IAS and Transmeridian merger terms agreed

CONDITIONAL merger terms have been agreed between IAS Cargo Airlines and Cunard, the owners of Transmeridian Air Cargo, which will result in the transfer of TAC's control to IAS shareholders. Details have not been released, but may relate to Transmeridian meeting profit and turnover forecasts. If the conditions are met, a new company will be formed from IAS and TAC with 65 per cent of the shares being owned by IAS shareholders and the remainder by Cunard. Chairman and managing director of the new airline will be Alan Stocks, who currently holds the same position at IAS. Two Cunard directors will join the board.

The merger would create a substantial force in the cargo field: IAS operates four DC-8-50F freighters to points in Africa, Australasia and the Middle East; Transmeridian operates two DC-8-50Fs, six CL-44Ds and one Conroy CL-440 (a Guppy-style conversion of the Canadair freighter). TAC also owns, jointly with Eurolatin Aviation, three ex-RAF Belfast freighters, which have made no revenue-earning flights since their retirement from military service.

Transmeridian last week started a certification programme which should result in the first commercial Belfast operations by the end of this year. Marshall of Cambridge is assisting TAC with design and flight testing, which is expected to last two or three months. Any modifications to the airframe and avionics, which may be required to meet airworthiness requirements, will be carried out by a new unit which Transmeridian has set up at Southend. Modification work is expected to take about three months and the target date for completing the certification programme is December 1. Transmeridian's heavy-lift division plans to use the aircraft for the carriage of outsize loads, which cannot be handled by other types. It is not yet certain whether the Belfasts are included in the IAS merger agreement, although Alan Stocks says that they will be used by the new airline.

UK Atcos give no-strike pledge

AIR Traffic Control Officers who are members of the British civil service union, the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, have promised not to take any further industrial action in their union's current dispute with the government. The Atcos are employed by the Civil Aviation Authority, with whom they are not in dispute; the IPCS as a whole, which includes government scientists and technical staff, want pay parity with main grades in the civil service. This already exists for Atcos' pay scales. The controllers were called out by their union for a 24-hour strike on June 22, and 58 out of 209 controllers scheduled for duty failed to report for work (not 18 as reported in last week's Flight).

Airliner market

UTA, the French long-haul carrier, is to buy two Boeing 747s in passenger configuration, adding to its two 747 freighters. The first will be delivered in 1981, laid out with 450 seats, for use on services to Africa. Statements by Air Canada president Claude Taylor point to the Boeing 767 being selected for the airline's 200-seater requirement, in preference to the Airbus A310. Air Canada is expected to announce its decision next week and has a requirement for about 30 aircraft in this class. Taylor says that the 767 is better suited to Air Canada's long-haul routes than the A310, which has superior economics on sectors shorter than 2,000km. Airbus has offered industrial offsets to the Canadian aerospace industry, in response to requests from the outgoing Liberal Government but the new Conservative administration has not yet made its views on this subject known. Aerotour, the French charter airline, has taken options on two Boeing 737s for 1982 delivery. National Airlines is to buy three Boeing 727-100s from Northwest Airlines. The aircraft will be delivered between August 1979 and January 1980. Westcoast Air Holdings of British Columbia has secured mid-1980 delivery positions for three de Havilland Canada Dash 7s. Egyptair has delayed advance payments on three McDonnell-Douglas DC-10s, which were provisionally ordered earlier this year, pending resolution of the current accident investigation. Egyptair officials insist, however, that the purchase will go ahead eventually. Southern International Air Transport, the Southampton-based charter airline which operates three Viscounts, has ordered two DC-9 Super 80s, according to reports emanating from the US. Neither the airline nor McDonnell Douglas will comment, but negotiations are probably taking place and there may be developments later in the summer. Fimair is leasing a DC-8-62 to Tunis Air for the summer.

DC-9 sales

A slip of the typewriter almost doubled sales of the McDonnell Douglas DC-9 in our issue of June 9 (page 2011). Instead of 1,700, as stated, the relevant phrase should have read "has achieved nearly 1,000 sales". On page 2005, we refer to Henri Ziegler as Airbus senior vice-president in charge of flight-testing and support. In fact, the position is held by his son, Bernard Ziegler.