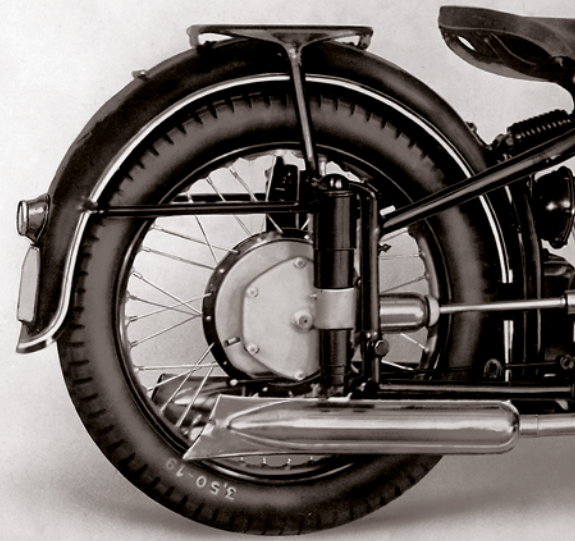


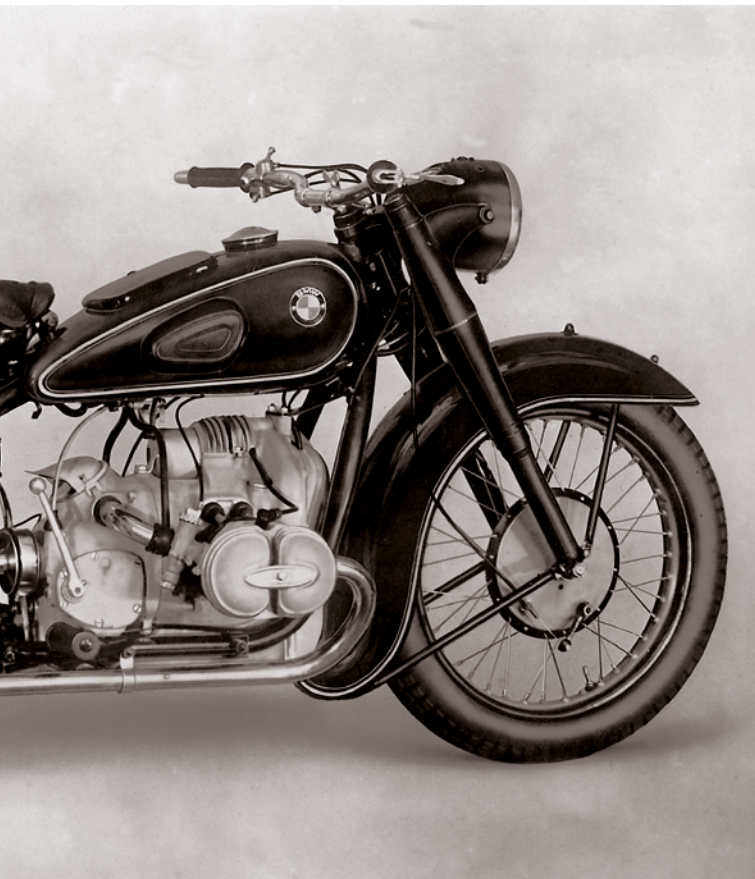
1950 – 1959: GERMANY AND THE ECONOMIC MIRACLE

In the middle of the massive upswing experienced in the 1950s, BMW Motorrad held its own with the successful single-cylinder and Boxer series, as well as pioneering innovations, such as the full-swing chassis. Things also went very well on the racing front: Winning the first championship for motorcycle and sidecar in 1954, Wilhelm Noll and Fritz Cron went on to numerous victories.

1950 BMW R 51/2



1955 BMW R 69 – US version with accessories



1954 Deutschland Solitude main prize: the winners Wilhelm Noll and Fritz Cron on their BMW sidecar set-up with partial fairing



1953 Cylinder head with valve control in the BMW 253 RS

It is hard to imagine a better start to the fourth decade of BMW Motorrad's history. Five years after the end of the war, the Germans craved more mobility, which explains the rise in popularity of the motorcycle as a significantly cheaper option than a car. While turnover at BMW was just over 4 million deutschmarks in 1948, by 1949 this figure had already risen to over DM 20 million, reaching more than DM 35 million by 1950. The total fleet of machine tools at BMW had increased more than ten-fold since 1948. From a previous level of around 120, it rose to more than 1400 within three years.

After only a short time, booming business in the automobile and motorcycle sectors enabled new developments and extensive model revisions. In September 1950, the R 24 was followed by the R 25, which now had a direct rear wheel suspension and a welded tubular frame instead of the previous frame, which had been bolted together. Hardly a year later, the R 25/2 was launched. This model contained subtly improved details, such as a new sprung saddle or an improved cylinder head.

After the American occupying forces lifted the 350-cc restriction in 1950, the R 51/2 was launched, based on the pre-war R 51. The bike's telescopic fork already benefited from the double damp-

ing system previously only used in the R 75. Its engine was optimised with new cylinder heads that now had screw-in rocker arm mounting blocks. The R 51/3 followed in 1951, as did the R 67, which was practically identical except for the 600-cc engine. Both models featured a new generation of engines with a previously unknown slim-line engine design. In these engines, the cam shaft was not driven by a chain, as was the case in the R 51/2, but rather by means of helical spur gears. While the output from the R 51/3, 18 kW (24 hp), was the same as for the previous model, the R 67, much favoured for sidecar pairings, produced 19 kW (26 hp) and the R 67/2 and R 67/3 later brought this to 21 kW (28 hp). With a higher 2-in-1 exhaust system, the new models also produced impressive results in off-road competition. Thus, the R 51/3 and R 67 took gold medals in the individual rankings at the Six Days event in Varese, Italy in 1951.

BMW Motorrad responded to repeated requests from sports-minded riders in 1952 with the launch of the R 68. Known as the "100-mile racer", this bike got its popular name from its maximum speed of 160 km/h, achieved thanks to its 26 kW (35 hp) output from a 600-cc engine. Bowing to tradition, BMW Motorrad also turned its attention to motor sport. In addition to the already familiar sports

version based on the R 5 and R 51, the 500-cc version of the RS 54 became available to private customers in 1954. The bike's flat-twin engine had a DOHC valve drive with two overhead camshafts per cylinder which were driven by an upright shaft. A whopping 33 kW (45 hp) output and engine speeds of over 8000 rpm were possible and the maximum speed of this racing bike was almost 200 km/h.

While the solo machine took numerous national championship titles, the upright shaft engine proved its capabilities in the international arena in sidecar racing. Starting with the title victory by Wilhelm Noll and Fritz Cron, BMW Motorrad took the world sidecar championship crown every single year between 1954 and 1967 and BMW Motorrad had taken no fewer than 19 world championship titles by 1974.

The leading link fork providing the front wheel control and the rear wheel swing arm of the solo racing bikes and the sidecar configurations were also to be found in the standard machines from 1955 onwards. BMW Motorrad developed the so-called full-swing chassis for the 500-cc R 50 and the 600-cc R 69 and R 60, setting new standards in comfort and road holding. This went hand-in-hand with the introduction of a new three-shaft transmission. In 1956, the full-swing chassis also came to the single-cylinder models, in the shape of the R 26.