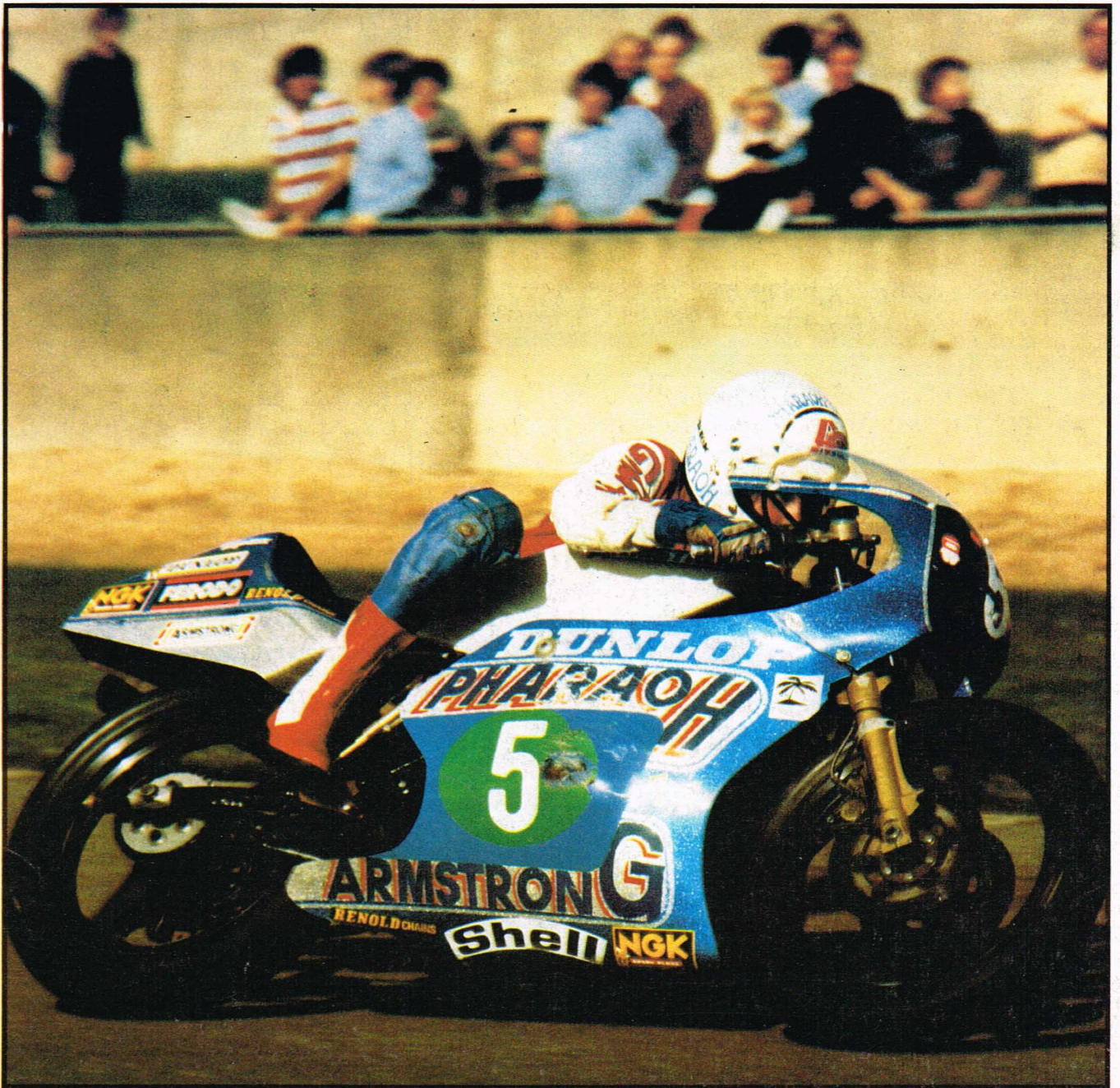


# MOTORCYCLE SPORT

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# “Friendship through Sport”

That was the official line in the Czechs' promotion of the ISDE. The reality was, on occasion, rather different. . .

IT SEEMS an unfortunate fact of the times we live in that all or nearly all inquests on the British efforts in the “Six Days” have of late tended to be extremely critical. Unfortunate in two ways — firstly, that the performances of our teams have not generally been of the standard that older enthusiasts had come to expect as the norm in the 1950s and early 60s. Secondly, that today's weekly motorcycle papers are, unhappily, far too ready to allow *uninformed* criticism to appear — all too often from readers who are briefed with a mere fraction of the available facts.

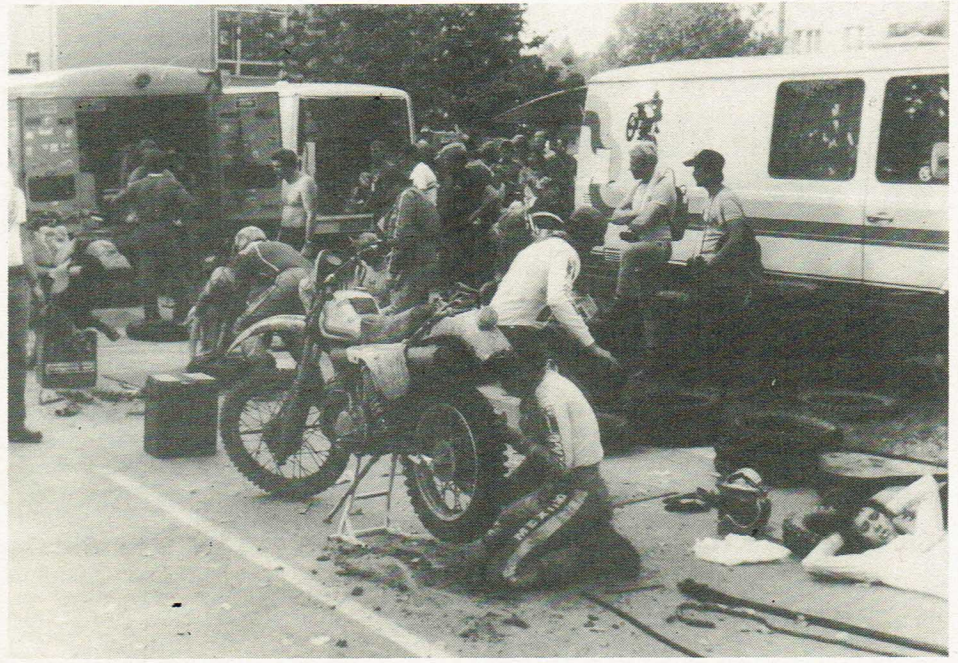
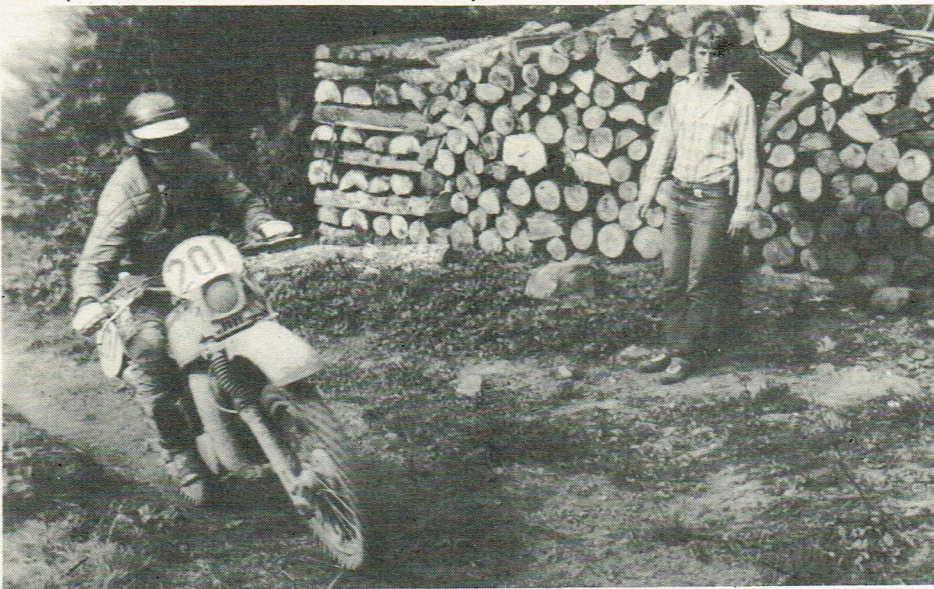
Thus after this year's event we had the situation where Arthur Brick — the dedicated team manager without whose efforts little or nothing would have happened at all — was being vilified on no fewer than three counts. These were money, and the amount that it had all cost; the lack of success after spending all this money, and, finally, the Jones / Thompson affair.

Let's take a look at these things objectively and then try to see if there are any better alternative strategies. But first — for those who haven't followed the story so far in the weeklies — let me recap on the event itself and the “charges”.

The enduro — still seems wrong to call it the ISDE instead of ISDT — took place in Czechoslovakia with the headquarters and start / finish area at a very dreary “new” town called Povaska Bystricka. “Friendship through Sport” proclaimed the hoardings. A thoroughly worthy intention spoiled entirely by the attitude of the police.

Hundreds of extra police had been drafted

*Best of today's Army riders: Gwyn Barraclough (250 Kawasaki), passes some Czech villagers' store of winter fuel near the Marikovu check on Wednesday*



*Typical scene before the final control each day. Mexican Trophy team man Octavio de Alba Jorge (250 Husqvarna) adjusts his rear chain while ahead of him a rider “slips on” a new rear tyre (a good time for this is about four minutes!) and behind, another competitor — having handed his machine into the parc ferme — lies exhausted on the ground*

into the area to help with the event but, unfortunately, they seemed interested in little except persecuting visiting motorists and motorcyclists. By the end of the event almost everyone had some tale to tell of a brush with the law.

All penalties were imposed on the spot and the standard fine seemed to be 100 Crowns — about the equal of £5 in our money. Some had been fined for not carrying passports, some for riding two abreast, some for not stopping at halt signs, some for parking in the wrong places . . . and so on. All of this made complete nonsense of the Friendship through Sport slogans and placed the event organisers in a very difficult situation as they tried to keep the peace between the two sides.

When, on the last night — at the final jury meeting — it transpired that the Swedish jury member wasn't there because he was being held

at the police station, “helping police with their enquiries” into an alleged offence by one of the Swedish riders, the jury refused to pass the results until their colleague was released (which he then was, very rapidly, because a very senior Communist party official was waiting to present the awards), and it was even suggested that we boycott the award presentation, though in the end that didn't happen because it was thought it would be unfair to the civilian Czech officials who had worked so hard to try to make the event a success.

That, then, was the place to which 25 of the originally entered 28 British riders made their way on, or about, 14 October.

For those who might now know, there were only 25 because, (a) Leatherhead Club team man David Banks had been forced to opt out because of pressure of business while (b) reigning British enduro champion Geraint Jones and championship runner up Ian Thompson — both Maico riders — had withdrawn only the week before the teams were due to leave for Czechoslovakia because of clothing contract “problems”.

What had in fact happened was that both men — under contract to wear “M. Robert” brand riding gear throughout the season — had just discovered that they would not after all be free to ride in the kit being supplied free of charge for both Trophy and vase teams by Comerfords and the Finnish manufacturers, Yoko. This after they had both signed statements earlier in the year stating that if selected for either of the two National teams they would be free to wear any clothing provided.

Why, you may ask, bother to try to get the team men to wear anything other than kit they are already contracted to use anyway?

The answer to that is that *at the time* it seemed a good idea because only a minority of the short listed riders were fortunate enough to have clothing contracts. The others would have to find their own, and for the Six Days, this can be very expensive. Because it's better publicity, it's easier to get sponsorship of this sort for a

# The Vase team — our No 1 entry this year — was well mounted by any standard

complete national team than for individuals, and for years this has been official ACU policy. Before the war, older readers may recall, our team men were photographed for *The Motor Cycle* and *Motor Cycling* wearing their Feridax suits. After the war came the Barbour suit and then a succession of other makes this year, when the deal was with Yoko.

The clothing problem had, of course, other repercussions. Deprived of its number one rider because Arthur Brick had no option but to honour his agreement with Comerfords, the Vase team shortage was made up by taking John May (500 Maico) out of the Trophy team, and this then left the Trophy team two men short in circumstances where it was impossible to replace them with other riders of a high-enough calibre.

In the circumstances, Arthur Brick was very glad to accept the offers of the remaining two Leatherhead team men — Bob Room and John Cordery — to make up the numbers, but both men would themselves be only too ready to admit that normally they wouldn't have been considered.

What about the machines? Well, the Vase team — our number one team this year — was well mounted by any standards. Andy Robertson, an expert mechanic, had prepared his own 250 Kawasaki; Derek Edmundson was to ride an equally well-fettled 250 Yamaha; Neil Buttery was being supplied with a 250 KTM by Comerfords, and John May had a 500 Maico loaned to him by the ever-helpful Bob Room. All, therefore, were on well prepared, well proven machines.

## Difficult for the Trophy team

For the Trophy team things were more difficult. Weakened as they were by the loss of two of the originally selected men, there was the further problem that Nigel Finnigan's 125 Yamaha wasn't going properly, even when it left the UK on its way to the Six Days. Problem was that Finnigan hadn't previously campaigned on a 125 and his machine was built so late in the day that there hadn't been time to get it right. Not available in production form, the watercooled motor was in fact a bored-out 100cc unit but there just hadn't been time to get the porting right.

Our other Trophy men were Andre Zembruski on a well-prepared 250 Maico, Alan Brick on a 175 Moto Gori thinly disguised as an SWM and Scotsman Douggie Kerr on 250 Kawasaki.

Most of the Trophy and Vase men arrived in Povaska on the Tuesday of the week before the event — having driven (more than 1,000 miles) non-stop other than for food and refuelling all the way from the Channel coast, in order to keep down expense. This, of course, left plenty of time for bike-fettling but, some might argue, this sort of work shouldn't be necessary, and it's very difficult to work effectively under these conditions, anyway.

On the Friday, the riders had to present



*Union Jacks printed on their "Yoko" riding gear helped identify the British Trophy and Vase men. Seen here gunning his 250 Kawasaki is Douggie Kerr*

themselves with appropriate paperwork — licences, insurance, etc — to the secretariat and the following day there was the weigh-in, when the machines were checked and marked before being placed in the Parc Ferme. Nowadays they are in fact weighed as well, to make sure they are up to the minimum limit prescribed for each class, so the term — borrowed of course from horse racing circles — is quite correct.

Only British rider to have to ask for extra time was Finnigan. He'd hoped to get some more power by fitting a new barrel and piston being flown out from England in the care of Dick Ward (of Meeten and Ward). Unfortunately, though, it wouldn't do. When they'd done the 100 to 125cc conversion they'd also altered the con rod length so that correct timing wasn't possible. This meant that poor Finnigan's engine had to be rebuilt with the existing parts, so he wasn't much further forward in his quest for extra power.

Traditionally on the Sunday afternoon preceding the Six Days there is an opening ceremony when all competitors parade, nation by nation, in front of the local dignitaries. Not very interesting for those involved, perhaps, but an excellent way of raising money towards the expenses of running the event when you can sell some 20,000 admission tickets at £1 each.

Then on the Monday — more than a week after our riders had set out from Britain full of hope — the trial started at last. First man was away at 8 am and by 10 the first British rider had retired. He was 19-year-old Campbell Chatham of the Scottish B team. Sickening as it turned out later for acute appendicitis, he collapsed after struggling up a steep hill, was brought down to the nearby time check and from there rushed to hospital by car.

By the end of the day we — the British generally, that is, and not just the British Trophy and Vase teams — had lost a further three men. They were Finnigan — whose engine finally seized — John Cordery — who holed his clutch case on a rock and at the same time jammed the clutch up — and Keith Hall of the Army team who fell off and was then run over by someone else. This meant that 16 per cent of the British runners were out of the event, as against 12 per cent average for the complete list of 307 starters — not, in truth, as bad a situation as it might seem when one considers that many countries had only entered carefully-selected Trophy and Vase squads.

The second day went a little better for us. Only Bob Room retired, and this only after he had put up a truly titanic struggle against all sorts of problems, including several punctures and finally a seized motor. No one can say Bob didn't try his best and it should be remembered that as well as riding himself he'd also provided a bike for John May. "Full marks for effort" should definitely go on his report.

And by the end of Day 2 our four-man Vase team was in fifth position in that contest — even though John May had lost time after being baulked on a hill. Our private leaderboard showed Andy Robertson heading the British contingent, followed by Derek Edmundson,

*Continued on page 610*

*British teamwork! Our picture shows l to r, Gwyn Latcham (Welsh mechanic), John Little (Scottish team member), Mrs Douggie Kerr, K. Bruce (retired Scottish team rider), Colin Jones (retired Welsh rider), Euan Syme, by then the only Scottish rider still going, and team manager Arthur Brick. Unfortunately, though, there was not enough of this sort of inter-team co-ordination*



# THE ISDE

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Neil Buttery and then — surprise, surprise — Welsh team men Steven Plain (175 Kawasaki) and Brad Jones (500 Maico). Sixth place was occupied by John May.

But if this was to gladden and excite the hearts of the Welshmen, it didn't do much for the English (as opposed to British). Inevitably, some were asking why Plain hadn't been picked for one of the national teams. The simple answer — and I speak here as one of those involved in the selection — is that you can't pick someone until you know how good he is. Until September, Steven Plain had never ridden in any international event except the Welsh Two Days and had only ridden in a few championship rounds. While a good performer, he had not done anything particularly striking and there had been no reason to think that he would be better than many of the people already on the short list. What we hadn't realized, of course, was his tremendous staying power — his ability to keep going without running into danger by going unnecessarily fast and his ability to keep going at a reasonable speed over some of the worst sections of the course where others were falling off or stopping.

Wednesday brought disaster. Andy Robertson — coming down a hill track on to a main road — was waved on by a policeman. Just as Robertson got on to the tarmac, a green Skoda car shot past the policeman and hit Andy, tossing him off the bike and dislocating a shoulder. Even thus disabled, he remounted but could do no more than struggle to the next check where he retired.

Was the accident deliberate, as some suggested? I doubt it. But the police — interviewing Andy and Arthur Brick later in the day — were most concerned that their colleague should not be implicated.

Other Britishers to fall by the wayside on Wednesday were Welsh team man Colin Jones (250 Kawasaki), who ran out of time, and Scottish B team man K. Bruce (175 Kawasaki), whose rear wheel collapsed. The Leader board order remained the same except that with the departure of Andy Robertson all the others went up one and Gwyn Barraclough (250 Kawasaki) came on in sixth place.

Why, you may ask, is it that the army, with all its resources, with thousands of young men at the peak of physical fitness and with their ability to bring complete novices — men who have never ridden a motor cycle *at all* — up to part two test standard in 14 days, cannot produce a better class of rider for their six-day teams? Without being in any way unfair, it must be said that of the army riders competing at the moment, only one — Barraclough — would be likely to figure on any selector's short list.

The answer to this one is difficult to obtain but, basically, the problem seems to be that the people who might make the best team men aren't available at the right time — that they are occupied with other, more important, things like guns and helicopters and can't be spared for what, after all, is only a sport. A pity, because I'm sure that a really successful army enduro team could prove both a boost to morale and a very inexpensive aid to recruiting.

Thursday — the fourth day — was when the going really got tough. As anticipated, this was going to be an event where, above anything, the important thing was to *finish*. The team winning the Trophy might well be the only team finishing with six men and — in my opinion quite rightly

— this wasn't to be an event like that in Italy where special team performances were far more important than ability to keep going on a super tough course.

Our three remaining Vase men were still going well and without further loss of time on the course, until another disaster struck. This time it was mechanical and the victim John May. Unable to restart his motor after stopping at a refuelling check, he went to change the plug only to find when the old plug came out that the head thread came away with it.

Then there was Alan Brick. Already down on time following a spill, he came off again and damaged one of his rear suspension units. Fortunately he was able to borrow a spare pair from British support crew stalwart Neil Hack and got going again after several minutes delay but another spill later in the day finally put him outside his hour. This meant that of the original six only two of our Trophy men remained, and of the original four only two of our Vase men were still circulating.

All the SACU A and B team men were now out. All the army team men were out — Barraclough having succumbed to gearbox trouble — and only John Kitchener of the Liverpool Club team was still going.

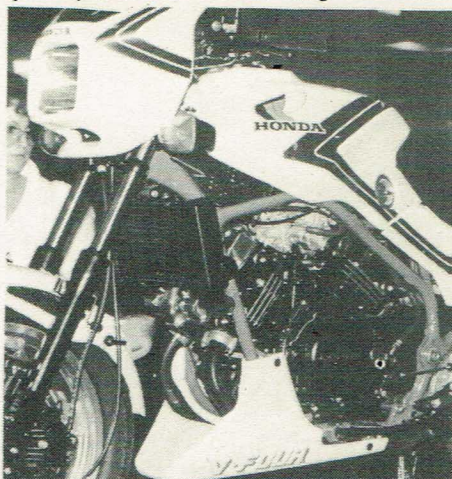
But in the Welsh camp they were even better pleased than before, for while at the end of the day Brad Jones had only just managed to scrape in on the very last minute of his hour, Steven Plain was now the best British performer — yes, ahead even of Derek Edmundson, irrespective of the fact that he was on a smaller machine.

To be continued next month

## THE COLOGNE SHOW

Continued from previous page

editorial quality. John Nutting and Colin Schiller of *Which Bike?* arrived looking just as though they'd had a tough bike ride — sort of distracted — and then confessed they hadn't the time for such high jinks. Poor old John, now he's editor, is missing the good old days when he used to rack up big mileages. Mick Woollet seemed to spend all his time talking earnestly to Very Important People. Jim Lindsay, *Motorcycle Mechanics'* Editor, and I met up quite by chance in a small village miles from



It is probably true to say that the greatest trade interest at the show was focussed hard on this model, the Honda VF400F. The public might gaze at big stuff, but most of them buy less costly motorcycles, although how on earth Honda manage to produce this for less than the VF750F is a mystery understood only by their accountants.

Cologne. "Hello, Dave," said the English voice in the middle of the German countryside. He, lucky blighter, lorded it on a CB1100R, while I tried unsuccessfully to find some sort of advantage in using an FT500.

As far as I was concerned, one of the disappointments of the show was Kawasaki's cowardly belt-drive launch. I suppose they should not be blamed for refusing to meet a rigidly buying public head on with a belt-drive GPz750, rather than on the minority-interest Z750 LTD. Presumably, this American model's equipment signifies a more progressive attitude on the part of our Atlantic cousins. The improvement these belts provide over either chain or shaft has to be experienced to be believed. Stephan Pachernegg, BMW's head of motorcycle R&D, was plainly disturbed by belt drive, inasmuch as he admitted the inexpensive threat it posed to BMW's traditional advantage of shaft drive.

His main worry, however, was the escalating cost of new machine development and, along with Piero Laverda, he was in complete agreement that some form of European manufacturers' co-operative was required to spread the load. Previous attempts have met no success.

Pierro was exhilarated by the success of the RGS 1000 and was quite determined that it was to be the last of the old-style Laverdas. From this point on, all new Laverdas will enjoy the sort of race development that made SF750s great. The next model will be a 750 of some sort, probably a V-4, but an in-line four is also under consideration, although it might not be a transverse crankshaft engine layout. Water cooling and shaft drive are probable, if only to meet promised low sound level regulations and the bike will incorporate a lot of what the factory learned during the development of the defunct V-6. It will also be designed for home-maintenance.

Late on the second afternoon, shortly before I left, Roger Slater came up all-of-a-beam. We swapped a few stories over coffee and I listened to tales of Life As It Really Is In America. As an aside, I learned that Roger has parted all business connections with Slater Brothers (Richard Slater) in Britain, and now runs the spares and service side of Laverda in the USA, which is building up very nicely thank you. How much time will pass before he takes over the complete American Laverda agency, I wonder? But listen to this little story that's been doing the American trade paper rounds, and which reflects the American attitude to safety, personal freedom, the responsibility of manufacturers, the attitude of its courts, common sense, the universe, everything. . . .

In a court case that was settled a year ago, a judge ruled that the fault lay with Honda because no crash bars had been fitted to the machine by Honda and it was the lack of them that broke the plaintiff's legs.

Six months ago, another judge ruled that the fault lay with Honda because crash bars had been fitted to the motorcycle and, even though they had been fitted by the plaintiff's dealer and were not of Honda manufacture or warranty, it was the fitting of them that had broken the plaintiff's legs.

I was convinced that the return ride would be more pleasant than the ride out, because then I'd had the wind blowing into me. It was no better going west, even though wind direction was unchanged. The FT merely *felt* as though it was struggling against a headwind, regardless of the weather. D.L.M.