

Sixtieth of the Latest Recognition Series

Aircraft Types and

FIAT B.R. 20

APPROXIMATELY in the same weight class as our own Wellington, the Fiat B.R.20 can claim two distinctive characteristics among the bombers of the *Regia Aeronautica*; it follows the twin-engined formula instead of the three-engined layout more usually favoured by Italian designers, and it was the type chosen to operate against London when Mussolini asked Hitler to allow him to share in the honour of bombing Britain's capital.

Possibly it was chosen for this job because it was a twin-engined, mid-wing design, with some idea that it would not be so easily identifiable as a typically Italian three-engined type when it appeared in daylight over our shores. If so, that was just another of Mussolini's little blunders, for it will be remembered that very few of the B.R.20 bombers which left their Belgian bases ever returned to them; most of them "had the honour" of being shot down into the English Channel by Spitfire and Hurricane pilots who had not the slightest difficulty in either identifying or disposing of them.

Possibly the most characteristically Italian part of the B.R.20 is its twin tail, with its rounded fins and rudders set above the tailplane well in from the tips and strut-braced to the fuselage.

Powered by a pair of 1,000 h.p. Fiat A.80 R.C.41 18-cylinder double-row, air-cooled radial engines, it has a top speed of 264 m.p.h. at 13,000ft., a service ceiling of 26,000ft., and a range of 1,240 miles at a cruising speed of 210 m.p.h.

Whilst the framework of wings and fuselage are all-metal, a composite form of construction is employed. The fuselage employs the stressed-skin monocoque principle in the front portion, but the tail portion is built up of steel tubing covered by fabric. The wings, which have two main spars, are metal-covered along the leading-edge, but the trailing portion has a fabric covering over tubular ribs. Armament consists of a rifle-calibre machine gun in the nose and at the rear of the bomb bay, and two machine guns in a retractable dorsal turret. Bomb load is 3,500 lb.

