



# Wheelin' around



by Charlie Moore

Most people on this continent have a very vague mental picture of life in the U.S.S.R., including the automotive segment of society. A large number of us think the Soviets ride around only on tractors or in big trucks, while in fact, there is now a large effort going on behind the Iron Curtain to put the populace on wheels.

It is still not easy to buy a car in Russia. The waiting list is about four years behind as all sales are handled by government agencies which are invariably bogged down in bureaucracy. You must also

deposit the greatly inflated full price in advance before your name goes on the list. Gasoline is hard to get and spare parts almost impossible, hence there is a large "Midnite Auto Supply" organization. The theft of components is so bad that many motorists take their wiper blades and hubcaps with them when they leave their cars parked on city streets. Service is also bad with few or no trained mechanics in most locales. Fortunately things are improving, albeit slowly, and with a little luck and the party's blessing, Ivan should soon be drivin'.

Recently, I received in the

mail the quarterly publication of V/O Avtoexport of Moscow, the Russian corporation which handles the automotive industry there. I assume this catalogue is somewhat out of date as there is no mention of the Russian version of the Fiat 124 now being built at the new factory/city of Togliattigrad (Togliatti being an Italian automotive engineer). Out of date or not, the Avtoexport publication is impressive with 132 pages in full color and printed on expensive glossy paper. It gives a rundown on all types of vehicles being manufactured in the USSR from giant trucks to children's tricycles. All the vehicles have been photographed amid sometimes scenic, sometimes shockingly bourgeois surroundings.

The passenger cars are typically decorated with young ladies (styles in women's clothes in Russia are dumpy) and settings include sailing parties, beach scenes, hunting trips and picnics. I presume that much of the carefree frivolity depicted is fabricated for the benefit of Western readers. At least the trucks are shown in workie type settings, farms, construction sites, quarries and the like.

For all the blather in the text about the "Soviet auto-making tradition" and their large staff of "automotive scientists", the vehicles, for the most part, are

copies of ten or fifteen-year-old Western products.

There are three basic models of passenger cars shown. First and smallest is the Zaporozhets which seems to be a copy of the German N.S.U. Prinz. These cars are reputed to be unreliable and even the car-starved Russians are reluctant to buy them. Next step up is the Moskvich which is similar in appearance to the Fiats of the early sixties and is equipped with a counterfeit B.M.W. engine. These are more reliable than the Zaporozhets and are exported widely in Europe and Asia. Moskvichs are available in Standard and DeLuxe four-door sedans, a stationwagon, and a neat little panel delivery a la Chevy Vega. The largest offering is the Volga which looks like an un-sanforized 1953 Ford. These are available in either a four-door sedan or a stationwagon and a microbus is also built on the Volga chassis. The Volga is known to be tough and reliable though somewhat underpowered.

The trucks are admittedly the stars of this presentation and it is easy to see that the bulk of Russian engineering research is directed towards them. Styling is even less original than with the passenger cars and the lines of the '56 Ford truck seem to have impressed the "automotive scientists" more than a little. Even so, some of the big jobs are really fantastic.

Most have either four or six-wheel-drive with giant tires and look like they will go anywhere which the text indeed says they will. Features like tire pressures being adjustable from the cab, waterproof running gear, and starting heaters for cold Siberian winters are common. There is even a dump truck which deposits its load to either side as well as to the rear.

The motorcycle section of the industry seems to be the most backward in comparison to the West. Of course the motorbike is still looked upon as a utilitarian conveyance in Russia rather than enjoying the recreational status that it enjoys here. Mo-peds and scooters are very popular and there are also some interesting tricycles with van or pickup bodies for transporting small loads. The biggest bike available is a 650 with a horizontally opposed 2 cyl. 4 cycle engine. It has a top speed of 65 mph and is offered with a sidecar as is a line of two and three cylinder cycle 350s. With the shortage of cars, sidecars seem to be quite popular. Probably the funniest picture in the whole catalogue is a shot of some dauntless Bolshevik attempting a Steve McQueen-style jump over a ditch on a scooter accompanied by a cloud of blue oil smoke. He deserves an 'A' for effort anyway.

Keep wheelin'

## Intramural Swim Meet

### EVENTS

Men's 200 yard Medley Relay	
Engineering	2:09.9
Law	2:18.8
Women's 50 yard Freestyle	
Wendi Lacusta (P.E.)	28.5
Gabrielle Morrison (Eng.)	50.1
Men's 50 yard Freestyle	
Steve Cann (Eng.)	25.9
Bob Strother (Law)	26.6
Jim Corning (Eng.)	27.9
Terry Lennihan (Law)	28.8
Tom Vincent (Eng.)	31.5
Robie Spicer (P.E.)	31.6
Al MacDonald (Eng.)	31.6
Ken Speiran (Eng.)	34.3
Women's 100 yard Breastroke	
Carole Donaldson (Eng.)	1:41.5
Donna Sutcliffe (P.E.)	1:46.2
Men's 100 yard Breastroke	
Dave Jessop (Eng.)	1:21.2
Paul Stokes (Law.)	1:26.0
Robie Spicer (P.E.)	1:31.6
Al MacDonald (Eng.)	1:33.9
Women's 100 yard Backcrawl	
Wendi Lacusta (P.E.)	1:16.2
Carole Donaldson (Eng.)	1:58.9
Men's 100 yard Backcrawl	
Steve Cann (Eng.)	1:21.6
Brian Sherman (Law)	1:37.3
Ron Pink (Law)	1:43.1
Ken Speiran (Eng.)	1:58.6
Bruce Edwards (Eng.)	2:14.7
Women's 100 yard Freestyle	
Donna Sutcliffe (P.E.)	1:22.8
Gabrielle Morrison (Eng.)	1:47.1
Men's 100 yard Freestyle	
Steve Cann (Eng.)	1:05.4
Dave Jessop (Eng.)	1:07.9
Jim Corning (Eng.)	1:16.1
Women's 50 yard Butterfly	
Wendi Lacusta (P.E.)	33.6
Donna Sutcliffe (P.E.)	57.5
Men's 50 yard Butterfly	
Dave Jessop (Eng.)	42.3
Men's 200 yard Freestyle Relay	
Law	1:57.6
Engineering	2:01.4

## University Football

St. Francis Xavier 34  
Dalhousie 5

For Dalhousie — a field goal by Mat Paterson; 2 singles by Darcy Depoe

**Gazette staff meetings**  
**Mondays 12:30**

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