that number will be sold by the end of the decade.

Further complicating the issue is the question of Airbus Industrie’s forthcoming launch of the 130-seat A319. While this is seen as complementary to other Airbus offerings, and not competing with the regional jets, its launch will be dependent on the availability of sufficient funds from the partner companies.

The German Government is already being pressed to help fund the Regioliner programme and its associated engines. The two engine consortia vying for German funding — MTU with Pratt & Whitney and BMW with Rolls-Royce — have already begun exploratory talks on a tie-up of their new programmes.

Airbus says it will fund A319 development internally, but Germany wants final assembly, for which it would have to pay.

A DASA decision in favour of Fokker would be good news for UK aero-engine builder R-R, which has its Tay engine on the Fokker 70 and 100 programmes.

A DASA decision to follow the Fokker edict and abandon the Regioliner agreement would leave Aérospatiale and Alenia without a regional-jet programme, and end the cooperative marketing agreement between the three companies covering their turboprop and jet aircraft.

BY MIKE GAINES

The USA and Russia are to co-operate on the development of 5,000t-class wing-in-ground-effect (WIGE) cargo vehicles based on Russian Ekranoplan technology (Flight International, 15-21 January).

Aerocon, a Virginia-based company funded by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to explore the use of WIGEs for military applications, visited Ekranoplan experts at the Panchenkov and Alekseyev design consortia in January. Both Russian concerns have signed co-operation protocols with Aerocon.

The Alekseyev team, responsible for the huge “Caspian Sea Monster” of the early 1970s and the later Orlyonok series — both of which have flown — has designs better suited to a sea-going craft, says Aerocon president, Steve Hooker, while the Panchenkov designs, named after early Ekranoplan researcher Bartini, appear better suited to a trans-tundra concept.

A number of the Alekseyev designers are to visit the USA soon.

The present plan is to set up a new group called the American-Russian Wingship Engineering and Manufacturing Research Centre, sharing bases at Hampton, Virginia and Nizhniy-Novgorod.

Hooker says: “We aim to bring Russian scientists to Hampton and begin a trans-engineering process. We need to translate their concepts into engineering and then into the American engineering convention. We will pay the Russians for hardware used in testing. We are talking to Lockheed and General Dynamics on structures and Pratt & Whitney and General Electric on engines.”

“We think that the 5,000t class is possible, using smart structures. We believe that the Achilles heel would be materials and their joins and fasteners.”

The proposed 5,000t military Wingship, powered by 20 large turbofans, would have a 1,500t payload. The cost of development is estimated at $15 billion and unit cost is $400 million.

The USA is studying Ekranoplan, which it calls Wingships, for the US Navy’s Military Sealift Command as a troop/cargo transport, able to install and support a task force. Russian interest is in a cross-tundra transport.

NEW 146 ORDER

UK carrier Dan-Air has traded its two leased BAE 146-100s against two -300s for delivery in mid-1992. It has agreed to replace the -300s, and also two already in service, with four new Category IIIA landing-system-equipped -300s which will be available next year. It has taken options on two further such aircraft.