Standard equipment in heavy-bomber units of the R.A.F.—the Avro Lincoln, with Rolls-Royce Merlin engines. Max. bomb load: 22,000 lb; armament: 4×0.5in and 2×20 mm guns.

"Flight" photograph.

BOMBERS of the POWERS

British, American and Russian Types : The Lincoln

Our Latest : Brabazon-size Bombers in Production

IN a memorandum accompanying the Air Estimates for 1948-49, the Secretary for Air has stated that special attention is being given to the training of the R.A.F.'s Bomber Force in the realization that the existence of efficient striking forces is this country's most effective safeguard against aggression. He further remarked that the Air Council aims "to enable a substantial weight of air power to be developed at short notice in any area where it may be required." Thus the emphasis is on training, mobility and re-deployment. Re-equipment has no place in the programme.

The factors governing our present bomber policy are not difficult to perceive. Skilled manpower and money are in short supply, scales of equipment and re-equipment are proportionately low, and the metamorphosis which has become apparent in the design of all classes of high performance aircraft is of so radical a character that a vast amount of basic research must be undertaken before suitable new types of bomber can be introduced into service. Britain now possesses a small operational force of Lincolns and Lancasters, backed, it may be presumed, by fair stocks of wartime Lancasters and Halifaxes and manned by crews who, though well trained on standard equipment, lack experience of bombers with a higher performance than the Lincoln.

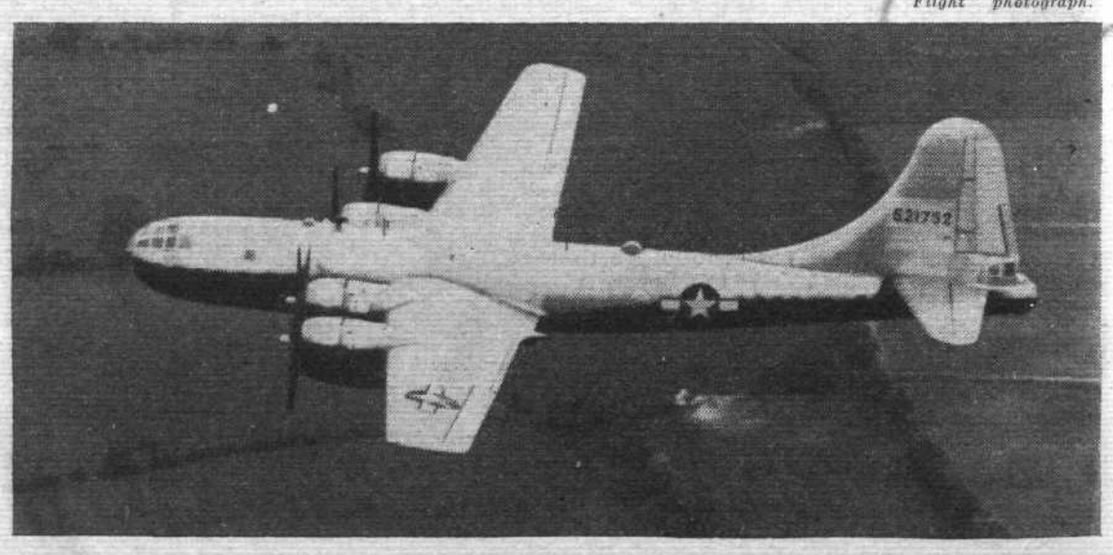
Though an admirable machine in many ways, the Lincoln, it must be remembered, is a development of the Lancaster and is itself five years old in design. Post-war improvements in the type have been of a relatively minor nature and no Mark is known to be capable of the performance of the contemporary American B-29 Superfortress—still less of the later B-50. It is, nevertheless, gratifying to record that the maximum bomb load of the Lincoln is 22,000 lb, and that when this is reduced to 3,000 lb a range of 4,450 miles is attainable by the standard Mark II version. The armament is four 0.5in guns and twin 20 mm guns in a dorsal turret. Though over 300 m.p.h., the top speed is appreciably lower than that of comparable American types.

The bomber situation in Britain would be less disturbing if service trials were known to be in progress on more modern types than the Lincoln, especially turbine-powered machines. Such, however, is far from being the case, though a measure of satisfaction is afforded by a Ministry of Supply announcement that an order has been placed for a medium-range bomber powered with two turbo-jets and capable of a speed approximately twice that of the Lincoln, and that, subsequent to this, an order was given for a heavy four-jet bomber with a similar performance, but having a longer range. Against this solitary statement must be set a mass of American releases concerning five new types of jet bomber for the U.S. Air Forces, all of which have flown.

The Boeing B-50

For the present, the greater part of the American bomber force is composed of B-29s, large number of which have lately been taken out of store, but deliveries of B-50s will start in the spring. This latest model of the Superfortress (215 are on order) is claimed to cruise 27 per cent faster than the B-29 over equal ranges; cruise about 50 m.p.h. faster than any other bomber capable of flying equivalent distances; and to have a top speed approaching 400 m.p.h. Four 3,500 h.p. Wasp Major engines are fitted and a great deal of structure weight has been saved.

"Flight" photograph.



Pressurized for high-altitude operation the Boeing B-29 (Wright R-3350 engines) remains in service as a standard U.S. heavy bomber. Maximum armament is ten 0.5in guns and one 20 mm.