S.A.I.-Ambrosini Activities : Italian Four-Year Programme

Under the previously mentioned programme, S.A.I.-Ambrosini and Aeronautica d'Italia (Fiat) will be the major producers of training aircraft in Italy. Ambrosini will build quantities of both the S.A.I.-7 advanced trainer and the Grifo, and Fiat will build the G.46 and the G.59. The latter is the new designation for the G.55AM and BM trainer variants of the G.55 single-seat fighter. The G.46 being exported to Argentina and both the G.55 and the G.59 are being delivered to the Egyptian Air Force. The S.A.I.-7 is still the holder of the International Speed Record over a 200-km closed circuit for aircraft in this category. The prototype illustrated was originally powered by a 280 h.p. Isotta-Fraschini Beta R.C.10, but this engine has now been replaced by a 225 h.p. Alfa 115 ter. It is hoped to power production machines with the Gipsy Queen 70. At present, an initial production order for twenty machines of this type for the Italian Air Force is in hand and, under the Four-Year Programme, the company expects to produce some 400 S.A.I.7s.

Ambrosini S.1001 Grifo with Gipsy Major engine.

The following performance figures refer to the Beta-powered prototype: Maximum speed, 252 m.p.h. at 5,740 ft; stalling speed, 65 m.p.h.; climb to 3,280 ft in 1 min 30 sec, to 6,560 ft in 3 min 30 sec, to 16,400 ft in 14 mins. Service ceiling, 23,000 ft; normal range, 560 miles. The S.A.I.-7 is a very clean design of all-wood construction and it is estimated that, with the Gipsy Queen 70 engine, the maximum speed will be increased to nearly 310 m.p.h.

The prototype S.A.I.-Ambrosini P.512 twin-engine light freighter, described in a recent issue of Flight, has now reached an advanced stage in construction and should be ready for flight testing in March. A passenger/freighter version is being prepared with accommodation for 10-12 passengers. To conform to I.A.T.A. requirements, the two 225 h.p. Alfa 115 ter engines will be replaced by two higher-powered units, possibly Gipsy Queen 30s.

Of late, there has been comment in the Press regarding the advisability of permitting Italy to produce British jet aircraft and engines. Under the Four-Year Programme, it is planned that Aeronautica Macchi, S.A.I.-Ambrosini and Aeronautica d'Italia (Fiat) shall all undertake the construction of jet fighters, and Fiat (and possibly Piaggio) will also build jet engines. Discussions have taken place during the last few weeks between representatives of the Italian aircraft industry, the Air Ministry and the de Havilland Aircraft and Engine companies regarding the production of the Vampire by the Italian concerns. At the time of writing the necessary licence has not yet been granted.

This subject of permitting Italy to produce British jet aircraft and jet engines has received much adverse comment in certain quarters. One newspaper columnist inferred that, owing to "Communist domination" in the Italian aircraft industry, allowing Italy to manufacture the Rolls-Royce Nene would be a roundabout way of sending copies of the blueprints of this engine to Russia. Furthermore, he states that by so doing we would be repeating the error made in selling examples of this engine to the Russians. To the writer, it would appear that this columnist is forgetting that few objections were raised to the granting of a licence for the production of the Nene in France, a country possessing a higher percentage of Communists in its aircraft industry than does Italy.

S.A.I.-Ambrosini, which hitherto has only produced aircraft, has, since the war, designed and built prototypes of two light aircraft engines. W. G.