

more passengers—the inference being that more first-class seats were offered than hitherto. In their Comet 4 the ratio is 24 first to 43 tourist, a denser configuration than that adopted by BOAC, although for both carriers 61 seats filled for the moment represents 100 per cent revenue load-factor. (In BOAC's Comet this is because at the start of services supernumerary crews undergoing route training will be carried; in the Argentinian Comets the configuration is identical with that used on overland services.) The number of seats could eventually be increased to 68, although most tourist-class proving flight passengers would agree that they would prefer not to see an extra row of tourist seats added to the present layout.

In BOAC's case these proportions between first- and tourist-class seats have been derived from the arrangement most suited to the aircraft and from the study of market conditions in South America undertaken by the Corporation in June; inevitably they represent a compromise that will have to be assessed during the first months of service.

Seats per week, one way on South Atlantic, Winter 1959

Airline	Services	First-class	Tourist	Seats per a/c	Seats p.w.	Crossing
BOAC ...	2 Comet†	20	41	61	122	Dakar-Recife
Aerolineas Argentinas	2 Comet	24	43	67	134	Dakar-Recife
Swissair ...	2 DC-7C	26	29	55	110	Dakar-Rio
Air France ...	3 L.1049G	20*	34*	54	162	Dakar-Rio
Panair do Brasil ...	2 DC-6C	12	35	47	94	Dakar-Recife
	3 DC-7C	12	48	60	180	Lisbon-Recife
Iberia ...	1 L.1049G	16	55	71	71	Ilha do Sal-Rio
Alitalia ...	2 DC-6B	12	51	63	126	Ilha do Sal-Recife
KLM ...	2 DC-7C	24	31	55	110	Lisbon-Rio
SAS ...	2 DC-7C	24	25	49	98	Lisbon-Recife
Lufthansa ...	2 L.1049G	22**	33**	55	110	Dakar-Rio
Weekly totals	23	440	877	—	1,317	
Average seats	—	19	38	57	—	

\*Air France flights to Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo only; to Lima Air France offer 12 first-class, 44 tourist+4 beds.

\*\*Configuration is changed to suit bookings.

†Later 3 services weekly

**Who travels?** In studying traffic and travellers from South America it is impossible to categorize so big a market. BOAC serve Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, each of which has different affiliations to Europe, contrasting interests and standards of living, and different political, cultural and economic backgrounds. But undoubtedly the most important markets for BOAC at the moment are Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in Brazil and Buenos Aires in Argentina. These are the great business centres of the South American continent and it is the carriage of business traffic to Europe and to the United Kingdom which must be the mainstay of the corporation's year-round load factor. It represents perhaps 30 per cent of the total uplift—just about the proportion, incidentally, of first-class seats in the Comet. Of the businesses in these cities some are concerned with the production of motor cars under licence (Fiat, Volkswagen, BMC and Renault are active in South America), and the interchange of executives and technicians between the South American countries and the United Kingdom, German, French and Italian engineering industries account for an appreciable proportion of the total traffic flow. But production of cars is only part of the ebullient South American industry, so it is axiomatic that the better the trade relations between the United Kingdom and South American countries the better our national carrier can expect to do. The remaining and largest category of travellers can be classified as those whose primary interest is tourism, sport, or the religious or cultural affiliations of South America with other parts of the world—for example the close Brazilian connection with Portugal or the home ties of the half-million Japanese who also live in that country.

There is also a tradition among the more wealthy South Americans—just as there is among many inhabitants of the United States—that Europe should be visited at least once during the course of a lifetime. There is a major task here for the British Travel and Holidays Association—who have offices in Buenos Aires and are represented in Rio—to encourage travellers to include London in their European itinerary; their campaign will now be mounting for the peak travel season of late April to August and their effort should be given impetus by the introduction of BOAC's services this January.

But this (as BOAC's traffic manager at Rio and Sao Paulo was at pains to point out to the writer) is probably as far as generalizations can go. "Brazil," he explained, "is a special case, because here there is no middle class." The majority of the traffic consists of businessmen, and if the corporation had only Rio and Sao Paulo to consider the service might well take on a different aspect, with greater emphasis on high-speed, first-class travel.

One other great market remains relatively untapped—the con-



Behind the Panagra DC-4 is Buenos Aires' imposing terminal building

siderable number of passengers who travel to and from the eastern South American seaboard by sea. Many South American tourists, it is claimed, save hard to travel to Europe or the United States by air and then return by sea, bringing with them sufficient purchases to recoup part of the cost of their journey. These are travellers who would benefit from economy-class travel, but as yet they are insufficiently numerous for South Atlantic promotional fares to have been seriously considered—this in spite of the Great South American Rate War in which discounts of up to 50 per cent were offered.

Earlier in this article the two questions posed were: Can BOAC hope to operate its South Atlantic services at a profit? And why has this point in time been chosen for their re-introduction after a lapse of five years? Having brushed in the the broad background to this vast South American canvas, we might now examine in greater detail what the corporation has to offer on these routes, and what it may hope to gain.

As already remarked upon, the schedule which will begin this month offers very little increase in capacity in a market that has expanded quite appreciably. In the past five-and-a-half years a steady effort has been made in keeping the name of BOAC before the South American public by operating off-line sales offices and by keeping up contacts and a flow of information from staff serving in South America during the period when there were no operations. Small though this effort has been in competition with the sales campaigns mounted by the other airlines on this competitive route, BOAC claim—with a good measure of justification—that the public image of the corporation has remained favourable. But it must be added that on-the-spot confidence in what has been achieved over the past five years varies considerably, and it is probably true to say that the two most pro-British, pro-BOAC countries are Uruguay and Chile—unfortunately also the smallest generators of traffic.

To try to get the profit-potential of this service in perspective a little arithmetic shows that the average sector-length on BOAC's South Atlantic service is the surprisingly low figure of 863 n.m., since two ultra-short stages are included—Madrid to Lisbon (over which there are no traffic rights) and from Montevideo along the River Plate to Buenos Aires. Even the longest sector—Dakar to Recife—is only 1,725 n.m. Making some rather broad assumptions about the ratio of BOAC's direct to indirect operating costs, the cost of Comet operation over this hypothetical stage, and Comet earnings on the South American route (about £2.25 per aircraft n.m. on 100 per cent load factor) it seems that total costs calculated on a basis of twice ATA formula direct operating costs could be covered on load factors of about 50 per cent, although this must be factored to bring it into line with BOAC's actual operating costs (which are believed to be somewhat higher) and by the promotional and establishment costs inherent in returning to the South American route. Initially these costs could well demand a break-even load factor that would be out of reach over any sustained period.

Apart from January 1960 being about the earliest date that BOAC have had the capacity available to resume this service, there are two other powerful reasons why this period should be chosen. From this summer, the big jets are to be introduced on the South American routes by competitive carriers, and it is

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Measure of the Comet's prestige in South America: no Chilean airline operates the Comet, but it features nevertheless on the nation's stamps

