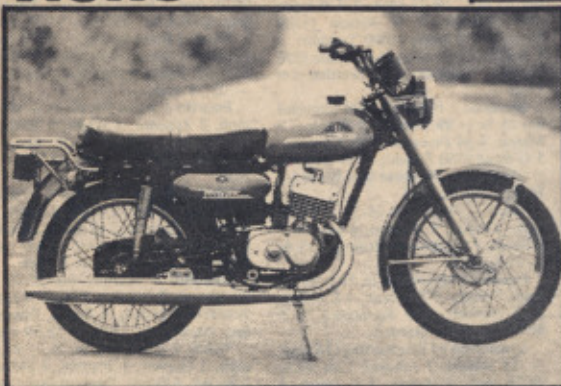


Motor Cycle News TEST FILE

MACHINE: **MINSK 125**PRICE: **£468**

Undercutting even Honda's ever popular £679 C90 on price, this updated and re-imported commuter/learner bike scores top points on value for money. It's not that this is cheap — it's the others are too expensive, says the importer.

PERFORMANCE

TOP SPEED	BEST	PRONE		UPRIGHT	
		MEAN	mph	mph	mph
		60.7		57.1	
		58.3		53.4	

STANDING QUARTER MILE	BEST	TIME		TERMINAL SPEED	
		secs	mph	mph	mph
		22.97		56.2	
		23.64		53.6	

ROLLING 40 <small>(¼ mile acceleration test from 40mph in top gear)</small>	BEST	TIME		TERMINAL SPEED	
		secs	mph	mph	mph
		17.45		59.5	
		18.43		55.75	

SPEED THROUGH GEARS at 6500 rpm

1st	20
2nd	30
3rd	46
4th	61
5th	
6th	
mph	10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

SPEEDO ACCURACY

INDICATED	TRUE	mph
30	33.9	
40	40.2	
50	54.2	
100	—	

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Best	52.2	mpg
Avg	49.9	
Worst	46.0	
50mph	—	
70mph	—	
Tank capacity	2½ galls	
Avg range	130 miles	

TEST CONDITIONS

WEATHER: **Dry track, 15mph sidewind**RIDER: **12 stone wearing leathers**MACHINE MILEAGE: **250**

COMPARISONS

Bike	Standing ¼ mile	Rolling 40mph	Avg fuel consumption		Price (£s)		ALL SPEEDS ARE BEST ONE WAY
	Top speed (mph)	Time	Speed	Time	Speed	Price (£s)	
Kawasaki KE125	70.11	18.90	66.2	15.45	68.0	71.0	£929
Honda NS125	72.0	19.88	64.6	17.98	59.35	57.8	£1549
Suzuki TS125	70.3	19.63	62.5	12.2	64.61	65.4	£1249
Gilera RV125	70.1	20.46	61.6	18.45	58.1	54.9	£1199

SPARE PARTS PRICES (inc. VAT)

Fork stanchion.....	£18.40	Front indicator.....	£3.68
Front wheel.....	£43.70	Brake linings (pair).....	£5.29
Complete exhaust.....	£39.10	Piston + rings.....	£15.41
Handlebars.....	£5.63	Barrel.....	£40.25
Brake lever.....	£2.41	Kickstart lever.....	£7.93
Major service intervals 2000 miles		Time taken 2 hours	

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: Aircooled, single cylinder two-stroke, piston port induction. Bore and stroke 52mm x 58mm. Actual capacity 123cc. Compression ratio 7:1. Single carburettor. Claimed maximum power 12.5 bhp at 6500 rpm. Lubrication by 20:1 pre-mix.

TRANSMISSION: Primary drive by oil bath chain, final drive by enclosed chain. Wet, multi plate clutch. Four speed gearbox with internal ratios of 1st 2.925, 2nd 1.78, 3rd 1.271, 4th 1.000:1. Primary reduction 2.75, final reduction 2.8:1.

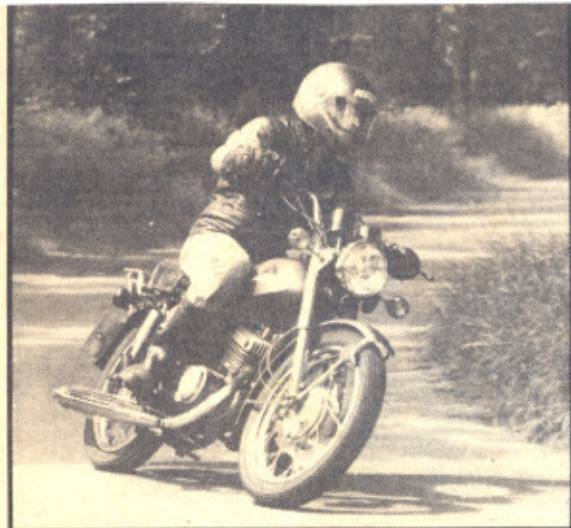
ELECTRICS: 12v flywheel magneto ignition, direct electrical power. 45/40w headlight. Warning lights for main beam, neutral and indicators.

WHEELS: chromed steel rims, spoked.
TYRES: Russian 3.00 x 18 front and rear.
BRAKES: SLS drums front and rear.
SUSPENSION: Telescopic front forks, rear swinging arm with non-adjustable shock absorbers.

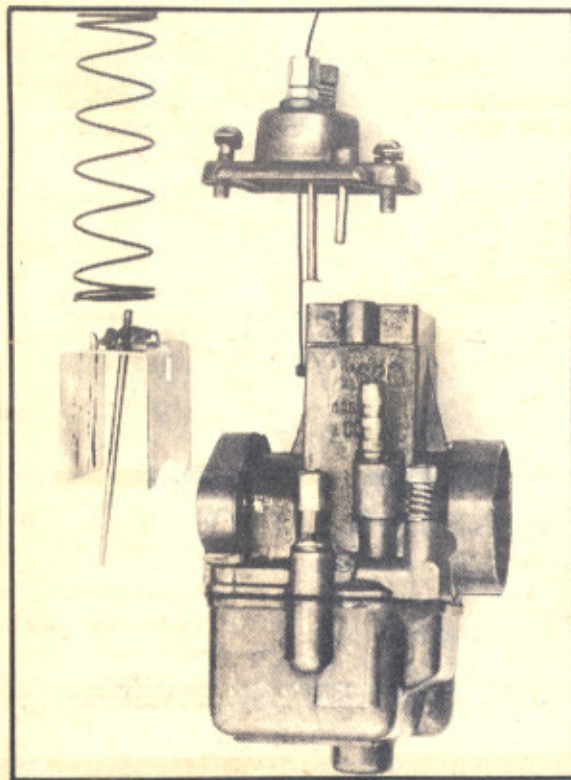
DIMENSIONS: length 78ins (198cm), width 31ins (79cm), height 47ins (120cm), wheelbase 48ins (122cm), seat height 30ins (76cm), ground clearance 5ins (12.5cm). Dry weight 230lbs (105kg).

WARRANTY: 12 months parts, not labour.

IMPORTER: Britane Ltd, Railway Street, Grimsby, South Humberside, DN32 7DA. Tel: 0472-43604.



When Ivan Stroganoff takes his daily 100km commuter run to the salt mines, he'll not try 'earolling' on the way. This is maximum angle of dangle on the square section tyres.



Minsk-style hi-tech is shown in its flat-slide carb! The pressed steel slide is unusual in design, and holds the needle. Protruding from the slide cover (top) is the tickover speed adjuster (left) and the running-in restrictor (right). No choke is fitted, the carb is simply flooded to start.

COMRADES, the revolution is here!

But forget notions of burning capitalists' cafe racers on barricades.

Instead, the new Minsk 125 from Mother Russia gives you the chance to rebel against the hi-tech high-price rat race by steering onto a different road.

Ignore performance statistics. One figure says it all: £468.

That's the on-the-road price of the basic bike undercutting the £600-plus MZ ETZ125 which is currently the popular cheap option.

The Minsk is so cheap there has to be a catch.

The catch is you must mentally prepare yourself to slip back in time, leaving behind the world of racer styling, massive depreciation, expensive spares and dealer services.

Tardis-like, the Minsk deposits you in the 1950s when de-cokes were commonplace before the weekend run, when everyone carried a puncture repair outfit and dressed in greatcoat and wellies.

Thanks to modern oil, of course, the de-cokes stay in history. The greatcoats are still optional.

Everything about the Minsk reminded me of my early days on a BSA Bantam, when I learned about maintenance the hard way, believing all there was to riding skill was to make the bike go as fast as possible, and when riding had to be done on a shoestring budget.

This is why the Minsk can take the role of today's Bantam — a world apart from modern 125s.

I saw the worst side of the Minsk first.

Believe me, nothing carrying road tax is slower than a tight Russian 125 running with a throttle restrictor!

Mopeds could have outpaced me while I was running-in the freshly uncrated bike. With warnings from importer Harold Lawson in mind, I decided

not to go the whole run-in period on the restrictor.

This device prevents careless folk from over revving and seizing the engine. Unlike modern Japanese engines, the Minsk unit is built tight and needs to be run gently until clearances loosen.

The concentric-type carb has a projection built into the slide cover to prevent the pressed-steel slide from being fully raised. A cautious owner may simply break off the obstruction to liberate the full learner-legal power.

A great squealing noise soon had me fretting at the side of the road after performing the operation. It was not the engine, but the speedo drive causing noise in a rubber seal! A drop of oil cured this.

Top notch

I raised the carb needle to its top notch to allow the engine to run easily. In these early miles, the Minsk proved thirsty at 46mpg. But it survived speed testing even though there were too few kilometers on the metric clock (mph is applied on the dial by a transparent sticker).

Later tankfuls produced about 52mpg. Only towards the end of the test did the engine take kindly to having that carb needle lowered to middle position, giving more economical lean-running. But there was no time to test for improved mpg.

With the mixture leaned off, initial pick-up with a cold engine was hesitant (no choke is fitted, you simply flood the carb to start) but higher revs came more cleanly.

Though the pessimistic speedo showed 45-50mph (in reality 50-55mph) with ease, the Minsk didn't like to be hurried. In true 1950s style, the engine has a wide spread of power well suited to its four speed box, and its pace belongs to the same era.

While the Minsk's flat-

out speed of 60mph is blitzed by alternative racey orientals, that fine flexibility showed through when it turned in a creditable 17.4 second/59mph rolling 40. This is better than some of the opposition!

That pulling power and fewer ratios encouraged single gear cruising rather than the 'tunes on the gearbox' progress demanded by peppier 125s. Ah! the nostalgia . . .

Surprisingly the modest output of the Minsk was enough to produce a little clutch slip at peak power, even with adjustment reset. Mr Lawson believes the standard Russian oil that stays inside until the first service may be too heavy.

At a gentle rate of progress, I would believe the importer's claim of 80mpg, though you would have to have a chronic phobia-fear of movement to see their allegedly obtainable 100mpg.

Vibration from the engine is no problem to the rider, but there was enough buzzing to loosen the exhaust collar and the front engine mountings. Mr Lawson said the latest update is to fit the Minsk with self-locking nuts.

Some screws, nuts and bolts did seem to be of poor quality material, easily scarred by the tool kit.

Internally, one imagines the machine to be of better quality, but the engine echoes with the same slap and tinkle as my old Bantam.

Gearchanging was reminiscent of the Jawa 350 — a foot-off-the-peg job to change up slowly.

Brakes were becoming more efficient as the test progressed, showing they need some bedding-in. While the rear was powerful, it had to be used for at least half the braking effort due to a front drum that was barely adequate. No chance of accidentally locking up the square-

sectioned Soviet rubberware!

You might be tempted to change the tyres for something grippier until you find they are only £17.50 each (inc. VAT) compared to alternatives at nearly £30!

The importer uses heavier-than-standard fork oil to beef up the front end, but this leaves the rear end too bouncy and soft. Best save up for replacements, or try to rebuild the units with heavier oil and spring?

As a commuter bike, the Minsk is comfortable, apart from that soggy backside, and easy to use. It's a second-kick starter, for instance, and the only hassle is having to mix a half-litre of two-stroke into a tank of two star. There was very little fuel in reserve.

Pay off

Riding position is upright, but the seat's well padded against the potholes of Siberian dirt tracks, the upswept 'bars making the little bike man-sized. Good news for smaller folk is that the seat height's only 30ins.

No machine could be easier to look after than the Minsk — basic designs do pay off! Direct ignition and lighting mean no battery is needed, though beware of a dim tail light when stationary in traffic.

Like the MZ, the rear chain is totally enclosed for long life and reduced maintenance. You might have to tighten a few nuts and bolts periodically, but that's no hardship compared to the cost of visits to the dealer.

Designed with easy servicing in mind, the Minsk is so simple to work on that the importer reckons only 4-4½ hours to swap the engine's bottom end. And the gearbox can be replaced with the engine unit in the frame!

Paint is applied heavily enough to survive life in the salt mines, and the general finish looks prac-

tical. If something goes rusty, it's inexpensive enough to replace! Spares prices speak for themselves.

"A new Japanese 125, counting finance and extras, could cost £2000 in the first year. It's prices that have been killing the market," said Mr Lawson. "The Minsk is a realistic way of getting into motor cycling. It's robust and will get you from A to B with least complication."

That's what it's all about.

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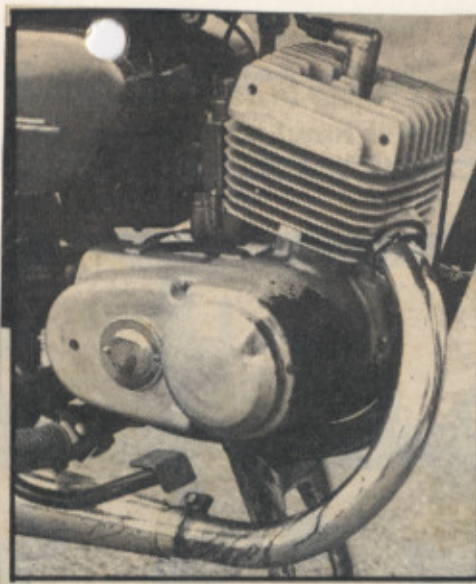
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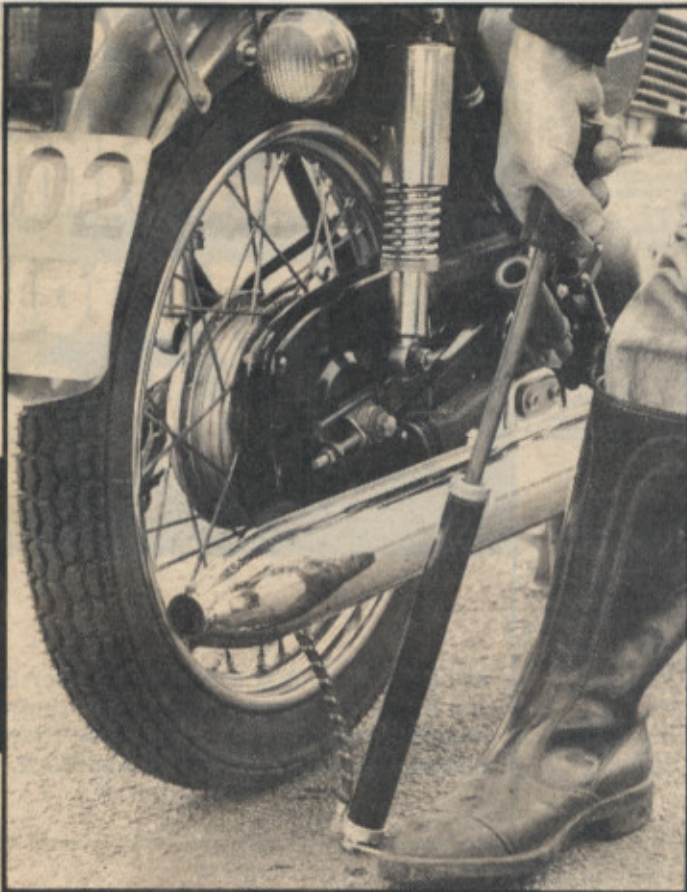
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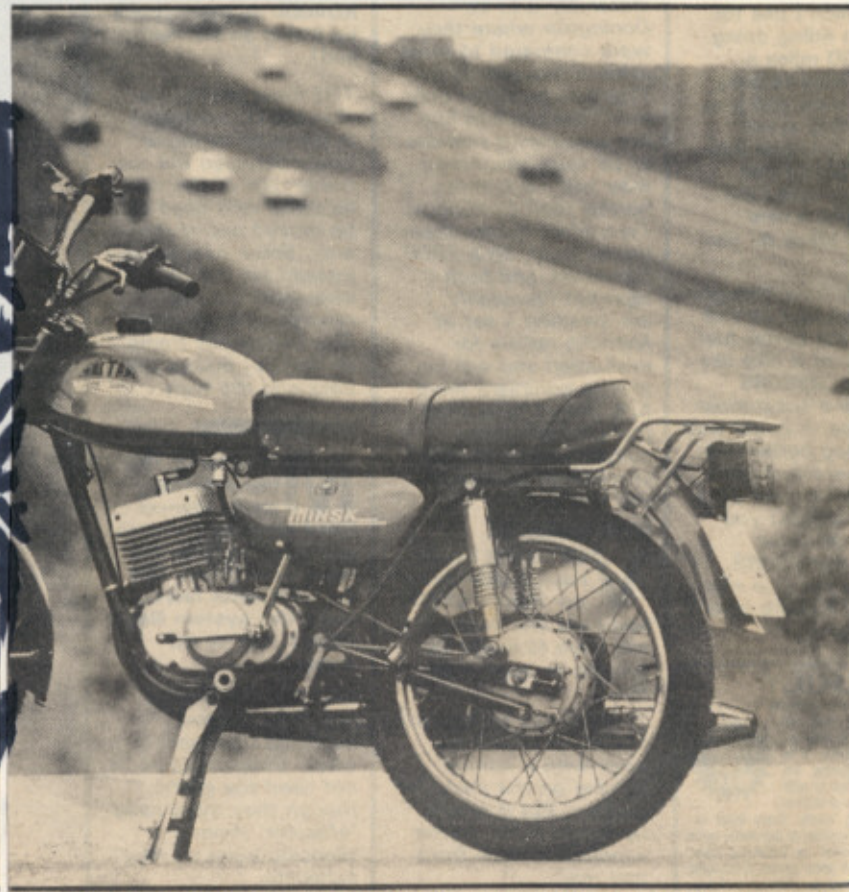
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Simplicity personified, the Minsk two-stroke is devoid of ATAC, etc, but the LEAK on the crankcase is oil mist from a loosened exhaust collar. Clutch adjuster is under the chromed sidecover.



Part of the Minsk's standard equipment is a tyre pump — a practical plus-point along with that enclosed chaincase.



The rat race roars away in the distance while the Minsk takes you down a more old fashioned route.