

'New' System from Colombia: MECANO – "THE BEST"

The name may be very similar to a system with rather more claim to be 'The Best', but the parts are much more akin to the German MEKANIK, both in design and in their 13mm hole pitch. The thread though is $\frac{5}{32}$ " BSW rather than M4. David Hobson found a near complete example of a No.2, the largest set, and kindly lent it for this account.

MAKER Christian Le Paliscot, Fábrica Franco – Colombiana "MECANO", Teléfono: 45 97 52, Bogotá. This is from the manual, it is not given on the box.

HISTORY No indication of date but the parts are similar to German MEKANIK, which appeared (then called MECANIC) in 1948.

SETS The contents of Sets A, 1, & 2 are given in the manual, and are shown right, with my names for the parts alongside. The quantities given for the No.2 are credible except that only 2 Spanners were in the Set; also the 28h Strips are actually 21 holes long, and the 5cm Axles are 4.3cm. The Set is very broadly comparable to the MEKANIK No.21 – it has more of some parts, including Strips & Gears, but fewer Brackets & Flexible Plates; the most significant differences though are that it has no A/Bs, nor a Bush Wheel.

The No.2 box is red, large, $60\frac{1}{2} \times 40\frac{1}{2} \times 3$ cm, with a label, 32×18 cm, identical to the manual cover shown later except that it has a 1cm white border around it. The Set No. isn't shown on it anywhere. The parts are fastened with nickel clips to a cream card sheet and its right side & centre are shown below (the round brass clips are substitutes). The parts are laid out symmetrically on either side of the round N&B tin ($8\frac{1}{4}$ cm \varnothing & $2\frac{1}{2}$ cm deep) in the centre, except that the bottom left corner has 6x 2h Strips instead of the 3x 2h high D/Bs on the right. There is no obvious home for the Crank Handle (shown on top of the Flanged Plate).

HOLES 4.3mm \varnothing at 13.0 ± 0.05 mm pitch. There are no elongated holes.

MATERIAL/FINISH Most parts are painted steel but the Gears, bosses, & Flexible Plates are plastic. The green parts are as uniformly dark as the darkest

in the photo, and the Flexible Plates are purple.

PARTS Apart from the lack of elongated holes most parts are similar to their MEKANIK (MEK) counterparts but are of thinner gauge metal and are not as well made - there are some rough edges and many of the bends are less sharp, and are not at right angles. In the notes below only significant differences will be mentioned.

PIEZAS CONTENIDAS EN LAS CAJAS "MECANO"

DENOMINACION DEL A PIEZAS		NUMERO DE PIEZAS		
		CAJA A	CAJA 1	CAJA II
N&B Tin	Caja de tornillos	1	1	1
Axle, 5cm	Ejes de 5 centímetros	1	2	4
Small? Pulley	Polea transmisión	1	1	1
Bolt, 5/32"x1/4"	Tornillos 5/32 por 1/4	12	25	50
Bolt, 5/32"x1"	Tornillos 5/32 por 1	2	3	6
Nut	Tuercas	15	30	60
Pawl	Trinquetes		2	2
Gear, small	Piñones chiquitos		1	2
Gear, large	Piñones grandes		1	2
Pulley	Ruedas	2	4	6
Tyre	Llantas	2	4	6
Flanged Plate	Placas básicas rectangulares	1	1	2
Fgld Sector Pl.	Placas básicas trapezoidales		1	2
Trunnion	Placas triangulares dobladas	2	2	2
Flat Trunnion	Placas triangulares planas			2
Spanner	Llaves	1	2	4
Screwdriver	Destornilladores	1	1	1
Crank Handle	Manivelas	1	1	1
Axle, long	Ejes grandes	1	2	4
Plastic Plate	Placas de plástico	2	2	4
Corner Brkt	Placas para esquinas	2	4	4
Curved Strip	Tiras "frijoles"	2	2	4
Double Brkt	Tiras de 3 agujeros dobladas		3	4
2h deep D/B	Tiras de 5 agujeros dobladas		1	3
DAS 1*5*1h	Tiras de 7 agujeros dobladas	2	4	8
Strip, 2h	Tiras de 2 agujeros planas	2	2	6
Strip, 3h	Tiras de 3 agujeros planas	2	4	4
Strip, 5h	Tiras de 5 agujeros planas	2	6	6
Strip, 7h	Tiras de 7 agujeros planas	2	4	8
Strip, 11h	Tiras de 11 agujeros planas	2	6	8
Strip, 28h	Tiras de 28 agujeros planas			8
T O T A L		61	122	225



The width of the Strips & Brackets varies from 12.2 to 12.8mm, and they have large-radius ends. The Trunnions have a little more metal around the curved top, with some 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ mm extra above the top hole. The Flanged Plates have sharp corners; the 5*11h is 68mm wide; the Sector Plate has straight ends and only 7 holes in the flanges, one roughly midway between each pair of face holes.

The Pulley, about 32mm \varnothing with a 5mm wide vee, is made from thin tinplate discs held together by a plastic boss. The Tyre for it is a black rubber ring, 50mm o.d. when fitted to the Pulley, & 10mm wide. No part was found which could be the Polea Transmisión but it is most likely a small Loose Pulley – the comparable MEK part is 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ mm \varnothing . The Gears, apart from their bosses (see below), are very like the MEK parts, but are not as crisply moulded and ran together with a slight tight spot. The tip of the Pawl is slightly rounded.

The plastic Bosses are integral on the Gears and separate on the Pulley (with

moulded 'peening'), and a bore of about 4.2mm They are single-tapped through an extension on one side of the boss (similar to the type in 9/211).

Axles are 3.96mm Ø, 43 & 98mm long, with slightly chamfered ends. The **Crank Handle** is 150mm long o/a with a 15mm handle offset 40mm; the MEK part is 155mm long with the handle offset 28mm, and its bends are near 45°.

Fixings Plain steel 5/32" BSW N&B, probably commercial items. **Bolts** are RH, 7.5mm Ø, and 1/2" & 1" u/h (the 1/2" instead of the 1/4" in the inventory). The **Set Screw** is similar but with a 7.2mm Ø head & 3/8" u/h. The **Nut** is pressed, square, 8.5mm A/F & 3mm thick.

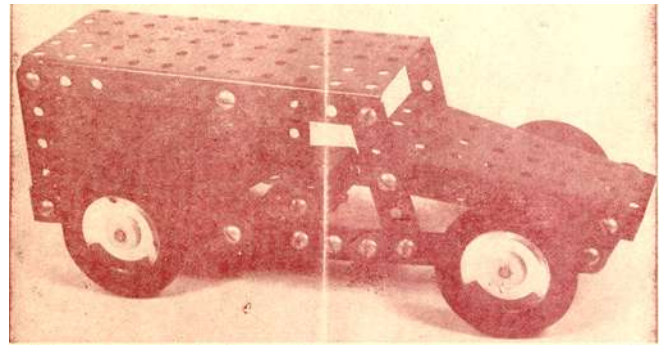
Tools The flat, dull grey plated **Screwdriver** is 89mm long; a wire one is shown in the No.1 set illustrated in the Manual. The **Spanners** are 85mm long, 1 1/4mm thick, & painted black. The one in the photo is slightly cranked at one end, the other is flat. The MEK ones haven't been seen but look similar in MCS except for their hex ends.

MANUAL The cover, below, is 292*164mm. C2-4 are pale

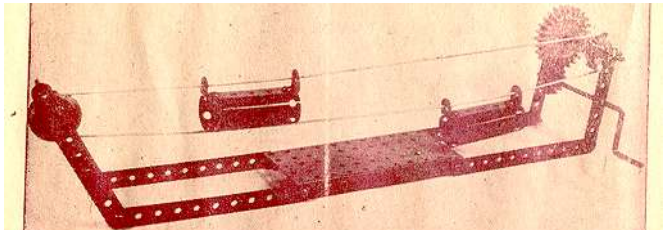


green – C2 has a short introduction & the details of the maker; C3 has the Set Contents (Nos.A,1,2); C4 is blank. The 8 inside leaves are printed on one side only with 2 poor quality, dark red-brown tinted photos on each. The 16 photos are entitled Forma del Construcción Nos.1-16. No.1 shows the layout of Set 1 with the parts laid out individually as in the No.2. The remaining 15 photos include 11 small models, usually named, and 2 or 3 of them are similar to MEK models. The other 4, mixed up among the models, are basic constructions, and 2 are again in a MEK manual. The first of the 4, No.2, non-MEK & unnamed, consists of 2 Strips, overlapped 3 holes, with a 2h deep D/B at one end and a Trunnion at the other. The latter is attached by an A/B even though none seem to be included in any of the Sets. The first actual model is No.4, Columpio para 2 (Seesaw), and the last is No.16, Carretilla Manuable (Hand Cart). 3 of the 'original' models are shown in the next column. They are about 3/4 size but show all the detail that can be seen in the originals.

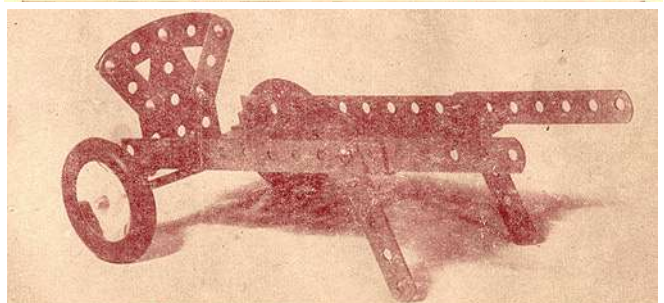
Apart from the Set Contents the only reference to sets in the Manual is in the Intro where it is claimed that more than



Automóvil Cubierto - Forma de Construcción No. 9



Carretilla de ida y vuelta - Forma de Construcción No. 13



Carretilla Manuable - Forma de Construcción No. 16

100 models can be made from MECANO No.1. Probably all the Manual models are for Sets A or 1; certainly none do justice to the contents of Set 2. The 'MEK' ones are from the small outfits 18 & 19, and given the fairly wide range of quite attractive MEK models that could have been copied, one wonders why more weren't.

REMARKS Most of the parts look useable despite their indifferent quality, but the scope of model building would be limited by the inexplicable omission of A/Bs & a Bush Wheel. And the Manual would surely discourage many beginners.

MECANO [2]: S2

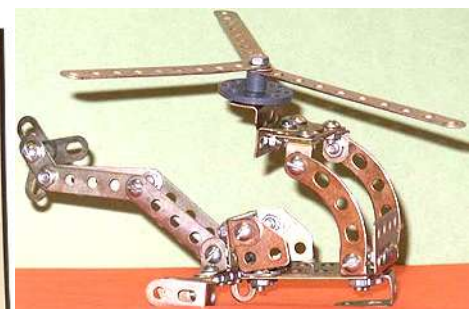
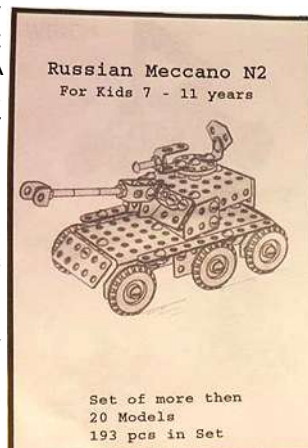
OSN 31/920

Snippet: Russian MECCANO The manual cover right shows the abuse of the Meccano name - this set seems similar to KONSTRUKTOR VOENNAYA TEKHNIKA (KVT, see 25/718), but with fewer parts & a manual in English. The significance of the N2 after Meccano isn't known. Apart from the cover, the Ebay item last Spring had 3 photos of an apparently unused set: the bottom with the parts in it, all the parts spread out, & the model far right. The box is one of the characteristic Russian moulded jobs in orange plastic with 3 compartments - the lid wasn't shown but I'd guess it would have KONSTRUKTOR on it.



All the KVT parts can be seen and they look identical apart from the Trunnion left, and the colour of the plastic parts - the Road Wheels black, also the Bush Wheel (but blue in the model).

The KVT contents are given on the MCS Extra Sheet X1.3/4/6; the parts that can be seen in this Set are: 3,4,1 of 10,5,3h Strips; 2 Curved Strips; 1 DAS; 3 Flanged Plates; 4,4,2 of 2*5,4,2h Plates; 4x 2*4h Plates with one 45° corner; 2 Trunnions;



4x 2*2h Gussets; 4x 3*2h Double Gussets; about 13 A/Bs (some may be Obtuse); 7 Flat Brackets; 4 D/Bs; 3x 2h deep D/Bs; 6 Road Wheels; 1 Bush Wheel; N&B; 1 Rod about 7cm long; 1 Spanner & 1 Span'driver. From the manual cover the Set has 193

parts, compared with 274 in the KVT outfit.

Neither the Helicopter above, one of the more than 20 models claimed for the Set, nor the Armoured Car on the manual cover are in the KVT manual.

RUSSIAN MECCANO: S1

OSN 31/920