

Harbinger of a new air-transport age, the first of six Boeing 707-120s for PanAm, resplendent in the new blue and white paint-scheme of that airline, emerges on schedule from the Renton assembly line on February 3. This is the second production J57-powered 707 (the first one flew on December 20), and it will be delivered in December.



CIVIL AVIATION

THE MUNICH TRAGEDY

THE cause of the accident to the B.E.A. Elizabethan G-ALZU Lord Burghley at Munich last Thursday afternoon, February 6, is probably by now understood; but until the formal German inquiry is completed the Corporation are unlikely to make any statement.

Probably no previous accident to a British aircraft—Comets included—has impinged so forcibly upon the public mind. The Elizabethan was carrying home from Belgrade the Manchester United football team and sports journalists after the European Cup quarter-finals *versus* the Red Star team. Of the 44 people on board, 21—including seven members of the team—were killed. Eight people, including four players, were seriously injured. With the exception of Steward W. T. Cable, the crew survived, including the captain, Capt. J. Thain. The first officer, Capt. K. G. Rayment—who was in command at the time—was seriously injured.

Because the aircraft had attempted to take off twice before the third and fatal departure, it was at first assumed that engine failure had been the cause: indeed, B.E.A.'s chief executive was quoted as saying, "We must get the Bristol Centaurus engines back for inspection." However, the next day Mr. Milward exonerated the engines, and said that the effect of snow on the Elizabethan would have to be examined. The aircraft had not been sprayed, he said, because it was in transit and only unfreezing snow had been falling. The aircraft had returned to the apron because of variations in the boost-pressure reading, but this incident had no bearing on the accident.

The German inspector of air accidents, who under international law is responsible for the inquiry, issued a statement last Sunday attributing the accident to icing. B.E.A.'s representative on the inquiry, Mr. J. W. Gibbs (B.E.A.'s senior accident investigator) suggested that this statement was premature pending completion of the inquiry. The M.T.C.A. representative on the investigating body is Mr. G. M. Kelly.

There have been no previous fatal accidents involving Elizabethans (D.H. Airspeed Ambassadors). Since they entered service in March 1952, they have flown 180,000 hr with B.E.A., and have carried 2,300,000 passengers. The only previous serious Elizabethan accident was at Dusseldorf on April 8, 1955, when a B.E.A. aircraft was written off in a crash-landing after take-off, but without injury to the passengers. That accident was believed to have been caused by one propeller inadvertently going into reverse pitch; as a result the Ambassador's propeller-reversing system was deleted.

B.E.A.'s 19 Elizabethans were put up for sale in February 1957; five have so far been sold, three to Butler Air Transport of Australia, one to B.K.S., and one to Rolls-Royce for Tyne flight-testing. The remaining 14, according to the original plans, were due to be disposed of by the autumn of this year, but they are still in scheduled use on B.E.A.'s routes to the Mediterranean and to Germany.

B.E.A.'S INTEREST IN CAMBRIAN

IN the middle of the recent civil aviation debate in the Commons, up spake the Member for Anglesey, Mr. Cledwyn Hughes: "... Wales is the only country in Europe this side of the Iron Curtain which is not served by B.E.A." But, he added, he did not under-estimate the contribution made by Cambrian Airways.

In actual fact, of course, Wales has been well served by Cambrian Airways, the independent operator which entered into a ten-year operating agreement with B.E.A. in May 1956. Under that operating agreement, Cambrian operate services connecting Cardiff with Manchester, Bristol, Liverpool, Belfast, and the Channel Islands.

Now it is learned that B.E.A. have acquired a 33½ per cent

financial interest in Cambrian. On the face of it, this is a small event in the progress of British air transport; but it is nonetheless a pointer to an interesting trend. The event follows B.E.A.'s acquisition last year of a 25 per cent financial interest in the ownership of Jersey Airlines—likewise after an integration of domestic services.

This trend can be regarded as sinister or sensible, depending upon one's political views. Relations between the independents and the Corporations always arouse political emotions: but this will always be so in the continuing absence of a non-political regulating authority for British air transport. In this situation some independents can only expand by coming to terms with the Corporations, and by so doing remove the political barrier to expansion.

It is significant that the B.E.A.-Cambrian development is a further independent association with B.E.A. which off-loads U.K. domestic operations from the Corporation. This is a healthy trend, and there is much scope for its continuance, as discussed in *Flight*, December 6, 1957, page 864.

For the record, B.E.A. say the financial agreement with Cambrian "recognizes the spirit of the Corporation which has developed under the operating agreement and will further cement the close relationship already existing." B.E.A. will be represented on Cambrian Airways' board by Sir Arnold Overton, a member of B.E.A.'s board, and by Mr. P. C. F. Lawton, B.E.A.'s commercial director.

B.O.A.C. IN JORDAN

NEGOTIATIONS to renew the B.O.A.C.'s expiring contract with Arab Airways are being accompanied by reports from Amman that "alternative arrangements" are being considered by the Jordanian airline. Arab Airways' threatening attitude is conditioned by the need to finance re-equipment, for their fleet of three ageing DC-3s is having to face fierce competition not only from their traditional rival Air Jordan (also operating three DC-3s) but also from the superior Viscount fleets of M.E.A. and Iraqi Airways. Re-equipment will soon be unavoidable, and someone must be found to provide the necessary funds.

B.O.A.C. controls 49 per cent of Arab Airways' capital, the balance being held by local interests, including the Jordan Government. Air Jordan is associated with Transocean, and it is likely that this U.S. non-scheduled carrier has a controlling share. Both foreign airlines were brought into Jordan by the need of each local carrier to finance re-equipment. For several years prior to 1953 Arab Airways had been unsuccessfully attempting to use Rapides in competition against the DC-3s that Air Jordan had obtained under its agreement with Transocean. B.O.A.C.'s participation in Arab Airways (originally through Aden Airways) was accompanied by the provision of three DC-3s. A third local company, Jordan International, is owned by Malik and Company (a well-known local trading organization) but operates no scheduled services.

The Jordan Government is aware of the competitive and financial weaknesses inherent in the existing duplication and would prefer to see a more rational air-transport system. How far B.O.A.C. is prepared to go in satisfying the demands set by these conditions must depend on the Corporation's assessment of whether traffic gains are offset by financial losses in this hitherto unprofitable airline.