

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

Volume 12, Issue 8 August 2015



Amateur Radio USSR

Box 88, Moscow - Part I

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma... Winston Churchill on Russia (BBC broadcast, October 1, 1939).

Today, it may well be difficult for amateurs licensed after the fall of the Soviet Union, a

quarter of a century ago, to understand the mystique once inherent to U-prefix hams. During the Cold War, American hams were often asked by their non-ham friends and family if they were permitted to communicate with the hams of communist bloc nations, and what those communist bloc radio operators had to say. The answers were simple: yes, they could QSO with them and often did, but they had little to say aside from name, QTH, gear used and QSL via Box 88, Moscow.

Moreover, the average American ham knew little of the inside story of ham radio (*Radiosport*) in the USSR. The little we *thought* we knew: USSR hams belonged to radio clubs, were required to spend a period of time shortwave listening, collecting QSL cards and building receivers before moving on to a transmitting license and amateur radio call sign. Those SWLs were assigned SWL call signs. Most DX-active US hams from that period can attest to that with the many USSR SWL cards in their QSL collections.

Amateur Radio Operation in the Soviet Union

The 71-page monograph, *Amateur Radio Operation in the Soviet Union* by F. Gayle Dunham, was published in 1965 for the Research Program on Problems of Communication and International Security, Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The paper comprises 49 pages of descriptive text and footnotes and 22 pages of appendices.

This is the first in a series of *K9YA Telegraph* articles to offer a synopsis of *Amateur Radio Operation in the Soviet Union*. Hopefully, by the series' conclusion readers will better understand how the Soviet amateur experience both paralleled and diverged from the American amateur experience.

DOSA AF

The primary amateur radio organization in the Soviet Union was the Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force and Navy (DOSAAF), it was defined as "a para-military civil defence and military training association, directly responsible to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.... All members of DOSAAF Radio Clubs are called *RADIO-LYUBITELI* (radio amateurs), but only part of them are hams in the sense we [in the US] understand the term."

DOSA AF membership comprised:

1. **Operators**—Those with their own station and those operating out of a club station, both on the short and ultra-short waves.
2. **Experimenters**—" [D]eveloping radios, tape recorders, phonographs and other equipment we would classify as consumer items."

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"RADIO-LYUBITELI"

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Dear Hiram

2015 Dayton Hamvention®

Bob Cashdollar, NR8U



Crowds Formed Inside While it Rained Outside

Well, another Dayton Hamvention® is in the books. For Francis “Fritz” Tender, WD8E, and me the weekend’s theme was the weather. We got a taste of what was to come on our way over to Dayton on Friday morning. As we approached the exit for Hara Arena we were greeted by a brief and intense shower. The TV weather people have taken to calling these showers “pop-up” rainstorms. Over the two days we were at the Hamvention®

there was definitely some weather popping up.

Driving Rain

The rain held off until about the middle of the day Friday and gave me plenty of time to walk a lot of the flea market. A brief but intense shower cleared out the flea market and drove everybody inside during the middle part of Friday afternoon.

Saturday, weather wise, was a repeat of Friday. The morning was good for me trekking around the parts of the flea market I missed on Friday. While Fritz and I were in the Quarter Century Wireless Association Forum around 3:00 pm a “pop-up” shower returned with a vengeance with the wind blowing and water flowing in the streets.

Compared to years past, when the Hamvention® was in April, it was not much of an event. At least it was not snowing, sleeting, or temperatures near freezing all of which we had experienced over the years.

As we were standing under cover on the north end of Hara Arena getting ready to leave late Saturday afternoon, the Dayton Hamvention® weather experience was neatly summed up by a gentleman in one of those powered scooters. Pausing before driving

out from under the protective cover of the doorway overhang, he whipped out a large golf-style umbrella, looked at us, and with a sly smile commented, “This is not my first Dayton” and promptly drove off towards the parking lot.

As I mentioned, I did my usual tour of the flea market on Friday and Saturday. The Flea market was its usual eclectic self. Mixed together in the outdoor area were the usual parts, radios, antique equipment and assorted used commercial electronics. This year I noticed that non-ham vendors have started to creep back into the flea market. I felt sorry for the guy with a fairly large couple of spaces who was selling “genuine leather wallets.” Both days when I passed his spaces, he was sitting kind of forlornly in his area as people passed his display of about a hundred wallets.

High End Flea Market

Another thing that seemed to be prevalent in the outside area was “high end” (read over \$1,000) amateur radios for sale. I saw the same thing when Fritz and I were at the Mansfield, Ohio and Athens, Ohio hamfests earlier in the year before Dayton. I wondered who carries thousands of dollars to buy these used radios. Apparently, from what I saw, the answer is, “NO ONE.”

On my Friday sojourn in the flea market I found the Enigma man, Professor Tom Perera, Ph.D., W1TP, holding down a flea market

*“The Dayton
Hamvention®
weather
experience”*



Kenwood’s Flagship TS-990S XCVR



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space. I stopped and had a brief conversation with him about Pearl Harbor and the question of did the Japanese Navy maintain radio silence on their way to Pearl Harbor. I attended Professor Perera's excellent forum on encryption techniques over the centuries when Fritz and I were at the American Radio Relay League's Centennial celebration in Hartford, Connecticut last summer.

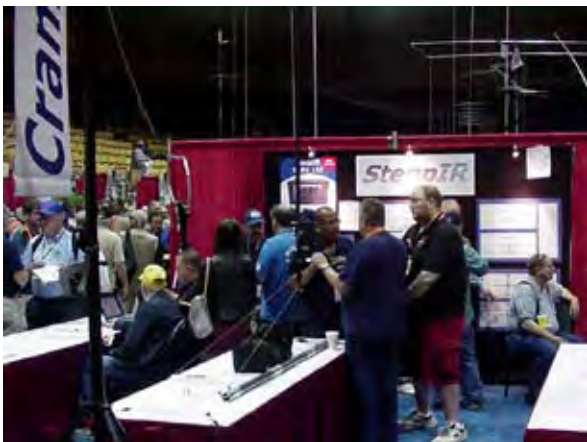
When Friday's rains came and drove me inside I headed for the American Radio Relay League's area. As usual, your ARRL had a large space inside Hara. I managed to purchase a couple of shirts and extend my League membership to get the reprinted first edition of *QST*. The reprint of the first edition is very well done. It is also nice to see that Clarence D. Tuska's name getting a little recognition for the role he played in helping found *QST*.

Breaking Bread and Telling Tales

Later on Friday evening Fritz and I had a great dinner with Bradley Swinehart, AK8H, and Kevin Page, AC8GI, at a nearby Texas Roadhouse. Three-and-a-half hours flew by as we swapped amateur radio stories and experiences.

We awoke Saturday morning to an overcast sky, but no rain, yet. After we arrived at Hara Arena later in the morning on Saturday, Fritz attended the Mad River Radio Club's annual meeting. The meeting is unique in that it is held in Hara's main arena up in the stands. When I looked in on it there seemed to be quite a few members in attendance scattered up in the stands.

As I mentioned, on Saturday Fritz and I attended the Quarter Century Wireless forum. In Hamventions® past, QCWA had its forum on Sundays and was sparsely attended.



SteppIR Display—Main Floor

This time on Saturday afternoon there was a much larger group in attendance. QCWA Director Carol Perry, WB2MGP, announced a new QCWA program which emphasizes connecting QCWA members and chapters with youth groups.

Hara Arena Renovation

As I was waiting in the hallway outside where the QCWA forum was to be held, I noticed a large poster on an easel facing people coming in from outside. The poster's theme was the renovations planned for Hara Arena in the next year. From the drawings on the poster there is apparently going to be some major renovation work done to the arena. The completion date looks to be sometime in 2016, although no completion date was given on the poster.



Fritz Tender, WD8E,
Checking Out the Mad
River Radio Club Booth

Fritz and I had earlier in the year discussed only attending the Hamvention® on Friday and Saturday. We both agreed that Sunday is a bit of a wash as far as things to do and see. Most of the flea market has disappeared by Sunday morning and the only reason we could think of for staying another day was the noon drawing on Sunday when the Hamvention® closes. Since neither of us has ever won anything in the drawings and if you win one of the main prizes the Hamvention® prize committee will call you, we decided to keep our Dayton experience to just two days this year.

*“Clarence
D. Tuska”*

Off-Roading

As we left the Hara Arena handicap parking area to head home, we were directed to the driveway that circles the backside of the flea market. The road is like something out of a torture test track for some automotive company. We were fortunate in following a Jeep® SUV as it navigated some really huge mud puddles. When the Jeep® navigated a mud puddle that came up to the bottom of its doors, we managed to circle around the puddle and make it to the other side.

Oh well, that is the one and only Dayton Hamvention®.

Bob, NR8U: No one called to tell me or Fritz that we had won a major prize—36 years in a row for me. ■



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The Fist is the Last to Go

Hal Mandel, W4HBM



Ahoy! Those of us in the New Free French Underground Resistance know just who we are, and what it takes to keep the network going.

Hats off to such heroes of the revolution as Kenny, AB*NI; Gennady, UA*MA; Chris, N*FSX; and many more unsung heroes, risking their necks, mostly at night, keeping the hobby alive.

In one circumstance She Who Must Be Obeyed, (SWMBO or just S/O for short), developed a fear of overhead wires while pregnant, and that led to a heightened sensitivity to the sound of a heterodyne, *at any pitch*.

It's not unusual for the S/O to develop these symptoms. It must be something in the water. After all, how do sisters, miles apart, get in the condition at the same time? (But that's a topic for a serious scientific treatise that's in the works...)

In my case, I was banished to the basement, along with the Great Dane. Rule Number One was: *There Shall Be No Wires On The Floor*. The Dane would chew on them, and probably teach either of the harmonics to do the same, so, it was a chore, but it got done.

Operating time was another hurdle. If S/O was awake or just Moving About, my duty assignment was to be in one (1) cable-tow length, or less, and best if I had no spare minerals, metals, tools, manuals, fictional literature, non-fictional literature or any such item or object so as to cause my mind to be distracted from my Primary Responsibility and Duty Post. What I had to do was to either wake up in the middle of the night or wake up very, very early in the morning and soft-shoe it down to the shack, whereupon donning my KOSS Pro-4A cans and seeing who I could

roust on 80 or 40. No Yagis back then: We were on a shoestring at our small farm, so it was a 160-meter Windom in the back 40, no balun, no open wire, just a hunk of coax to the Heathkit.

Most of the time I managed to keep the noise down to a dull roar, but sometimes that pesky tuner-upperer would zero beat and the resulting "WEEEEOOOOO" would make those Pro-4's bounce on my head, and even with the liquid-filled cushion, the changing sine wave would seep out.

The first result was the 200-pound Great Dane, already awake from seeing me in the basement and hoping for a 10-pound sirloin steak, medium-well, would HOWL in sympathy with the beat. No amount of "Shut up, stupid!" would stop this, and I only weighed around 170 pounds to the dog's 205, so a wrestling match was not an option.

Just two seconds of the Howling Beast would be like having the U.S. Navy band playing in the living room. I could hear the "THUMP-THUMP" of the bunny slippers as You-Know-Who flew down the stairs with Murder (or worse) in her heart. "What are you trying to do, wake the baby!?"

What defense was there for me other than to apologize? The "But, but, but" prefix was long ago used up, so I quietly said I was just listening while reading through my night school homework. After a few times of this, I realized I was At War and The Boche were Listening.

So, I graduated to an Autek AF filter box in an attempt to keep the howls down and kept a big bag of Great Dane treats easily accessible. (I know, I know—the dog wanted fresh cold cuts and whole Perdue chickens, but surprisingly, a big bag of cat food nuggets was right on the money.) The dog thought she was getting "forbidden fruit" and kept her yap shut. I stacked up cardboard cartons near the radio corner to help absorb noise.

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"WEEEEOOOOO"



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Scott B. Laughlin, N7NET

Charlie walked Rose and her parents as far as his booth. He wanted to ask Rose for a date, but with him being older by five years, he wasn't sure how her father would react. Something in their conversation hinted they were farmers. So she would probably not get into town except during weekends. Any chance of seeing her often was remote. However, she called the shop the following day.

"I'd like to see your QSL collection," Rose said.

"Sure, anytime you like, Rose,"

"My father wants to know if you can work on his pickup tomorrow?" she asked.

"What kind of work?"

"He thinks it needs clutch work—disc, pressure plate, and turn the flywheel. And then he'd like you to tune the engine, too."

The following morning, shortly after eight, Virgil brought his pickup to the shop. Rose was with him, so Charlie took Rose into his radio shack and retrieved several boxes of cards from a closet. After setting up a folding table and chair he left Rose to sort through them at her leisure.

"If you have any questions I'll be the shop. I remember some of the QSOs."

"QSOs?"

"Conversations. Radio people call them QSOs. It's another Q-signal. You may find some of the cards stating: FB QSO. FB means Fine Business; it was a good conversation. Others refer to fists. We call the hand that works the key a fist. Each fist has its own distinctive rhythm, or signature, each as distinctive as one's voice," Charlie explained. Then, almost as an afterthought, he unrolled a world map, so she could locate the countries from which the cards had been sent.

Then he returned to the shop and started on Virgil's Chevrolet pickup. Anne waited in the Ford sedan she'd driven to the shop.

"How long do you think it will take?" Virgil asked.

"We should have it finished by noon."

After Charlie started working Virgil and Anne drove to May's for breakfast.

"Hello Virgil. Hello Anne," said May as she placed menus before them. "Where is Rose?"

"Rose is down at Henry's Automotive. We're having Charlie work on the pickup," Anne explained.

"Do you know Charlie well?" Virgil asked.

"Yes, he's lived here all his life. His mother died when he was a youngster, so it's been he and his dad. He's a fine young man."

"That's good to hear," Virgil said.

"He's a fine young man," she repeated, sensing there was more to the question than was stated. "What can I get for you?"

"Ham and eggs over medium, wheat toast, and coffee," said Virgil.

"I'll have the same," said Anne.

"What are we going to do with our time? The pickup won't be ready for nearly four hours," said Virgil, sipping his coffee nervously.

"We can go home. I'm sure there are things needing attention. You mentioned a flat tire on the wheat drill, and the west fence on the north forty needs mending. I know I can use this time to prepare some apple jelly and pear butter," Anne suggested.

"What about Anne? Are you suggesting we leave her here in town, at the shop?"

"Of course," said Anne, touching the back of his hand. "She will be fine. She is getting an education that might be useful when she goes off to college. She can drive the truck home when it's ready."



"Ham and eggs over medium..."



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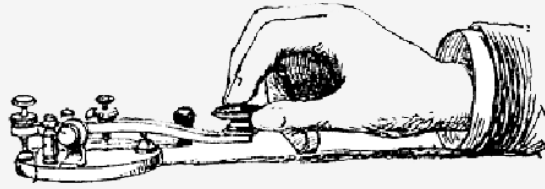
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My Name is CW

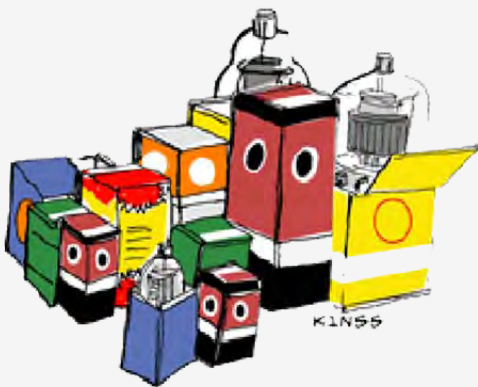
James A. Henson, Sr., W4UFP



My name is CW ham and I don't work no phone
I let my fingers do the talkin' with a purely DC tone
My xmitter has just one stage with 3900 on the plate
I usta have a current meter but the needle got
bent outta shape
Now the porch light across the way my output
will indicate

Those ole 211s inverted in a bucket of cold water
Moans and groans but works just like they oughta
And when they ask the kinda rig that could put
out such a sig
I say its made by Collins and it's their very fin-
est rig.
They don't have to know it's homebrew and an
ole pole pig

The lights all dim and the house drop will spark
And two blocks away a burned out street light
will strike an arc
Ole man smith just down the street
All of a sudden is copying code with nothing but
his teeth
And somewhere over a mile away on a cul-de-sac beat
A lover sighs "was it as good for you as it was for me?"



CONTINUED - THE FIST FROM PAGE 4

I consider myself lucky because the sound of a J-38 clicking away didn't cause a disturbance, BUT IT COULDA!!!

So for me, and for the other "night operatives," CW was a godsend. I/We/They could just forget about speaking into a mike. Could you just imagine: "CQ 40," (Boom-boom. Out go the lights.) S/O was a world-class athlete when we first met up and she could out-wrestle me in zero time flat, (which was, I think, the reason I proposed), ((and the reason she accepted)), (((but that again is the subject of yet another treatise in the works))), so a physical defense on being discovered was to just let the Radio Gestapo thrash on me verbally for a while, 'cause the alternatives were not pleasant.

In the New Free French we would trade War Stories. My buddy Gumby in Elmira would offer to give the baby a 2:00 a.m. bottle and tune up for a few QSOs. Some thirty years later his little baby has her own ticket and is a graduate engineer, so you never know what good will come of it.

So for those of you still addicted to the sound of your own voice, unplug the mike and make yourself wake up in the wee hours and catch the slow code QSOs right near the edge of the Extra bands. Chances are you are listening to words of freedom from the New Free French!

Bonsoir et 73! ■

CONTINUED - ROSE FROM PAGE 5

"I not so sure that's a good idea," objected Virgil, tugging at his handlebar.

May pushed through the kitchen door and started for their table with their orders.

"Can I get you anything else—salsa, catsup?"

"I think we're good," said Anne, smiling.

"Do you really think she will be alright?" Virgil asked, after May was out of earshot.

"Tell me your worst fear, Virgil," she urged.

"I suppose you're right," mumbled Virgil, digging into his breakfast.

Anne could see he was uneasy, but she let the matter drop and they ate in silence. ■

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3. **Experimenters**—"[A]ppplied electronics in industry."

DOSAAF published *RADIO*, the "official journal of the Soviet radio amateurism." *RADIO*, launched in 1924 as *RADIO FRONT* was later renamed *RADIO PO VSEM (RADIO TO ALL)*. In 1965 single copies of *RADIO* cost 30 kopeks (33 cents [one ruble then equaled \$1.11]). That same year the average *RADIO* run was "800,000 copies per edition." If that number is accurate, far more than hams and SWLs were reading it, inferring a wide swath of the radio listening public.

In the Soviet Union amateur radio operators were "Generally the holder of a technical job...[and is] often closely [involved in]...radio communications." In other words, in the USSR, as elsewhere, amateur radio attracted and still attracts technical types.

Hams in the USSR were a privileged group, a high degree of official approval allowed them to communicate with locations anywhere in the Soviet Union and, most tellingly, with western hams. Unlike other USSR citizens Soviet hams and SWLs could freely listen to foreign broadcasts beamed to the USSR from the USA, UK, and other western nations. Thus, Soviet hams formed an elite as some of the best-informed in the nation; "they are aware of this reputation and take pride in it." On the air, however, "discussions, with [other] Soviets and foreigners, are limited to the subject of radio communications only."

Technical Training

DOSAAF offered licensing and code courses administered by local radio clubs. "These clubs are furnished with a high frequency section, vhf/uhf section, several classrooms, a library and workshops." DOSAAF provided the clubs with three paid employees, the club's manager and his assistants. Use of club stations was strictly regulated to prevent unauthorized use.



"*RADIO PO
VSEM*"

Once prospective hams proved their proficiency at 12-wpm code they advanced to the SWL level. It was at this point they were required to join DOSAAF. Once approved and admitted to the organization the new member was assigned a SWL license. "A Soviet short wave listener (SWL), it should be noted, is licensed in the same way as one who transmits. He also sends out QSLs of reception of transmissions, just as does an operator licensed to transmit."

Amateur candidates had to follow a rigorous licensing protocol that included providing various documents and following a number of procedures, including:

1. A personal history statement and work record from their employer or school.
2. Petitions from the Central Committee of DOSAAF, the local committee and a schematic drawing of his station.
3. The local Inspectorate of Electro-Communications received two copies of these documents.
4. Membership in Young Communists League (*Komsomol*) was desirable, but not wholly necessary.
5. Upon approval of this last application the amateur may be licensed for a period of one year. After this period the license must be renewed by the State Inspectorate of Electro-Communications, which almost automatically grants the license on the basis of this recommendation.

License Classes

Class One: *Phone and continuous wave operation on all amateur wave bands; class one stations are permitted up to 200 watts input power. This class usually requires a high level of skill acquired usually after three to five years experience in operating a transmitter.*

Class Two: *Phone and continuous wave on all vhf/uhf bands, c.w. operation on 160, 80, 40, and 20 meters and power input of from 11 to 40 watts. He must be able to copy at a speed of about 16-18 words per minute.*



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Class Three: *Phone and c.w. operation on all vhf/uhf bands, c.w. on 160 and 80 meters, with a power input of 10 watts.*

In order to build his own transmitter a Soviet amateur must receive permission from the State Inspectorate of Electro-Communications of the Regional Directorate of Ministry of Communications. After approval of this application he has six months to complete the construction of his station. If this is done, he is then assigned to a certain class of short wave operation by the qualification commission of the local DOSAAF committee.

Prior to 1956 it was very difficult for Soviet citizens to obtain permission to operate a private radio station. However, following the Twentieth Party Congress that year, private stations were encouraged. In 1958, due in part to the rapid development of uhf radio, the number of private stations rapidly increased.

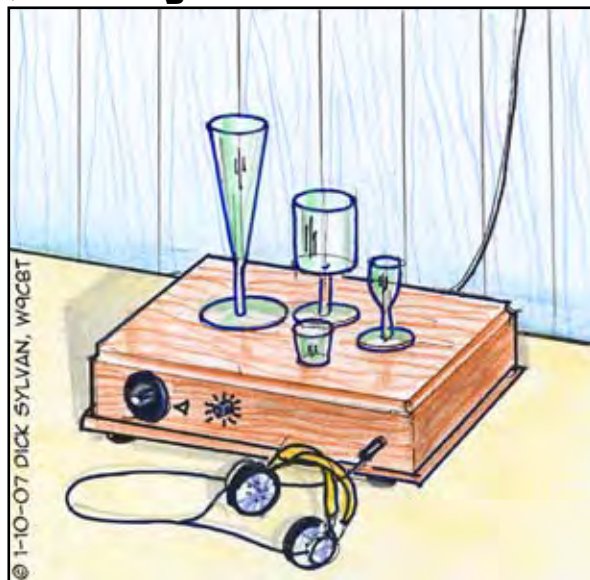
Rules and Regulations

By international treaty Soviet amateur radio rules and regulations mostly followed those of the rest of the world. The USSR's authoritarian rule, however, was explicitly reflected in its "limitation on [the] content of [amateur] conversations." That stricture was forcefully reiterated in an early 1960s *RADIO* article.

We must pay greater attention to the strengthening of discipline in the ether. We cannot be reconciled to the fact that individual amateurs are operating an imperfect transmitters and powers above those authorized, use frequencies not allocated to amateur communications, and carry on conversations not relating to amateur radio operation.

Ham Lingo

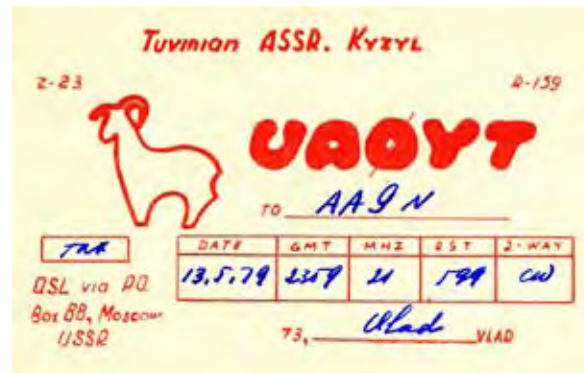
DICK SYLVAN, WACBT



"CRYSTAL SET"

Call Signs

The paper provides a brief review of call sign allocations worldwide followed by examples of Soviet call signs. The Ukrainian call sign, UB5VO [Mukacheve, Ukraine, USSR in 1961], is dissected into its component parts.



The first letter of the Soviet amateur call sign is "U". The second letter indicates the republic (A for the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic], B for the Ukraine, and so on), which is followed by a number which indicates that the operator is the Ukrainian SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic], in the fifth region and that he has been assigned the letter combination VO.

An "...amateur...licensed to operate on all bands changes his call sign from 'U' to 'R' when he operates on frequencies higher than 29.7 mcs [sic]. This is optional for all but novice class operators, and is carried out by few."

The first official Russian call book was issued in 1962, it listed amateurs licensed as of November 1961. Statistics from that call book: 929 collective stations, 2,803 individual stations, 1,091 collective ultra-short wave stations and 5,362 individual ultra-short wave stations for a total of 10,185 stations.

The ratio of club to private stations was one to four, of these nearly half were estimated "not active." Soviet call book information was "not available to non-Soviet hams for the USSR." ■

K9YA Telegraph Algorithm

Like what you're reading in this month's *K9YA Telegraph*? If so, you're in good company, as amateur radio operators in more than 100 countries agree with you. Know what else? Hams just like you write the *K9YA Telegraph*.

Evidenced by your feedback we know we've hit on a winning formula:

YOU + *K9YA Telegraph* = A Great Read

But without your side of the equation, it just doesn't add up.

http://www.k9ya.org/write_for_us.htm



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