

## Argentine Cars: History of the Teram Puntero (1958 – 1963) (and the chronicle of the Argentine Porsches)

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When I was a kid, I used to watch a TV series called **Connections**. In the course of each weekly episode, James Burke managed to link remote historical events, inventions and discoveries, deciphering an invisible thread through time regarding the evolution of ideas and the causality of the most important events of humanity. Like, for example, that the invention of the thermos was related to the design of the rocket propellants used in the American space program, or how the calculation methods of the Chinese ended up being a major influence in the creation of the first computers.

It certainly was a spectacular program. Basically, what Burke was doing was deciphering the genetics of history and establishing that the Bible and the Calefón (from tango “Cambalache”) were nothing more than distant cousins. And although we are not at the level of James Burke, nevertheless we could apply a similar reasoning when trying to establish the origins of the vehicle that now concerns us. Because... *what does a national car with a banned name have to do with it, a brilliant German*

*engineer with a Nazi past, a prestigious German sports car whose manufacturer was in serious financial trouble, and the Liberating Revolution that overthrew the government of Juan Domingo Perón in September of 1955?.*

The answers are in the **Teram Puntero** , the car whose history we are dealing with throughout this article.

### "The Great German Engineer"

It is beyond the purposes of this column to analyze a figure as complex as Ferdinand Porsche; while history inundates us with factual data, trying to explain his motivations - *throughout a period as tumultuous as Nazi Germany* - is another matter entirely. Without a doubt he was a brilliant technician, a hell of an innovator and one of the most outstanding engineers of his generation; but, on the other hand, he had to live in an incendiary time, plagued by hatred and exacerbated nationalism, and where it was easy to get intoxicated with speeches overflowing with cheap patriotism.



the **Type 12** – *the prototype that Porsche wanted to sell to Zundapp* – had the genes of the future **Beetle** , although it was a much larger car and its finish was extremely crude

Porsche was already brilliant before it was contacted by Hitler's government – *in June 1934* – to create the “**people's car**” – *a people's car that would represent Germany's post-war industrial renaissance, and its rise as a power through world level* -. Among his achievements is the fact that in 1901 he designed the first hybrid motor in history – *an electric engine whose batteries were eventually charged by a small combustion engine, which made it small, light and gave it great autonomy* -. And when he joined **Austro-Daimler** (1906), he produced some of the fastest cars in Europe, which led to numerous race wins. But in 1926 the **Daimler** merged with **Benz** , giving birth to a more elitist company oriented to a select public. It wasn't long before the leadership of **Mercedes Benz** began to butt heads with Porsche, who preached the need to build a cheap and popular car. The friction continued until it exploded with the depression of 1929, where **Mercedes Benz** took advantage of the move to get rid of the annoying engineer. *Porsche found itself out of work and, what is worse, in a devastated Germany, which not only had not yet been able to recover from the effects of the First World War, but now had to suffer the Wall Street crack rebounds of 1929. It was certainly a desolate panorama.*

Being a restless and resourceful man, Ferdinand Porsche decided to create his own design agency in 1931, which began to develop projects for the main German car factories. That's where he finished honing the sketch of the small, popular, inexpensive car he had fought so hard for in the **Mercedes Benz**. Porsche wanted to sell the project to **Zundapp** and, later, to the **NSU**, but none of the companies saw the project as viable, especially considering the large investment they had to make and the little profit that each unit sold left. However, the opportunity that the engineer so longed for would come in 1933 when Adolf Hitler – *recently elected Chancellor of Germany*– launched the project to motorize the entire German nation, creating a “**people's car**” – *a really cheap car, with acceptable power and capable of comfortably transporting an average*

*family* -, whose construction would be sponsored by the government. It goes without saying that between the requirements of the government project and the characteristics of the Porsche prototype there were minimal differences, which ended up being polished over the next 4 years and which would end up giving birth to the **Volkswagen Beetle** in [1937](#) .

But while the **Volkswagen Beetle** brought fame and fortune to Porsche - *it was dubbed "the great German engineer" by Hitler himself* -, it would also be the beginning of an alliance with the devil, which would bring serious consequences in the future. For example, Porsche was forced to renounce his Austrian citizenship in 1934, becoming a German national and ending up joining the Nazi party three years later, becoming part of a select elite who personally advised Hitler on industrial issues. And even if Porsche's only ambition was to make automobiles, its fame and talents would eventually become involved in the euphoric process of militarization that Hitler was hastily implementing in Nazi Germany, eager to launch a raid of conquest and revenge. throughout all of Europe. The engineer would end up playing a fundamental role in the design of some of the most outstanding tanks of World War II (such as the **Tiger I** and **II**, the **Elephant** and the **Maus** prototype ), as well as participating in the production of the **V1** flying bombs.



the second prototype of the **Beetle** (known at that time as the **KdF-Wagen** ) in 1935 was the first design with definitive features of the future **Beetle**

*Was Ferdinand Porsche a staunch Nazi, or was he simply a man intoxicated with the patriotism, fortune and power that Hitler's government offered him in abundance? He was certainly a member of the **SS**, but this was a *sine qua non* for any individual of importance who wanted access to the very narrow inner circle that surrounded Hitler – *at that time, the most powerful ruler in all of Europe* -. On the other hand, there are testimonies indicating that Porsche took steps to free his former partner from the design agency, Adolf Rosenberg, from the concentration camp where the Nazis had interned him. Rosenberg was able to leave Germany and settled in France (and later Britain), where he would continue to represent Porsche's business interests even after the war. This speaks more of a debt of loyalty to his former partner than of a position of confrontation with the extremely racist ideology of Hitlerite Germany - *after all, Rosenberg was a Jew and had made an**

*enormous contribution to the establishment of Porsche as a prestigious designer - , which does not end up saving him from scandal. The fact that the **Volkswagen** used slave labor - *prisoners of war* -, or that Porsche arrived at the factory surrounded by a retinue of **SS** officers - *implemented as his personal guard* -, only underline the association of the engineer with the hardest and most powerful nucleus of Nazism german.*

All this would have a price, which Porsche would pay heavily at the end of World War II. Although he was always considered a civilian collaborator of the Nazi government, his file aroused suspicion and he soon found himself in serious difficulties, both personal and financial, which would determine the fate of the enterprise that he himself had founded in 1931.

### From heyday to disgrace

1945, end of World War II. The cities are destroyed, the economy is in chaos and the country is divided. The Porsches carried the stigma of being direct collaborators with the Nazis, which closed the doors to sources of financing. To top it off, the Porsche facilities had been leveled by bombers, and the market for offering their services seemed to have disappeared.

In the interim, the services of the Porsches - *father and son* - began to be treated as spoils of war, and were claimed by the French, who wanted the engineer to assemble a French version of the [Volkswagen Beetle](#).. The initiative caused a lot of uproar in the French industrial community, who considered that their sources of work would end up being seriously threatened. The leader of the group, Jean Pierre Peugeot, began to use his influence to stop the initiative, and his move ended up unleashing a conspiracy that would end with Ferdinand Porsche, his son and son-in-law being arrested during a business meeting in Wolfsburg, and being accused. to be war criminals. In an extremely summary decision, the authorities put the Porsches in jail without trial (and without the right to have one), and they were required to pay exorbitant bail. It was in fact a kidnapping and, with no choice but to abide by their captors' rules, the trio decided that Ferry Porsche – –

*Ferdinand's son, and a young man as brilliant and enterprising as his father* – was given his freedom in exchange for burning the last funds of the family business. That is where Ferry's path begins to close deals of all kinds and colors in order to accumulate the impressive fortune that they demanded of him as bail and, thus, free his father and his brother-in-law.

Ferry Porsche's action plan was complex and slow. With Europe's economy devastated – *and lacking the proper facilities for a major automotive project* – Ferry turned to making water pumps and winches, as well as servicing pre-war Porsche-designed vehicles. Since he still had the capacity to manufacture engines, he began to probe possible interested parties in acquiring them, a point in history at which Porsche's interests ended up crossing the Atlantic and reaching our pampas. The first point of contact with Argentine automotive history occurs in 1946, when he is contacted by Piero Dusio from **Cisitalia** and is commissioned to build a Formula 1 for the prestigious Italian (Dusio, a decade later, would found [AutoAr](#) and establish a local subsidiary of **Cisitalia**). Two years later, Porsche would be contacted by the Argentine businessmen Pedro Daverda and Federico De Bucourt, who wanted to import their engines and sports cars - the [356](#) *had already appeared*, which was sold (and produced) in meager quantities, but was generating a growing wave of praise from users and the specialized press -, and with which he would close an exclusive contract for 10 years (Daverda and De Bucourt were the founders of **Teram** and who would later manufacture the **Porsche Puntero** which now concerns us). The other Argentine who would come into contact with the Germans would be Nilson Bongiovanni – *one of the main partners of **Industria del Transporte Automotor SRL*** -, who would obtain his engines to manufacture the [Zunder](#) in 1959. None of these Argentine businessmen would manage to set up a lasting industrial project. and they would end up disappearing from the market in just a handful of years.



In the 1950s, Porsches – *hard-pressed by the economic situation* – licensed and sold (by *troche and moche*) their engines, some of which fell to the first Argentine-manufactured cars such as the **Justicialista Gran Sport** (photo) or the **Zunder**

Certainly it was Dusio's juicy Formula 1 project that helped Ferry finish raising the funds he needed to free his father and brother-in-law, which ended up happening in 1949. With all the Porsches released, things had improved. something, but not enough. Banks continued to refuse him credit in view of his Nazi past, and by then the family was dealing with the recently launched [Porsche 356](#) , which called for improvements and was far from a success. In a moment of desperation, Porsche went to knock on the doors of **Volkswagen** – *the factory that he had founded.*-, who offered him a saving hand. First, because they arranged to pay him a minimum of royalties for each unit produced of the [VW Beetle](#) - *which ensured the Porsches a small and stable fortune* - and, second, because



they offered him the possibility of exhibiting the **356** in their huge network of dealers, which helped them to take orders, build waiting lists and increase the sales numbers of the small and promising sports car. Unfortunately, all this movement would arrive late for Ferdinand Porsche, who would die in 1951, exhausted from dealing with the troubles that the post-war period had brought him.

### Argentine cars with a German heart

Now the thread of this story moves to Argentina. It was the 1950s and Juan Domingo Perón decided to speed up the country's industrialization process, signing a series of decrees that would serve to stimulate the establishment of a native automotive industry. Among these decrees is the creation of **IAME**, a state entity that would serve as the beachhead in the manufacture of national vehicles. The first cars manufactured by **IAME** are called **Justicialistas** (in honor of the ruling party; an outburst of ego that would end up having its consequences in the future), and it is a line made up of a sedan, a truck and a coupe with sporty characteristics. (the famous **Gran Sport**, whose history we have dealt with previously in this portal). It would be the **Gran Sport** that carried the much-mentioned **Porsche** engine, which had 1,488 cm<sup>3</sup> and gave it a maximum speed of 155 km/h.

The problem was that all of these ventures – *whether it was the small independent manufacturers, or the state IAME* – produced vehicles in small quantities and with a large percentage of imported parts. It would be necessary to wait until 1955 – *with the arrival of IKA, which brought all the expertise acquired in the North American market* – to speak of a serious and real beginning of the Argentine automotive industry.

But the whole process would suffer a severe setback with the fall of Perón in 1955. The bloody *Liberation Revolution* (Revolución Libertadora) came with other priorities and, among all of them, was the redefinition of **IAME**'s priorities. Renamed the **National Directorate of Aeronautical Manufacturing and Research** (*DINFIA*), the former **IAME** proceeded to a severe purification of models, exchanging its main line for a series of vehicles originally manufactured by the German **Wartburg**, and renaming them in the process of change. Perhaps the

most curious detail of all this is that the far-right *Revolución Libertadora* ended up negotiating the use of parts and dies with an East German auto firm, a bastion of the communist outpost in Europe.



no: the tail didn't match... but the changes to the nose – with materials supplied by *Porsche itself* – gave the **Teram Puntero** an uncanny resemblance to the **Porsche 356**, which was sold in Europe at the time.

***And the Justicialista Gran Sport?*** . He was seen as the symbol of Peronist decadence. The revolutionaries disliked the photo of Perón driving the **Gran Sport** in the gardens of the presidential residence in Olivos, and decided to ban it. Outside of the name, the image, the fame, the truth is that the car became an undesirable pariah... and that it had garnered praise from the specialized press just a few months before, during its successful presentation at the International Motor Show. of the Automobile in Paris.

The solution found was to cancel its production and sell its remnants to the highest bidder. This is how 144 **Justicialistas Gran Sport** chassis ended up in the hands of **Teram**, which could only be sold if they were given a new image and identity.

What followed was really curious. Somehow the people of **Teram** convinced the Porsches to license the brand and some design features of their sports cars, so that the **Justicialistas Gran Sport** ended up being recycled as a kind of Creole version of the **Porsche 356**. While the horn and the aesthetics – *made locally in fiberglass* – strongly copied the *styling* of the **356**, the internal elements (seats, instruments, engine, etc.) were 100% **Porsche** – *imported directly from Germany* -, which It gave off an unusual aura of quality for the local market.

But the changes were not only cosmetic. Like the German **Porsches**, the **Justicialista / Puntero** was modified to house the 1,488 cc engine in the rear. **There were versions that came out with a 1,582 cm<sup>3</sup> Porsche engine**, which gave it enough power to reach 170 km/h.

Of course, the **Teram Puntero** (or **Porsche Teram**, as it was also known) was never intended for series production. It was a limited edition of the 144 remaining units of the **Justicialista Gran Sport**, which were recycled and sold between 1958 and 1963. And although it was not a thoroughbred **Porsche** – *its body was made of reinforced plastic* – it had the air and shared numerous genes with the mythical German sports car, which were enough elements to feel proud of such machines.

More than 50 years have passed since the birth of the Argentine **Porsche. Teram** ceased to exist, the **Porsche** survived - *thanks to the successful campaign of the 356 at LeMans in 1951, which skyrocketed sales to thousands of units per year* -, and some **Teram Puntero** still subsist in the hands of a handful of select collectors, who are suspicious enough to exhibit them to the public only a couple of times a year. In them rests the memory of this rarity, a hybrid of a Creole colt and a German thoroughbred, and which saw the light many decades ago in this remote corner of the world.



rear view of **Teram Puntero**; the engine was relocated to the back, just like the original **Porsches** , and the trunk was slimmed down to give it a more European feel.

## JUSTICIALISTA

*Articles published on the portal about this brand: [History of the Justicialista Gran Sport](#) – [History of the Teram Puntero](#) – [History of the Graciela W \(and the history of the Wartburg brand\)](#) – the [Justicialista sedan](#) and the [Justicialista Gran Sport GT V8 prototype](#) are discussed in the article [Selection of Missing Argentine Cars \(I\)](#)*

## PORSCHE

*Articles published on the portal about this brand: [History of the Porsche 356](#) – [History of the Porsche 914](#) – [History of the Teram Puntero, the Argentine Porsche](#) –*

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