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start in 1983-84. It is expected that
some DC-9s will remain in service
with Aero Transporti Italiani (the air-
line's domestic subsidiary, wholly
owned and controlled) until 1987, air-
craft on domestic operations not being subject to EEC-wide noise regulations. Considerable attention was focused on Alitalia last year when the airline ordered a substantial batch of DC-lOs, including the first DC-10-30AFs, and then cancelled the order within a matter of months. Uncertainty over DC-10 maintenance costs in the after-math of the Chicago accident, which occurred only days after the Alitalia order was signed, was quoted publicly as the reason why Italian Government approval of the order was not forth-coming. The reasons, however, went beyond this aspect of the DC-10 pro-gramme.
The DC-10 order placed in 1979 was vital to Alitalia's fleet planning, be-cause the airline had decided to standardise on a single basic long-haul aircraft type for passenger and freight operations. Boeing offered to replace Alitalia's old and payload-limited 747s with new aircraft, includ-ing Combis. This offer was attractive in its potential economics; but at lower traffic levels McDonnell Douglas' rival offer offered a better return. MDC was offering more DC-10-30s and the new freighter in the short term, the 747s being replaced by DC-10

Alitalia's DCSs (foreground) will be phased out as new 747s arrive, but the DC-9 fleet (background) may survive beyond 1985 and some are likely to be transferred to Alitalia's domestic subsidiary ATI

Super 62s, intercontinental aircraft stretched by 26-7ft compared with the DC-10-30.

Alitalia signed the DC-10 order in May in the expectation that the DC-10 Super 60 series would be launched in October. But immediately after Chicago the company suspended work on the Super 60 in order to concen-trate on the accident investigation. Alitalia became uncertain whether the St Louis corporate board would be prepared to sanction development of the stretched aircraft. One Alitalia executive suggests that the decision might have gone the other way had the airline been dealing only with the Long Beach management. At that point, Boeing came back with a take-it-or-leave-it offer which included an agreement to buy back Alitalia's old 747s for $140 million. (Neither Luft-hansa nor Singapore Airlines managed to get buy-back agreements when they replaced their 747s.) This, combined with continuing uncertainty over the DC-10 Super 62, swung the deal against MDC.
Alitalia's decision not to rely on the DC-10-62 was in a sense a self-fulfill-ing prophecy, setting a trend for DC-10 operators to step up to the 747 and then standardise on the larger air-craft. Alitalia's DC-lOs will probably be retired by the late 1980s, possibly by 1985.
The replacement of the DC-9s is not urgent as yet, although the airline will have to take a decision within a year or two. Alitalia's view is that the sensible course must be to wait for any new projects such as the McDonnell Douglas ATMR, Fokker F.29 or the Airbus Industrie SA to materialise. Its view is that the route system is sufficiently malleable to accept anything between an aircraft the size of the 727 (150 seats) and an A310.

Operationally, and to some extent commercially, Alitalia's biggest prob-lem is that the main market for busi-ness air travel in Italy is Milan. But when Feruccio Pavolini, heading Alitalia's operations co-ordination management team and responsible for improving the airline's punctuality record, remarks that "we shouldn't be based in Rome—we should be based in Milan" he is expressing an ideal rather than a concrete plan, because there is no chance of Alitalia with-drawing its employment from the Rome area to the industrial North. This does not obscure the fact that Milan is Alitalia's biggest market and yet is not the hub of the system. Serious deterioration in Alitalia's punctuality between the end of 1977 and October 1978 led to the adoption of a number of measures to improve the airline's performance. The pro-portion of flights departing within 15min of the scheduled time has been improved by 15-20 percentage points since then, but at a considerable cost because most of the delays were found to have been due to outside

causes. Alitalia's main remedy has been to build more slack into the operation, increasing flying time, turn-round time and the amount of "spare" aircraft time at a cost of 5,000hr annual utilisation. Pavolini comments that "the problem of ATC will be the problem of the next few years. Run-ning around Europe will become almost impossible. There are too many states, and too many computers, and the computers don't speak to each other." Better unified ATC is, in Pavolini's view, indispensable. "Euro-control is too lenient."

All-weather operations is an area where Alitalia is doing something to improve its record, and the Italian Government is helping. The airline has negotiated a new seniority schedule with its pilots, classifying its aircraft in three groups (DC-10/747, A300/DC-8/727 and DC-9) instead of taking them all independently. The creation of a new 747 captain now implies only six conversions instead of ten (the number would have gone up to 12 with the introduction of the A300), and increases the length of time pilots spend on each type. Train-ing beyond Category I is thus possible for the first time; the A300 will be up to Cat II by the winter. "But it won't help us at Milan," warns Pavolini. "The fog of Milan is not the usual fog. When Milan is closed, it's closed. Not Cat II, not Cat III. It's zero." The solution to this will be available by the mid-1980s, when new facilities at Milan Malpensa, far less fogbound than Milan Linate, become available.

Training for the future
On the training side, Alitalia is. close to founding its own pilot school to substitute for the diminishing flow of ex-military pilots and forthcoming re-tirements. The first group of cadets— all of whom must start with a private pilot's licence and their military ser-vice behind them—is about to begin English-language classes. Output will be variable between 35 and 70 crew a year.
One unusual aspect of the course will be the aircraft used; Alitalia plans to do all single-engined train-ing on a high-performance type such as the Siai SF.260 before transition-ing directly to a twin-turboprop, which the airline considers a better prepara-tion for the twin-engined jets to which they will graduate. Aircraft orders are expected to be announced soon. Alitalia's present weakness and its potential strength is that it carries only 40 per cent of Italian-generated traffic while other European flag car-riers take 85 per cent and "upwards of the home market. The standard and the image of the product are clearly in need of improvement, and at the moment they seem to be get-ting it. If Alitalia can sustain its improvement, it has a vast potential market in that missing share of native traffic. B

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