



Above: Siochiro Honda himself

Mr. Honda goes to Belgium

New factory opens near Brussels

A PARTY of British journalists, including the Editor of *Power & Pedal*, were among the guests at the recent opening of the new *Honda* factory near Brussels.

The factory, the first Japanese-owned works in Europe, is already assembling large numbers of *Honda 50's* and the immediate plans are for an output of of 100,000 units per month all to be marketed within the Common Market area. The engines are still imported from Japan, but the rest of the production comes from countries of "The Six" and mainly from the Benelux Group. The obvious reason for the development is to ensure economic, tax free production and sales within the tariff wall.

Fourteen Japanese administrators and technicians control 200 local workers from the small town of Aalst, some 20 kilometers from the capital, and the whole job of assembly, painting in an ultra-modern, almost fully-automatic paintshop, and final testing is carried out in the one building. The language in the shop is Flemish, even the Japanese speak it fluently, and the new venture was very heartily welcomed at the Civic Opening with speaker after speaker, including the Burgomaster of Aalst and the Vice-president of the Belgian Parliament, making it clear that this kind of Japanese invasion, bringing employment and prosperity to the town, was a major local event.

A plane flew round our heads trailing a banner which read "Welkom Mr. Honda" and a good time was undoubtedly had by all.

Man of deeds

Before the factory opening the English journalists had an opportunity of meeting Mr. Honda and questioning him about his plans and ideas.

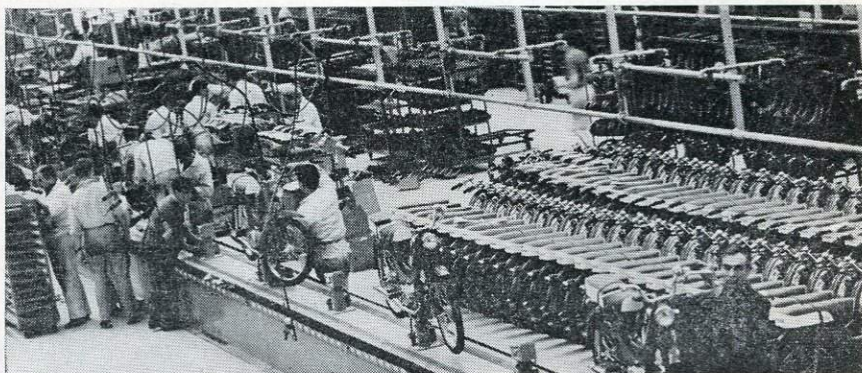
Siochiro Honda at 56 is a spry, cheerful man who started life as the son of a village blacksmith, took an interest in motors at an early age and founded his present highly successful group of companies by fitting war-surplus engines into bicycles back in 1947. Today his motor cycles are world beaters in the racing field, his production of powered two-wheelers is the largest ever known, and his research establishments are already turning out sports cars and light aircraft.

It is the engines that are the real *Honda* part of the machines he produces and the man admitted that his ambition is to be internationally known as a successful designer and manufacturer of engines of all types. The little 530 c.c. sports car (we saw

pedal cycles every day and almost all of them would take to mopeds if they could. The sales of the *Honda 50* seem assured.

We were all impressed by the dynamism of Mr. Honda and the efficiency of his team in the Belgian factory. The Aalst works will not have any effect on the marketing or production of *Honda* machines in Britain, but to have seen this go-ahead company at work and with our knowledge of the quality and up-to-date specifications of their machines convinces us, if we had needed convincing, that the name will long be an important one in our industry.

Below: 50 c.c. production gets under way in the new Belgian factory



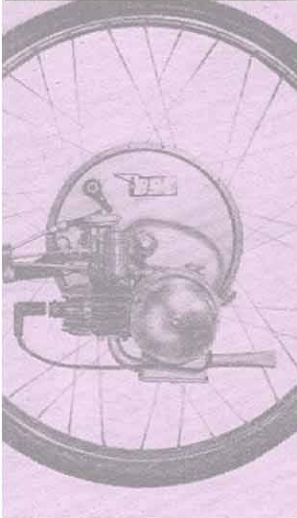
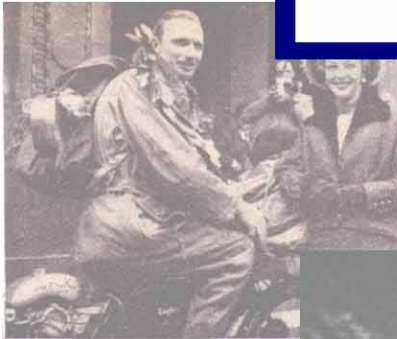
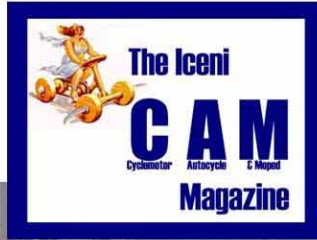
a prototype outside the Aalst works) will be on the market in Japan next year and its performance is claimed to be quite remarkable.

Although exports are obviously a major part of his plans, Honda made it clear that Japan's huge potential home market is the background of his two-wheeler production for many years to come. He pointed out that there are 20,000,000 Japanese using

ACU HISTORY

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