

# U.S. hams report the news to Russia

By Edvins Beitiks  
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

An amateur radio operator in Brooklyn who has contacted radio stations in the Soviet Union says Soviet ham operators are generally unaware of the extent of damage at Kiev.

The 25-year-old Russian emigre, who asked not to be identified, said he made contact with ham radio operators in Kiev and elsewhere in the Soviet Union this morning.

"This is in Kiev, smack there, not on the outskirts," said the emigre, who has been in this country for six years. While listening to signals on the 20-meter band, one of the amateur radio frequencies, he made contact with a ham radio operator inside the city.

"He was literally besieged by amateurs calling him from Europe. He didn't respond to it, because it was in English, but when I broke in speaking Russian he came back to me.

"I came on and said, 'You've got a disaster right next to you. It's the top subject for United States mass media... How is it in Kiev?' And he said, 'Everything is normal. We know nothing about this.'"

Soon after speaking with the Kiev station, said the emigre, he made contact with two other operators in the Soviet Union — one from Moscow and the other from Kuibyshev, west of the capital city.

One of the operators argued with the emigre's use of the word "catastrophe" to describe the nuclear accident at Kiev.

"This guy asked me what exactly was happening and I painted the picture and he said, 'It's exaggerated — the expression is 'utka,' meaning 'duck' — something grossly exaggerated... a product of the capitalistic press.'"

The emigre explained that "you better believe it because you're going to hear a lot about this," when another operator came on the airwaves to question where the nuclear accident had taken place.

"Is this happening in our country?" he says. Can you imagine?"

The Brooklyn operator, who routinely contacts ham operators in the Soviet Union between 7 and 8 a.m., eastern time — the best hours of reception — said, "I have a few friends who are ham operators living in Kiev. The people must be drinking this same water, breathing this same air, and nobody knows anything.

"I honestly believe (the government) is not doing anything, so not to start a panic."

Although he spoke only with three Soviet operators, the emigre explained, "I'm sure a lot of people were listening. I can say things, but they can't respond. They risk their operators' license if they start talking."

David Sumner of the American Radio Relay League in Connecticut said he also made a number of contacts in the Soviet Union last night.

"It was business as usual, as far as they were concerned," Sumner said. "I heard one station raise the subject with a ham operator in Asiatic Russia and the fellow came back and just said, 'Sorry, no Chernobyl.'"

Sumner said in a phone interview that Soviet radio operators

don't seem to be deliberately covering up the incident.

"They weren't being evasive... They were simply in the dark about it," he said.

The best time for reaching Soviet stations on short wave radios, Sumner said, is early to mid-morning, eastern time. Members of the 140,000-strong American Radio Relay League will keep trying to make contact, he explained, but it doesn't look good for a communications breakthrough.

"Based on what we've heard to this point, it's doubtful we're going to get very much," Sumner said. "Apparently TASS and Radio Moscow told the West just as much as they've told their own people."

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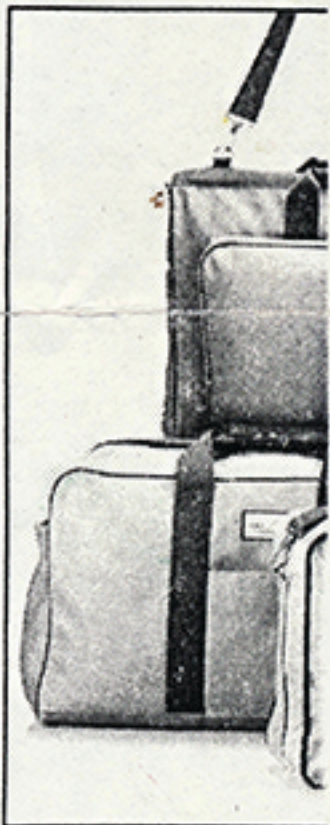
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