

Listening to the World on Short Wave

What Russian Programmes Are Like

FROM Mr. R. Leslie Jones comes the following interesting letter regarding shortwave reception of world stations, and in particular of the Russian station RFN:—

THROUGH the courtesy of Mr. L. H. Bowe, of the J. B. Ford Coy., Spring Street, Sydney, who visited my house Thursday evening, March 28, I am now able to give listeners a translation of Thursday's transmission from the Russian shortwave station. Mr. Bowe, who speaks many languages, was, during the war, attached to the Allied Secret Service. He was born of British parents at Moscow 39 years ago. Mr. Bowe left Wellington for Sydney on Good Friday; having been transferred by his firm to Sydney, after having spent some time in New Zealand.

The Russian station was tuned-in at 8.40 p.m. (New Zealand time) Thursday last. Reception was held on loud-speaker; the receiver used being the very latest in screened-grid shortwave receivers; encased in aluminium, the set employing in addition to the screened-grid, a detector, and two stages of audio; and is fully screened. The set was constructed by Mr. Roy Clarke, the well-known amateur transmitter, who transmits under the call-sign of 2AW, Wellington. So far as I am aware, this is the first occasion a New Zealand translation of the Russian transmission has been made public.

Contrary to expectations, the "spoken" parts transmitted, were, for the most part, lectures and news of the day from "round the world." I understand the Soviet Government has cut up (or confiscated) the big farms, and placed same under closer settlement, hence the large amount of propaganda relating to agriculture, which is being broadcast by the Russian stations. I also understand the Soviet does not encourage the Russian populace to instal individual receiving sets, but prefers to, and does, encourage what one might term "community" listening-in.

Many listeners have held the opinion that the Soviet Government regularly and consistently broadcasts "direct, Red propaganda." On this particular occasion, such was not apparently the case, as will be seen by the following: Special advice and educational matter appertaining to agriculture, is, however, a regular feature of the transmission, as was the case Thursday, March 28.

Addresses were given by a lady and gentleman alternately, and these two speakers dealt with the question of "rendering practical help in the villages." Then followed in the order given below the various items (brief details only are given hereunder).

Comparative value of 100 roubles in different localities.

Forming villagers' organisations to raise culture by means of schools; various artisans being mentioned. A large gathering of villagers is to be held next year.

Musical items rendered on the Russian "Garmonika" (accordeon).

Information re the Chinese peasants, 70 per cent. of whom (it was stated by the announcer) were ignorant and unlettered.

Listeners were exhorted to "how to armaments."

Hunger in the Russian villages was due to speculation.

Women "Red" workers were being organised.

At present the peasant proprietors were having more scope, so as to increase grain production.

Music by a "balalaika" (triangular guitar) followed.

An address on land and agriculture, and the "Greater Use of Machinery" were interesting subjects dealt with next.

"Folk" music on an accordeon followed; and then an address on the "Necessity for Organising Workers," a waltz played on a "balalaika" being a pleasant break in the programme.

The next subject dealt with was "Inflammation of the Lungs: Its Symptoms and Effect on Human Beings, also Animals."

A quick waltz tune on an accordeon followed, this being immediately succeeded by a humorous monologue on "Village Life" (one could hardly imagine it).

An orchestra rendered a "Russian Folk Song"; and another short speech was immediately followed by a "Polka" played on an accordeon. The next item was another monologue and a string orchestra played a march, with plenty of "pep."

After a "Gazette" (news item) from Washington, D.C., was read, the Russian station closed down at 9.50 p.m. (New Zealand time) for 15 minutes.

When the station reopened an address on "Cleanliness and Venereal Diseases" was given.

The announcer then stated they would "relay" from station R.A. 97, and that it was then 10.22 Eastern time.

Another address followed, regarding "The Workers' Conference and Meeting of Bookkeepers at Nigni Novgorod"; also "Archangel Forests" being referred to. The speaker then touched upon the "Trading Organisations of Farmers."

A monologue and orchestral music was next heard; then remarks re "Produce and Conveyance by Steamers."

More music preceded an address on "Germany and the Revolutionary and Reformation Movement."

A lady rendered a "Folk Song" with piano accompaniment at 11.10 p.m. (New Zealand time).

News of the day included information regarding the Chinese Civil War, the attack on Hankow (pronounced by the announcer as "Anko"), the panic in Canton, troops were massing.

Reference was made to the Japanese Government and the insult to the Emperor.

The speaker next referred to the "Death of Marshal Foch" and the arrests of Communists, mostly French, apparently at the ceremony in connection with the late Marshal Foch.

The English elections were touched upon; also the Liberals' promises; Spain and its Dictator; the sinking of "I'm Alone" steamer—with contraband abroad—by the U.S. Navy.

An announcement was made as follows: "Russian Station R.A. 97 on 70 metres, Sabar time, 20 hours 58 minutes."

The announcer stated further music would follow after an interval. Then there was an interval of 20 minutes.

Mr. friend Mr. Bowe had to return to the city and left my house at 11.50 p.m., therefore further translation was not available that night. Another friend, however, has kindly offered to give me further translations after the holidays, when require.

KDKA (Pittsburg) was in good trim on Good Friday afternoon (our time), also 2XAF, these stations broadcasting the big fight for the world's lightweight championship, of ten rounds, between the holder of the title, "Tommy" Laughran, and the challenger, "Micky" Walker, holder of the world's middleweight championship, held at the fine Chicago Stadium.

The fight was a thrilling and gruelling contest after the third round, and at the end of the tenth round the two boxers were absolutely "done," so fagged out, in fact, as to be unable to do more than "hug" each other. "Tommy" Laughran was declared the winner on points, although, as the announcer said, either of the two men, with a decent punch, could have gained a "knock-out," just at the close of the tenth round. A huge crowd attended at Chicago's beautiful stadium. The fight ended at approximately 4.40 p.m. (New Zealand time).

I obtained reception on the loud-speaker throughout, and after the fight I listened-in to 2XAF until the programme from Albany, New York, comprising organ music and soprano solos, was finished, the closing-down time being given as "three and one-half minutes to 1 a.m." at Schenectady, and that the station would "re-open again Good Friday morning (that is, this morning), at 6.45 a.m." Reception was beautifully clear and steady.

I am very pleased with my new screened-grid shortwave receiver, and I predict there will be a big "fillip" to radio listening, when once the public become aware of the excellent reception obtainable, and interest derivable from shortwave telephony.

Last Sunday afternoon, March 24, I held the American shortwave station, broadcasting messages to Commander Byrd and party throughout the transmission, every word being heard through loudspeaker as "clear as a bell." It is not necessary to sit up half the night to get shortwave reception, as many people probably think.

There are several stations which listeners can hear at reasonable hours of the day and evening, working shortwave transmission. Amongst the stations I have logged during the last week or so, are: PCJ (Holland), Java, working 2ME, Sydney; 5SW, (London), WGY, 2XAF, 2XAD, KDKA, W2XG, WAKNX, PLG (Bandoung), 3LO (Melbourne), RFN, RFM, and RA97 (Russian), also many amateurs, some on 'phone and others on Morse; also South America and Germany, whilst a large number of "Aussies" and ZL amateurs have been heard on both 'phone and Morse. Spasmodic transmissions from a few quarters were also heard; such as the whaler Larsen, the Graf Zeppelin, etc.

I was able recently to listen to 5SW (London) at 8 a.m., through loud-speaker, whilst partaking of breakfast.

Details of Mr. Jones's set and equipment are as follow:—

THE set is a fully screened shortwave one comprising screened-grid, detector, and two stages of audio. The wiring is compact, and is worked in a simple manner, there being one lead-in and one earth served by a

switch in the veranda, and another in the sitting room, with the two-way wiring between sitting-room and veranda so that I can use either sitting-room or veranda at leisure, by simply lifting the shortwave set from room to room and coupling up at a moment's notice. By a simple and effective switch alongside the two sets in the sitting-room, I can change from ordinary broadcast stations to shortwave stations in a fraction of a moment and vice versa. My earth is very short, being coupled up to the water pipe, and I always keep the earth round about that spot moist by letting the water drip from the tap slightly. The new set is immune from hand capacity and other objectionable features found with many shortwave sets; the smoothness of control being ideal. I am working 120 volts B battery, aerial single wire (seven strands enamel), height at south end about 48ft., and about 40ft. north end, running due north-east to south-west, and with lead-in, is about 100ft. It is about 16ft. above my iron roof.

Useful Brackets

Advice to Builders


In the assembling of wireless receivers the need often arises for a small bracket which can be used for mounting condensers, certain kinds of drum dials, and other components.

A suitable bracket, sufficiently strong for the purpose, but compact enough to place in the small space which is often available, is difficult to make. Two forms of bracket are available to the home builder. Aluminium angle bars in the form of a strip which can be cut easily and drilled in any desired manner can be obtained cheaply at any large hardware establishment.

Aluminium brackets of this kind possess the advantage of being very strong and light. If included in the receiver circuit they possess high electrical conductivity, and are lacking in magnetic properties, an important feature when the brackets are used to mount certain kinds of audio frequency amplifying transformers.

Another useful bracket is the angle bracket, which forms part of model building kits of the meccano type. These brackets are of steel, and are accurately formed and drilled. If they are employed it should be remembered that they possess marked magnetic properties. If several audio frequency transformers were mounted on a single bracket, it is probable that an undesirable reaction, resulting in a tendency for the receiver to "howl," would be set up between them along the bracket.

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