



WORLD NEWS

Airliner sabotage

A Swissair Coronado was destroyed and an Austrian Caravelle was forced to make an emergency landing when both aircraft suffered explosions in their freight holds on Saturday, February 21. The Caravelle was successfully landed at Frankfurt, but the captain of the Coronado was unable to maintain control and the aircraft crashed some 20km from Zurich.

The Coronado captain was in radio contact with Zurich until the moment of impact and reported an explosion followed by fire. The aircraft, which carried 38 passengers and a crew of nine, was totally destroyed; it is understood that the flight recorder was damaged on impact although it has been established from the tape that rapid decompression followed the initial explosion.

The Arab organisation, Popular Front, initially claimed responsibility for both incidents but subsequently declined to make any further comment. World airline reaction was immediate; BOAC and BEA announced that air freight would not be accepted for Israeli destinations for the time being and SAS cancelled their Copenhagen-Tel Aviv service on February 22, ostensibly because of the number of customers who have cancelled bookings.

Strict security measures were enforced at Heathrow and Munich when Mr Abba Eban, Israeli Foreign Minister, flew to Germany by BEA One-Eleven on February 22; at Munich Mr Eban was transferred rapidly to a military helicopter to obviate the risk of any demonstration at the airport.

Ray of Hope for Beagle

A better than 50-50 chance of saving Beagle still exists, with two parties looking at the company as we close for press. An American consortium is negotiating with Mr Cork, the receiver, and Lord Gavagh and Associates, industrial consultants specialising in leisure, motor trade and electronics activities, is negotiating on behalf of an as yet unnamed client.

Confusion arose last week when Mr Benn, Minister of Technology, announced the liquidation of Beagle. His statement referred to the old company, Beagle Aircraft Ltd. As with Handley Page, the receiver set up a new company, in this case called Beagle Aircraft (1969) Ltd, and it is this which is for sale. The

Government has undertaken to pay off the £1 million debts of the old company. This means that a buyer would not inherit any of Beagle's liabilities. With the value of the assets now down to £½ million Beagle may well still be a good buy although it is difficult to visualise Pup production being continued on any large scale. To provide any return, the price of the aircraft would have to be increased substantially above that of its competitors. Apart from the Pup being a different aircraft and in a different class, this necessary price increase would make it uncompetitive, assuming that limited production were found to be feasible. The possibility of producing the much more expensive military Bulldog must now be fading since the

original delivery date—which was the deciding factor in the Swedish decision to buy the type—cannot now be met.

Even so, over 200 Pups will eventually be in service and there should be a profitable business in supporting them with spares.

Waiting on the sidelines are several companies eager to bid for parts of Beagle should the present negotiations fall through.

Of the 435 remaining staff, 170 are on "precautionary notice" and these will stay if the company is rescued. About a quarter of these are at Rearsby, the remainder at Shoreham. About 200 are engaged on subcontract work on such items as parts for Rolls-Royce Spey engine pods. This part of the company always has been profitable.

Few of the apparently large number of companies who have negotiated for the purchase of Beagle have announced their interest, but it is now known that very shortly after the receiver was appointed last December, Mr Colin Chapman, managing director of Lotus Ltd, the racing and sports car builder, looked into the possibility of buying the company.

The Lords' debate Beagle: see p. 288.

HSD's Missile Agreement

Hawker Siddeley Dynamics has signed a licence agreement to supply TRW System Group of Redondo Beach, Calif. with extensive information on tactical guided weapons and systems. The American organisation has a very close association with HSD, and now has three agreements with the firm (two

Danish Dragon The first Saab 35XD Draken for the Royal Danish Air Force made its first flight on January 29. Forty-six aircraft are on order with the first deliveries scheduled to begin later this year to No 725 Sqn, RDAF



SA.330 to Boscombe Down Following development flying at Yeovil, the first SA.330 Puma, equipped to Royal Air Force requirements (XW241), was delivered to A & AEE Boscombe Down on February 21 for final service acceptance tests. The airframe is one of the first batch built by Sud-Aviation, but production of the Westland-built airframes is now gathering momentum at Hayes