

The Eagle Soars—Again



by Bob Rimel

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK MITCHELL

The years immediately following World War II challenged every major power, victors and vanquished alike. In the United States, though the nation had remained free of physical harm, industry still faced an enormous challenge regearing to peacetime demands. For several years, in fact, orders for cars and motorcycles—to cite just two examples—created waiting lists as long as a year or more.

In England, the challenge was greater, for that nation's industry had suffered greatly. (See *Classic Cycle Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 11 ff.) In the late Forties, when the British resumed peacetime transport production, what they made was usually either a "civilianized" version of a WD vehicle or a

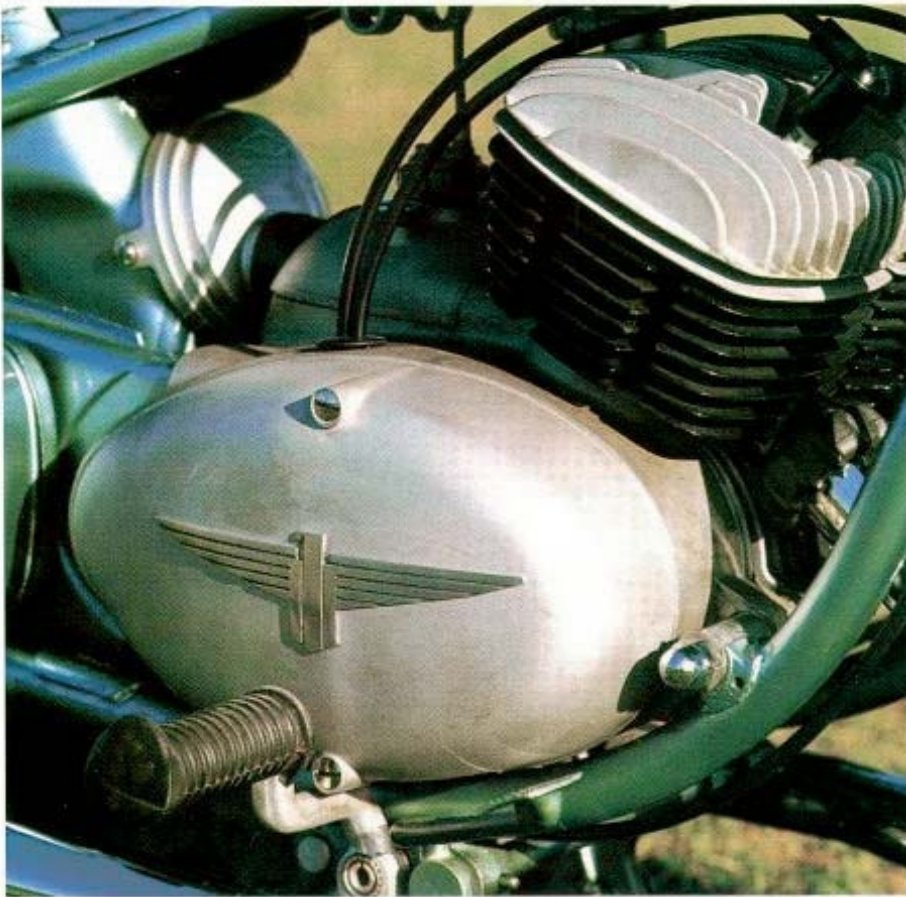
revival of a pre-war mount. The BSA C-11 featured in Vol. 2, No. 2 of *Classic Cycle Review* is typical. Its chromed tank and telescopic forks are assuredly post-War, but its 20" painted rims are leftovers from the 1939 model year—perhaps even leftover '39 stocks.

For Germany, the challenges were even greater. What had not been bombed out was most likely distributed as spoils of war. After a sea voyage, the DKW two-stroker became the beloved Bantam, and the BMW cycle operation all moved east of the Iron Curtain.

Still, as degraded as the German industrial complex was immediately post-War, it did rebuild. And when it did, it did so efficiently, completely and well. In fact, so much did the Ger-



Overleaf: Down among the sheltering palms, the Eagle poses in sunny Florida, resplendent in Adler green, chrome and aluminum. Above: Sturdy and reliable, affording a recovering Germany basic transport with a high level of quality. The deeply valenced fenders are typical of Fifties-era German machines. Below: Beneath the eagle is the business end, where 16 horses reside. The crankcase houses a two-piece crankshaft joined by Hirth coupling.



man economy improve in the first four years immediately following World War II that the nation found itself sorely in need of personal transport.

Enter (or should that be re-enter?) the motorcycle.

One German firm, BMW, met the transport need with single-cylinder machines, the R24 and R25 in their various configurations. So acute was the need for private vehicles that often the Bavarian thumpers hauled chairs (Steib LS200s, more often than not). Supplementing the revival of established German makes like BMW was the entrance of a number of new companies into the business, often concentrating on two-stroke production. Adler was one of these.

According to Mick Walker's *German Motorcycles: Road and Racing Bikes*, Adler first ventured into the motorcycle business in 1902, but abandoned the venture by 1907. However, the demands and opportunities presented by the transportation crisis of the late Forties were too much for Adler to resist. So, in 1949, Adler introduced its first modern motorcycle, a 100cc commuter bike. Rapidly, the firm's offerings expanded, culminating in very well-made quarter-litre strokers.

While in Germany in 1987, Erich Bley found the 1954 Adler MB 250 pictured here. As found, the machine





was missing parts. For most of us, that circumstance would pose a problem. Not so for Bley—but then his situation differs from most. As owner of Bley Engineering in Elk Grove, Illinois, he was foresightful enough to buy most of the remaining US stocks of new Adler parts when they were offered.

The success of the cosmetic restoration speaks for itself, as the photos here document. But it's not in looks alone that this example stands out. This MB 250 is ridden daily to Bley's shop, and his plans for the machine's future are to keep it in use as daily transport. The machine has not been shown in competition, but has been on display at AMCA meets in Davenport and Daytona.

The engine and transmission nestle in a double-cradle tube frame carried on plunger rear suspension, the bike trailing behind leading link forks of Adler's own design. An interesting special feature of the leading forks is the specially cast bottom piece which serves as a fluid reservoir in each.

Power is supplied by a piston port two-stroke twin nominally displacing 250cc (actual displacement is 247cc, the same as BMW singles). The engine churns out 16 horsepower (D.I.N.) and is good for 70–75 MPH top speed. Interesting engine details noted by Bley include the one-piece crankcase/gearbox and the two-piece crankshaft joined by

Above: Rear plunger was typical Fifties, but the front leading forks were not—the fully suspended motorcycle was quite a luxury for common transportation in 1954! Hella headlamp, Denfield saddle and Magura controls were all bought in, a common practice at the time. Below: Bing 1/22 carb feeds the two-stroker; its location indicates piston-port induction. All detailing, from chrome work to routing of wires, is impeccable.






Hirth coupling. A Bing 1/22 carburetor feeds the engine, a flywheel generator producing spark and juice for lighting.

The Adler rides on 3.25 x 16 tires front and rear. (Adlers were equipped with 16" rims from the beginning.) Forward motion is halted through application of single leading shoe drums fore and aft.

A Hella six-volt headlight shows the way, after the machine's voltage-compensated coil ignition does its work. Levers are by Magura, saddle by the ubiquitous Denfield firm. The impeccable paint is done in stock Adler green, and the company's logo—the eagle (which is what Adler means)—proudly adorns both sides of the smoothly flowing tank.

Adler left motorcycle production in 1958 to concentrate on developing its typewriter business.

For years the machine in my office at the university where I taught was an Adler Satellite. I'm not knocking it. The Satellite was a fine machine. But given the choice, I'd rather fly on that MB 250 than on that Satellite. Any old time at all. 

Top: Leading link forks and dual cradle frame were favored by German makers of the day. The space between the wheel and front fender supplied ample room for motion during damping. Below: Detail of the hydraulically-damped leading link front end. The brakes are kept in great shape, as the bike is ridden daily.

For more on the Adler and other German motorcycles, see Mick Walker's *German Motorcycles: Road and Racing Bikes* (Osprey, 1989).

