



Horizontal View

The magazine of the Cossack Owners' Club

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As always, please appreciate that most of us are working, looking after family or even riding and working on our motorcycles when you contact us for advice or support.

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A Warm Welcome to our New Members

Robert Scott-Godley - Somerset
Robert Beard - Lancashire
Anthony Head - Hampshire
Mark Mallatratt - Durham
Stefan York - France
Neil Chowney - Hampshire
Alison Hougham - Surrey
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**Front and rear page - Harry's Balkan
MPM 50**

Stafford's Eastern Bloc Surprises *Andrew Mutter*

What I love about Stafford is that some really interesting and unusual machines always turn up. Last year, we had Tony Jones's M1A Moskva, Jason's Buhanka van and Peter's IZH Planeta Sport Mark Two. This year we had a real treat. Paul and Harry Greensmith had brought along a couple of fascinating bikes. There was Paul's Byelorussian Minsk (Capital of Belarus) based trials bike TX TJ150, but assembled in UK by Neville Mason (ex of Nevals). to test the market for an economical track bike. Then there was the real treasure of the show, Harry's Balkan MPM 50 (front page). A fascinating bike, and even more intriguing was the little purple leaflet attached to it on the stand. Across the top in huge white letters was "MPM 50" and underneath was a photograph of a neat little Eastern European moped



carrying the Balkancar name. The machine attached to the bike featured in the leaflet (back page) was the Balkan MPM 50, a 50cc moped built in Lovech, Bulgaria, during the late nineteen sixties and early nineteen seventies. The factory itself had an interesting history. Before the Second World War, it had produced aircraft components, but after Bulgaria entered the Soviet sphere, it was reorganised into a state-run industrial plant producing motorcycles, mopeds and eventually small cars. Under the Balkan name, the factory produced a whole range of lightweight motorcycles which became familiar sights throughout Bulgaria and parts of Eastern Europe. The MPM 50 was designed as a practical transport for ordinary working people. In communist Bulgaria private car ownership was still beyond the reach of many families, so lightweight motorcycles and mopeds filled an important role. Cheap to buy, economical to run and easy to repair at home, the little Balkan machines were used for commuting, shopping and country travel on roads that were often rough and poorly maintained. The leaflet itself proudly claims that the moped was suitable





for “any kind of roads and under severe conditions,” which was probably not far from the truth.

Mechanically, the bike was simple and robust. Power came from a 49cc two-stroke engine, which owed much to earlier German DKW engineering. Like many Eastern Bloc manufacturers, Bulgarian designers adapted proven prewar and postwar German ideas because they were reliable and easy to manufacture with limited resources. The result was not especially fast or glamorous, but it was dependable. Top speed was around forty miles per hour, which was perfectly adequate for local transport at the time. The Balkan factory reportedly built hundreds of thousands of motorcycles and mopeds between the nineteen fifties and the mid nineteen seventies. Within Bulgaria they were a common sight and many riders learned their motorcycling skills on these small machines. Outside the Eastern Bloc, however, they remained largely unknown. That is what makes the English language brochure especially interesting. Printed at the bottom of the leaflet is the name “Balkancarexport” together with a Sofia address, telex number and telephone contact. This was the Bulgarian state export agency and the leaflet was clearly intended for overseas markets. During the nineteen sixties many communist countries were eager to earn hard currency through exports, and small motorcycles were one of the few products that could realistically compete abroad on price. Britain at the time still had a healthy market for small capacity commuter machines. Mopeds from France, Italy, Austria and Czechoslovakia were already established here, while Japanese



manufacturers were rapidly expanding. Bulgarian machines never achieved the success of Jawa, CZ or MZ, but it appears that at least a small number were imported into Western Europe and possibly into Britain itself.

The story behind this particular machine makes it even more unusual. It was originally owned by a company involved in importing Lada cars into Britain. According to its history, the owner of the company took a liking to the little Bulgarian moped and decided to keep one for himself. Rather than being used regularly, it was



put away in a shed where it remained untouched for many years. That long period of storage almost certainly explains why both the bike and its original sales leaflet survived together. Whatever its exact route into this country, the survival of both machine and paperwork is remarkable. Bulgarian motorcycles are far less common in Britain than Czech Jawas or East German MZs, and many British enthusiasts have never even heard of the Balkan marque. That rarity is part of their appeal today.

The Balkan MPM 50 survives not simply as an old moped, but as a small piece of Eastern European history that somehow found its way to Britain and then disappeared into a shed for decades before finally re-emerging into the light once more.



Paul's RTX TJ150 was another fascinating machine on display at Stafford. The bike was produced by RTX Motorcycles of South Humberside during the nineteen nineties and was developed with the involvement of well-known British trials rider and engineer Jon Bliss. Although assembled in Britain, the machines used rugged Minsk-based engines from Belarus, together with components sourced from several different countries. The TJ150 was intended as a simple and economical competition trials motorcycle, offering an inexpensive alternative to the increasingly sophisticated Japanese competition bikes of the period. With its purposeful no-nonsense appearance and unmistakable Eastern Bloc influence, the RTX attracted plenty of attention from Stafford visitors, many of whom had never

encountered one before. It should also be mentioned that many of the usual suspects were in attendance at Stafford, working hard to keep the punters informed and entertained throughout the weekend. Phil brought along an amazing virtual reality machine, treating many visitors to the stand to a digital ride in his sidecar. It was absolutely fascinating travelling through forests and along country roads from the comfort of Phil's virtual sidecar outfit. Gina and Phil also did sterling work on the Cossack Owners Club merchandise table, while Paul dispensed endless technical advice to visitors struggling with problems on their Soviet Bloc machines. Tom, with

his wry smile and gift for storytelling, charmed countless people with tales of Cossack Owners Club outings and camping adventures. We were also honoured by a day's visit from our esteemed president, Peter Ballard, and greatly enjoyed hearing stories about his latest rebuild project. Nick and Samuel arrived with a trailer strapped to the back of the bike, carrying enough provisions for the whole group. Paul was also kind enough to bring along his Jupiter 3 to help with my own rebuild project. I am forever asking questions about where things go and where I might find this part or that part, and Paul very kindly travelled for hours on a 350cc two-stroke for my benefit, so many thanks to him for that. On the stand we were also offered another Jupiter 3 with a seized engine. Hopefully, we will be able to rescue that machine, as we now have the address

and are planning to track it down in the near future.



I always enjoy Stafford. What more could I want? Talking about motorcycles, meeting up with friends and learning more about our beloved machines. Weekends like this remind you exactly why the Cossack Owners Club is such a special group to be part of.



Paul's RTX TJ150

Geabox adjustment without the guesswork.....

David Angel writes....

I get phone calls at F2 Motorcycle saying things like, "My gearbox misses gears" or "It jumps out of gear", but you need to understand when and how it does it before any adjustment can be made. Go for a test ride and figure out what the problem is before you adjust anything. Then follow these instructions.

Changing Up

Going up the gearbox, changing from 2nd to 3rd, does it fail to engage 3rd or jump out of 3rd when the power comes back on? If so, you need to adjust the lower of the two screws, as this limits the gear lever travel when changing up. Hold on, you need more information. When it fails to engage 3rd on the up-change, is it going all the way through 3rd to a sort of 3.5 position, or is it not making it all the way to 3rd, to a sort of 2.5 position? Out on your ride again, change into 3rd. OK, it didn't select. Now tap down gently as if going back to 2nd. If you are back in 2nd, the up-change never made it to 3rd

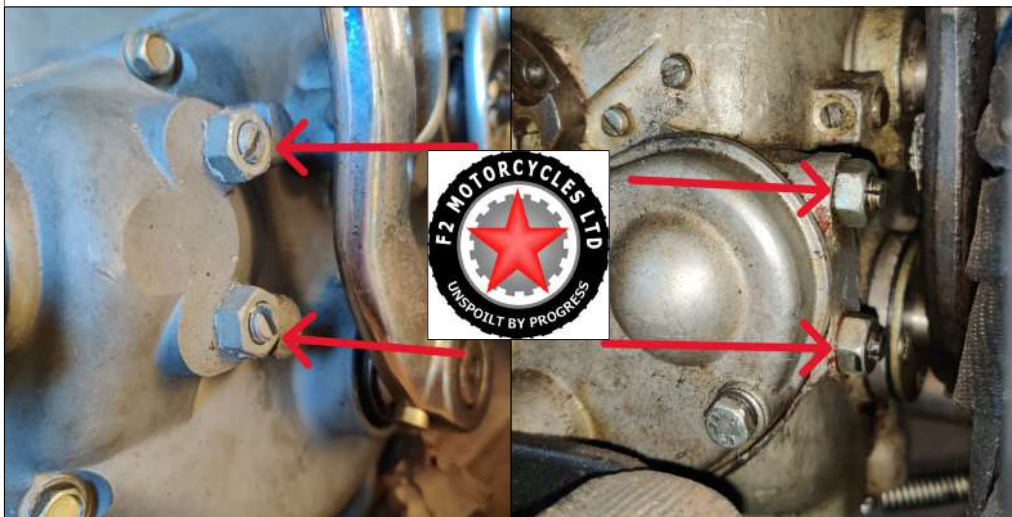
and you were in a 2.5 position. But if you are now in 3rd, the up-change went straight through 3rd to a 3.5 position. Now you have the information required to make an adjustment.

If you were at 2.5 after an up-change to 3rd, turn the lower adjuster screw $\frac{1}{4}$ turn anti-clockwise to increase the pedal travel and go for a ride. Keep adjusting in $\frac{1}{4}$ turns until 3rd is selected. Do the locknut up before each test ride. If you go too far, you will be in the 3.5 position, so reverse the last adjustment.

If you were at 3.5 after an up-change to 3rd, turn the lower adjuster screw $\frac{1}{4}$ turn clockwise to decrease the pedal travel and go for a ride. Again, keep adjusting in $\frac{1}{4}$ turns until 3rd is selected.

Changing Down

If the problem is when you are changing down from 3rd to 2nd, the upper screw needs to be adjusted, but again you need more information. Change down from 3rd to 2nd and, this time, when it fails to engage 2nd, tap the gear lever up. If you are now in 2nd, the down-change went too far to a sort of 1.5 position. If you are back in 3rd after a tap



up, the gear change didn't go far enough and it is in a 2.5 position between 3rd and 2nd. If you were in the 1.5 position after a down-change from 3rd to 2nd, turn the upper adjuster screw clockwise ¼ turn and test ride again. Repeat until 2nd gear is selected. If you were in the 2.5 position after a down-change from 3rd to 2nd, turn the upper adjuster screw anti-clockwise ¼ turn and test ride again. Repeat until 2nd gear is selected. I find keeping a note of the adjustments really helps. If you go too far, you can then reverse the last couple of adjustments to where the change was better.

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Who Says You Never See a Policeman These Days... *Jake Dixon*

Your editor and I had an exceptional ride on Easter Monday with the London Riders out to the Super Sausage at Potterspur, just outside Towcester. The glorious sunshine and the spring blossom made it feel like the perfect start to another great year on the road.

The car park was packed with bikes gleaming as if they had all been polished for perhaps their first outing after a rather wet winter. I was a bit discouraged by the long queue stretching out of the café door, but joined it anyway, having thought about an all-day breakfast for the last hour. In front of me were three guys, all wearing jackets with a club badge on the back: a blue phoenix.

I got chatting to them and discovered they were a new club, Phoenix 99, all police officers and recently formed. I heard a bit about their history; they've only been riding together for about eight months and are enjoying the challenge and company of the group.

One of their challenges has been to ride with a badge but, being law enforcers, they weren't too worried about any problems in that direction. Their president, Dan, told me the story of their start and showed me the designs which led to their memorable and well-designed

badge, while I worked my way through a breakfast bap (egg, bacon, sausage and black pudding wrapped in a huge roll).

I have to say that, despite a bit of a queue to get into the café, the service was exceptionally fast, the food freshly cooked and would have been worth a longer wait.

Dan's riding name is Pistol, embroidered on the front of his jacket, but not chosen because he packs one.

Phoenix 99 is founded on shared values: respect, loyalty and pride in the job. The flag on their jackets is run across with the Thin Blue Line and, although they are not endorsed by the police service, they are proud to be a part of it.

Dan and his club are looking for new members. They are based in East London and would love to be joined by fellow police officers, past or present, emergency services personnel or anyone who 'serves the Crown'. If you are interested, please contact them through their website, phoenix99lmc.com.

Apart from the joy of talking bikes to fellow enthusiasts, there was, for me, the discovery of Kurviger. This app can be downloaded free, or with additional features for £29 a year. It will design routes for you which avoid motorways and major roads, and take you on the quieter, scenic roads to your destination. A sort of biker's ideal sat-nav.

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"The Nasty Two Stroke"

The Presidential Sport

Paul Codling

It's been a mystery for quite a while, this particular Planeta Sport. Peter bought it full of water, and the crank was wrecked, rusted to death. Fortunately, I happened to have some NOS cranks, kept safe for 50 years in their copious coating of lanolin. He put one of those in and rebuilt the chassis as a trail bike. That took a while, so when the time came to start up the engine full of new bearings, it was in the recommissioning zone, that is, hung around long enough for colonisation by his shed's tiny wildlife and for whatever condensation there was to critically eat something important. The engine didn't

run. Worse, I think there were a few Chinese parts, always a worry, and an untried electronic ignition. They're a diagnostic nightmare dynamically, that is, they're sneaky and make you think they work, but when you screw the plug back in and work up a sweat on the kickstarter, they change their minds. We swapped emails over the following months, I made him check the crankcase joint in search of maximum primary compression, and he discovered a crank seal in backwards, but turning it round didn't help. He went for a short ride once, but it stopped and refused to start again. Exasperation sometimes comes when too many checks and changes bring



Peter chucking the Chinese Carb

confusion in the form of a complex cocktail of symptoms which exacerbate each other, and none of them is the core problem. Dead is a good place to start, then. So, having achieved that, Peter put “The nasty two-stroke”, as he calls it, on his trailer and stayed in Norfolk for a holiday. It arrived with a Chinese carburettor, one of a choice, neither of which gave life. First checks, fuel tap flow and throttle slide movement. Does it rest on the throttle stop? Then the spark with an old plug, having broken the centre electrode off, zap, right across the top! We’re in with a chance then. Three or four kicks and off she goes. Peter’s impressed, but she’s belching smoke, and the throttle response is awful. We run it long enough to wheel her outside for a warm-up, switch off the ignition and try to restart. She’s not interested. This is

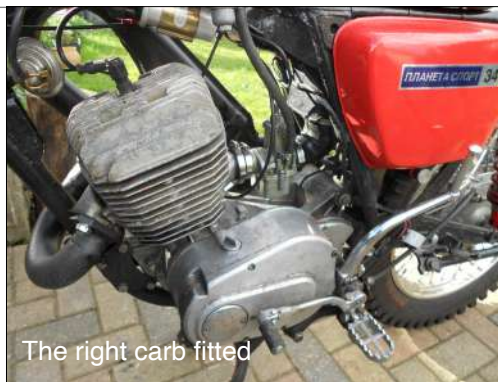
because she’s filthy rich, fine from cold, and it’s bitterly cold today, but swilling in fuel so much when warm, there’s not enough air to light it up. The needle’s as rich as it’ll go, a hangover from a previous experiment and one of those complex cocktail exacerbations. We try 4 clicks leaner and off she goes again, but it’s not possible to adjust anything to achieve a reliable idle or an enthusiastic pick up. She’s hypersensitive to the needle position, and the pilot screw’s hopelessly vague. The Chinese carb’s too small.

Our poor strangled Sport is sucking hard on a small hole. The fierce airspeed is whipping gallons of gas off the jets, and the gap under the slide is limiting the air to burn it in. When we look, the throttle’s open loads just to tick over. Chuck the Chinese carb over next door’s hedge?

We might as well. Maybe we might have been able to make it work if there were jets, needles and throttle slides to change, but there aren't. Fortunately, Peter's brought a K65. On that goes, just like it is, except the throttle stop's too high. Once we've set that near enough, ooooh lovely! It takes a while for the flood in the crankcases to burn off, but soon the smoke dies down, and the engine begins to respond to carb adjustments normally. We don't know where the needle is, and she seems to want the pilot screw turned in closed. Perhaps the needle is lean, but there's little point in trying to be too clever. This engine's only been a few hundred yards since its rebuild which means it'll loosen up quickly once it's off on a journey. When that happens, Peter might need to drop the throttle stop further and if he does, the pilot adjustment will change. Why didn't she run with the Soviet K65, before Peter tried the Chinese carb? Whatever ever the reason was, it wasn't the K65. It might have been the crankcase joint, or the seal in the wrong way round, or perhaps just the bloody minded reticence newly rebuilt engines sometimes have, especially tight ones. All we can say is it was probably one of those attempts to adjust out a symptom of something else but it added more layers of mystery instead.

The President says Paul, good words there thanks! Two points:

1. No Chinese parts apart from the "copy" of a 28mm Mikuni carb. so smaller than the std 32mm K65. See the photo attached.
2. The electronic ignition is still triggered by the original points by Boyer Bransden that have a good reputation, supplied & recommended by David at F2, and does provide a good spark..... Must go and ride it now!



The right carb fitted



Paul working his magic



Yuk mayonnaise



Easy or what!



Izzy whizzy, let's get busy. *Binzi*

Wise words from the famous glove puppet bear, Sooty. As everybody knows, the camping season finishes in December and starts again in January, the first Saturday after the New Year to be exact. For many years now, a group of chums have blown off the lassitude of the festivities by getting on our bikes and riding somewhere to set up our tents and have a gargle. For the first few years of what must now be called an annual event, we went to Tan Hill, the highest pub in the UK. Sometimes we had snow, sometimes rain. Sometimes the pub was welcoming, other times the staff failed to embrace us with warmth and cordiality. The low point came one year when they decided to close the bar at 9.30 despite having a bar full of thirsty motorcyclists with nowhere else to go.

That was the final visit and since then the group has become peripatetic, searching out hostelrys mainly around the Yorkshire Dales. This year found us huddled in a shed in Cragg Vale, Calderdale. Sadly there was no bar as we needed 20 bods, and only 7 hardy souls could be motivated this year, to make it worthwhile for the barkeep. But we did have a stove, access to lots of logs and many cans of succour, so joviality persisted well into the early hours. Cragg Vale is famous for its gang of coiners who clipped the edges from gold coins and used the clippings to make forged ones. The gang became so prolific they nearly destabilised the government before eventually being caught and brought to justice. Their leader, David Hartley, was hanged at York Assizes, covered in tar and suspended in a metal cage at a



crossroads with his arm pointing towards the valley where the crimes were committed. No community service in those days. The following weekend brought the Yorkshire Section winter rally, formerly held at Howstean Gorge but now based behind the Bottom Crown Hotel in Lofthouse, Nidderdale. Fourteen hardy campers attended, plus Bear the Alsatian who arrived in a sidecar wearing goggles and a heated coat. Snow arrived on Sunday morning just as we crawled from our tents. We get fewer and fewer MZs at these gatherings now. This year there were only two. The average age of attendees is probably somewhere between 60 and 65 and folk seem increasingly drawn towards more modern, comfortable machinery. I was riding my latest steed, an Enfield Himalayan outfit. I could perhaps be forgiven for leaving the MZ in the shed because I was reliability testing the outfit for my next adventure, a trip to Austria. On January 25th I boarded the overnight ferry to Rotterdam, meeting up with long-time chum Dobbo en route. This was our second attempt to get to the Tauerntreffen rally in the Austrian Alps. Last year, Dobbo's MZ outfit dropped a gudgeon pin circlip near the Chunnel, causing premature termination of the trip. This year, he had invested in a Triumph Tiger outfit specially for the occasion and had spent months carrying out reliability trials. The following morning we rolled off the ferry full of optimism and Guinness. Our route would take us gradually south with overnight stops before tackling the snow-covered climb to the Edelraute Hutte near Hohentauern. Unfortunately the Tiger had other ideas. Barely 60 miles into the journey, I was engulfed by a warm sweet mist as coolant erupted from Dobbo's machine.



Oh joy. Here we go again. Rather than hammering down the motorway we diverted onto smaller roads following the Rhine. Progress was painfully slow but at least the scenery was magnificent, castles perched on hilltops, ferries shuttling across the river and endless sleepy villages. The days settled into a routine. Slow progress, frozen fingers, fuel stops and late arrivals at hotels that invariably seemed miles from civilisation and refreshment. Pizza became a dietary staple. Eventually we reached Austria where the roads climbed steadily skywards through snow lined valleys and endless hairpin bends. The Himalayan revelled in it all while the Tiger continued to wheeze and grumble behind me. At last we rolled into Hohentauern only to discover no obvious signs of a rally. After a brief panic a girl in the tourist office pointed us towards a snow covered side road leading up the mountain to the hutte. The final climb required snow chains. The Himalayan clawed its way upwards while the Tiger became increasingly unhappy until eventually Dobbo had to be rescued by a passing pickup truck. I pressed on alone through the snow and ice, sliding about but somehow keeping forward momentum until suddenly the trees opened up to reveal tents, motorcycles and smoke curling into the mountain air. Huzzah. We had made it.



Sadly my tent chose this exact moment to self destruct in the freezing temperatures and Dobbo's was likely to suffer the same fate.



Fortunately the hutte had rooms available and with temperatures dropping to minus 20 we gratefully abandoned thoughts of winter camping. For the next couple of days we did very little beyond eating, drinking and talking tosh with fellow travellers from across Europe. In truth that is the whole point of these gatherings anyway. Eventually it was time to head home and predictably the Tiger's health deteriorated further until somewhere in Germany it finally expired completely in another cloud of steam. Dobbo and bike disappeared aboard the truck of shame while I continued alone aboard Tenzing, the Himalayan now officially christened after Sherpa Tenzing. Strangely, once travelling solo the journey became rather relaxing. Heidelberg, Valkenburg and finally Europort drifted past in a blur of frozen mornings, motorway services and quiet

hotel bars. Eventually Dobbo reappeared at the ferry terminal as a foot passenger while I rode triumphantly aboard. And so the adventure came full circle. Two pensioners, several countries, one dead Triumph and a successful assault on an Austrian mountain rally.

It would have been far easier to stay at home watching the latest celebrity scandals unfold on television. But then we would have missed out on a memorable experience and had nothing interesting to talk about afterwards. Somewhere down the line somebody will mention another far flung winter gathering in some godforsaken corner of Europe and the wanderlust will start all over again.

*Maybe Dobbo will get home under his own power next time.
I wouldn't put money on it!*



Before You Buy a New Carburettor Mikolai's Planeta Carburettor Problem

Mikolai Krol with advice from Peter Ballard and Paul Codling

Email conversations are always very interesting because they demonstrate how ideas, fixes and developments are shaped. Reading them can be very useful for others who may have a similar problem. Anyway, this is an edited email conversation between Peter Ballard, Paul Codling and Mikolai, who is trying to sort out his carburettor for his IZ 56 Planeta.

Mikolai asks

Hello Peter,
I'm looking for particular advice on a carburettor for my IZ56 Planeta. At the moment, I have a K28 that somehow won't start, but with Easy Start spray it

runs for a few seconds.

I have cleaned the carburettor inside and can't see any reason why it doesn't work. I'm thinking that fuel is sitting in the first chamber where the float bowl is, and I think it's not passing fuel further to the jet. I am considering purchasing a new carburettor, a Mikuni 32mm to 34mm with a rubber flange mount with a 60mm bolt centre. Apparently, this is the best option. It's a bit expensive, but it's likely very good quality. I think your IZ56 Planeta from 1981 is twin port, so the carb is slightly different too, but it is running very evenly.

Do you have any better options?

Peter replies

The carb on my Planeta is a K62. It does work well now.

The problem with trying another carb on your IZH56 is that there are so many settings to optimise, such as slide cutaway, main jet and then adjustments



considering purchasing a new carburettor, a Mikuni 32mm to 34mm with a rubber flange mount with a 60mm bolt centre. Apparently, this is the best option. It's a bit expensive, but it's likely very good quality."

There are obvious checks such as crank seals, piston rings, air leak between carb and barrel etc. Are they all good? Hope you get your IZH56 running. Do not use any more easy start spray, it is not good for the rings.

Paul steps in with this advice

Hello Mikolai

Japanese Mikunis are the world's best carburettors, not just because of their design and manufacture, but because the range of parts available is also very accurately manufactured. This means if you need to change jets or

for needle position and idle. It can take a lot of work to get it to run correctly.

I am not an expert on carbs for these two strokes, so I have copied your carb issues to another person who might be able to offer some advice. He has an IZH56, a Planeta Sport Mk1 and set up my carb.

You ask: *"I'm looking for particular advice on a carburettor for my IZ56 Planeta. At the moment, I have a K28 that somehow won't start, but with easy start spray it runs for a few seconds. I have cleaned the carburettor inside and can't see any reason why it doesn't work. I'm thinking that fuel is sitting in the first chamber where the float bowl is, and I think it's not passing fuel further to the jet. I am*

needles, you can be sure, for example, the 220 main jet you think you want is exactly 10% bigger than the 200 you're replacing. I imagine Chinese Mikuni copies are not like this, and inaccurate manufacturing, where carb parts must be accurate, would drive you nuts with exasperation. It matters that anyone you buy a Mikuni from will have only a vague idea of jet sizes and needle profiles to suit an IZH56, so out of the box, it's only going to be a good guess and you'll spend many happy hours buying and trying more jets and needles, all at more cost. Is fixing your K28 going to be easier? Probably yes, if there's anything wrong with it at all. So far, we don't know if your engine won't run because of a



carb fault or something else. Did it run OK once and then stop, or are you trying to start it from a rebuild and it has not yet run? Buying a Mikuni is going to be an expensive luxury if there's something wrong with your engine. Worse, it's going to add many layers of variables, which might make fixing your engine more complicated. If your engine is OK, it should run on a K28 somehow. The first step is to get it to run on that. If you discover that it runs badly because your K28 is worn out, then you can look for a new carb, knowing your engine runs. First, what happens when you flood it to start? Does petrol pour out of the air filter end? If it does, it means that there's petrol in the venturi and the engine should suck that in.

Mikola writes

Hello Paul.

First things first, thank you for your quick reply to my emails. I purchased further

tools to check cylinder bore size, and it is far from spec: 72.60 - 72.70 mm, so with my assumption, it's only one way now, which is to rebore the cylinder for the next specification, which is 73.00 mm, and then machine the piston with clearance 0.07 - 0.09 mm – I'm right...? I also purchased a new carburettor. A Keihin PWK26 2-Stroke Racing Flat Side OKO KOSO 26mm ATV Carb. After reboring the cylinder, I will update you on the progress. I hope everyone starts work as they should.

He also says I'm early in my work on the IZH-56, which has been my dream bike since early 1996. If this article goes well, I'm happy to share updates and findings as the project progresses.

I'm looking forward to hearing whether or not the bike starts and the new carburettor works well. As always some sound advice here from both Peter and Paul.



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CABLES: SATRA BYFLEET

SATRA and the Arrival of Soviet Motorcycles in Britain

Andrew Mutter, edited by Peter Ballard

For many British motorcycle enthusiasts, the sight of a horizontally opposed twin with a sidecar badged “Cossack” is a curiosity, a conversation starter, and sometimes a bit of a mechanical puzzle. Behind those machines lies a lesser-known but fascinating piece of Cold War history: the role of the Soviet American Trade (SATRA) in bringing Soviet motorcycles to the UK.

A Trade Bridge Across the Iron Curtain

During the 1960s and 1970s, trade between the Soviet Union and the West was tightly controlled and politically sensitive. SATRA was established by Agop Chalekian, an Armenian-American businessman involved in East–West trade during the Cold War. Although the company handled a variety of Soviet exports, it is best remembered in enthusiast circles for importing motorcycles, cars such as the Moskvich and Lada, and Belarus agricultural tractors into Britain.

Working alongside Soviet export organisations such as Avtoexport, SATRA acted as a commercial and logistical bridge between Soviet manufacturers and the British market. The company organised shipping, distribution, dealer networks, and after-sales support throughout the UK.

The Birth of the “Cossack” Brand

One of SATRA’s most significant contributions was the creation of the “Cossack” brand. Rather than selling motorcycles under their original factory identities, SATRA rebadged them for the British market. This gave the machines a more recognisable and marketable identity for UK buyers unfamiliar with Soviet manufacturers.



Under the Cossack name, British riders encountered machines from several Soviet factories:

- Russian IZH, including the 350cc twin-cylinder Jupiter series

- Russian IMZ Ural, known for rugged 650cc sidecar outfits
- Ukrainian KMZ Dnepr, another producer of heavy-duty 650cc flat twins
- Belarusian MMVZ Minsk 125cc lightweight motorcycles

A machine that left the factory as an IZH Jupiter 3, for example, might be sold in Britain simply as a “Cossack 350J”. For modern enthusiasts, this rebadging can make identification challenging, but it also adds to the intrigue surrounding these motorcycles.



Adapting to British Roads

SATRA's role extended beyond simple importation. Many motorcycles were modified to comply with UK regulations and road use requirements. These changes commonly included:

- Lighting and electrical alterations
- Speedometers converted to miles per hour, often with MPH overlays or replacement faces
- Various market-specific adjustments carried out during import preparation

English-language manuals and official documentation were generally prepared through Soviet export agencies such as Avtoexport rather than by SATRA itself. Pre-delivery preparation standards could vary considerably between dealers, and evidence for systematic dealer tuning programmes appears limited.

Dealers and Distribution

Alongside better-known outlets such as T C Munday, Cossack motorcycles were sold through a surprisingly broad network of ordinary motorcycle dealers across Britain. At its peak, more than two hundred outlets handled the range, most of them established shops better known for British or Japanese machines.

Examples included mainstream dealerships such as Camberley Honda Centre, where Cossack motorcycles could sit alongside modern Japanese imports.



This widespread dealer approach gave the machines national exposure, but it also meant that preparation quality and after-sales support varied substantially from one outlet to another. That inconsistency undoubtedly contributed to the mixed reputation the bikes acquired at the time.

More Than Motorcycles

Although motorcycles are what many enthusiasts remember today, SATRA's British operation formed part of a much wider Soviet vehicle import network. Satra Motors handled Soviet cars such as Moskvich and later Lada, while SATRA Belarus Ltd, formed in 1974, distributed Belarus agricultural tractors and became closely associated with the Cossack motorcycle range.

Alongside complete vehicles came stocks of spare parts and specialist tools, essential if British dealers were to support unfamiliar Soviet machinery on local roads. The documented evidence suggests that SATRA functioned primarily as a vehicle, tractor, motorcycle, and parts import organisation rather than as a broad household goods importer.

This wider trade reflected the Soviet Union's broader aim of earning foreign currency through exports. In addition to motorcycles, cars, and tractors, other Soviet-made products exported to Western markets during the period included cameras, scientific instruments, and some food products (*not exported through SATRA*).

Reputation and Reality

Soviet motorcycles occupied an unusual position in the British market of the 1970s. They were often considerably cheaper than British or Japanese rivals and were built

with mechanical simplicity in mind. However, they also developed a reputation, fair or otherwise, for inconsistent build quality.

Many faults were repetitive and model-specific rather than random. Enthusiasts commonly encountered issues such as:

- Burnt valves on Ural M66 engines
- Warped flanges on K301 carburettors
- Worn dog clutches in Ural gearboxes

In practice, reliability often depended heavily on correct setup, maintenance, and owner expectations. When properly sorted, many of these motorcycles proved durable and capable, especially in sidecar use. Today, their straightforward engineering is often regarded as one of their strengths, making them attractive to hands-on owners and restorers.

The End of an Era

By the 1980s, SATRA's UK business had begun to decline. Changing political conditions, economic pressures, stronger competition from Japanese manufacturers, and shifting consumer expectations all contributed to its gradual disappearance.

The final chapter came with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which effectively ended the role of Cold War-era import organisations such as SATRA. In later years, manufacturers such as IMZ-Ural increasingly exported through dedicated distributors and independent UK importers.

Cossack[®]

350S.

The sportsman in the Cossack family.

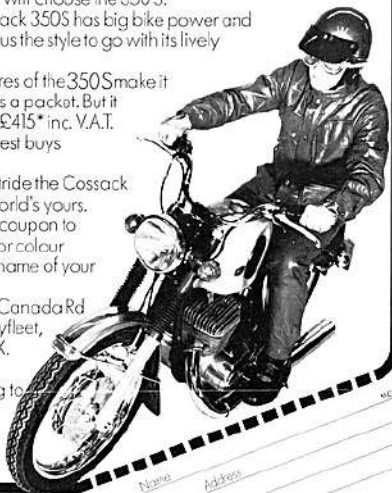
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Name _____ Address _____

Legacy

For modern riders and collectors, SATRA's legacy survives in the motorcycles themselves. A Cossack-badged machine is more than simply a motorcycle; it is a surviving piece of Cold War industrial history.

For clubs such as the Cossack Owners Club, these machines hold particular fascination. Their horizontally opposed engines, utilitarian engineering, and unusual backstory make them natural conversation pieces wherever they appear.

And for anyone searching today for an IZH Jupiter 3 or similar Soviet motorcycle, it is worth remembering that the machine may not say IZH on the tank or on a UK registration document at all — it may simply say "Cossack".



COC Club Events

for 2026

Red Star Rally, or East European if you like, and COC AGM, Friday 30th July – Sunday 2nd August 2026

Talybont Farm Campsite, Talybont on Usk, Brecon LD37YJ.

This is a joint rally hosted every two years, now more frequent than the previous every four years, this year by the MZ Riders Club, with the Jawa/CZ Club and the Cossack Club. It usually has a brilliant turnout and in the past there have been over 200 people attend. The campsite is brilliant with lots of flat grass, excellent toilets and showers and a couple of real ale and food pubs less than 10 minutes walk away. It really is a beautiful part of the country.

Contact Andy Binns on 07980 837005 email bynnsi@gmail.com or Peter Ballard secretary.cossackownersclub@gmail.com 01225 891634

Norfolk 'n' Good COC Weekend of September 4th-6th. We're returning to the campsite right in the centre of Loddon, **Loddon Marina Campsite, Bridge Street, Loddon South Norfolk NR14 6EZ.** The site has been significantly tidied up. It's quite pleasant now with two clean toilets and a shower in a toilet block which looks pretty much complete these days. Loddon is a spectacular location with a host of eating and drinking opportunities. It's on The Broads National Park with rivers and cruisers contrasting the canals and longboats of other COC camping weekends. The Saturday ride out is to **Raveningham Threshing Fair**, an agricultural show/classic vehicle weekend. We might get in free if we can blag a place on display as fascinating classics. Punters early enough might enjoy a Friday evening ride out to Geldeston Locks Inn, if dry weather means the track across the swamp is OK.

B&B is available in Loddon itself and in many of the surrounding villages. Of course you will need to book that in advance. Booking your pitch on the campsite is not strictly necessary because we're operating an informal, pay on the day, £20 per

pitch per night even if there's 10 friends in your tent. However it would be polite to ring the campsite, a guy called Lee Jackson, on 0779867263, so he can type you in on his spreadsheet.

Contact: Paul Codling paulcodling@mail.com 01508520890

COC Autumn Dent 2–4 October 2026 Conder Farm, Dent, Cumbria, LA10

5QT There is no official organiser for this, the weekend runs on the formula of the first weekend in October, so those who know go then. It's very much a COC institution. The scenery is as good as Yorkshire gets, although politically it's in Lancashire.

NB. Mick, who ran the Conder Farm campsite is now in a nursing home. At the time of writing we're not sure if we'll return to Conder Farm in October. The site was being run by Mick's son when we were up there in May but as a rented property, anything could happen. There are plenty of other camping options in Dent itself and in the surrounding Dales. Watch this space.

Anyone interested in the Dent weekend should send questions to paulcodling@mail.com

Red Oktober Day, Ace Cafe, Sunday 18 October 2026 Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London, NW10 7UD

Eastern Bloc vehicles - **TO BE CONFIRMED WITH THE ACE CAFE**

Contact: AndrewMutter

andrewmutter@yahoo.com 07775890815

The Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show, 10–11 October 2026, Staffordshire Showground, ST18 0BD

Contact: **Comrade Carl at front of the magazine**

In addition to the main calendar events, there are likely to be a number of ad hoc day events organised by local groups, such as Red Oktober Day at the Ace Café. Last year, several events were held at Krazy Horse Customs in Bury Saint Edmunds, all of which proved very successful.

Members interested in organising an event are encouraged to do so. Please inform the editors of Horizontal View so the event can be publicised. No prior permission is required. Events should also be advertised on Facebook. It is particularly encouraging and exciting when these activities develop independently."

E-mails, sent out more frequently throughout the Summer, enable short notice meet ups.

Going out at the weekend, fancy making it a gathering of friends? Email Paul, He will tell the Club through the newsletter, the more the merrier right?



Some notes on vapour blasting

Nick Tucker

If you are looking to get a back-to-new finish on engine parts then vapour blasting is a surface cleaning and finishing process that uses a mixture of water, fine abrasive media, and compressed air to clean metal components.

The abrasive is suspended in water and propelled at the surface, where the water acts as both a carrier and a lubricating cushion between the abrasive and the workpiece. This water cushion is what makes vapour blasting fundamentally different from conventional dry blasting (bead blasting). Instead of dry abrasive particles hammering directly into the metal surface, the wet slurry flows over it — cleaning deeply without the aggressive impact of dry media — see figure 1. The result is a clean, consistent satin finish that looks factory-fresh. The part is then thoroughly rinsed and dried with compressed air. The result is a clean, dry part ready for inspection, assembly, or coating.

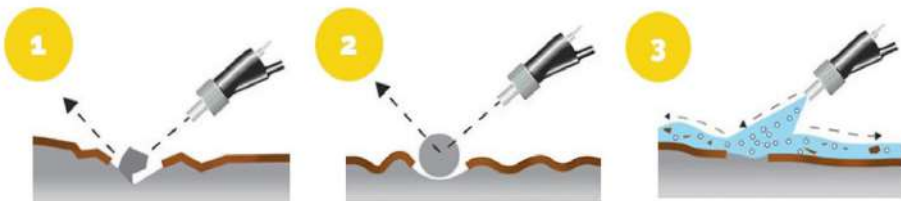


Figure 1 Comparison of blasting methods

1. Grit blasting

2. Bead blasting

3. Vapour blasting



Figure 2 MT11 Heads - before



Figure 3 MT11 Heads - After

The good thing about this process is that it does not affect engineering tolerances, and the post-blast cleaning operation removes any residual blast media. See figures 2 and 3 for before and after pictures

Information supplied by Charlie Durham of Vapour Modified Components Ltd
(<https://vapourmodifiedcomponents.co.uk/> Tel: 07366 325 681, Unit 10, Lincoln Enterprise Park, Newark Road, Aubourn, Lincolnshire LN5 9FP

Sad news – Jack Street

Peter Ballard

I have some sad news in that Jack Street has just passed away at the age of 90 leaving his wife Ann.

Jack Street was without doubt the longest serving member of the Cossack Owners Club, right from the start when we were just the Ural Owners Club. Jack ran the post of treasurer for the club for many years.

Jack rode for many years a Ural fitted with a huge Busmar double adult sidecar together with an awning to many club rallies. Jack worked as a groundsman for many many years and managed to survive using the lethal Allen Scythe and was excited to see an example in the Atwell Wilson motor museum in Calne that we often visited from the Three Magpies rallies.

Jack will be missed.

If you would like any more information please contact Peter Ballard - details at the front of Horizontal Veiw



Jack left Frank right



Jack left Phill right



Jack's huge Busmar double adult sidecar outfit

MASSIVE CLOTHING SALE NOW ON

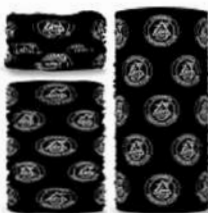
ONLY WHILE STOCKS LAST

COC branded clothing on sale at reduced prices. Go to www.cossackownersclub.co.uk/shop

Back in Stock



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£13.50



NeckWear with club logo
£8.50



T-Shirt
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Polo Shirt
~~£18.00~~ £5.00



Sweat Shirt
~~£23.00~~ £12.50



Full Zip Fleece
~~£27.00~~ £15.00



Hooded Sweat Shirt
£25.00



Woolly Hat
£10.00



Key Ring
£6.50



Ural Round Tank Logo
£2.00



Dnepr Round Tank Logo
£2.50

DNEPR

Dnepr Gold Sticker
£1.75



Star Logo Cloth Badge
Out of stock



COC Cloth Badge
£5.00



COC Pin Badge
£5.25



Ural Tourist Pin Badge
Out of stock

MPM 50



Harry's Balkan MPM 50, featured on our front cover, is the subject of a full article in the opening pages of *Horizontal View*. A fascinating survivor, the machine is currently undergoing restoration and was displayed alongside a reproduction of the small leaflet originally supplied with the motorcycle. We wish Harry every success with the restoration. It is particularly encouraging to see someone so young taking an interest in machinery from the Soviet-era Eastern Bloc, and he deserves congratulations for preserving this unusual and historically significant motorcycle.

balkancar



The Cossack Club website features a gallery of photographs — sometimes showcasing the inimitable photography of Webmaster Dave Cox — all organised into albums for easy browsing. It's a great way to see **The Past, The Present, and Into The Future** of the club. If you haven't yet been to a COC camping weekend and are wondering just how much fun you've missed, take a look at the *Club Rallies and Event Photographs* section.

For example, if you're based in the South, check out *The Three Magpies* album (from Wiltshire) then make plans to be part of it **next year!**