

**Pete Moore** finds a viable 22 Long Rifle AK47 variant that he likes, all the way from Poland



Same old, controls are standard AK, however the safety catch can be slotted to offer a manual hold open, note the Polish eagle



The 18" barrel is chrome-lined, note the set-back foresight and muzzle brake

Given the amount of 22 rimfire, look-a-like, military, semi-auto rifles around, I'm surprised that the only AK47-type was from GSG (German Sport Gun). To be honest, it was not all that, as it did not feel right, nor was it that reliable! Weird, as their later MP40 SMG and StG44 assault rifle were bang on the money and it's hard to think they all came from the same place. So, if you hankered for the pleasure of a UK-legal version of what must be the world's most prolific military rifle ever made, then you would be sadly disappointed.

#### POLSKI AK

However, I had heard a rumour that FSU Connections had brought something in and a call to the owner Oleg Savochkin confirmed this. Called the Beryl-22, a name that would make most Brits who had read the Beano

comic laugh, as one of the characters was a girl called Beryl the Peril. The irony of this would be lost on those who live in Europe or the US. Looking deeper showed the Beryl was a Polish make, from Fabryka Broni's Archer Arms Factory in Radom, the heart of their firearms industry. Unsurprisingly, it's heavily based on their standard service rifle; the Karabinek Szturmowy Wzór 1996 Beryl (M96). Chambered in 5.56x45mm it replaced both the 7.62x39mm AKM and the 5.4x39mm AK74, AK variants used by their armed forces. The 22 version is pretty much the same deal as say a 22 rimfire Spikes AR15, in that it uses a standard 223 lower and upper but built around a 22 Long Rifle semi-auto only action and barrel. So, it is in most ways the dead spit of the original centrefire.

Essentially an AK variant, it shows a higher-build standard and some nice features, but also the same basic Kalashnikov package. For example, there's no automatic, last round or manual hold-open facility and that big and clunky safety lever remains, as always. Different, is the longer 18" barrel with the front sight set back further and a rather fancy muzzle brake fitted; also, the plastic forend has been replaced by a 4-way Picatinny rail block. Moving further back, the pistol grip looks to be a Fab Defencos AK-replacement with more to get hold of and finger grooves; nice handle! Most noticeable is the short, non-folding, telescopic butt and the lack of night sight bracket on the left of the receiver, which is normally used in all the generic AK-types for a day scope mounting, which was never ideal.

# Rimfire AVTOMAT

## UP AND OVER

Instead, Fabryka Broni have fitted a long, QD, raised Picatinny base that locates and locks at the rear of the receiver and stabilises by twin forward arms that engage with cut-outs in the sides of the dummy gas block. It's a better solution in some ways, but still offers a very high sight line, which, with their low butts, is another familiar feature on AKs. Iron sights are the same with a tangent, U-notch at the rear and the classic AK A-frame up front with a height/windage-adjustable post; although basic, they work fine. The bolt system and barrel are dedicated .22LR and, like the military guns, the bore is chrome-lined and the rifle strips like the original. The safety is a two position design; up is SAFE with the bolt blocked from moving rearwards. The cocking handle is quite skinny, but there's enough to get hold of. Although not included in the price, the Beryl came fitted with an APOPHIS 1-6X28 first focal plane, compact, CQB-type scope, more of that later.

Controls are simple, the big safety lever on the right, flips up to SAFE, where it also blocks bolt movement and down to FIRE. On request, this can be slotted to offer a basic/manual hold open facility. The magazine release is a push-forward lever at the rear of the mag well and feed is from a 20-round polymer magazine, with a side-mounted follower button in a slot for ease of filling. The FAB Defence pistol grip is preferable to the skinny AK-type; different, is the telescopic stock, a design we usually

associate with the AR15 carbine types. It's mounted on a strut and not a buffer tube and sits very low on the receiver, it has decent shoulder footprint, thanks to the slip-on, rubber extension pad. Typically, length of pull (LOP) is short at 12.5" with a total adjustment length of just 2.5", fine for the iron sights, but with the high-mounted optics rail and short LOP head/scope position is not ideal. I'm told that this can be replaced with a FAB Defence alternative with a height-adjustable cheekpiece/comb.

## ALTERNATIVE THINKING

An alternative mounting option would be to use a low, cantilever base attached to the 12 o'clock Picatinny rail on the handguard, as it would position the scope a bit more forward and in doing so the eyepiece, which to a greater degree would compensate for the shorter LOP. I tried this with a Primary Arms 1-6x24 I had, and it worked well enough. However, with the APOPHIS 1-6X28 on top, the lack of head support was most noticeable. Conversely, a compact, reflex red dot up front would be a great alternative ▶



The 4-way forward mounting of a scope that to a degree lowers height and offers a better head position

► to the iron sights. One anomaly on the scope base is the fact that it is a tight fit and Oleg supplied a rubber mallet so I could knock it on to engage the forward, support arms, it's not an issue, just the way it is! In position, the rotary lever in its base is turned to the right to engage and lock. Overall, the Beryl-22 is a well-made and presented rifle, with a nice heft to it and, me being me, I loved it right away. I suppose in terms of feel and handling it's similar to GSG's SIG44, which I consider the historical wellspring for the Kalashnikov.

I tried three brands of ammo; Norma 40-grain sub-sonics, Winchester MAX 42-grain subs and Remington Cyclone high velocity. The Normas, running at sub-1000 fps (970fps) would be a good test of the rifle's ability to cycle slow loads, as not all semis can digest it. Much to my delight, the Beryl ate it all without preference, with not one stoppage. Accuracy was also good, with the rifle more than capable of holding 1-1.5" at 100m and also holding its own with iron sights, nice... I did find the 4-way, Picatinny forend a bit hard on the hands and would recommend some rail guards or a vertical foregrip.

#### LIVE ROUND EJECTION?

A test I always do with any semi-auto rimfire, is to see if it will live round eject, to simulate the unload; some don't. Oleg told me it didn't, but I had no problems at all. One aspect to think about is the lack of hold open, unless of course you get the safety catch slotted. I'd recommend a chamber flag, as that would doubtless be acceptable at club and competition level. Accurate, reliable, cool looking and certainly distinctive, the downside is the price, as the cost of this



APOPHIS 1-6X28 scope on dedicated, removable rail, the latter is included in the rifle package

model with the scope rail is £1289, by special order, with a £1000, up front deposit. The main reason is that Fabryka Broni price them the same as their centrefire guns, so FSU doesn't stock that many at any one time.

#### CQB

The APOPHIS 1-6X28 is a typical compact variable, of the type much loved by the rimfire Action shooting disciplines. I have a similar Hawke model on my Smith & Wesson M&P 15/22. With reticle illumination it will act as a red dot at minimum magnification and from x2-6 allow you to reach out to 100 yards + easily enough. Best described as a CQB (close quarter battle) sight, the APOPHIS is a tad different, as it shows a 35mm body tube and 28mm objective lens, which might increase the field of view a little, no bad thing. The reticle is your typical ladder-type with pre-set horizontal stadia from 100 to 800m, with an inverted, horseshoe ring surrounding the centre dot, for fast

acquisition and placing, there are also lead and wind markers. Visually, the pattern is a bit small and quite busy, as this generic design tends to be, as it tries to be all things to all shooters, click values are 0.5MOA. Illumination is by a rheostat drum on the left of the saddle, that offers both red and green options. It comes supplied with two, low, Picatinny-type rings and flip-up lens caps. In use, I found the focus quite critical, which would doubtless be helped with a more supported head position, as already mentioned; but at £260, it's in the ballpark and would doubtless suit 223 ARs too.

#### END GAME

Rifles like the Beryl-22 are up against the more prolific and normally cheaper AR15-types, with most offering some form of automatic and/or manual last round hold open as standard and generally more user-friendly control functions. Plus, there's no separate, scope mounting system required and prices of a mid-level gun like the Tippmann sit at around £1000 mark! However, it is what it is and in that has a certain appeal, if you want something to make you stand out from the crowd.



FAB Defence pistol grip is a good handle, LOP is short on the telescopic butt and the comb too low for scope use

#### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

■ Name	Beryl-22
■ Calibre	22 Long Rifle
■ Capacity	20-rounds DM
■ Action	blow-back semi-automatic
■ Barrel 18"	with muzzle brake
■ Iron sights	Y
■ Butt	telescopic/positional
■ Length retracted	36"
■ Length extended	38.5"
■ Weight	7.7 lbs
■ Scope mount	Included
■ Price	£1289 by special order only (£1000 DEPOSIT)
■ Spare magazine	£36
■ APOPHIS 1-6X28	£276
■ Contact	Web: www.rsmilitary.com