

Warmbold wins tough but scrappy Polish

FROM sixty-five starters, only three cars managed to complete the arduous route of the International Polish Rally which ended at Krakow on Saturday evening. There were others who arrived at the finish, but for one reason or another they were eliminated. Outright winners were Achim Warmbold and Jean Todt in a works Fiat 124 Abarth Spider, and they were followed by Egon Culmbacher and Werner Ernst in a works Wartburg 353, and Maciej Stawowiak and Jan Czyzyk in a works Polski Fiat 125p.

The early stages of the rally were completely dominated by three works-entered cars from the west, an Alpine driven by Jean-Luc Thierier and Alain Mahé and Fiat Abarths by Warmbold/Todt and Alcide Paganelli and Nini Russo. Indeed, by half-way the gap between this trio and the rest of the field was almost two hours. Paganelli retired early in the second-half when his engine seized, whereas Thierier arrived first at the finish with least penalty points but was disqualified for missing the start of a special stage. More on that incident later.

Notwithstanding the result, Thierier, Warmbold and Paganelli completely outclassed the rest of the field in what turned out to be a sub-standard event in many ways. The organisation was weak, marshalling and timekeeping poor and the results service almost non-existent. Couple this with a determination by the organising club to run a blatant road race almost in Safari style and you will be part of the way towards realising how dangerous the whole thing was at times. A fast, all-go rally needs a strong team of organisers behind it and the terrain in which to run such an event. The 1973 Polish Rally had neither and the event wilted as a result, although it seems that previous Polish Rallies have been of a rather higher standard.

Apart from the Alpine and Fiat outfits which we have mentioned, both well supported by factory mechanics and service cars, not forgetting Pirelli who were looking after the Fiats, the other factories represented were Polski-Fiat, running quite independently of the Turin team, Moskvitch and Wartburg. There was no factory team from Skoda, presumably due to the proximity of the Vltava Rally, but the make was represented by two privateers from Hungary and one from Poland.

Polski Fiat had five cars entered, a Gp 2 version of the 1300 cc model for Marek Varisella/Janina Jedynak, a Gp 1 version of the 1500 cc model for Stawowiak/Czyzyk who were eventually third, and three Gp 2 versions of the 1500 cc car for Marian Bien/Wieslaw Nicieja, Jerzy Dobzanski/Antoni Ryniak and Jerzy Zyszkowski/Ryszard Zyszkowski. The latter pair are brothers, whereas Bien and Dobzanski have in common the fact that they have both been co-drivers of Sobieslaw Zasada. Zasada himself wasn't there, and we gathered that he said he would only take part if he could feel sure that the event would be of a high standard. The fact that he was on holiday at the time rather indicates what his feelings were.

Russia's Moskvich team consisted of three Gp 2 412s for Stas Brundza/Anatolij Brum, Kastis and Ajwado Girdukas, and Lew Morozow/Andris Kalnais, and a Gp 1 412 for Hajno Sepp/Toomas Bernstein. The team came well supported by service cars, including a huge military-type vehicle as an

equipment transporter. Furthermore they were even lubricated by Castrol, though the cars bore no decals to announce this.

For some reason or another the works Wartburgs were running towards the end of the field, and it all seemed as though starting number allocation was by group and capacity class. There were two Gp 2 cars for Karlfried Weigart/Bernhard Malsch and Peter Hommel, Gunter Bork, and two Gp 1 cars for Egon Culmbacher/Werner Ernst and Volker Beyer/Werner Schramm.

A combined class for Gp 3 and Gp 4 ran at the head of the field, and the only car to join the Alpine and the two Fiats in this class was the Porsche Carrera RS of local men Adam Smorawinski and Zbigniew Kolaczowski. Alas it didn't last very long.

First of the Gp 2 cars was the 2.8 litre Capri (one of those entered by Ford of Germany in the Safari a few years ago and well-rallied since) of those well-travelled Swedes Hans Britth and Magnus Olsson. This pair had very little time for practice since they had come directly from Czechoslovakia after competing in the Vltava Rally (won by Walter Röhrl in an Ascona from Sadro Munari in a Fulvia) and were being serviced by a truck not quite as big as that of the Moskvich team. Britth's outfit is called Team Flygt.

Another entry from Sweden was that of veteran Evert Wesström who brought a Gp 1 Toyota Corolla with Bo Carlsson as co-driver. Other entries from Scandinavia were four cars from Denmark, an Ascona for Carl Syberg/Per Brøns, a Datsun 1600 for Jens-Erik Esbensen/Villy Esbensen, an Ascona for Poul Weinrich/Holger Møller-Nielsen, and a Volvo for Oluf Kristensen/Per Sandager.

Among the other cars entered were a handful of BMWs, a single Volkswagen from Austria, several Asconas, a whole fleet of Polski Fiats, a single Alfa Romeo 2000 GTV, the occasional Vaz from Bulgaria, a Seat from Poland, a trio of Skodas, a single Trabant, a few Polish Syrenas and four Dacia 1300s from Rumania, which is really the Renault R12 assembled in that country under licence. Hubacek was to have brought an Alpine from Hungary, but he didn't appear, whilst Raffaele Pinto (last year's winner) was to have driven the third works Fiat at number one. Having recently taken part in rallies in Bulgaria and Hungary, Pinto had had rather enough of that part of the world and asked his team manager to allow him to stand down.

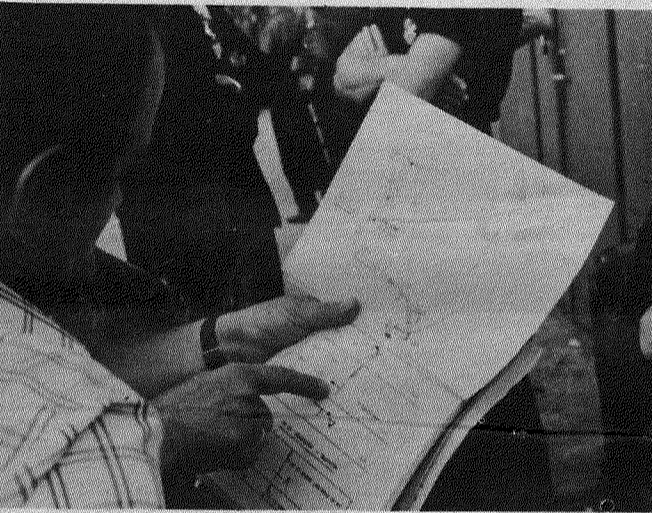
The works Fiats were in their customary trim, whereas the Alpines were using the small sumpguard, not the full-width, full-length skid-plate which they used on the RAC and Morocco Rallies. That decision might have been a mistake, for the Polish Rally was very rough in parts.

The 3000 kilometre route was

divided into two legs, each starting and finishing at Krakow. One went to the west and the other to the east, but both headed out to complex clusters of special stages, many of which were tackled twice. Each leg returned to Krakow by the same route as it left, which made administration easier for the organisers but which rather tangled things up for competitors and made practice rather hazardous.

There was a tulip-style roadbook of which the Poles were quite proud, but it wasn't quite up to the standard of that supplied by organisers of other World Championship events. What is more, the route for the second leg was not made available until less than a week before the start, which isn't at all in keeping with the requirements of championship rules. Russo said that he spent a whole day at the club offices waiting for the roadbook, whereas Mahe said that he got his even later. It seems that the second-half route hadn't been finalised and various changes had to be made at the last moment.

There were 28 special stages in the first leg and 27 in the second. Penalties were on a scratch basis, which ought to have been quite enough to find a winner, but the transport sections were made crazily fast, a totally unnecessary move by the organisers.



JURY members discussing Thierier's wrong slot compare the disputed roadbook entry with a diagram of the stage in question and its approach roads.

A 26 minute allowance for a 70 km section in the daylight, passing through villages and hamlets is quite ridiculous, and the visiting drivers said that although they were quite capable of driving that fast it was completely stupid to subject villagers and their children to such dangers. The averages in towns were just as bad, and competitors found themselves compelled to indulge in slalom tactics with trams, buses, horse-drawn carts and pedestrians in order not to run the risk of going beyond the 24-hour maximum lateness which applied to each leg. There were some pretty hair-raising moments, and there were several tales of cars just about disappearing under the shafts of laden carts.

The MPL appears to be quite generous, but so high was the average that many competitors found it quite beyond them. Even some of those who finally made it to the finish were later disqualified because they had gone beyond the



PAGANELLI drove in his usual spirited fashion to make the best he could of a rally which he, like the others, wasn't enjoying. But early in the second half his Fiat seized its engine due to a faulty pump and he and Russo returned to Krakow.

limit somewhere or other. Before the start some competitors approached the organisers and tried to convince them that they should completely revise the timetable in order to reduce the averages between stages, but only a few small changes were done, and those to the night sections.

The roads were terribly rough in parts, and quite out of keeping with a European qualifier in the championship. It's all very well to run a rough event in Morocco,

wish to tackle again unless matters are improved.

Krakow is the old Polish capital, a city of many old buildings and a few mediocre attempts at creating new ones. Rally headquarters were in a building next to the state-owned Orbis Cracovia Hotel which was grossly over-expensive and quite devoid of decent service. Indeed, the bar didn't sell beer, the shop wouldn't accept Polish money and diners in the restaurant often had to go in search of waiters, not vice versa. The Fiat team did well to rent a big house and base themselves there.

Having mentioned Polish money, we should also mention the strict precautions taken by the authorities to prevent foreign visitors making use of the black market which is rife in Poland. Rally people usually have budgets to think of, so it's as well to explain that whilst the official rate was 80 zlotys to £1, the unofficial one was more than double that — if you were prepared to take the risk, that is.

Documentation took place on the Wednesday, but scrutineering did not begin until 07.00 on the Thursday, the day of the start. The organisers insisted that competitors themselves attended scrutineering (at the stadium which was also used for the start) and this was inconsiderate and totally unnecessary. The rally was so tiring because of the sustained high speed that no one really wanted to be out of bed at 07.00 on the day of the 16.00 start, particularly as it ran from Thursday to Saturday with a half-way stop just long enough to snatch three hours sleep at the most during Friday afternoon.

The start was well attended by officials and dignitaries, but spectators were very few inside the stadium, a cluster of them gathering at the exit to watch the cars leave. Two helicopters were in attendance, one displaying a huge GTX sticker on its underside as it took off — an astute move by one of the two Castrol men who were present in a Range Rover.

That Range Rover was the centre of attention wherever it went, oil being required by competitors and stickers and trinkets by all others from small boys to senior policemen and army officers. Key rings were very popular among the police who attached them to their whistles!

As cars left the stadium the dust

kicked up from the cinder surface led one to imagine what sort of spectacle would have been created had the track itself been used as the first special stage. But there were hardly enough spectators to have appreciated it.

Thierier, Warmbold and Paganelli forged ahead from the start, but it was quite impossible to keep a check on stage-by-stage progress because no stage times were made available. Even on the day of the finish the organisers said that they were quite unable to provide the times even for the first special stage. After four stages an aggregate was produced and similar aggregates at irregular intervals thereafter, but surely it would have been a simple matter to publish the separate times which made up those aggregates.

Marian Bien had the distinction of being the first to provide an incident. On the first special stage he put his Polski-Fiat on its side, got going again only to retire later when the water pump packed up. Weinrich crashed his Ascona twice before the car finally gave up the struggle — slowly — by first going on to three cylinders and eventually none at all.

The single Trabant, crewed by two men from Krakow itself, crashed very badly after the end of the tenth stage, when both had removed their helmets and even unbuckled their straps. The co-driver, Jacek Chmielewski, received serious head injuries and was in a critical condition on Monday, when we last heard.

Thierier ran into a spot of bother when a stone jammed behind a front brake disc assembly and put a wheel completely out of track. This is an Alpine failing, many breakages having occurred in the past, both to the tracking and to the wheel hubs. On this occasion Thierier and Mahé struggled on to a service point and had the whole assembly changed. But it cost them the lead, for both Warmbold and Paganelli moved ahead. Klaus Miersch, in an Opel Ascona, lost his fourth place when he hit a huge flood which stopped the car dead. He managed to get going again and made it to the halfway stop but was so fed up with the whole event that he declined to start the second half. His partner's words were: "I have never seen so bad rally."

At the halfway stop faces were gaunt and drawn even though the rally had been running for less than 24 hours. Tales of near misses with other traffic were being told,



JEAN-LUC THIERIER and Alain Mahé, in an Alpine with just the small sumpguard, dominated the early stages, made up the time lost when a stone detracked the front wheels, but were disqualified at the finish as a result of missing the start of one special stage.



THE only Polski-Fiat to finish, within time or otherwise, was the Gp 1 car of Stawowiak and Czyzyk which was third. The Polish team plans to send cars to November's POR Rally and to next year's Safari.



HAVING his first drive for the Fiat company was Achim Warmbold who, with Jean Todt, rewarded the Italians with 20 championship points. Notwithstanding the elation of success, they were as outspoken as the other visitors about the bad organisation of the rally.

THE Moskviches were as reliable as ever, but the stupidly fast averages took their toll and none of them finished. This one, driven by Sepp and Bernstein, was fourth at halfway but a crash put the car out of the rally and the crew in hospital.

whereas the Fiat and Alpine crews said that they'd been obliged to stay on full pace notes (with crash helmets, of course) for all of 700 kilometres.

There were also tales of incompetence, of marshals taking over half a minute to put a simple stamp on a card at a passage control, of watches which were by no means accurate and of special stages which were quite open to non-competing traffic. Many stages passed through several junctions and at very few indeed were steps taken to prevent the entry of vehicles. There were several near misses, and competitors never felt quite sure that they were not going to meet an ageing truck or a haycart around the next corner.

In the regulations it was said that up to one minute early arrival would be allowed, but many marshals seemed not to understand this and there were several multi-lingual arguments (with neither party understanding the other) when crews were clocked in the moment they arrived at a control. Such a penalty given to Paganelli was put right later because the incident was witnessed by a girl from Rally HQ who saw to it that the penalty was removed. But the on-the-spot exchange nevertheless cost a few minutes.

Only a dozen or so cars arrived at the halfway stop, only ten of them within their lateness allowance. The leaders were Warmbold (14738 sec), Paganelli (14963 sec) and Thierier (15281 sec), and after that trio had arrived in the stadium there was a gap of nearly two hours before the next car arrived. Fourth at halfway was the Russian pair Hajno Sepp and Toomas Bernstein in a works Moskvich, just over 23 minutes ahead of the Zyszkowski brothers in a works Polski-Fiat.

A spot check by the scrutineers at the halfway stop brought a penalty to Thierier for a rear light which would not work and to Paganelli for a fog lamp which didn't light up, but later we gather that these penalties were removed. On the other hand, the separate penalties which made up the running totals were never made available, so no one knew exactly what was being put in to make up the totals. The whole business of scrutineering took time, which ate even further into the meagre allowance for rest between the legs.

Britth needed his exhaust welded up and stayed at the stadium to arrange for welding kit to be available when the cars came out of parc ferme for one hour's servicing. The same was needed by Westrom's Toyota, and when asked afterwards if they'd had any rest at all co-driver Bo Carlsson said "Sleep is for when you get old."

Since the restart was at 19.00, one would have expected the organisers to arrange that the servicing be done between 18.00 and 19.00. They did not. The service period for all cars was between 17.00 and 18.00 which meant that they had to be brought out of parc ferme and put in afterwards, a ridiculous complication. At least they allowed the mechanics to do the driving, so that competitors could get some rest. But they forgot that mechanics also need rest, and it would have been better for all concerned, organisers included, had the halfway stop been of eight or even ten hours duration.

The Alpine was getting its customary refit of suspension gear, brakes, wheels etc, as were the Fiats, whilst the Russian mechanics were using that well known Abingdon trick of turning their cars on their sides to work beneath.

As dusk fell the ten runners left on the second leg, to encounter storms and floods before returning the following day. Alas the lone trio up front was soon reduced to a duo, for Paganelli's Fiat suddenly lost its oil pressure. They checked, found that there was sufficient oil in the sump, realised that pump failure was undoubtedly the cause but chose to carry on simply because waiting for the arrival of a service crew would have put them out of the rally anyway. Hoping that the engine would last until they got to a service point, they continued, but it wasn't long before the engine faltered, stiffened, slowed and eventually seized.

Sepp, the Russian driver who was fourth at halfway, crashed his Moskvich injuring himself in the process, whereas Varisella's Polski-Fiat went out with broken suspension and the car of team-mate Zyszkowski when its head gasket blew. The Polish Fiats were using Kleber tyres, not the Polish-made Stomil ones which one would have expected them to use. When taxed about this the team manager said that they had to think about the service they would get during all the rallies they planned for a year, and since they go outside Poland the reason is a valid one.

Then came the incident which resulted in Thierier's disqualification from first place. On the way to a special stage which had been used in the reverse direction as a road section earlier in the second leg, one tulip diagram came up eight-tenths of a kilometre sooner than it should. Since a road sign shown on the roadbook was also not in sight, Mahé chose to tell Thierier to continue without making the turn. Later, five-tenths after the distance shown in the roadbook, a turning did come up and they chose the second of the two turnings. Alas it turned out to be the wrong one and the French pair found themselves emerging on the road used for the stage about halfway between the flying finish and stop lines without having passed the start line at all.

There is some doubt as to what happened at the end of that stage, for there was a complete language barrier. At the end of the rally one official got up at a conference and said that the start control was 300 metres away from where it should be and that marshals at the end of the stage refused to allow the French crew to return and use the correct route. Minutes later, another official (chairman of the Jury, in fact) said that the marshals at the end of the stage had told the Alpine crew that they should go back and that they had refused. Whatever happened at that spot, the pair decided to go on, for to return would have been to incur a considerable road lateness penalty anyway.

Thierier's car was the first to arrive at the finish, but it was the Fiat of Warmbold and Todt which got all the champagne. Jacques Cheinisse, after waiting to see the organisers for several hours, eventually put in a written application to have the special stage in question scrubbed, but the jury decided that this could not be done and that Thierier would have to be disqualified for missing a stage and not completing the intended route. We understand that Alpine may be taking the matter up with the FIA.

Meanwhile, six cars arrived at the finish to be directed into the goalmouth of a football field where final scrutineering took place in the open. There didn't seem to be any problems with the final checking, and later a general classification listing just six cars was published,

together with penalties, on an unofficial basis. But the following day all that was changed, and the final list (with different penalties) gave just three cars, the other three having been dropped because in the meantime someone had discovered that they had gone beyond their OTL time.

It's difficult to sum up an event which fell far below the accepted standards of the World

Championship without sounding over-critical and biased, but the fact remains that beside the other events in the series the Polish Rally stood out like a sore thumb. It gave Fiat 20 more championship points, but there will certainly be representations to the FIA to have the event dropped from next year's series.

Poland has plenty of suitable roads without resorting to the car-

breakers used this year, and if only the organisers realised that road sections mean very little in events with as many as 55 special stages, they would perhaps be on the way to running a reasonable rally which doesn't put competitors and non-competing traffic in unnecessary danger. Then with a smoothed off results system, better marshalling, a better timetable, firm closures of all special stages and an earlier

finalisation of the route, the Polish Rally could perhaps again be considered for championship status.

General Classification G.P.
1. A. Warmbold/J. Todt, Alpine-Renault, 30494s; 2. E. Culmbacher/W. Ernst, Wartburg 353, 40534s; 3. M. Stawowiak/J. Czyzyk, Polski-Fiat, 43729s.

65 starters, 3 finishers.
Stage times cannot be published since they were not made available by the organisers.

The DTV Weekend.

Saturday July 7th

All the DTV stars competed in the Vauxhall Trophy Chase at Oulton Park. Gerry Marshall led the pack home and established a race average only a little outside the class record! All the cars may have been Vauxhalls, but it was still a race.

Sunday July 8th

Having decided that the weekend should continue in the same vein, Gerry Marshall and Bill Dryden departed southwards. Bill went to Mallory Park, to the M.C.D. Special Saloon race. The SMT Firenza never missed a beat and he led the race from start to finish.

Gerry Marshall pressed on further south, to Thruxton and the Forward Trust Championship race. Here he led from the start, dropping back only to retrieve his sunglasses!!! Undeterred by this he stormed back and won, establishing a new lap record.

All in all it was a good weekend, but then DTV weekends usually are.

- 1st Oulton Park ... G. Marshall
- 1st Mallory Park ... W. Dryden
- 1st Thruxton ... G. Marshall

Tour of Britain

- 2nd Class ... B. Williams
- 3rd Class ... P. Harper
- 4th Class ... D. Thorne

3rd Team overall Tour of Britain.

(All results subject to official confirmation.)

