THE GERMAN communications system in the Bizonal Area has been fully restored to its prewar level of service.

This achievement largely is the result of the improvement of the Deutsche Post which combines the functions of a postal service, a telephone system and a telegraph company, plus offering financial services of banking and financial institutions. Its busses, which carry fare-paying passengers as well as mail and freight, are in many instances the only connecting link between isolated German villages and the larger cities. Its employees, exceeding 200,000, are mostly civil servants.

Full restoration of German communications services, vital not only to German recovery but for European recovery as well, has been a basic objective of Military Government.

The first 16 months following the German collapse in 1945 saw the restoration of all internal communications services within the Bizonal Area and most of the major communications services between the US, British and other occupation zones.

A start had also been made toward putting Germany into contact with the outside world with the reopening of limited international postal service in April 1946 with all countries except Japan and Spain, and with the initiation of an incoming international parcel post service, limited to gift parcels for the three western zones, the following summer.

Transit telecommunications service throughout Germany, a vital step in the restoration of normal communications throughout Europe, was approved in December 1946.

Long distance telephone and telegraph service, which was made available to the German public in the US Zone six months after the cessation of hostilities, was reopened between all occupied zones and the city of Berlin early in 1946, and on April 1, 1947, both international telephone and telegraph service on a limited basis was resumed between the Bizonal Area and the United States, other Western Hemisphere countries and most of western Europe.

Although collect telephone calls and prepaid telegrams from the Bizone to certain other countries were authorized at the same time, limited foreign exchange funds restricted normal ongoing international service to businessmen whose activities were essential to German economic recovery.

A YEAR AGO less than 2,000 German firms and individuals in the Bizone were authorized to make international telephone calls or send international telegrams. Today all Germans in the Bizonal Area can call the United States, Sweden, Brazil and Argentina, even on a reversed charge basis for both business and social purposes, and about 4,000 can phone any country to which service is available on business matters.

There are no restrictions on the dispatch of outgoing telegrams to 17 Latin American countries and to Czechoslovakia due to those countries accepting messages on a “sender keep

All photographs
by German Postal Administration.
This is the Deutsche Post's teletype repair shop at Frankfurt.

Interior of repeater station which strengthens long distance calls.

Test board for checking the transmission of telegraph messages.

all" basis. The "sender keep all" principle as applied to international communications permits the country of origin to keep the entire message fee for each originating communication.

Any bona fide business message can be sent anywhere in the world. This progressive relaxation of existing restrictions was authorized in order to promote the expansion of the German export-import program and to stimulate western German recovery.

When negotiations are completed, postal and telecommunications relations between the Bizone and Spain and Japan will be resumed. Then, bizonal Germany will for the first time since 1939 be in communication with all countries of the world.

Other services were also added, improved and supplemented throughout 1948 to speed the exchange of correspondence and goods between western Germany and the remainder of the world. Incoming international airmail service was reopened April 1 and limited outgoing airmail service on May 1. Effective Oct. 20 all restrictions were lifted on the use of outgoing airmail by bizonal Germans, and Germans are now permitted to send as well as receive packages with the inauguration in October of two-way international parcel post service.

Similar impetus was given to the expansion of international radio telegraph and radio telephone facilities during this same 12-month period. Direct radio telegraph service between the Bizone and South America was introduced Nov. 1, 1947, and direct telephone service to Brazil and Argentina the following spring. Denmark was added to the growing list of countries willing to accept collect calls from Bizonal Germans and person-to-person calls were authorized in the international long distance service.

Today, calls can be placed even on passengers on ships at sea. German coastal maritime radio stations were brought back onto the international scene with the authorization in May of marine ship-to-shore radio telegraph service.

The value of this service, which flashes navigational bulletins, storm reports and routine docking instructions to ships at sea, was demonstrated four months later when the Kiel coastal maritime station was able
to direct rescue operations for a Danish ship which had sunk in the Baltic after hitting a mine off the German coast.

Domestic interzonal telephone and telegraph service was also improved with the addition of 30 new categories of service, including facilities for sending urgent personnel, press or government messages. A special prewar frontier service was revived enabling Germans living in border communities to phone towns in adjacent countries on the other side of the German boundary line.

One of the most marked developments in the communications field during the past year has been the greatly increased speed and dependability of all categories of service.

Despite badly-worn and over-loaded equipment and a chronic shortage of skilled personnel, the Deutsche Post handled an average of 300,000,000 letters a month during the first six months of 1948, and more than 1,000,000 incoming packages.

About 3,000,000 telegrams a month were sent during the first half of 1948—four times as many as were filed in an average month in 1938. More than 154,000,000 phone calls a month were made during this same period of 1948—25,000,000 more than in 1938. The volume of long distance calls was double that of prewar years.

This abnormal traffic burden, which reached its peak during the third week in June, shortly before announcement of currency reform, took a sharp drop in the first two weeks after conversion. The biggest drop was in the number of long distance phone calls made, but both mail and telegraph traffic fell to about half the preconversion volume.

At the end of the first month after the new money came into circulation Deutsche Post traffic was back to the 1937 level and by Oct, 1, 1948, while still below the abnormal preconversion volume, had surpassed prewar levels. Marked improvement in service was an immediate effect of the reduced traffic load.

A year ago about 15 percent of all intra-zonal long distance calls placed were cancelled by the originator due to the excessive delays involved. Today few calls, even to the most distantly-located points in the Bizonal Area, require more than 15 minutes to complete.

OVERALL IMPROVEMENT in personnel efficiency has also contributed to the general betterment of service. This increase in efficiency is due partly to the fact that excessive overtime formerly demanded of the understaffed Deutsche Post staff is no longer required. It is also due to the more selective personnel policy immediately instituted by the German Bizonal Department for Posts and Telecommunications as the labor supply increased after June 20, and to the newly-placed emphasis on language and technical instruction.

One hundred sixty thousand more telephones were in use Oct. 1, 1948, than a year before, bringing the total number to above 1,600,000. Only about five percent of this number is in use by occupation forces. Hundreds of additional operating positions have been added to German switchboards. The increased speed and dependability of all categories of communications service has had an important effect on German morale as well as proving directly beneficial to the economy.

The return of communications facilities to German control and operation during the past year kept pace with the rapid rehabilitation of the communications network. By Nov, 1, 1947, the majority of German telecommunication services in the US Zone had been transferred to German civil control. These included more than 2,500 miles of telephone and telegraph open wire lines which had been operated by the US Army since the end of the war.

By Jan. 1, 1948, the Deutsche Post had taken over responsibility for all telegraph services which the US commercial companies licensed to operate in the Bizonal Area had been performing for occupation personnel. The single exception was Press Wireless, which was authorized to continue in order to insure specialized service to the Allied press.

A month after US commercial telegraph companies ceased to operate in the Bizone, the single US Commercial telephone company, which had been licensed by Military Government to provide overseas telephone service from the Bizone to the Western Hemisphere, also terminated its activities, placing all international telephone and telegraph service for Germans and Allied personnel through German facilities.

The Deutsche Post was fully prepared to meet the technical demands of this newly-delegated authority. In December 1947 two specially-designed, German-built radio transmitters were installed in a station situated in the outskirts of Frankfurt, becoming the first German-owned, constructed and operated commercial radio equipment to be installed in the Bizone during the postwar period. On Jan. 1, 1948, this station became the only radio telegraph link between Germany and the United States.

The first radio teletype equipment ever used in German post history was also installed in December. Developed during the war, this equipment eliminates manual operations and by reducing personnel requirements has made it possible to handle a steadily increasing overseas traffic load.

In order to fulfill its commitments in the field of overseas radio telephone, special equipment of a type never before produced in Germany was needed by the Deutsche Post.

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Although only two engineering firms in the world had previously produced this particular type of transmitting equipment, the German firm of Lorenz A.G. announced it was prepared to undertake its manufacture, at a saving of about $1,000,000. Completed a year later, the new installation is one of the world’s most modern transoceanic radio telephone stations, providing continuous transatlantic communications except under the most adverse weather conditions.

With the completion of this station the Deutsche Post returned to the US Army all Signal Corps equipment with which it had been operating. From now on international radio telephone traffic from the Bizonal Area will be handled entirely over German-manufactured equipment.

Certain broad responsibilities in the field of radio communications will revert to German control by decision of the Military Governors reached on July 15, 1948. This delegated authority covers control over all radio frequency emitting equipment and the licensing of both Germans and eligible Allied personnel for amateur radio operations. Allocation of radio frequencies and control over radio broadcasting are still reserved to Allied Military Government.

Further authority was placed in Deutsche Post hands when negotiations at the international level on the technical operation of telecommunication circuits became a full German responsibility on Aug. 1. Control over circuits transiting the Bizon to other countries still rests with Military Government.

The issuance of postage stamps without prior MG approval also became a German responsibility in August.

Censorship of German civilian mail, telephone calls and telegrams, both internal and international, originating or terminating in the US Zone, ended Oct. 15, by MG order. The original regulations relating to the subject matter of German civil communications prescribed by ACA and German laws in effect still stand, however, and the US occupation forces reserve the right to impose censorship on communications to and from the US Zone in the interests of occupational security.

Although the demands of western Germany’s expanding economy had prompted the establishment of a bizonal communications organization in March 1947 to expedite the rehabilitation of the communications network in the combined US and British Zones, it has been basic MG policy to press for the resumption of all interzonal and major international communications services on a uniform basis throughout the whole of Germany.

The Bizonal Area now leads the remainder of Germany in the restoration of services, but considerable progress in the rehabilitation of communications for all four zones continued to be made through quadripartite action during the first six months of the period Oct. 1, 1947—Oct. 1, 1948.

Four-power agreement had been reached on Dec. 1, 1947, for the resumption of international telegraph service and on Feb. 1, 1948, for international telephone service on a Germany-wide basis. Uniform postage stamps were in use in the Bizon, the Soviet Zone and Berlin.

Other services approved during the past year included facilities for sending registered mail, receipt of delivery notices and a small packet service for sending parcels as regular letter mail. Special provisions were approved for mailing parcels to German prisoners of war in France and Czechoslovakia and there was a significant expansion in the postal service between Austria and Germany by four-power agreement.

There was only one exception to the general trend of the past year toward lifting communications restrictions. By quadripartite decision the transmission of tobacco and tobacco products to Germany through the international mails was prohibited on Dec. 1, 1947, in view of their use on the black market.

Scores of communications measures were under discussion at quadripartite level when all four power meetings were suspended by Soviet action on March 20. Approval had in many instances been reached on many of these proposals and only awaited implementing action by the Allied Communications and Posts Committee.

Because a minimum level of international service had to be maintained, even in the absence of a central Allied administration, mandatory correspondence with foreign administrations was carried on by the various Allied secretariat members, and international accounting continued to be done by the German staff under the rotating supervision of the Allied working party delegates.

The mere continuation of a minimum international communications service soon proved inadequate to the growing demands of the west German economy. Early in September 1948 a tripartite Provisional Posts and Telecommunications Commission, made up of US, British and French representatives, was established.

Within a month the new commission had taken unified action for the three western zones to reestablish outgoing and incoming international parcel post, resume postal and telecommunications relations with Spain and Japan, establish unrestricted outgoing airmail service for the trizonal area and to authorize an incoming international postal and telegraphic money order service. The French Zone had been virtually fused with the Bizon from the communications standpoint since April 1, 1948 when

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