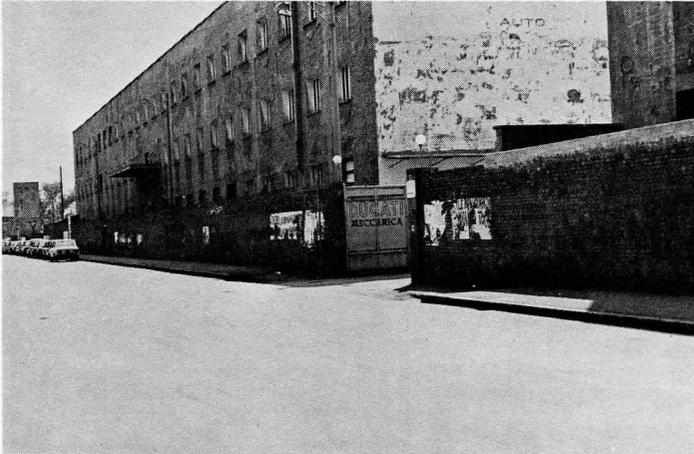


features



A VISIT TO THE DUCATI FACTORY

by Didier Campion and Franco Mannato

Translation from French to English by John Geslin, Key West.

The following is a report by Didier and Franco who visited the factory last year. They sent us a lengthy report in French but with the help of club translator John Geslin we have come up with the following. It wasn't an easy job.

BORGO PANIGALE, eastern suburb of Bologna in a street lined with old broken down buildings the Via Ducati, our story begins here as two Ducati fanatics approach a set of buildings housing what we know as Ducati Meccanica SPA. The buildings are old and years of weathering have rendered them cold and grey looking. It was hard to believe that from these huge imposing structures beautiful motorcycle are created. The ancient facade of old bricks were as smiling as those of Alcatraz. As we approached the gate two guards blocked our entrance, but not for long as Ducatis director of public relations, Marco Cupprini arrived to greet us. He was to be our guide to our visit to the factory. His warm welcome did much to calm our fears that we would have a hard time getting in and make our report to the club.

The outside structures are quite deceiving to those on the outside who may think that these old buildings are what the entire facility looks like, but on the contrary, they only surround a more modern facility on the inside grounds where more up to date structures house the present motorcycle assembly lines. These newer structures serve to house one of the most modern assembly lines in all of Europe.

We were to have several surprises during our visit and the first was to learn that Ducati is deeply involved in making industrial deisel motors. They are also involved in the manufacture of outboard boat motors.

After a brief tour of the deisel works we are lead to the buildings that house the motorcycle works. The place where they make Ducati Super Sports, Darmahs, Pantahs, the excitement began to build rapidly as we anticipated this moment.

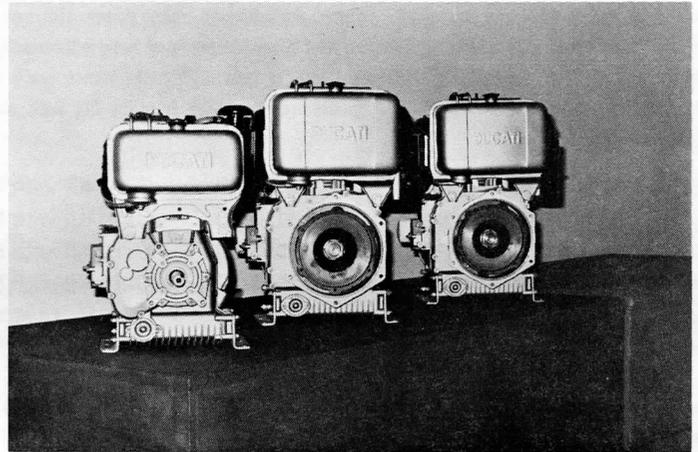
We learned from our guide that Ducati plans on maintaining a present course in the building of V-Twin engines. At the present they don't have any thing on the drawing boards to indicate that they will be making any multicylinder machines, nor will they pursue any plans for manufacturing singles such as the ones that were recently shown at the Milano Show; the Rollah and the Utah. We inquired into Ducatis future plans and were told that "the future is for later, we are very busy right now taking care of the present." Present

plans are those to keep up with the demand for the new machines such as the Mike Hailwood Replica that the English market is absorbing at a rapid rate. They have shown a great deal of enthusiasm for this model, which was inspired by the tremendous win Mike Hailwood had at the Isle of Man TT aboard the NCR Ducati. So far the English importer has received 200 of these machines.

Total production of machines by Ducati during 1978 was around 7000 units. This is a small number when compared to those of the Japanese manufacturers, but Ducati is not in the business of making machines for the everyday rider, they don't make common bikes. Their machines are for experienced knowledgeable enthusiasts, bikes for conniseurs, not commoners.

As our tour of the motorcycle works began we were lead into a very large machine shop housing huge machines used in the manufacture of parts for the engines. All the machines looked new and very modern. The place was very sanitary. Many of the workers were on break when we entered but the machines were still humming with activity. One huge machine which was computerized was churning out camshaft supports for the head of the 900 SS all by itself without any human intervention. Several of these machines were programmed to turn out barrels, heads, crankcases etc. all on their own. It was a sight to see it turning out four cylinders at a time.

As we went along we came upon some sub-assembly groups that



Ducati Deisel motors

Ducati outboard motor.
I wonder if it handles
as good as the bikes?

