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ZiL-157

When the test polygon of the I.A. Likhachev Automobile Works in Moscow saw the initial testing of a new light-weight truck with its 6x6 drive in 1956, there was hardly anybody believing that - in several years, when the series production takes its full run - the new prototype would become one of the vital types used by the Soviet Union's ground forces, that the huge lots in many various versions would be supplied to all the Warsaw Pact satellite countries, and - last but not least - that it would find its manifestation as a very good export article to the countries of the so-called Third World.



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Indeed, it is not very easy to find a precise milestone of the ZiL-157 truck birth. One has to look back and immerse in history. The Soviet forces were not much motorized before 1941. To meet the needs of the army and public sector as well the light-tonnage trucks used to be turned out, mainly with the 4x2 drive, with ZIS-6 most widespread among them. But not even the latter, despite its large numbers manufactured, could fully satisfy the demands of the troops being speedily motorized during the period from 1939 to 1941. In the war years the truck production doubled its volumes and new types began appearing. In addition to the 4x2 standard, the 4x4, 6x6, and 6x8 vehicles started to make their way ahead. Not a small benefit also came in the form of the trucks and other military vehicles supplied within the "Contract of Loan & Lease", being transported from the U.S., the U.K., and Canada by the sea convoys. Not only that these imported vehicles found their application in service, but their design soon became apparent in the home-made output.

Development and fabrication of the trucks did not slow down anyway with the end of the war. To meet the needs of the devastated country, the wartime machines (both home-made and imported) were used and some large enterprises also started focusing their efforts on the automobile production.

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with the freight bearing hull the semi-trailer tractor of the saddle type, marked ZIL-157KV (its original designation ZIL-157V was changed in 1962) was also manufactured. As the production went on, additional technological innovations were appearing, adding the versions of ZIL-157KD, ZIL-157KG, ZIL-157KE, ZIL-157KJ a ZIL-157GT to the existing range. They were exported worldwide, modified in accordance with the pertinent climatic conditions (northern versions with pre-heaters and efficient or independent heating systems; southern versions with more profound dust filters and ventilation systems).

The basic series of ZIL-157KD survived in the large-lot production since 1976 until 1982, with some special and small series being still manufactured at the end of the eighties.

In all of its versions ZIL-157 was really a very successful engineering concept, allowing to use a wide choice of special superstructures, while guaranteeing the ability to cope with almost all type of terrain, a relatively high moving speed, and last but not least an easy operation with the minimum service and inspection demands. Despite this automobile's birth in the late fifties it is still much valued by many states throughout the world for its broad utility.

A imaginary breakpoint came with 1948, when the light-weight truck ZIS-151 with its 6x6 drive saw its first large-lot production. The truck became an immediate predecessor of ZIL-157. Some construction assemblies were plainly taken over from ZIS-151, others were innovated or quite newly brought to life. Thus, the ZIL-157, which had been started up in 1958 and survived in its original design until 1961, triggered off a long production series of the 6x6 light-weight trucks, meeting the high standards in their qualitative and technical terms. Since 1961 until 1964 the serial production of the ZIL-157K upgrades was in progress. The innovation rested in the drive unit's modified performances, improved design of the clutch and altered gears. Besides the conventional truck design



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