual efforts of a scientific thought were concentrated on an electric engine instead of the internal combustion engine then now we would have driven electric vehicles, and the greenhouse effect would not have exist".

The electric vehicle has driving-wheels which are set in motion by an electric engine, and it is powered by an electric battery. The electric vehicle appeared in Great Britain and France in 1880 and it is significantly older than the automobile equipped with the internal combustion engine.

At the beginning the speed and the fuel distance of the electric and gasoline vehicles were approximately the same. The main disadvantage of electric vehicles was a complicated system of recharge since there were no usual transformers of alternating current into direct one. Hence, the electric vehicle was recharged in a quite difficult way. An electric engine operated on alternating current was used to recharge it. The electric motor rotated a shaft of the generator which was connected to batteries of the electric vehicle. However in 1906 a rectifier which was simple to operate was invented. Despite its principle of operation was quite complicated (mercury vapor was used for transformation of alternating current into direct one) it has given a great stimulus for development of automobile industry.

There were no essential proves of advantage of gasoline vehicles as compared with electric vehicles. Nevertheless, even at that time there was an opinion that electric vehicles run more slowly and to shorter distances. However "gasoline" records were also insignificant and comparable with results produced by the electric vehicles. At the same time producers of electric vehicles did their best to demonstrate the advantages of these vehicles. If you remember, Walter Baker, one of the most famous American constructors and producer of the electric vehicles, achieved the speed of 130 km/h driving his car. An electric vehicle produced by Borland Electric company run from Chicago to Milwaukee (the distance of 167 km/h along non-asphalted road) without recharge. Next day after recharging the electric vehicle returned to Chicago by its own power without meeting any incidents. During the journey its speed came to 55 km/h.

In 1899-1900 a hereditary Russian nobleman Ippolit Romanov made an experiment on designing of the first Russian electric vehicle. Since these vehicles had been designed to run in Saint Petersburg then the city council required to produce them in the same place. In 1899 Romanov's first electric vehicle was made. Its general design was borrowed from English cabs in which a cabman sat on a high dickey placed behind passengers. Romanov's electric cab had two passenger seats situated in front of the dickey in a half-cabin having side and back windows. The cabin was equipped with a hood. The seat of a driver was placed behind and above the cabin; a box containing an accumulator was located under the driver's seat. The vehicle was four-wheeled. Diameter of the front wheels was smaller than those of the rear wheels. The front wheels were fixed by elliptical springs and were driving ones. They were connected to two independent electric motors by a roller chain drive. The regulated rear wheels had a smaller diameter and were fixed by spiral springs.

This first electric vehicle was equipped with lead accumulator which had 36 banks. It required recharging every 60 versts (1 verst – 3500 feet). The total power of both the electric motors was equal to 4 hp. Design of the vehicular part of Romanov's electric vehicle was borrowed from the models produced by an American company named *Morris-Salom*. This company had produced electric vehicles since 1898; however those models had wheels of greater diameter as they were equipped with pneumatic tires, while Romanov's vehicle had wheels with light rubber rims. Both the electric vehicles had two electric motors, but the distinction of Romanov's electric vehicle consisted in the presence of 6-row ball bearings in the wheels.

Romanov's second cab was built in 1900. This model had entirely closed and glazed cabin for passengers. The chain drive was replaced by a gear; however the basic sizes remained the same. This model was equipped with an accumulator designed by Romanov. The general weight of the electric vehicle was 45 poods (750 kg), and the weight of the accumulator came to 22 poods (362 kg). It should be noted that weight of American and French electric vehicles exceeded these figures. The speed of both Romanov's models of the electric vehicles came to 15 km/h.

Romanov's first electric bus was built in the same 1900. The electric bus weighted 100 poods (1600 kg) could make speed up to 10 km/h. For reasons beyond Romanov's control, traffic of the electric vehicles in Saint Petersburg was not organized.

A vehicular company named *"Frezer and Co."* participated directly in production of Romanov's

electric vehicles, i.e. a running gear of these vehicles was created by this company. In January 1900 *The Cyclist* magazine reported that this company had built an electric vehicle which had already been tested. A picture of this first electric vehicle by *"Frezer and Co."* can be found in advertising publications of those years. Various firms proposed the innovation for sale and described its technical characteristics.

Frezer electric vehicle was four-seated, had two engines whose total power came to 7 hp. The advertisement booklets reported as following: "The accepted system of accumulator is remarkable for its solidity and life-time. Capacity of the elements is about 15 Amperes/ hour per a kilogram of electrodes. The size of the battery is defined according to calculation of 120 W/h per one ton and per one-kilometer of the distance; its weight is equal to 30-40% of the total weight of the vehicle including a payload". Weight of Frezer electric vehicle came to 70 poods (1120 kg). It made the speed of 15-18 km/h and required recharging every 35-50 versts of the path. The second variant of Frezer electric vehicle differed from the first one for less weight of the accumulator which was located above the rear axle.

In addition to the four-seated vehicles, *Frezer* Company produced two-seated electric vehicles equipped with engines of 3.5-hp power. The two-seated electric vehicle was remarkable for its more perfect steering tube. There is known one specimen of this model purchased by somebody from Riga (Latvia). Moreover, on the territory of *"Frezer and Co."* there was a station for recharging accumulators of the electric vehicles.

In the period of the Soviet Union pilot batches of electric vehicles began to be produced only after the II World War. In general there were small lorries applied for transportation inside great buildings, for example, in a main post office or an airport.

Now there is a great probability that Moscow will be the first Russian city where the electric vehicles can find mass application. Russian capital suffers from gas pollution which is especially heavy in the center of the city. At the same time the budget of the city allows acquire own ecologically appropriate transport. Now financing of production of the electric vehicles is realized through the Fund of Ecologization of Moscow Transport. The means are assigned due to income taxes coming to the budget of the city.

To tell the truth, citizens of big cities know electric vehicles very well, i.e. usual trolleybuses and trams are electric vehicles despite they are not autonomous. An autonomous public electric transport has one advantage which is especially valuable in the conditions of the cities overcrowded by cars. This advantage is their mobility. Trolleybuses are inseparable with their wires that causes decrease of their maneuverability. For example, they cannot pass several cars which have been parked wrongly. In this case a maneuverable and autonomous electric vehicle will run to the center of the road and pass the obstacle with ease.

A Moscow company named *Eltran* which deals with exploitation of electric transport has developed a model of EV which runs the distance of 60 kilometers without recharging. Total recharging of this electric vehicle takes about 5 hours, however a half of required energy they can obtain for 1 hour. Hence, if the accumulators are recharged before their full discharge then this vehicle can operate constantly. However, a developed infrastructure of charging stations is necessary for this aim.

From the economical point of view, EV does not yield to trolleybuses and trams which house more passengers but run twice more slowly than the autonomous and compact EV. Therefore EV does not experience difficulties in jams in the conditions of the traffic of the city. It maneuvers easily in thick traffic current.

Unfortunately, now EV cannot replace automobiles equipped with internal combustion engines. Imperfection of its accumulator batteries does not allow it to become a public vehicle. The battery imperfection causes a small run on one recharging, long cycle of recharging, and high price of the electric vehicle.

To tell the truth, EV has important advantages. Maintenance charges of EV are lower than the charges of the standard automobile requiring expenditures for support of cooling systems, powering systems and exhausting systems. The lifetime of the electric engine comes to 10 thousands hours. Quantity of operations for maintenance of the engine is minimal. For example, it is necessary to change brushes in the dc motor from time to time. As for a modern three-phase electric motor and synchronous ac motor they are practically maintenance-free.

EV is easy to drive. To start the car you should only insert the key, turn it and press the accelerator pedal. You do not need to make any manipulations with adherence or gearshift.

Use of EV is justified in so called zones of higher environmental requirements that are cities, parks, vacation resorts. Electric buses, developed by *Eltran* run in the public green space of All-Russia Exhibition Center. There are about ten compact commercial EV operating in Moscow.

Taking care of environmental sanitation the management of AZLK (big automobile plant) has developed EV on the basis of two production automobile models "Moskvich-2141" and "Moskvich-pikup-2335". "Moskvich-Elektro" (Fig. 1-2) at fully loaded mass of 2060 kg accelerates up to 60 km/h at 15 seconds. Maximum speed of the load-free vehicle is 110 km/hour. Cruising range at one battery charging

is 100 km, and it comes to 80 km with 400 kg of load. At present Electrical Vehicle "Moskvich" is filled with imported component parts, which are cheaper but functional. In time it will be supplied with Russian equipment that will make it cheaper.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

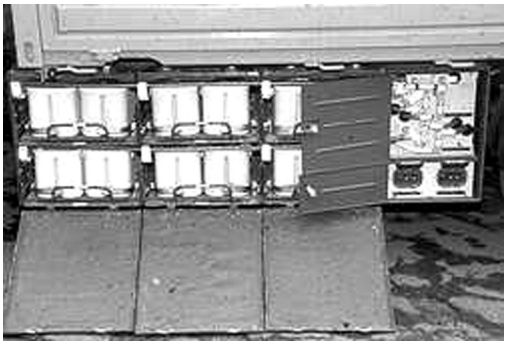

Fig. 3

The model of truck equipped with electric motor "ZIL-Electro", the authors of which being called "AVEKS" and "Optimum-electro", also enjoys the support of the Fund of Ecologization of Moscow Transport. Various privileges and free passage to any location in public green zones are promised to the future owners of "ZIL-Electro".

Forty-eight lead-acid traction batteries of roll type (Optima battery) are hanged in pairs along the ramps of the truck. They are united into 4 sections (Fig.3). Capacity of these batteries is enough for 70 km running. Probable charging station for these machines is the loading/unloading point. Charging time varies from 30 to 60 minutes. Substantial disadvantage of the model is that batteries take away a great percentage of carrying capacity. Among the advantages of the model there are small internal resistance, fast recovery (to 400 A), discharging to zero level without serious consequences.

A traction induction unit "ATAD-Optimum 50/120" serves as the engine for "ZIL-Electro". Its weight is only 100 kg and it doesn't require any diesel generator or transmission that compensates a little the loss of carrying capacity.

The engine is very simple. It is a non-contact rotor of a "squirrel cage" type rotating on the bearings. No brushes are used. Thus expensive maintenance is postponed for uncertain date. On the other hand there is asynchronism. It means that some equipment is needed for converting into three-phase current and further frequency and amplitude adjustment. However it is expensive and complicated.

In spite of all existing disadvantages, Electric Truck is considered to have a bright future ahead of it. There several reasons for that:

1 The vehicle is manufactured from cheap production component parts.
2 The system of optimum vector control of the drive is introduced. (The torque and shaft speed of rotation is regulated precisely, energy of the batteries is used rather efficiently.)
3 Microprocessor system with feedback coupling and great number of sensors (current sensor, heat sensor, velocity sensor, voltage sensor) minimizes losses, prevents the motor and batteries from overheating, protects mains from short circuit in case of an accident.
4 The vehicle is reasonably priced (for such an exotic object) – about $26 000 USD subject to serial production.

Volzhsky automobile plant has already been engaged in research of EV for a quarter of a century. Over 10 original models have been designed and produced for these years. They have been appreciated abroad as well as in Russia. These are electric vehicles "Poni", "Oka", "Elf", "Gnom", "Niva", "Rapan" "Lada-golf", etc.

The models manufactured on the basis of VAZ-1111 "Oka" became the most popular among them. These EV received many different rewards, and became world-renowned. For example, VAZ-111E "Oka", manufactured in 1993, kept all merits of a production midget car. Use of electric motor makes it a non-toxic and noiseless vehicle. Efficient fast-acting short circuit protection eliminates current rush, providing absolute car operating safety.

In EV of VAZ manufacture two direct-current motors are commonly used as a power-generating set. The first is a 25kW capacity motor with torque of 110 Nm.

Another one has 40 kW capacity and torque of 190 Nm. Motors of the first type are usually mounted on light vehicles, such as "Golf", "Oka-Electro", "Elf", while high-power motors are usually used for VAZ-2108, VAZ-2109, "Niva".

The first models of electric vehicles used to be equipped with nickel-zinc batteries. But as life time of these batteries is not long, it was decided to start using nickel-cadmium batteries, manufactured at Saint-Petersburg plants "Rigel" and "Istochnik". Nickel-cadmium batteries are power-consuming, they withstand temperature of –40°C. The only drawback of these batteries is their cost, and as a consequence a high cost of the vehicle itself. Because of that the final choice has been made in favor of lead-acid storage batteries, which were mounted at "Gamma Golf" in particular, thus reducing its price by several times. The batteries are located under the driver and passenger seats. They allow discharge of 80-85% and provide cruising range without recharge of up to 100 km within city area and several times more on a highway. Power current is transmitted from the electric motor to the front wheels through single-reduction gear unit, which substitutes the transmission.

For the present time electric vehicles are not developed to take the place of automobiles with internal-combustion engine in all industries and spheres of application, but only as a specific vehicle for highly specialized utilization. They are utilized when use of internal-combustion engine is objectionable or impossible.

It is considered that so-called hybrid models of EV would be able to replace automobiles with internal-combustion engines. These are vehicles with two motors, an electric motor and an internal-combustion engine usually running on diesel oil. In this case the combustion engine works constantly, but under the operation modes of little air pollution. Besides, fuel consumption is also much reduced.

In this direction real commercial success is possible. For example, "Toyota-Pirus" has already been chosen as a personal vehicle by tens of thousands of customers, this being a good result for such an original construction.

Nowadays three circuits of hybrid propulsion system are generally known. The simplest one is a series circuit, in which combustion engine operates together with a generator, and battery or generator powers electric motor providing propulsion. Actually this is the same circuit of electric transmission that is used at quarry trucks. Its main disadvantage is great losses of energy at transmitting the torque to the wheels. In parallel circuit the output shafts of the motor-generator and combustion engine are rigidly bound, and it doesn't allow working in steady-state mode (i.e. with permanent rotations and load).

In the third circuit, which is also the most commonly used there are an electric motor, combustion engine and a generator. The output shafts of all these units are bound by planetary differential. This allows almost lossless distribution of power between the units, and provides sustained performance of the combustion engine. The disadvantage of this circuit is the extreme complexity of coordination of units operating.

A hybrid EV was produced in Russia by automobile plant "Izhmash" though it has not been put in mass production yet. At the developing of the propulsion system instead of unique components there were used units of Russian mass automobile production that is one of the fundamental design solutions. "Orbit" Izh-21261 was used as a base for the device. It was equipped with gasoline engine (of 30 hp power and 650 cm^3 capacity), drive dc motor ПТ-125-12 (of 120V voltage and 49 H/m torque) and eight accumulators 6СЕ-55. Twin-engined propulsion system works according to the parallel circuit of engine joint. Electromotor serves as starter and at the acceleration it operates simultaneously with internal-combustion engine. On reaching some definite speed the electromotor changes its operation mode to the mode of generator and charges the accumulators. When the loads at gasoline engine increase then the electromotor begins to operate together with it. Operation of the hybrid propulsion system is controlled by starting regulation electronic equipment. Control unit, speed transducer of crankshaft of the internal combustion engine, detector of the accelerator pedal etc. are responsible for coordinated work of the engines.

During the tests fuel consumption of the hybrid vehicle "Orbit" was less by 20% than that of the usual model. For Russian prototype it is a good qualitative characteristic, however foreign designers reach better results, for example, "Crysler ESX3", which was presented in 1998 at Geneva auto show, consumes 3.3 liter of diesel oil per 100 km of path.

Representatives of specialized Moscow companies producing EV assert unanimously that these are hybrid electric vehicles which should change public transport with internal combustion engine. To encourage the automakers it is useful to create the proper laws drawing on foreign experience. For example, in California, USA, automakers whishing to present their production in the state market should put out 2% of automobiles with null blast. Legal system also supports an automobile user who is provided for free parking and free or cheap recharge. The user is granted with maximum of discounts to encourage him buying EV which is still twice as expensive. However it is said that in one of the villages situated near Moscow where the so called new Russians live, everybody drive electric vehicles leaving their cars with gasoline engine outside the gates. It would be quite good if EV turns to the real vehicle from the extravagancy of nouveau riches and beloved creation of ecologists.