

# Two-Way Invasion

J. W. GOODWIN tells how BBC television invaded Europe—and Continental programmes crossed the Channel on the tenth anniversary of the Allied landings in Normandy.

SEVEN huge metal dishes give the summit of a Swiss alpine peak a bizarre appearance so that only the mountain flowers, in pools of sunlight between the black rocks, reassure one that this is not the setting for some science-fiction fantasy. Projecting television beams like searchlights, they are the eyes of 11,000,000 people whose differences of language can be overcome by common sight.

This peak in the Jura Mountains is a vital link in a 4000-mile chain of relay stations by which eight nations are now linked by television. Through it 30 programmes have been transmitted during June, officially described as an experimental month. Televisioners have seen four queens—Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother, the Queens of Denmark and Holland. They have seen friars walking in the quietness of the Vatican, roaring thousands packed into Swiss stadiums for the world Soccer series, the neon fires that blaze in the night at Piccadilly Circus, and horses racing in knightly pageantry through the mediaeval streets of Siena.

## Triumph for Britain

This linking of the television systems of Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Italy is to a great extent a British triumph over time, tempest and terrain. In five months equipment was supplied by the General Electric Corporation and installed on the 5000-foot Jura peak and on the 12,000-foot summit of Mount Generosa overlooking Lake Lugano.

It was part of nearly £2,000,000 worth of equipment supplied by British firms, including E.M.I., Marconi and Pye, making possible this TV leap-frog

across the Alps and as far away as Scotland.

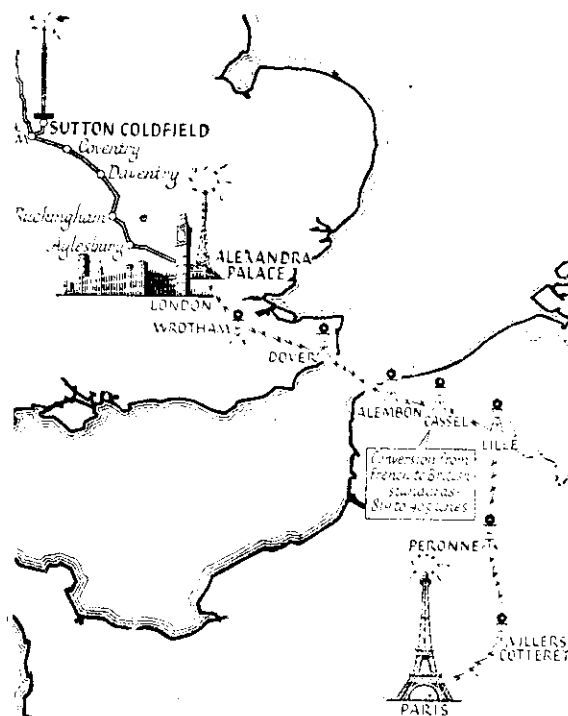
With one hotelier and a St. Bernard dog for company, Swiss, British and German engineers worked for months in the bitter cold until the tiny mountain hotel was overshadowed by the fantastic erection of steel dishes. The electronic eyes look north across the Black Forest and south across a gap of more than 40 miles to a British-built station in the Jungfrau, high above the summit of the rack railway.

There are few ordinary radio stations at 12,000 feet, and this TV transmitter among the ice not only operates automatically, but also keeps itself warm.

## First an Accident

At the end of months of planning which began soon after the cross-Channel relay of the Coronation television, all was ready for the first complete transmission test through the concrete cabin under its fantastic crown of seven dishes. The team was prepared for everything, even with a notice which could be televised: "A major breakdown unfortunately forces us to close the international network."

There was no breakdown, but, as with Alexander Bell's experiments with the telephone, it was an accident which proved their work to be a success. In his case, the snapping of a delicate piece of equipment in another room was the first sound to be carried electrically on a wire; in their case, it was a street accident in Holland, 480 miles away.



THE VITAL cross-Channel television link (pioneered at the time of the Coronation television relay) is shown in this pictorial diagram

The Dutch engineers trained their camera on a crossroads near their transmitter when two cars collided. The commotion in that wet street in Lopik was nothing compared to that in the Alpine cabin where the engineers saw the car drivers gesticulating and one of the passengers removed on a stretcher, all unaware that their personal mishap had become international drama.

## Only One Failure

When the service opened on the first Sunday in June, there was only one interruption of three minutes during the relay of the Carnival of Flowers at Montreux—famed for the Castle of Chillon in Byron's poem. This was caused by the failure of one of the 20,000 valves on the network.

Even in a world where only human imperfections are taken for granted, it is a wonder that there were no other mechanical failures. So much could have gone wrong in 44 transmitters, in 80

relay stations, and at the four points where the TV waves are converted to the different standards of other countries.

As might have been expected, most trouble was caused by some of the human links in the chain. Plans to include programmes from "Cafe Continental" in London, from the Copenhagen Tivoli and Versailles had to be abandoned when the international unions of musicians, actors and variety artists demanded extra fees because of the larger audience.

Some officials were equally mouse-minded when faced with the challenge of a continental community. British Customs at first demanded dues on French equipment taken across the Channel as part of the network; the French retaliated by banning a BBC television project from a ferry in French waters.

## "Eurovision"

However, the organisation within the European Broadcasting Union has worked with amicable efficiency. "Eurovision," as it is called, involves 25 administrations, with a communications centre at Lille, which has become the television capital of the Continent. Control engineers work from the Town Hall with the main receiving aerials on its 350-foot tower.

Until now, Lille has been a pain in the neck to me, a reminder of jolts in the night crossing the Continent as the engine is changed from one end to the other of the Orient Express. Though I am not a great admirer of television—and all the eight countries in the link-up are full of programme-grumbles—Lille has become a place of exciting associations.

As the Pope said when 11,000,000 televisioners saw him on that first programme:

"May this international programme be at once a symbol and a promise—a symbol of union between the nations. Let the nations thus learn to know each other better. Let them be happy and proud to display the natural beauties of their countries and their natural riches. How many prejudices and how many barriers may thus fall?"

As his picture came leap-frogging over the Alps and fanned out to Berlin and Ulster, the BBC sound programmes were recalling the Allied invasion of the Continent 10 years before. There's a moral in it, if you wish, about cathode-tubes being mightier than tanks.

## PORT OF OTAGO

LISTENERS will hear the story of Otago Harbour in *Forth of the South*, four programmes written by Anthony Bartlett, which are to be broadcast from 4YC, starting on Monday, July 5, at 7.34 p.m. The programmes trace the development of the harbour and describe events that have taken place in and around it right up till today. The first three are historical; the last describes the harbour as it is. This includes an imaginary journey on a ship from the entrance of the harbour up to the Port of Dunedin. In preparing this programme Mr. Bartlett had a trip on the harbour on a dredge. He says: "The listener is, as it were, standing by the pilot of a ship who tells what he sees and where they are going. I have also inserted comments by an engineer on works at Port Chalmers, and by a fisherman and a dredgemaster." Among the stories from the past is an account of the first steamship coming into the harbour.

LEFT: Otago Harbour, looking from the heads towards Dunedin

