

STALIN'S ORGAN

**Workers of Australia!
Your salvation is at
hand. Comrade Smith
re-establishes his
Party credentials and
takes the revolution to
the streets in the form
of the Glorious
Socialist Dniepre 11
outfit. Read on, or
we'll send you to
Siberia.**

With the bars almost at full left lock the outfit slid through the tight downhill right-hander and into the creek crossing. I stabbed at the rocker gearchange a couple of times, found the appropriate ratio and powered uphill and into the left-hander with gusto and malice aforethought, wet and grinning. Here, on the highland dirt tracks around Oberon in sunny New South Wales, I had found the Dniepre's Natural Habitat!

It had been a long and arduous road test, with disappointments, adventures, breakdowns, complications and oil-stained boots but finally, with only a couple of days in hand, I had discovered what the latest three-wheeled offering from Mother Russia was all about and, as far as I was concerned, it was all about time too!

But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself here. Let's have a nice, close look at the Dniepre (the distributor's spelling, not mine) outfit and see why one could be forgiven for dismissing the plot as a load of old cobbles.

The Dniepre-11 is a cousin of the Ural tested in these pages a good few issues ago. Like the Ural, it is powered by a horizontally-opposed, twin-cylinder engine of 650cc. The similarity, however, ends there for while the Ural has been designed as an all-round motorcycle, the Dniepre has been built with one purpose in mind. It is a tractor for hauling a sidecar.

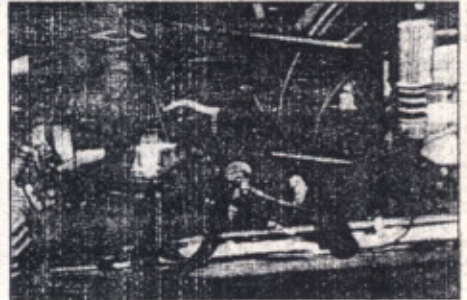
In fact, to consider the Dniepre as anything other than a complete and integrated outfit would be to totally misrepresent the issue and do a disservice to a machine which has its place in the world of motorcycling. When we look at the various components of the machine we can see that a large amount of planning has gone into the bike to suit it for its intended role.

ENGINE AND GEARBOX

Back at the engine, we find that, unlike the Ural, it is fitted with plain bearing big ends to enable it to handle the consistently heavier loads imposed upon it in sidecar applications. The fuel is fed via a couple of mixing instruments which bear a remarkable resemblance to the Dell 'Ortos which graced the Smith Morini... except that the slides are manufactured from a

piece of pressed tin. They work fine, and swallow their air from a massive cylindrical air filter abaft the donk. It kept out the very worst of Mount Hope dust.

Each four-ringed piston (two compression, two oil scrapers) in the 78mm x 68mm cylinders runs in a cast-iron liner shrunk into alloy barrels. The heads are alloy, two-valve set-ups a la BMW with hemispherical combustion chambers. The wet-sump engine delivers a heady 43 ps in its high compression (8.5:1) export form. It likes



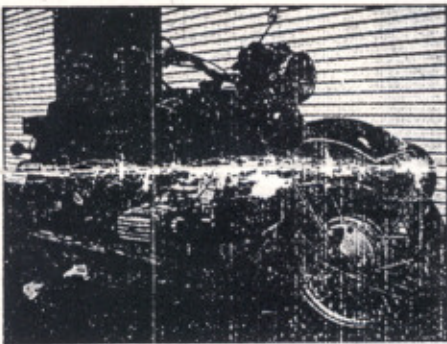
Not exactly an uncluttered layout, is it? Just love the rear brake linkage.

super rather than unleaded since the Russians seem to have the world's largest lead deposits.

Huge timing gears drive the camshaft, oil pump and, gulp, AC generator (rated at 200 watts). When the engine is running, these gears whine more than a shipload of Pommie migrants.

Transmission time, and here the Dniepre differs radically from the Ural. The gearbox is a four-speed unit and is fitted with reverse. This is great for amusing the lads when parking the plot at the boozier or for catching the odd stare from Joe Public, his lovely wife, Jo-Anne, and the little Joettes.

The box also incorporates a slickshift a la Jawa, Triumph and some Japanese scooters (but without the centrifuge). This can come in most handy when (and please note I said "when" and not "if") the clutch cable comes adrift, should one be so foolish as to omit to correctly adjust said cable. This device was also most welcome when wrestling the outfit along dirt roads and allowed a full grip to be kept on the bars when changing gear in circumstances closely akin to those mentioned at the start of this test.



**B I K E
R I D E**

Drive is directed to the rear wheel by exposed shaft which turns an outrigger crown wheel in the rear drive assembly (and please note, it is not a diff). The use of an outrigger-type drive (unlike BMW) means that the rear of the bike will tend to squat under acceleration (again unlike BMW) which comes in very handy when driving outfits through left-hand corners. BMW used this type of final drive on their Rennsport road racing outfits. Too good for their road customers, I suppose, but not too good for Dniepre!

WHEELS AND BRAKES

All four wheels on the outfit are interchangeable. Yes, all four... the two wheels on the bike/tractor, the sidecar wheel and the spare mounted on the sidecar boot lid. This enables one to rotate the tyres to obtain even tyre wear since, as any outfit freak can tell you, tyre wear on outfits is often very far from even. The bike was still fitted with original equipment tyres ("Heroes Of The Proletariat" Brand, as I recall) which were of trials universal pattern and rather soft. More on them later.

With drum brakes all around one would expect that the stopping performance of the Dniepre would be less than impressive given the past performance of Russian motorcycles in this area and the added weight of the chair. I am most pleased to relate that they worked very well indeed. In fact, if they hadn't worked so well, I wouldn't have been here to tell you how well they worked, if you get my drift. The front twin-leading-shoe unit is a beauty but what makes the whole set-up work so well is the linked rear wheel/sidecar wheel system. Connected to the rear brake by a system of balance levers, the sidecar brake comes on after the rear brake has started to pull the outfit up. The foot pedal alone will stop the machine in a straight line in plenty of time in most circumstances with the advantage of no rear wheel lift, the bane of outfit panic stops. Haul on the front brake as well and the plot stops on a rouble... and gives you a few kopeks change. Not bad for outdated drums. Oh, and here's a simple, effective and adjustable handbrake as well which applies and locks the rear/sidecar brakes.

ELECTRICS

One of the areas where Russian motorcycles have come in for much criticism over the years is the quality and reliability of their electrical systems. Things changed for the better a few years ago with the introduction

of 12 volt systems (which are actually 14 volt systems, but we won't go into that here). The Dniepre's system is thankfully, 12 volt and is quite reliable if basic. Lighting is adequate for the bike's performance and there are a few idiot lights fitted which, being an idiot, I ignored... except for your Oil Pressure Warning Light which is Multo Importanto.

CHASSIS

The chassis of the bike itself should be easily capable of taking the strain of hauling this very substantial chair around, since it is constructed of extremely heavy gauge tubing, massive frame lugs and large steel plate gussets. Springing is via two unsophisticated shocks at the rear and a pair of very substantial telescopic forks at the pointy end. All the suspension units felt very stiff... until I put a passenger in the chair and loaded the very substantial sidecar boot with luggage. The plot then started to ride quite well!

And riding's what it's all about so let's get on with it...

RIDE IMPRESSIONS

Before we go any further let me state that I am a great believer in using machines within their capabilities and their correct context. The Dniepre is not a rocketship. It's been designed to rattle over roads paved with split logs, to slither through mud and to thump along forest tracks. Once a rider comes

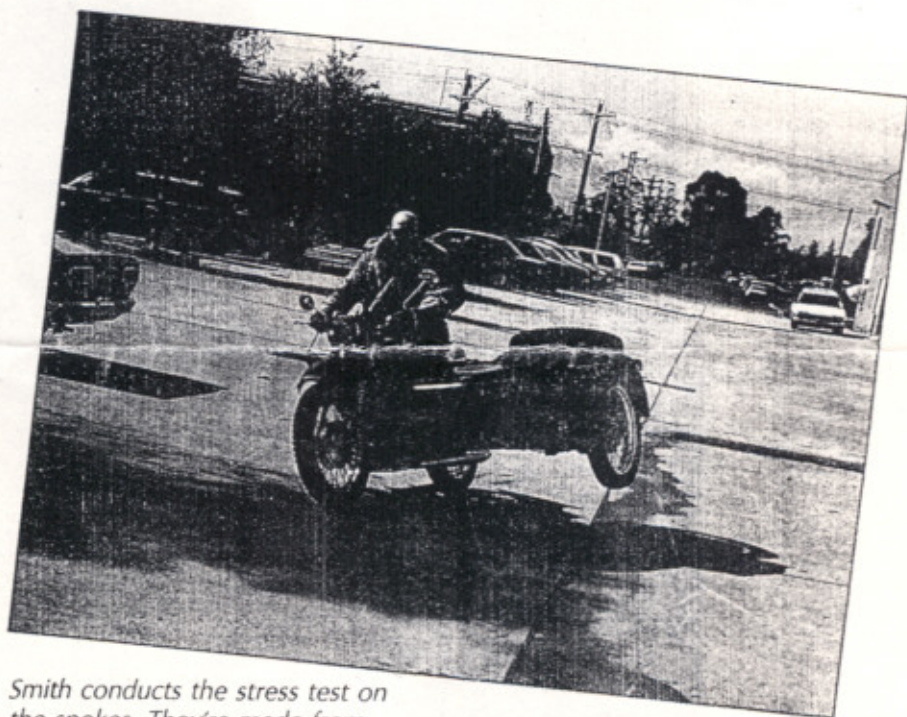
to terms with the fact that the effective top design speed of the outfit is 95kmh, then (s)he may start to enjoy her/himself... and I enjoyed myself very much.

In order to give the bike a thorough workout in Oz conditions, I decided to take the plot from Sydney, where it had performed very well as a city hack and delivery bike, to lovely Mount Hope in the geographical centre of New South Wales, the site of the Green Horror Rally (see you there May 12/13).

It was a rather hot day when I set out from The Competition Shop at Penrith in Sydney's west and started the trek up into the Blue Mountains. The engine was still tight, having covered only 350km.

As the bike toiled up a hill in top gear at 60kmh I felt the engine start to tighten up. In came the clutch and over to the side of the road we went. The engine continued to idle alright but was very hot. After the engine had cooled enough to work on it I took the toolkit from the sidecar boot and went to work. The plug colour showed that the engine may have been running a bit lean. The carbs came apart with no worries and the needles went up a few turns (screw-in needles... no notches). Once everything was back together the engine fired up first kick and ran just as smoothly as it had before the incident. We continued.

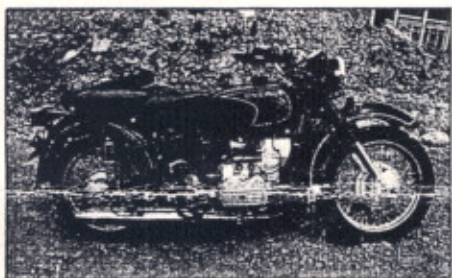
At Parkes the tank began to vibrate.



Smith conducts the stress test on the spokes. They're made from reconstituted T54 tanks and consequently passed with flying colours.

STALIN'S ORGAN

In fact the appearance isn't at all bad, and Smith reports that it was one of the sweetest handling outfits he's ever ridden.



БАТАРЕИ АККУМУЛЯТОРНЫЕ
СВИНЦОВЫЕ ДЛЯ МОТОЦИКЛОВ
И МОТОРОЛЛЕРОВ
BATTERIES D'ACCUMULATEURS
AU PLOMB POUR MOTOS
ET SCOOTERS

Инструкция по эксплуатации
Notice d'utilisation
ЖУИЦ 563410.102 ИЭ

СССР
URSS

МОСКВА
MOSCOU

The level of documentation is truly wonderful. If your Russian isn't up to scratch, there's always French.

B I K E
R I D E

Close inspection revealed that three of the tank's four mounting bolts had decided to defect and had abandoned ship somewhere along the way. A couple of new bolts from a hardware store, some new spring washers and some tank mount rubbers from the spares in the toolkit (as supplied with the bike) fixed the problem.

Only one kilometre short of Mount Hope and the instrument assembly decided it too would like to jump off. Various cables and wires (and my scarf) held it in place until we reached Mount Hope. Further investigation the following day revealed that the instrument bracket had broken due to the spot welds being of less than sufficient quality. It was possible to see where the welder had been applied to the metal, but insufficient current had been supplied and the metal had not fused. Ren, the three-handed mechanic, suggested that perhaps the assemblers had continued welding during a power strike, an observation which brought guffaws from the assemblage and beers from the publican. The bracket was re-welded that night by the light of a hurricane lamp in a shed on the famous Cohen Downs using good Oz Number Eight Fencing Wire as welding rod. It'll never break again!

While reassembling the instrument panel the following day we noticed that the fuse box had also lost a bolt, the blinkers had stopped working and that the rear wheel had broken a spoke. The bolt was easily replaced, the spoke was replaced with one from the toolkit (supplied with the bike) and a new bulb fixed the blinkers.

The run back to Sydney was uneventful... except for losing the pinchbolt which secured the rear axle (easily replaced from stores at The Competition Shop).

During the trip the Dnepr made obvious its preference for oil. It liked heavy stuff. It thrived on Penrite HPR50 but would rattle and shine its oil light at the sight of any lesser lubricant. Oil changes (of which I did three, since the machine was still running in during the test) were simplicity itself with the extensive (BMW copy) toolkit provided.

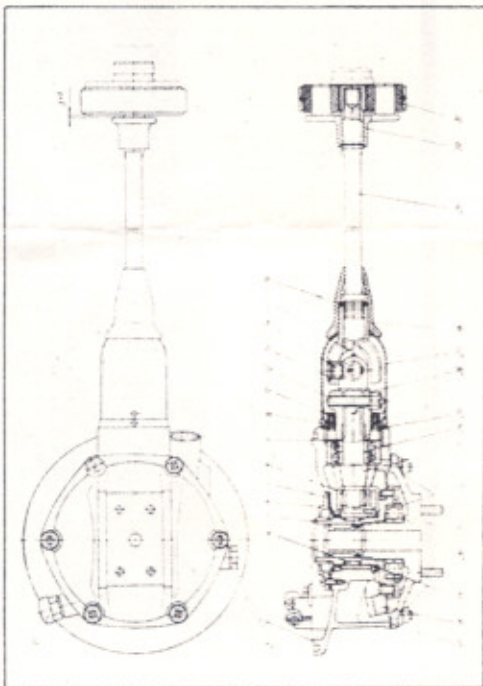
The toolkit and manual are excellent. As mentioned, there's some spares included as well as the tools. In fact, there's a bag of rubber parts, a bag of spare spokes (all spokes on the outfit are the same length), a tyre pressure gauge, a puncture repair kit, spare fuses, spare cork tank cap seals, spare fuel line, a grease gun full of grease, a bottle of touch-up paint (which comes in real handy since the paint on the outfit isn't the best), real tyre levers and a stirrup-type tyre pump.

The manual's in a language that approximates English especially if one consumes a Stolly or five before attempting to read same. I discovered that the engine hunting on overrun was due to "maladjusted carburettors". Poor buggers must have had a crook childhood.

The manual also contained a comprehensive section on sidecar adjustment and alignment which covers everything necessary for making the machine ride smoothly, straight and true. Correctly aligned, the Dnepr is one of the sweetest handling outfits I have ever ridden. The 19-inch wheels are large enough to ride over most potholes and the steering geometry seems to have been well developed over the years. With the built-in friction steering damper barely necessary, it is easily possible, if highly illegal, to steer this outfit one-handed in many circumstances. The steering is very light and direct with the outfit empty, with what the manual describes as "partial loading" (rider and passenger) or with three up and a pile of gear (tried at the end of the test).

Early in the test we discovered that tyre wear was not what it should have been. It was abysmal. After 1600km the rear tyre was about to call it quits. A careful check on the outfit revealed that the chair was way out of alignment. This came as a surprise to all who had ridden it including the distributor, Simon Lain, since the outfit

The main drive system: the outrigger means the rear wheel squats under power – useful for an outfit.



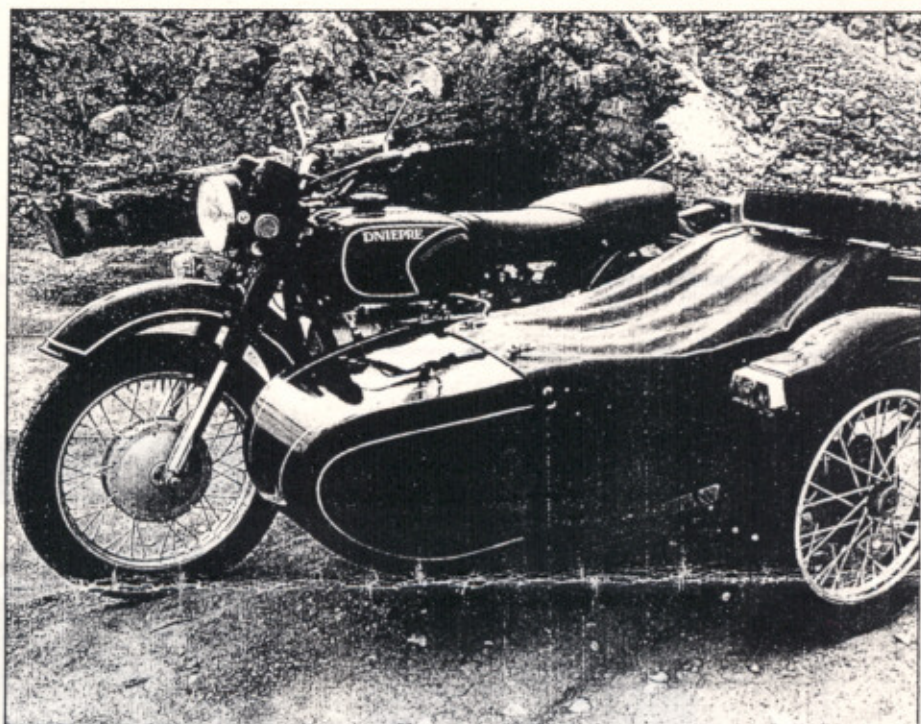
handled so well. After a few alterations (which included a re-design of the attachment system so that future machines do not suffer the same fault) tyre wear improved dramatically to the point where it seems that the original tyres should cover at least 20,000km before they need replacing, as long as the owner adheres to the "wheel interchange" procedure referred to in the manual.

One of the areas where the Dniepre really shone was its use of the old hydrocarbons. Throughout the test consumption figures never fell below 14km/l and often got as high as 16km/l. That's not bad considering the amount of steel the machine's hauling around. With 330kg dry weight and a "maximum permissible loading (driver and two passengers)" of 260kg I was surprised that the outfit managed what's equivalent to well over 40mpg in the real world. You'd be hard-pressed to return the same sort of figures in a little Japanese car . . . and I know which of the two is more fun.

The fuel consumption worsened dramatically when I fitted the optional pinnaker-like cloth windscreen. This extra put a dent in both top speed and vallet and was left off for most of the test. The Russians obviously ride round with 'em fitted all the time since the manual quotes a fuel consumption figure of "not more than litres per 100 kilometres" or 12.5km/l.

The Dniepre managed its best fuel gures on the open road where touring seeds were held to 85kmh +/- kmh. At these speeds it was quite possible to purr along, enjoy the scenery and let the rev-heads pass by. After all, you tend to meet them again at the next radar trap. The Dniepre seemed unfazed whether it was hauling one, two or three people, with the spacious boot full or empty. With more people the hills became a little more difficult but no problems were encountered. The acid test came when my little brother Doorfiller (a mere 16 stone), myself (a tiny 17½ stone) and a air full of 'Just The Essentials' made it the MRA NSW's Blood Run at Mt Mang. The outfit sailed up said Mt with very little trouble, third gear being led upon only for a couple of the kmh corners which we negotiated with a fistful of throttle at 60kmh. Bring stuff.

In conclusion (sound of Esteemed motor sighing with relief in background), the Dniepre does have, I believe, a place in Oz motorcycling. In spite of the problems, the majority of which were caused by inferior quality engine washers and a lack of Loctite, the outfit performed remarkably well



when used within its design limits. There are motorcyclists who enjoy tinkering with machines and getting their fingers dirty who would probably enjoy a machine like the Dniepre. The entire machine shows forethought and careful attention to detail in many places which compensate for the inferior quality paint and bad assembly.

Intending purchasers, should they wish to be overly cautious, may like to remove the sump and rocker covers from the machine in order to clean any

remaining swarf from their new engine. They may also like to replace the Russian battery with a more substantial Japanese item. As it stands, at less than \$7000 plus on-road, the Dniepre will probably represent great value for money to a certain type of motorcyclist. After all, that's what a KR-1 will set you back these days and there's nowhere near as much steel on a KR-1.

Cop'you later, Comrades.

Peter Smith

