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**International Restoration Contest Winner
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BOOK REVIEW

The Early Short Wave Stations

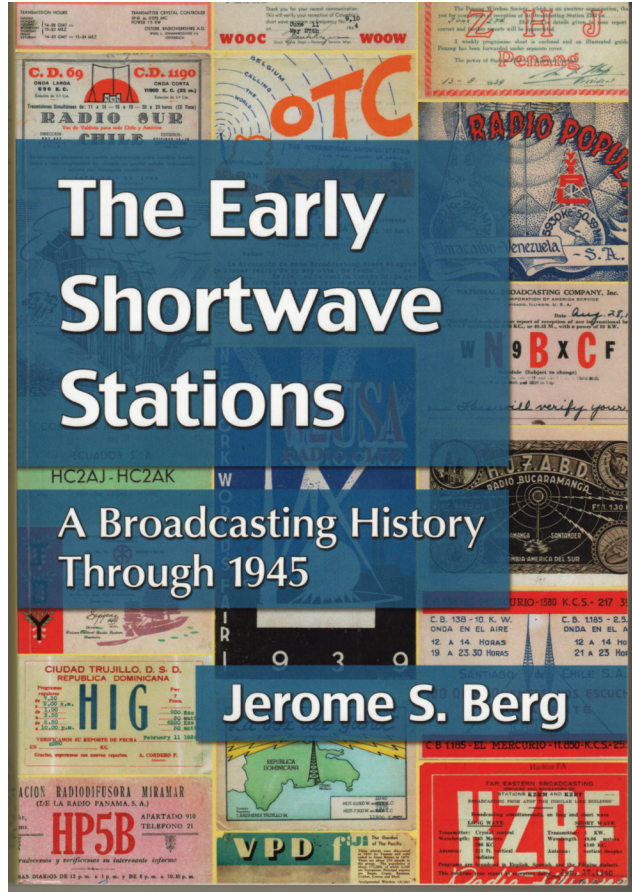
BY JEROME S. BERG
REVIEWED BY BART LEE

Jerry Berg writes great radio history. Whatever the period, the words of Hugo Gensback in 1926 resonate: "I cannot imagine any greater thrill, than that which comes when I listen, as I often do, to a station thousands of miles away. It is the greatest triumph yet achieved by mind over matter." (Jerry so quotes in an earlier book).

The fourth book on Short Wave Radio history is as good as it gets: *The Early Short Wave Stations*. He subtitles this: *A Broadcasting History Through 1945*. This book closes the circle of listening and broadcasting from 1901 to now. He approaches short wave radio chronologically, telling this story year by year. He illustrates the stations and the industry, and some of the literature of short wave listening. QSL cards from now ancient and rare broadcast-

ers abound. Preliminaries come first of course (Marconi and de Forest), and then it's broadcasting in the ether. The higher frequencies of short wave radio --- higher than the broadcast band of 500 KHz to then 1500KHz -- enjoyed much more ionospheric skip at night and for

frequencies above 10 MHz, in the day as well. Broadcast band stations had been heard internationally in the 1920s. There wasn't much interference in those days. But the shorter-wavelengths, the higher frequencies, regularly leapt from continent to continent. Moreover, in the 1930s countries had much to say to each other on the radio, sometimes virtually shout-



ing. Both Fascism and Communism took to the airwaves before sending waves of troops against each other and into peaceful countries also.

Geophysics also played a role in short wave radio's development. As the book relates, short wave broadcasting took off in the late 1920s. The "Radio Craze" put a broadcast band receiver in almost every home. People had a growing interest in hearing more, even from other countries. Radio News in June 1930 reported, "The growth of interest in short-wave broadcasting is nothing short of phenomenal"; this is the quote with which Jerry introduces the decade of the 1930s. The sunspots accommodated: from 1925 through about 1931 the eleven-year sunspot cycle peaked. The emanations from the sun charged the ionosphere. The radio waves bounced around the earth.

As the 1930s progressed, geopolitics in Europe and Asia heated up. So did the ionosphere, rising from a low in about 1935 to a peak in about 1940, the start of World War Two. At home in America, on so many radios now with short wave bands, people now could listened directly to the convulsions of the world. So too through World War Two, the belligerents had at it, in the ether as well as on the battlefield. Americans on the home receivers could follow every short wave broadcast announcement from around the world. These came from every warring nation, including even Lord Haw Haw for the Nazis. This book details exhaustively what these stations had to say, and the technologies of how they said it, including frequencies and powers. (Much then happened after 1945, and Jerry has also turned his considerable skills to shortwave radio in the Cold War in his second and third books).

Jerry has now detailed the history of short-wave radio definitively, with this fourth of four books. Every radio history enthusiast should own these books. So should every library covering the history of technology have reference copies.

A great virtue of these four books is the detail provided in the notes and sources. If it happened in short wave radio, it's in these books. These books are great companions to the old radios, from the gleaming living-room consoles to the little tabletops with modest short wave coverage. All of these radios brought into our homes the whole world. We owe a debt of gratitude to Jerry Berg for documenting this age and telling its stories so well.

Soft cover, 118 photos, 340 pages. Appendix, notes, bibliography, index.

Prior books in the series are:

On the Short Waves, 1923 -- 1945, Broadcast Listening in the Pioneer Days of Radio (2007)

Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today (2010)

Broadcasting on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today (2012)

The Early Short Wave Stations can be ordered through the Antique Radio Classified Book Store at www.antiqueradio.com.

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