Germany beyond Airbus

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he civil aviation scene in Germany is overshadowed by the Airbus
venture and its recurring financial
woes, which demand considerable Govern-ment financial support. This cannot be termed as straightforward subsidy, as US manufacturers imply, but should be seen instead as an attempt by the Europeans to create a joint aviation industry which might eventually take the place of the various national enterprises.
The venture should, therefore, not be observed exclusively from the economic point of view, although this plays a substantial role, but also from the political angle. The creation of Airbus Industrie is an attempt to cut the umbilical cord which for decades has tied Europe to the US aviation industry. Technologically this attempt has been a success, and it prom-ises to become a commercial one even-tually. In West Germany, the price of this opportunity to enter the commercial aviation market has been high, however, and not only in terms of Deutschmarks spent.

No treasury is inexhaustible, not even that of comparatively rich West Germany. Since its initiation, the Airbus programme has been supported by the West German Government with close to DM8 billion ($4-5 billion), and the latest request for help, voiced in mid-May, included not only DM2 • 9 billion for A330/A340 devel-opment, but DM2-3 billion to write off past German debts on the programme. It

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Promising projects and financial woes dominate the West

German aerospace industry. Stefan Geisenheyner reports from Bonn.

was turned down by the Minister of Finances, Mr Stoltenberg. Still, some substantial funds will be forthcoming. They will be welcomed by one part of the German aviation industry as essential support, while those sectors of industry not directly involved in the Airbus programme are virtually on the dole. Promising projects are therefore unable to mature.

Seastar

A typical example is the Dornier Seastar CD2 amphibian. Designed and built by Claudius Dornier Seastar (not to be confused with Dornier), it is an inno-vative aircraft developed for a specific market. With minor exceptions the aircraft is of all-composite construction. The Seastar features an aerodynami-cally clean, glassfibre wing, reinforced in critical locations by graphite-epoxy struc-

Claudius Dornier is now flying a pre-production Seastar

tures. The fuselage is constructed largely of the same material. Two 500 s.h.p. Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6-112 turboprops provide adequate power for short take-off and landing distances on land or water. Ranges of 1,000 n.m. with a 1,0001b payload, down to 200 n.m. with a 3,0001b payload, are offered. Twelve passengers can be carried in three-abreast seating in addition to two pilots.
A pre-production model is flying now, and FAA certification is expected by the end of 1988. For many regions of the world such an amphibian, which according to latest company estimates will cost around $5 million, would be a definite asset.
So far three sales have been concluded, down payments for 11 options are on the books, and more than 140 intentions to buy have been voiced. Before initiation of the programme Dornier Seastar conduc-ted an intensive market study, and came to the conclusion that a potential market exists for hundreds of amphibians. The company aims to sell several hundred aircraft during the coming decade.

Research, development, and produc-tion-tooling costs for the Seastar have been minimal compared with Airbus expenditure. From 1982 they amount to barely DM30 million, of which DM22 million were company-generated funds, and only DM8 million came as Govern-ment assistance. Since 1985 no further Government help has been provided, because all available funds had to go into

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