

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 Volen Rally in Hungary, Zlatni Piaszati 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 Polish Fiat works team and of the 1975 season in Eastern Europe was the domination by drivers using Western, or more precisely, Western-made Renault, which has supported several outstanding competitors from the East since 1968. Its continued association 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 Ferencz 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 Piaszati 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 Piaszati, 3rd in the Polish Rally, 2nd in Tatra and two wins in Wartburg and the Russian Winter Rally, Krupa clinched the championship.

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 Piaszati, 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 Bussell, 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 Stawowski took up the honour of representing Polish 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, Stawowski 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 Stawowski finished 14th in Lyon-Charbonnières and 8th in the

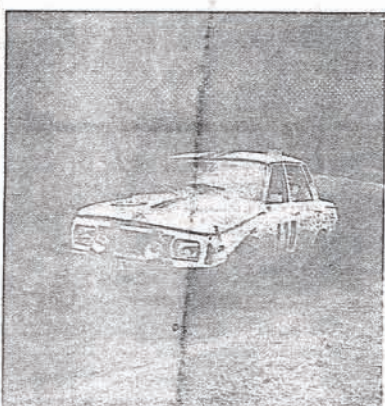


Fiat from the Safari the Poles found themselves in such an impossible situation that they could do no more than withdraw.

Two works Polski Fiat arrived in Britain for the RAC, driven by Jaroszewicz and the new foreign member of the team, Jussi Kynsichto from Finland. Their start can't be called a success, as both cars retired, but Kynsichto 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 Piaszati 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

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 Championships, three (Zlatni Piaszati, 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 Wrocław 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.

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



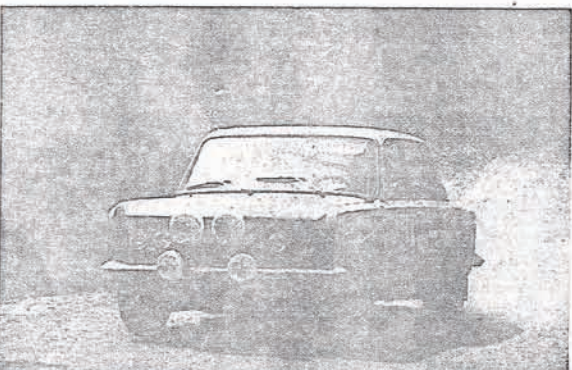
THE Soviet Avtoexport team uses cars from both Moskvich and Vaz factories. Pictured is the Vaz 2103 (called a Lada in some market areas) driven by Kastytis Girdauskas.

Firestone Rally, but further events ended mostly with disappointment, since Stawowski'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 may have had some service agreement with the Italian Fiat team, and after the withdrawal of

activity to a few selected events. Little success was achieved in 1975: the prototype Skoda 200 RS, a coupe 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 coupe body and weighing only 720 kg, 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 100 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 undrivable in past years, despite efforts of the Russian drivers, whose courage and skill is already famous, the opposition was



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



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