

THE FIRST WATCH FACTORY IN RUSSIA

In October 2000, the leader of Russia watch industry, the First Moscow Watch Factory celebrated its 70th anniversary. It also was the 70th anniversary of Russian watch industry.

Watch industry in Czar Russia consisted just of several small workshops and enterprises. They usually assembled watches using watch parts made abroad. After the 1917 revolution, the whole watch industry became a part of the 'Trust of Precision Mechanics'. They were watch enterprises, work shops, warehouses of watch parts and half-finished products which belonged to famous manufacturers such as P. Bure, G. Mozer, Reinin, Dmitriev, etc before the revolution.

By 1926, the supply of watches and watch parts had run out, however; the demand for watches increased for the army, the navy, the railways and ordinary people. Then the USSR started to buy watches and watch parts from abroad paying in gold. Therefore, on December 21, 1927 the Council of Labor and Defense passed a resolution About How to organize watch production in the USSR.

At the same time an offer to buy a laid up "Duber Hempton" watch factories was received from the United States. On April 26 1929 two purchase contracts were signed. The first one was a purchase of the watch factory with an output of 200 – 250 thousand watches per year at a price of USD 325,000. The second contract was a purchase of the spare parts and the half-finished products at price of USD 135,000.

To start production, four types of watches were chosen: a men pocket watch with 15 jewels for the enterprises of the Narkomat (Ministry) of Means of Communications, men wrist-watch with 7 jewels for the Red Army; a men pocket watch with 7 jewels and a ladies wrist-watch with 15 jewels to sell in a market.

In April 1930 a steamboat with American equipment on left for Russia. At the same time building of a main block of the watch factory on the previous location of a Tobacco Factory called "Krasnaja Zvezda" (Red Star) in Voronczovskaja str. in Moscow already was in progress. Building of the main block started from digging a foundation pit in February 1930 and finished by June 1930. Installing of main equipment was finished by September 15 of 1930.

The first production of this new factory which was named the 1st SWF ('1-й ГЧЗ'- the First State Watch Factory), later the '1st MWF' – ('1-й МЧЗ' - First Moscow Watch Factory) were pocket watches "the 1-st type" or K-43 with a side seconds hand. The movement of this watch was performed in an openwork mode. They were made with a pattern on a top ring on the polished watchcase. In fact, the 1st SWF exported its watches almost from the beginning of the existence of the factory.

Although at the start, factory needed some technical help from American and German specialists, after two years, the factory was got stronger and was able to solve technical problems and to develop independently. New production development started. According to the order of the Chief Military Aviation Administration, an airplane board clocks were created, and in June 1932 a decision to organize stopwatches production was made.

In the same year technical renovation of the factory started. In 1935 – 36 the factory received over 120 new machine tools from worldwide leading companies. Some equipment was made by factory itself. By 1936 a number of machine tools had increased by 1.5 times.

In December 16 1935, Mr. M. Kalinin signed a resolution to award the name of S.M. Kirov to the 1st SWF.

From 1935 until 1941, the 1st SWF produced about 2.7 millions the 1st type pocket and wrist- watches.

Were put into production before the Second World War aviation docks, stopwatches, navigators wristwatches with a stopwatches, auto car mechanical and electric charging watches, navy chronometers, ship deck watches and others watch movements for the national economy.

During the Second World War production defense: ammunition, aviation glass, aviation docks, navy and aviation chronometers and some parts for first Katyusha (lorry-mounted multiple rocket launcher) was organized in this factory.

The War was had not ended yet when factory started peaceful production: in 1943 it started to make machine tools for watch industry, in 1944 – watches for fire-places, table and auto car docks. In April 1945 the factory stopped ammunition production and started preparation for a new K-26 “Pobeda” (Victory) model of watch.

Production of “Pobeda” with a side seconds hand started in 1946. I. Stalin approved the name, design and specification of this watch personally. The 1st MWF was making the K-26 model until 1953; it is still on a production in the other factories. With exception of Pobeda, designers and technologists of the

1st MWF developed all models of watches and movements produced in this factory.

In 1949, "Shturmanskye" (navigator's) watches were put into production. They were designed specially for military aviation; therefore they were not in market. In 12 April 1961 Mr. Jurij Gagarin used this watch during his space flight. The Shturmanskye watch operated without any problems in weightlessness. Later, this legendary watch was given to the factory museum.

By 1955, 1,1 million of mechanical wristwatches were made by the 1st MWF.

In 1956 production of the first watches with an automatic movement started. It was "Rodina" (Fatherland) watch, which opened a new line of watch movements with caliber of 24 mm in the 1st MWF. They have a central seconds hand. The height of the movement was 6,3 mm, with 22 jewels.

In 1957, according to a special order a special "Antarkida" (Antarctics) watch for participants of the first Soviet expedition to the South Pole was developed. They were magnet proof, with a 24-hour dial; the watch movement was based on a "Pobeda" (Victory) movement. A special shield protected it against strong magnet fields.

In October 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite of the Earth. The whole world peered to a slightly flashing small star in the night sky. To mark this event, a "Sputnik" (Satellite) watch, based on a 'Pobeda' model was produced. Watches were made in two variations: with a central second hand and with a transparent dial, which had a satellite mark instead of a second hand. At the moment, "Antarkida" and "Sputnik" watches are collection rarity, because they were on production just one year.

In October 2 1959, the government of the USSR defined the 1st MWF as a leading enterprise in watch export. Export increased from 42% in 1959 to 80% in 90-ies. Watches were exported to 70 different countries, including USA, England, Belgian, Italy, West Germany, Hong Kong, Greece, etc.

In 1959 the first Soviet "Signal" 2612 alarm wristwatch was developed.

In the same year, a "Strela" (Arrow) 3017 watch was put into production. That was a wrist chronograph with a stopwatch function and a 45-minute counter of minutes. The dial had additional telemetric and tachometer scales. The "Strela" was exclusively designed for officers of military air forces and was produced only by military inspection. Cosmonauts Pavel Beliaev and Aleksej Leonov also used these watches when they first in the world entered into the open space.

During 20 years 100,000 of 3017 watches were made.

In 1960, the first "Poljot" brand watch with 2414 caliber appeared.

In April 12 1961, Jury Gagarin's flight opened the era of space travel in the human history. The first cosmonaut took "Shturmanskije" watch made in 1st MWF into the space. Later producing of several models with space names marked this flight: "Orbita" (Orbit) 2415 – in 1962, "Kosmos" (Space) 2416 – in 1963.

In 1961, the factory first in the country started production of particularly slim "Vympel" (Pennon) watches with a second hand, caliber 2209: 2,9 mm height of the movement, 23 jewels, the 1st accuracy class. The total height of the watchcase was 5 mm only. In 1963, during an international Fair in Leipzig, the "Vympel" watch was awarded with a Diploma and a Gold medal. These

watches were on production until 1975, later the technology was passed to Minsk Watch Factory.

Since 1964, "ПОЛЕТ" or "POLJOT" trademarks have marked the watches made in the 1st MWF. The factory trademarks are registered in 30 different countries and are famous in the whole watch world.

In 1965, production of a super slim "Poljot" 2200 watch with 1,85 mm movement height started. This product confirmed the highest level of skills of the factory's designers and technologists once again. The height of the watch-case depending on its variation was from 3,5 mm to 4,5 mm.

In 1966, the factory started production of a new basic movement model, a 26 caliber with anti-shock appliance, screw less balance wheel and flat spiral, and different accessories. New movements were distinguished by small height and long time of run.

In 1971, the factory produced 2,5 million wristwatches, and 1,6 million pcs. were exported to 63 different countries.

In 1972, the factory increased a production of wrist mechanical watches up to 2,7 million. Up to 70% of the whole production were sold on a export market, therefore the factory decided to design and to put into production a number of new watch movements which could satisfy the requirements of exacting foreign customers and would be useable for automatic technological processes. As a result, in 1972 a new design of watch with the 26-caliber movement, which was designated with an extra letter "H": 2609H, 2614H, 2616H, etc was made. The factory's designers, technologists and stylists develop them. Developing new design particular attention to its reliability, technological aspects and reparability was paid.

In 1976, the factory started production of new wristwatches with a stopwatch function: model 3133 of chronograph. For this development, the factory staff was awarded with a State Premium.

At the beginning, watches were intended for military officers of the navy fleet council with an "Okean" (Ocean) name. Later, the factory started to make a modification intended for military aviation staff, with a "Shtumanskije" name (model 31659, a watch with a second hand arrester and pointer of zone time) and watch "Shturmanskije" with a pointer of time zone (model 3133). The production of these watches was limited and subjected of military inspection. Just after nine years, in 1983, watches with a 3133 movement started being generally available.

"Poljot" watches were taken to space flights by astronauts from France, Russia, Germany, the Ukraine, and this chronograph have set a record in duration of a space flight together with V.V. Poljakov.

At the end of 70-ies and the beginning of 80-ies, the factory put into production the quartz 30 calibers watches, and later - 24 and 16 calibers. The quartz movements were mainly exported to Southeast Asian countries: Hong Kong and Singapore. In some years, export achieved up to 3 – 4 million pieces per year.

During of all 70 year's history, the First Watch Factory was keeping position of the leader in the area of men's wrist mechanical watch production. Today 1st Moscow Watch Factory also remains the first. Big experience, design and technological potential, spirit of innovation are the features, which helped the factory to survive during a hard period of the time and to face the future with

confidence. Today "Poljot" is a leader among the producers of high-class men's wrist watches, a producer of unique movements, such as chronographic movement 3133, alarm movement "Signal" 2612, the factory's pride is a 6MX marine chronometer. Furthermore, mechanical chronographs and "Signal" analogues today are on worldwide production only in several factories in Switzerland.

The high level of technological development, design and the high quality of "Poljot" production are also confirmed by the fact that the administration of the President of Russia has chosen a "Poljot" 3133 watch as a government award "From President of Russia"!

Last year, some new movements, such as chronograph with a moon-phase calendar, modifications with different additional scales and calendars were developed and put into production. Over 20% of "Poljot" watchcases are renovated each quarter, design is kept with latest tendencies of the worldwide watch fashion.

In this complicated period, "Poljot" not only saves the level of previous development but also continues to go ahead. With a slogan "To be the first" the factory meets a new decade.

1) K-43 - "first type" watch – the first factory production. Both wristwatches and pocket watches have the same movement.

2)"A4X", aviation clock-chronograph with a second timer and with the movement of flight time meter. Run duration by one wind up of spring is 120 hours. Operative temperature range -60°C to $+50^{\circ}\text{C}$. Produced in different variations from 1933.

3) "Pobeda" (Victory) K-26, with a side second hand, on 15 jewels, caliber 15 mm. Produced from 1946 until 1953. The first watches did not have an anti-shock appliance for balancer shaft. "Pobeda" 31-4H, with a central second hand, 15 jewels, caliber 26 mm. c 1950 until 1960.

4) "Shturmanskiye" (Navigators'). Central seconds hand, anti-shock appliance for balancer shaft, dust- and moisture-proof case. Produced from 1949 until 1953. The watch shown on the figure was in a space flight together with Mr. J. Gagarin.

5) Watch "Sportivnyje" (Sport), one among modifications of "Pobeda". Central second hand, brake system for balancer. "Sportivnyje" was possible to use as a 60-second timer. Produced from 1955 until 1962.

6) Other modifications of "Pobeda" – "Moskva", "Majak" (Leading light)

7) "Sputnic" (Satellit), the rocket that is illustrated on a transparent dial makes one turn per minute. "Antarktida" (Antarctic) – watch for the participants of the

first Soviet expedition to the South Pole. Antimagnet watch with a 24 hour dial. Both models are developed on a base of "Pobeda" movement. Produced was just one year 1957 – 1958.

8) "Rodina" (Fatherland) 2416, the first Soviet watches with a automatic movement, the first model of the 1st MWF with a movement of 24 caliber. Produced from 1956 until 1960.

9) "Poljot" (Flight) 2209 and 2200. The first in the country super slim watch. Height of movement 2,9 mm and 1,85 mm accordingly, height of case 5 and 3,8 mm. Produced from 1961 until 1979.

10) "Strela" (Arrow) 3017, Wrist-watch-chronograph, caliber 30 mm, height of movement 5,7 mm, 19 jewels. Cosmonauts Pavel Beliaev and Aleksej Leonov with those watches first in the human history entered into the open space. Produced from 1959 until 1979.

11) Movement 2609, height 3,2 mm, on 17 jewels, screwless balancer, flat spiral, anti-shock appliance for balancer shaft. This movement was on production from 1966 until 1973 being as a base for a number of different modifications.

12) "Signal" 2612, watch with a sound signal. Caliber 26 mm, height of movement 5,8 mm, 18 jewels. Was on production from 1959 until 1978, later was replaced by modification 2612.1.

13) "Poljot" 2616 9 ("Amfibija") (Amphibian) – watch in a watertight case made from stainless steel; water resistance 20 bar (200 meters). Produced from 1969 until 1977.

14) 2614.2H. One among new line movements differs by high reliability and technological aspect. Despite the similar designation, it has a different construction relatively to 2609, which is illustrated on the previous page. Produced since 1976.

15) "Okean" (Ocean) 3133 with a pointer of zone time (artide 731, for officers of navy fleet). Production started 1976. Caliber 31 mm, height of movement 7,35 mm, average run precision –20 to +20 sec. per 24 hours.

16) Quartz movement 2968 with a double indication. Height 2,85 mm, accuracy +/- 15 sec. per month. Installed functions – calendar, seconds timer, alarm clock.

17) One of the latest "Poljot" product– chronograph with a moon phase calendar, side seconds hand and single hand seconds timer with 30-minute scale of minute counter. Put on production in 2000.