

# Eastern Europe 1975

## Blazej Krupa wins Peace and Friendship Cup

THE last round of East European Rally Championship for the Peace and Friendship Cup, the Russian Winter Rally which finished in the Soviet Union on December 14, was won by Polish crew **Blazej Krupa** and **Piotr Mystkowski** in a Renault 17 Gordini. Krupa also became outright winner of the championship, ahead of Bulgarian Renault driver Ilya Tchoubrikov, who came second in Russia, and another Pole, **Andrzej Jaroszewicz**, driving a Fiat 124 Abarth. Rounds of the Peace and Friendship Cup included the Volan Rally in Hungary, Zlatni Piassatzi Rally in Bulgaria, the Polish Rally, Tatra Rally in Czechoslovakia, the East German Wartburg Rally and the Russian Winter Rally.

The most characteristic feature of the 1975 season in Eastern Europe was the domination by drivers using Western, works-prepared machinery. Renault, which has supported several outstanding competitors from the East since 1968, continued its connection with that part of Europe by providing Dieppe-prepared cars and even some service facilities for selected events. For 1975 Renault involvement included Alpine 1800s for Vladimir Hubacek from Czechoslovakia, who won the Skoda Rally at home and came 2nd in the Volan Rally, and for Attila Ferjancz of Hungary, the winner of the latter event. The best Bulgarian driver Ilya Tchoubrikov drove an Alpine-Renault and a Renault 12 Gordini, finishing 2nd in the Wartburg and the Russian Winter events, 4th in the Zlatni Piassatzi and 5th in the Polish. Finally, the revelation of the 1974 season, **Blazej Krupa** from Poland got the works-prepared Renault 17 Gordini and immediately showed that he was more than worth it: after a brilliant and consistent season marked with 5th place in Zlatni Piassatzi, 3rd in Volan Rally, 2nd in Tatra and two wins in Wartburg and the Russian Winter Rally, **Krupa** clinched the championship.

**Blazej Krupa** spent his rallying apprenticeship as a navigator, being for a few years a member of

the Polski Fiat works team and usually partnering Robert Mucha. He changed his seat in 1973 and in 1974 appeared at the wheel of a Dieppe-prepared Renault 12 Gordini, easily winning national events in Poland and finishing 2nd in the Polish Rally after a drive which left all the best competitors from the East well behind him. He has a lot of natural talent and skill and much more should be heard of him in future, given that he will be provided with a competitive car.

Although **Krupa's** championship was well deserved, the battle would have been fiercer had the Fiat Abarth of **Andrzej Jaroszewicz** been more reliable in the last two rounds. It was **Jaroszewicz**, not **Krupa**, who looked the strong favourite in the earlier stages of the championship, but mechanical failures put him out of the Wartburg and the Russian Winter Rally and dropped him from 1st to 3rd place in the Peace and Friendship Cup.

There was an odd situation in the Polski Fiat team last season, because the manager of the company's Sports Department, **Andrzej Jaroszewicz**, spent the season at the wheel of a works-prepared 16-valve version of the Fiat 124 Abarth instead of his usual Polski Fiat. One example of the model was imported by Polski Fiat in order to gain some more experience in preparing a full-blooded rally machine and

**Jaroszewicz** used it in an exhausting programme competing in both European and East European rally championships. He demonstrated that he can be ranked among top European drivers at the moment, and his achievements were quite impressive with wins in the Tatra and Warsaw rallies (the latter in the European series for 1976), 2nd place in the Polish, 3rd in the Baltic rally and the Zlatni Piassatzi, 5th in Costa Brava and the Yugoslavian Rally, 6th in the Firestone and 9th in the Lyon-Charbonnières. Third position in the final classification of the Championship, behind Verini and Bacchelli, after the first season in a really competitive car seems more than simply a success.

With **Jaroszewicz** driving Fiat Abarth, 1974 East European champion **Maciej Stawowiak** took up the honour of representing Polski Fiat as a No 1 member of the team. The Polish team, almost by tradition, was the most active of all East European firms, with a wide programme of events in the East and in the West, but the 140 bhp, 1600 cc twin-cam versions of the Polish car were not able to compete seriously against the sophisticated machinery of Lancia, Fiat, Ford, etc. and there was still no sign of homologation of the bigger, 1800 cc Polski Fiat engine. Nevertheless, **Stawowiak** came 12th in the Monte Carlo Rally and this position (the best a Polish driver has ever scored in Monte Carlo) could have been even better if only the tyre service of the Polish team worked properly during the event. Later in the season **Stawowiak** finished 14th in Lyon-Charbonnières and 8th in the Firestone Rally, but further events ended mostly with disappointment, since **Stawowiak's** efforts were hampered by mechanical troubles of various nature. In fact, the organisation of the Polski Fiat team was in 1975 far less smooth than it used to be a year before and the increased number of works cars entered in events (up to 10 works-supported crews in the Polish Rally) took its toll on the quality of the service and car preparation. For these reasons, the cars were often unreliable and suffered from both serious failures and silly little faults.

The Polski Fiat team was expected to take part in the Safari and this seemed certain even until the very last moment, since cars were shipped to Africa and both **Sobieslaw Zasada** and **Rauno Aaltonen** contracted to drive them, so the hopes for success were quite high. It was something of a shock, therefore, when the withdrawal of the team was announced only a few weeks before the rally. Although the true reason of this drastic move has not been made public, it is reasonably certain that the Polish team must have had some service agreement with the Italian Fiat team, and after the withdrawal of



Fiat from the Safari the Poles found themselves in such an impossible situation that they could do no more than withdraw.

Two works Polski Fiats arrived in Britain for the RAC, driven by **Jaroszewicz** and the new foreign member of the team, **Jussi Kynsilehto** from Finland. Their start can't be called a success, as both cars retired, but **Kynsilehto** is again to drive Polski Fiat in the 76 Monte Carlo. Speaking of guest drivers it must be mentioned as well that **Andrew Cowan** and **Geraint Phillips** drove for the Polish team in the Zlatni Piassatzi Rally and they managed to put up some really impressive times before retiring when the engine seized.

Mainly due to the performances of **John Haugland** and **Markku Saaristo**, Skoda is well known among the rallying community. This Czechoslovakian car, albeit rather unsophisticated, in the hands of experts can be driven surprisingly quickly despite its relative lack of power; the biggest version, the 130S, develops in Gp 2 trim about 112 bhp according to British estimation, although a figure as high as 125 bhp is usually quoted in the East. **Haugland** and **Saaristo** represent Dealer Team Skoda, the works team from Czechoslovakia having for a few years restricted its international activity to a few selected events. Little success was achieved in 1975. The prototype Skoda 200 RS, a coupé fitted with the experimental, 160 bhp 2-litre twin-cam engine took part mainly in local events in Czechoslovakia and in that car **Horsak** came 2nd in the Skoda Rally. A Gp 2 version of the 130 RS, based on the coupé body and weighing only 720 kgs, was homologated in 1975 and this car, propelled by a more powerful (122 bhp) engine scored many wins in touring car races in Eastern Europe, so a rally version of the car can probably also be expected.

The Russian Avtoexport team has been using two types of car, the well-known Moskvich 412, fitted with a twin-cam cylinder head and the licence-built, Fiat-based VAZ 2103, or Lada 1600 S, as the model is called in its export form. The latter car has an s.o.h.c. unit bored to 1.6 litres and developing about 130 bhp in Gp 2 trim. Although considerable progress has been achieved, particularly in the field of handling and roadholding of Russian cars, which used to be rather undriveable in past years, despite efforts of the Russian drivers, whose courage and skill is already famous, the opposition was

**BLAZEJ Krupa**, the navigator-turned-driver from Poland, had an eminently successful year and emerged Champion of Eastern Europe at the wheel of his works-prepared Renault R17 Gordini.



**WORKS** Wartburgs were hopelessly outclassed, but their drivers lived up to their sporting reputations wherever they went. Driving the car in the picture is **Horst Niebergall**.

too strong to enable the Soviet team to score more valuable placings than at the end of the first ten. Nevertheless, Avtoexport cars traditionally appeared in most East European events and in the 1000 Lakes Rally.

Unfortunately, the East German Wartburg team has reached a dead end; their two-stroke, 1000 cc saloons are so hopelessly uncompetitive that the wisdom of rallying them is doubtful. The team nevertheless tried to mark its presence in rallies by taking part in such events as the Acropolis, or 1000 Lakes. In terms of performance their presence was hardly noticed, but they always add some colour to such rallies and the team's sportsmanship is always held in high regard by Western competitors.

Of the East European rallies included in the European Rally Championship, three (Zlatni Piassatzi, Vlatava and the Polish)

had coefficient 3. Thus it was rather surprising to see that the Vlatava Rally has been replaced by the Skoda Rally, a non-championship event organised according to quite outdated patterns, with multiple starting points. Two other rallies were worth their championship status, especially the Polish Rally organised for the first time by Wroclaw Automobile Club. This turned out to be a great improvement on the same event of previous years, and CSI observers suggested that in its present form it deserves coefficient 4 for 1976.

The balance of East European rallying can be closed by mentioning the success of **Sobieslaw Zasada** who emerged from semi-retirement to win the Press-On-Regardless Rally at the wheel of his Porsche Carrera, to the delight of numerous Americans of Polish descent.

J.A.L.



**THE** Soviet Avtoexport team uses cars from both Moskvich and Vaz factories. Pictured is the Vaz 2103 (called a Lada in some market areas) driven by **Kastitis Girðauskas**.



**WORKS** Polski Fiats were none too reliable in 1975. Here **Maciej Stawowiak** holds fifth place in the Polish Rally but retired later in the event.



**ONE** of Russia's most outstanding drivers is Avtoexport man **Stasis Brundza**, seen here driving a Moskvich 412 to seventh place in the Polish Rally.