HELLO, SIR, THIS is the overseas operator. Are you ready for your call to the States? Your party in Chicago is standing by.

"Karl Schmidt A.-G.? This is the Deutsche Post. We have a telegram for you from Buenos Aires. Shall I read it to you before delivery?"

Such reports are heard many thousands of times each month by Allied nationals and Germans in Germany as the Deutsche Post delivers international telegrams from all countries of the world and connects telephone calls to more than 50 countries and territories. The Deutsche Post, under the direction of the Federal Ministry for Posts and Telecommunications and the City Council's Department for Posts and Telecommunications in Greater Berlin, is rapidly regaining its prewar efficiency and is furnishing Germany with the communications media so important for the restoration of normal commercial and social relations with the other nations of the world.

When the German Federal Republic was formed in the fall of 1949, it inherited from the bizonal administration a competent and well-organized postal and telecommunications system and one of the world’s most modern and efficient overseas radio communications systems. From Frankfurt, Berlin and Elmsborn, near Hamburg, and from Norderdeich on the North Sea coastline of Lower Saxony, Deutsche Post radio stations span the Atlantic and the Pacific with telegrams and telephone calls via direct circuits to the Americas, Japan, the Philippines and Portugal, and by retransmitting via those points, to most important countries in the Far East and the principal Pacific islands.

Radio facilities are also available for messages to trans-Atlantic cargo vessels which are the life line of the export-import trade between the old world and the new, to fishing craft in the North Sea, and to the boats and barges on the Rhine River.

It is true that the Third Reich enjoyed the use of one of the most efficient and extensive international radio communications networks with direct contact with almost all important nations. German submarine cables connected with those of other countries and formed a great telegraphic network across the Atlantic.

Unfortunately, however, almost the entire radio system emanated from Berlin and adjacent locations. The devastating air attacks to which the erstwhile capital was subjected during the war reduced much of this highly technical and complicated equipment to useless wreckage; most of that which survived the bombings disappeared into the east. Her overseas cable links were cut early in the war. The damage to some was irreparable and some were reterminated in other countries. Repairs or construction of new cables would have cost many millions of dollars and, more important, would have required several years.

Germany needed international communications immediately if she was to revive her foreign trade and achieve a measure of self-sufficiency. Then, too, cables solve only the problem of telegraph service. Due to technical limitations submarine cables are not capable of transmitting the human voice over great distances. Years of research have failed to produce a practicable cable suitable for transoceanic telephony. Intercontinental telephone service has developed concurrently with the advance of the science of radio communications.

While the re-establishment of international communications services to Germany’s European neighbors was admittedly of great importance, and presented numerous problems in the reconstruction of landline cable facilities, the most difficult task was the reopening of telephone and telegraph services to points overseas. Emphasis was placed on the restoration of
service with the United States, which was to play a major role in the economic recovery program for Germany.

Although service could be made available through the facilities of other European countries, this solution would involve payment out of huge amounts of foreign currencies for the performance of services which could only be rendered by the Deutsche Post if the necessary facilities were made available — foreign currency which a bankrupt and hungry Germany could more usefully employ for the import of food and other necessities of life. Therefore, high priority was placed on the construction of facilities for communications to the western hemisphere.

When international telephone and telegraph services were authorized for Germany in 1947, service to the United States and other points in the western hemisphere were established through the facilities of US commercial companies under a special license agreement whereby they operated the terminals in Germany on a non-profit basis, with net credits accruing to German export funds. Later, radio-telephone equipment was borrowed from the US Army and operated by the Deutsche Post. But these were only temporary measures.

The construction of an international radio station was undertaken by the Deutsche Post and German manufacturers employing engineers and production facilities in many cities in western Germany and Berlin with technical advice and assistance from Allied personnel. Of great importance is the fact that the entire cost was met with Deutsche Mark funds.

By placing the construction of the new station on an emergency basis, the first radiotelegraph components were installed at Frankfurt in March 1948 while initial radiotelephone facilities were delivered in July of that year, less than 12 months after the first orders were placed with German firms. This equipment was supplemented rapidly during the following months.

Two 20,000 watt transmitters and associated receiving equipment provide for five simultaneous trans-Atlantic telephone conversations. In addition to service to the United States, calls are relayed via New York to 18 other countries and territories. A total of more than 1,500 incoming and 3,600 outgoing calls averaging more than four minutes each were handled through the Frankfurt station in December 1949.

From the same station three 20,000 watt radiotelegraph transmitters provide direct circuits with the United States on a 24-hour-a-day schedule. By relaying through State-side radio stations, telegrams may be routed over German-operated radio equipment to some 60 countries and islands in the Americas, Pacific and Far East. Approximately 20,000 messages now pass over these circuits each month.

To provide direct telegraph service to South American countries, important customers of German industry, the Deutsche Post is utilizing some of the transmitters used prior to the war entirely for messages between Germany and ships at sea and during the war to control the Nazi fleets. Two 20,000 watt stations at Norddeich, in Lower Saxony, maintain daily schedules with Santiago, Lima, Bogota, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro.

Direct telephone service to South America has been acquired with little cost to the German taxpayer by the application of technical proficiency and ingenuity. Two giant 50,000 watt transmitters located at Elmshorn, near Hamburg — formerly used for propaganda broadcasts — now maintain daily contact with stations in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro.

In December 1949, the activities of the Elmshorn station were expanded to provide a direct telephone circuit with the Philippines. At the same time, direct radiotelegraph service was inaugurated between Germany and the Philippines and Japan.

The success of the program for restoration of Germany's international radio system has resulted in a saving of hundreds of thousands of dollars in foreign exchange which would have been paid to other administrations or private operating companies for handling the minimum communications requirements for the conduct of international trade.

It has aided immeasurably in the rapid expansion of international communications services and has permitted the maximum relaxation of restrictions imposed on the use of these services by the German public.

Expansion of Deutsche Post radio facilities to provide direct service to other major nations will improve the grade of communications services and will further reduce expenditures of export credits by the Federal Republic for those services.