

Nokian Tyres

Over one hundred years of professional skill, inventiveness and will

The roots of our business extend all the way back to 1898, when Suomen Gummitehdas Osakeyhtiö was founded. Nokia rose up on the map in 1904 when technical manager **Antti Antero** and Dr **Birger Pentz**, who had been looking for a site for a factory, became enchanted with the verdant surroundings along the river. The benefits of the factory relocation from Helsinki to Nokia emerged quickly when production increased and the final accounts showed black ink.

The first tyres come out of the oven

With the increase in transport traffic, Suomen Gummitehdas Osakeyhtiö began the manufacture of bicycle tyres in 1925. The resourcefulness and urge for development of our personnel already find their roots in the early days of the establishment of our firm. In 1912, long before the production of the first Finnish tyre for car vehicles, Managing Director Eduard Polon and Antti Antero had given attention to the new winds blowing in the world. They were fascinated by the manufacture of car tyres as a new field of produc-

tion but, being wise men, they decided they would first acquire the know-how to do it from America, where motor vehicle reserves had already exceeded one million. Finland's vehicle reserves were much more modest and did not reach above one thousand cars till ten years later.

From the bold ideas of its origins, two decades rolled by before the first Finnish car tyre was born, in 1932. The structure of this oven-fresh tyre was studied inside out, after which painstaking development work was initiated. General tyre manufacture began about nine months later, in April 1933.

The world's first winter tyre, Kelirengas, was developed in 1934 particularly for Finland's conditions: its road network, variable terrain and winter use. The first Kelirengas tyre patterned and configured for winter surfaces was intended for trucks.

Hakkapeliitta – a winner over snowy roads

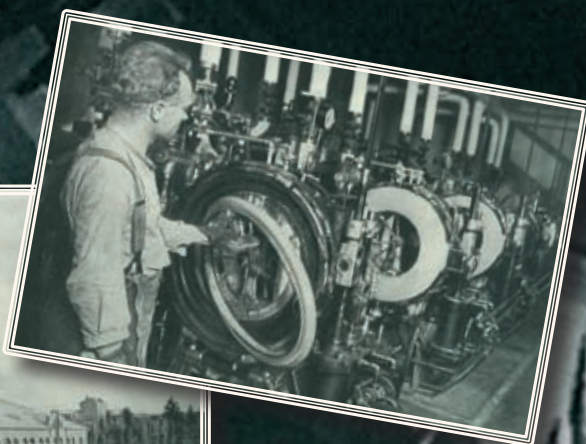
On the basis of the Kelirengas winter tyre, our first Hakkapeliitta tyre was developed in 1936, which was later named Lumi-Hakkapeliitta (lumi = snow). There was a stepped, rela-


tively scattered transverse pattern in the surface model of this winner over snowy roads, equipped with 'suction cups'. The surface pattern of our Lumi-Hakkapeliitta remained unchanged right up till the 1950s.

The story of our Hakkapeliitta winter tyres has continued unabated for 73 years. The core task of our product development has been maintained from decade to decade without change: the world's best winter tyres which are well-suited in their characteristics to the demanding and varying driving conditions of the north.

Wartime challenges to the tyre industry

With the approach of war, the factory attempted to obtain as many raw materials as possible in advance and concentrated its production on the most important products. The manufacture of rubber mats as well as toys was terminated, also due in part to the reduced labour force. Considerable time and resources were applied to replenishing the raw material stores so that production could be safeguarded. In addition to financing, problems were caused by marine transport





The Finnish rubber industry boasts long traditions: our success story already began to be written in 1898. Both rises and falls were part of those times: victories, setbacks, inventions, breakthroughs, joys and sorrows, but above all else a will – will to develop and manufacture safe, high-quality tyres for demanding northern conditions.

difficulties and the lack of natural rubber availability. The raw material of tyres had to be switched from genuine natural rubber to buna – synthetic German rubber. Scrap rubber was also used to a large extent in wartime tyre manufacture.

The operations of the factory during the war years were regulated by the needs of the defence forces. The war put aside long-term plans, but postwar model and production quantities of rubber products saw a vigorous increase. Reforms were carried out in the Nokia factory both during and after the war. After the end of the conflict, new knowledge and skills were acquired, and the first attempts were made to develop a successful, modern manufacturing facility.

Period of capturing world markets

Suomen Gummitehdas Osakeyhtiö already engaged in export in 1926 via the limited liability firm Teknillinen kauppaosakeyhtiö. It was not until the 1950s that our export accelerated in earnest when Hakkapeliitta opened up export to the other Nordic countries and into further areas of Europe, followed by the

world beyond. Competition with large international manufacturers has generated export challenges for our summer tyres from square one. Since the latter part of the 1970s, export markets also grew for special tyres designed for lorries and heavy equipment.

Our internationalization has been enabled by the expansions and production growth going on at our Nokia factory. With the outset of the 2000s, we have taken the world by storm through, for instance, our Vianor chain and the manufacturing facility at Vsevolozhsk. The first Hakkapeliitta tyres were manufactured at the Vsevolozhsk plant in 2005. Approximately 300,000 tyres were made there the same year. In 2008, tyres were made at both our factories, reaching a total of over ten million. Although at the moment our production level is on a lower level due to the recession, our manufacturing has increased tremendously from the starting period when annual quantities only totalled about 20,000.

A right to be proud

During our history of over 100 years, generation after generation have worked in our enterprise: mothers, fathers, grandmothers,

grandfathers. We've seen many a rise and fall and have struggled against the odds – and won. We've managed through it all and will continue to do so together. We've gone a long way, growing with surprising speed. Now we're truly an international business boasting operations in several dozen countries. We have a right to be proud about our accomplishments and top-quality products. Our goal is to be the world's best, most profitable company in the tyre field – manufacturing safe, high-grade products in the future as well. ■

Article edited by: Kirsi-Marjut Dickman
References: Nokian Tyres archives

