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eMercedesBenz Feature: The Mercedes-Benz 170 V, A Pre-War Car For A New Beginning

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Production of the Mercedes-Benz 170 V (W 136 I series) was resumed in May 1946. Even though just 214 units were produced until the end of that year, this was enough to raise hopes of a return to normal car production. Initially, however, it was not sedans but pickups, panel vans and ambulances which came off the assembly line because the Allied Control Council had prohibited the manufacture of passenger cars for the time being. It was not before July 1947 that production of four-door sedans was resumed which were, however, supplied almost exclusively to authorities.

What had happened at the time was this: Just twelve days after Germany's capitulation, the Untertürkheim plant – or what had been left of it – was provisionally re-opened on May 20, 1945. Some 1,240 wage-earners and salaried employees reported back. Initially, the occupying powers only permitted the clearing away of

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rubble and – in their own interests – the repair of their military vehicles in makeshift workshops. Production of motor vehicles was prohibited – and wouldn't have been possible anyway for lack of machinery and materials. And yet, modest manufacturing activities were resumed soon with a rather mixed range, including a first vehicle again: a bicycle trailer.

A ray of hope was made out at the Sindelfingen plant: Press-shop I had survived the air raids with relatively little damage – and this facility accommodated the tools for the successful 170 V passenger car model which had been produced from 1935. If anything, this was the key to the company's return to the automotive business. In November 1945, the allied powers issued a permit to Daimler-Benz AG for the production of pickup, panel van and ambulance versions of the 170 V. The company engaged in the preparations for production energetically, despite severe shortage of skilled workers, machinery, raw materials, coal and electricity. The first 170 V engine was completed in Untertürkheim in February 1946; the first complete vehicles, finally, came off the assembly line in May 1946, as outlined above.

In engineering terms, the "new" 170 V was a pre-war model – surely a good one but, in its design, clearly more than ten years old. Its side-valve engine corresponded to the state of the art of a bygone age; the trunk was not accessible from outside, and the bodywork, completely separated from its X-shaped tubular frame, was still some way away from the first attempts at self-supporting bodywork design. Nevertheless, the 170 was upgraded gradually. In May 1949 the 170 D with diesel engine was launched. In May 1950 production of the 170 Va and 170 Da began, their most important features being a larger displacement, more power, a broader rear track (since January 1950), softer springs, telescoping instead of piston-type shock absorbers, more powerful brakes, a trunk accessible from outside, air-deflecting panels on the front side windows, a steering shaft tube, and turn signal activation by means of a signal ring on the steering wheel. From 1950, it was possible to install a car radio, and reclining seat fittings and head restraints became optionally available. From September 1950, wind-shields made of laminated glass were fitted. The last refinements were introduced with the 170 Vb and 170 Db models in May 1952. Production was discontinued in 1953 – the 170 S had after all been available since May 1949 already. While it was based on the 170 V, it had been modernized so thoroughly that it can safely be described as a post-war design.

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Mercedes-Benz 170 V panel van (with the first-generation cab), 1946-47



Mercedes-Benz 170 V panel van (with the first-generation cab), 1946-47



Mercedes-Benz 170 V panel van (with the first-generation cab), 1946-47



Mercedes-Benz 170 V panel van, 1946 (the first four vehicles from the left feature the small headlights of the first generation)



Mercedes-Benz 170 V pickup (with the first-generation cab), 1946-47



Mercedes-Benz 170 V ambulance, 1946 (with the first-generation cab and small headlights)



Mercedes-Benz 170 V (W 136 I) ambulance, 1946



Mercedes-Benz 170 V ambulance (view of the interior with stretcher), 1946-47



Mercedes-Benz 170 V police patrol car (with the first-generation cab), 1946-1947



Mercedes-Benz 170 V, Police patrol car, 1946-1948



Mercedes-Benz 170 V, Police patrol car, 1946-1948



Mercedes-Benz 170 V, pickup, 1946-1949



Mercedes-Benz Type 170 V pickup, 1946-1949 (with the cab of the first version)

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