

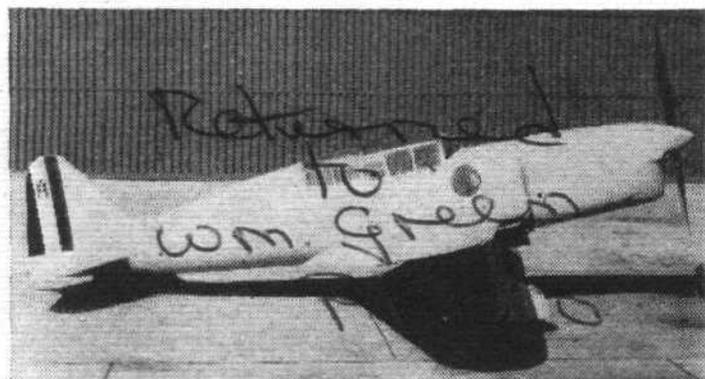
News from Italy

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

THE recent visit to this country of Mr. R. U. Valeri, of S.A.I.-Ambrosini and Co., of Milan, provided us with the opportunity of learning something of that company's present activities and its future part in the Italian aircraft industry's Four-Year Programme, which was inaugurated in November and is designed to co-ordinate aircraft production and regain something of Italy's pre-war position in European aviation.

The Societa Aeronautica Italiana was incorporated into the Ambrosini group in 1934 and, since that time, has produced a series of touring and training aircraft. The company's Passignano factory was severely damaged by Allied bombing but has since been rebuilt and is now producing considerable numbers of the S.1001 Grifo monoplane which, it may be remembered, set a new international non-stop long-distance record for touring aircraft in this category in April last by flying from Udine to Massaua. At the time of writing, a new long-distance flight is planned for the Grifo from Milan to Buenos Aires. The flight, which was due to have commenced on December 20th, will be made via Madrid—where the Grifo will remain for some days to be demonstrated to the Ejercito del Aire—Casablanca, Dakar, Port Natal and Rio de Janeiro.

The Grifo is becoming increasingly popular and considerable orders are now on hand. In addition to the four-seat tourer and taxi versions, the Grifo is in production as a two-seat military trainer. The company have orders for this variant from the Italian Air Force and an initial batch of the military trainer, consisting of 12-15 aircraft, is to be delivered to Argentina in the near future. One machine is also on order for Spain, but is at present awaiting the arrival of an engine fitted with a de Havilland v.p. airscrew. It is of interest to note that the Israeli Military Flying School, *Alica*, at Rome, which is staffed primarily by American instructors, is using four Grifo trainers and has a number of additional machines on order. This version of the Grifo differs in a number of respects from the tourer; a 145 h.p. Gipsy Major 10 replaces the Alfa-built 130 h.p. Gipsy Major 1, the wing has been moved forward some four inches and the aircraft seats instructor and pupil side by side with dual wheel controls.



S.A.I.-7, an international class speed record holder.

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 is 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 not a true post-war aircraft, having been designed in 1939. Although considered successful, production plans for this aircraft were shelved during the war years owing to more pressing commitments. The

S.A.I.-7 is still the holder of the International Speed Record over a 100-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 expect to produce some 400 S.A.I.-7s, both for home and export.



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 5,740ft; stalling speed, 65 m.p.h.; climb to 3,280 feet in 1 min 30 sec, to 6,560 feet in 3 min 30 sec, to 16,400 feet in 14 mins. Service ceiling, 23,000 feet; 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-engined 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.