



EDXC Conference Saint Petersburg

Report by Alan Pennington



The annual 2015 European DX Council (EDXC) conference was held in Saint Petersburg, Russia, between 18th and 22nd September, hosted by the St Petersburg DX Club. Venue for the conference was the Hotel Russ, south of the River Neva, but a short walk and Metro ride to the historic heart of the city which is a UNESCO world heritage site. Russia's second largest city, Saint Petersburg was founded by Tsar Peter the Great in 1703, but renamed Petrograd in 1914, then Leningrad in 1924 before reverting to its original name in 1991.

The British DX Club is now a full member of the EDXC, the umbrella group for DX clubs in Europe. The conference had 33 participants, with eleven from outside Russia including four BDXC members from the UK – Chrissy Brand, George Brown, Dave Kenny and Alan Pennington. There were also four participants from Finland, plus two from Germany and one from Denmark.



This was the second time the EDXC conference had been held in Saint Petersburg – of the UK participants, only George had attended the first conference here in 2006 – for the other three this was our first visit to the city so we took time out before, during and after the conference to visit some of the many sights. The city is often referred to as “the Venice of the North” and has a wealth of waterways with palaces, museums, churches and other places to visit. Especially impressive is the Church on the Spilled Blood (*photo above left*), built on the site where Tsar Alexander II was attacked in 1881. Also St Isaac's Cathedral had an impressive interior. And post 1917 October Revolution history also abounds, such as the Soviet statue of Lenin in front of the Finland Railway station (*photo above right*) where Lenin arrived from exile ahead of the October Revolution in 1917.

A radio-related museum (not on the conference agenda but very well worth a visit) is the Popov Communications Museum (which we will be featured in a separate article in 'Communication'. As well as radio and television, this museum also features stamps and postal history, telegraphy, telephones and satellites. <http://www.rustelecom-museum.ru/?lang=en>



The EDXC conference itself opened on Saturday morning with a welcome from the President of the St Petersburg DX Club, Alexander Beryozkin (*left*) and EDXC Secretary-General Kari Kivekäs. Both had received greetings to the conference from around the world, including from Bryan Clark (New Zealand DX League), Konstantin Chernushenko (KNLS), Dario Monferini (PlayDX), AIR Italy, Kaj and Else Bredahl Jørgensen (DSWCI) and Harald Süß (Austrian DXB). Kari then updated us on EDXC topics: the EDXC website and blog are now combined at <https://edxcnews.wordpress.com/>, the EDXC Country List 2014 is available to download via this website and the EDXC Facebook page now has more than 350 'likes'. EDXC now has 15 member clubs (plus 3 individual members) and it is proposed that

membership fees will cover two years 2015 & 2016. And a vote is due shortly for the posts of Secretary General, Assistant Secretary General and auditor for the term 2016-2018.

The first talk of the conference was by Andrey Fyodorov who gave us a very detailed history of broadcasts in Russian, starting before WWII. As well as broadcasts by the major powers, his talk mentioned broadcasts by General Franco targeting the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War in 1938, HCJB's Russian broadcasts which started in 1941 and the 'Black' stations operating during WWII, broadcasts after the coup in Chile in 1979 etc. A wealth of facts and ably translated into English for the non-Russian speakers by Alexander Smulsky, to whom we are indebted for a lot of translation throughout the conference on Saturday and Sunday.

Next, a talk by Victor Rezunkov, now a Radio Liberty freelance, but a 15 year old back in 1973 when his father introduced him to radio. He talked about 'Radio Hooligans', a term written into law outlawing the making and using of illegal transmitters in the USSR by pirate stations. Penalties since 1963 for such offences ranged from a 50 rouble fine to 1.5 years in gaol, but it did not stop the short range and long range 'hooligans' Victor described. In contrast today, the Radio Controller Service is commercialised – you have to pay to detect 'hooligans' and nobody wants to pay for this service, including the government!

Our morning session concluded with Mikhail Nevolin giving an illustrated talk about Christian stations broadcasting in Saint Petersburg. As well as stations Radio Maria (1053), Pravoslavnoye Radio (828 – which we would visit) and Radio Teos (1089 from Krasny Bor opened in 1962, south of St Petersburg), he also mentioned the broadcasts from Tartu (Estonia 1035 kHz) and from Moldova (on 999 kHz). In his conclusion he posed the question facing the Protestant stations – whether to broadcast at all given internet competition and AM band interference.



After lunch, a minibus took some delegates 10km south of the city to visit the studios of AM station Pravoslavnoye Radio (Orthodox Radio of St Petersburg) which broadcasts on 828 kHz with 10kW 0500-0900 and 1700-2100 local time (sharing the frequency and studios with Radiogazeta Slovo, the Communist Party station). Mr Vasily Stamov, editor-in-chief at the station gave our party a friendly welcome to the former factory building, converted to a Russian Orthodox church on the ground floor, and station offices and studio on the first floor. The church and radio station were founded by Mr Sergey Vasilyev, a former factory director who turned to religion to escape his alcoholism. The studios contained an old vinyl record deck and cassette player, though most programmes now come from a computer hard-disk. The station sometimes receive reception reports from other countries, including Finland.



Orthodox Radio 828 AM studio (above left – photo Ydun Ritz mw.info) Cyrillic station sign (photo EDXC)
 Below left: Jan-Mikael Nurmela (Assistant S-G EDXC) and guide Vasily Stamov (right) (photo EDXC)



Following our radio station visit, we visited “Grand Maket Rossiya”, an impressive indoor model depicting several regions of Russia, including Saint Petersburg, covering 800 square metres. Lots to admire for model railway enthusiasts, the model also lights up as it moves from its daytime to nighttime phase.
<https://grandmaket.ru/en/> .

On Sunday morning the conference lectures started on a technical slant , beginning with “Modern SDR techniques in amateur radio and DXing”, presented by Alexander Gromov,

followed by Dr Anatoly Bobkov debating “Receiving antenna: electric or magnetic?”. He concluded, in ideal conditions, there is no advantage in a magnetic antennae (e.g. loops), but if there was interference, magnetic antennas were better, producing a weaker but cleaner signal.

right: Alexander Gromov (PARS Ltd, St Petersburg), describing SDR techniques. Also the designer of Radio Bonch’s SDR transmitter (below)



After introducing himself and relating some his DX memories (including attending a DX meeting in Leningrad in 1990), Risto Vähäkainu of the Finnish DX Association once again asked the question “Que Vadis EDXC Que Vadis DX?” (where are EDXC and DXing heading). This included some history of the DXing hobby and some impressive statistics e.g. 70 countries have now been heard on FM in Finland including China, India and the Canary Islands.

Then Dr Harald Gabler updated us on the activities of the Rhein-Main Radio Club (RMRC), Germany, with some photos including their DX camps and winter quarters in the Algarve, Portugal, available for rent for DXpeditions. RMRC has during recent years published a 'QSL Calendar' picturing historic QSL cards and we were treated to a first preview of the 2016 calendar – see <http://www.rmrc.de/index.php/rmrc-service/qsl-kalender> for details of how to order.

Our own editor, Chrissy Brand, then proposed on behalf of the British DX Club that the venue for the 2016 EDXC Conference should be Manchester in the UK, 9-12 September. Since being founded in 1967, only twice has the EDXC held conferences in the UK (Canterbury 1974 and London 1983) and Chrissy's presentation highlighted the many attractions the city of Manchester and surrounding area offered. Of course this proposal still has to be voted on by EDXC member clubs, but to date no other proposed venue has been suggested. So mark these dates in your diary!



Right: Chrissy presents Manchester as venue.

Finally, Alexander Beryozkin told us of his recent trip to the south coast of Spain, Costa del Sol, and some interesting catches there on his Sangean 909 including Radio Gibraltar on MW, Talk Radio Spain on FM and a station in Marbella in Russian for tourists and residents.

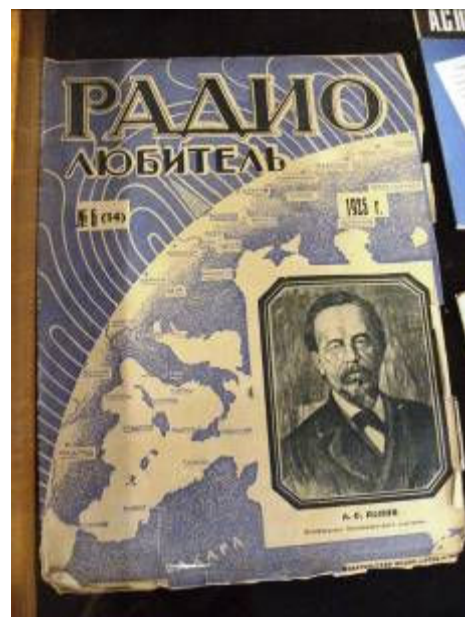
Unfortunately our scheduled Sunday afternoon visit to FM station Dorozhnoye Radio (Road Radio) was cancelled. However we were still able to visit the Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University (ETU) and have a guided tour of the A.S. Popov Memorial Museum. As we entered the grounds of the museum, we also had a good view of the nearby 326m high TV tower we unfortunately could not visit due to maintenance. By a statue of Popov we met our guide, Mikhail Partala, who is also head of the museum's amateur radio station RK1B

Below: Popov Museum QSL card (left) and Popov statue outside the memorial museum.



Alexander Stepanovich Popov is celebrated in Russia as the inventor of radio, although in the rest of the world, radio pioneer Guglielmo Marconi is more often attributed with this invention. On 7th May 1895, Popov is said to have demonstrated a system for transmitting electromagnetic signals of different duration at Saint Petersburg University. As a result, 7th May is now Radio Day in Russia. The coherer receiver used in this experiment is regarded in Russia as the first radio

receiver. Our tour visited the former laboratory of Popov, which contains authentic instruments and equipment, photographs (some taken by Popov), books and documents, including a coherer receiver and wireless telegraphy set produced by French engineer E. Ducretet in collaboration with Popov for the Russian and French navies. During the tour, I pointed out that Oliver Lodge had publically demonstrated the transmission of radio waves a year earlier than Popov, at Oxford in June 1894. This produced a lengthy reply by our guide Mikhail (in Russian) as to why Popov's demonstration was the first valid one and Lodge's not. We also had a guided tour with Director of the museum, Mrs Larisa Zolotinkina, of the apartment at the University used by Popov, still furnished as in Popov's lifetime and including some of his personal possessions including his desk. Popov died in 1906 aged only 46 following a brain haemorrhage. Regardless of how you view the claim that Popov was the inventor of radio, the Museum is a fascinating step back in time to the experimental early days of wireless and the life and work of pioneer Alexander Popov. See: <http://www.eltech.ru/en/university/our-history/museum>



Popov laboratory (left) and above Popov on cover of 'Radio Journal' from 1925 (displayed at the museum)

On Sunday evening, delegates gathered in the 'Big White Hall' at Hotel Russ for the traditional EDXC banquet. As well as a long table spread with an abundance of good food, there were also bottles of wine and vodka bearing the St Petersburg DX Club logo which flowed throughout the evening along with the conversation. Each delegate gave a short speech about themselves, often toasted with a shot of vodka and very soon midnight approached. Some continued the convivial chat into the early morning whilst others headed to bed, mindful of the following day's excursions.



On Monday morning, our minibus headed to the Bonch-Bruyevich State University of Telecommunications (SPbSUT) named in memory of the founder of the Russian radio valve industry, Professor M.A. Bonch-Bruyevich who died in 1940. Head of International Relations, Nina Zhuraleva, told us the institute had opened in 1930 so is celebrating its 85th anniversary this year. Today more than 10,000 students study there, including 350 from overseas. The University website includes a 3D tour: <http://www.sut.ru/> and has an English option. The most modern buildings on the campus were opened in 2013 and include a media centre, home to student station Radio Bonch. In these studios, a special EDXC broadcast of Radio Bonch was prepared with two young presenters interviewing Kari Kivekas, Alexander

Beryozkin, Alan Pennington and Alexey Kulakov about radio topics. We then ascended to the top floor of the building where Radio Bonch's Zeus ZS-1 SDR transmitter was fed with the programme we had just recorded and broadcast on 1593 kHz with a power of 60 watts, using a dipole wire aerial sloping from the roof of the building. After leaving the SUT campus, the Radio Bonch signal on 1593 kHz was audible in our minibus as far as the outskirts of Saint Petersburg, listening on just a Tecsun portable.



Above: Cabinet with 12V power supply (left) HLA 150plus amp, MFJ-945E antenna tuner (centre) & Zeus ZS-1 transmitter (vertical right)



Right: Dave Kenny listens to Radio Bonch on 1593 kHz. Below: Alan Pennington being interviewed for Radio Bonch's special broadcast (photo by Ydun Ritz).



Above: Kari Kivekäs on Radio Bonch

Our minibus's next destination was Bolshiye Porogi, on the banks of the Neva River, in the countryside south east of Saint Petersburg. Down an unsurfaced track we arrived at the home of St Petersburg Club member Omar Cheishvili. Omar was already there to greet us and firstly showed us a large room above the garage which was being refurbished to become the club house for the St Petersburg DX Club. The number of old wireless sets around the room alerted us to Omar's passion for restoring vintage radios, especially Soviet ones. Downstairs Omar proudly showed us a room with even better examples of polished restored sets, some very rare. Also on show were sets by Marconi, Stern and a set familiar to many DXers of a certain age, the RCA AR88. After lunch, he would explain that old Soviet sets are hard to find, as most were handed in to the authorities in 1941 during the war to be cannibalised for parts for the military.

One rare Soviet set in particular he showed us after lunch, he was still searching after many years for original authentic valves for. We sat down to a magnificent lunch of barbecued chicken and many other dishes, including Georgian recipes. As this was sadly the final event of the conference, vodka toasts of thanks and speeches followed the lunch. A very big 'thank you', to Omar and his wife for their wonderful hospitality at their home.

Below: Omar Cheishvili, Alexander Beryozkin & Risto Vähäkainu. One of Omar's beautiful Soviet sets.

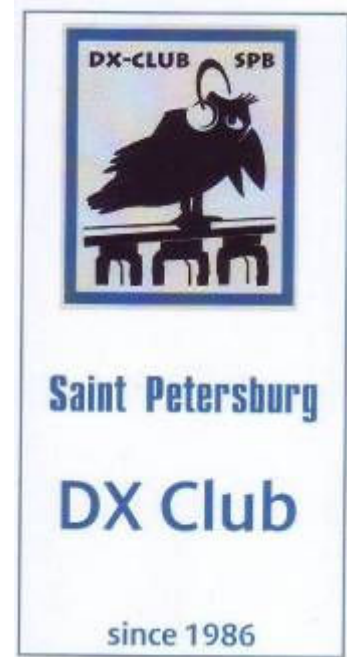


Our minibus returned to Saint Petersburg and our hotel, calling at the Moskovsky railway station en route to drop off Moscow DXers returning to the Russian capital by night train. The following day Chrissy, Dave and I managed some more sightseeing before our flights back to the UK. As well as the sights of the city and radio events, our five days in Saint Petersburg will be especially remembered for the warm hospitality of our hosts – many thanks to Alexander and Valentina Beryozkin and all at the St Petersburg DX Club who organised a great conference!

Some of the EDXC 2015 conference delegates outside Hotel Russ, Saint-Petersburg:



left to right: Harald Gabler (with camera), Kari Kivekäs, Alan Pennington, Alexander Beryozkin, Jan-Mikael Nurmela, Dave Kenny, Omar Cheishvili, Boris Kovalenko, Risto Vähäkainu, George Brown, Konstantin Gusev, Henri Ekman, Vasily Gulyaev, Albert Grabarenko, Sergey Smykov, Chrissy Brand, (inset: Ydun Ritz)



Above (left to right): Omar Cheishvili, Alexey Kulakov, Kari Kivekäs and Alexander Beryozkin. Right: Saint Petersburg DX Club logo.

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FM Bandscan – St Petersburg, 17- 22 September 2015



A passenger boat sets off on St. Petersburg's River Neva, advertising Radio Maximum on 102.8 MHz, with the dome of St Isaac's Cathedral (the city's tallest building) in the background.

Chrissy Brand writes: During the EDXC Conference last month we listened to the wide range of FM stations in St Petersburg. There were about 35 in total. My time listening led me think that Russian chanson seems quite a popular format with that style heard on Piter (Peter) FM, Radio Dacha, Retro FM and Radio Shanson. "Russian chanson (Русский шансон *Russkiy shanson*) ... covers a range of Russian songs, including city romance songs, songs performed by singer-songwriters, and Blatnaya Pesnya or "criminals' songs" that are based on the themes of the urban underclass and the criminal underworld." (Wikipedia).

A lot of American and British music, although all of these genres also had Russian equivalents on other stations. It was great to be able to hear famous old stations Radio Rossii and Mayak in glorious FM. Hearing a version of Abba's 'Ding a dong' in Russian on Russkoye Radio was amusing but my favourite station was Detskoye Radio, which in the daytime is a station for children and parents with fairy tales etc. but from midnight to 0600 local time it plays a relaxing non-stop mix of ambient, chill out & gentle classical music.



Right: Avtoradio 88.4 vehicle spotted off Zastavskaya str.

Logs by: **Alan Pennington, Dave Kenny & Chrissy Brand**. Note, only two of the five radio stations listed in WRTH 2015 on the OIRT band in Saint Petersburg were heard (plus a TV audio channel). Receivers: AP – Philips DA1200; DK – Tecsun 310ET (which covers the OIRT band); CB – Tecsun PL -360 and SanDisk Sansa Clip.

MHz	Station	MHz	Station
66.3	R Rossii	99.0	Rossi FM (songs) "Rossi FM" ID no RDS
73.1	R Grad Petrov (religious)	100.1	101.1 FM, classical, ID 'Stor Adin FM' weak
83.8	TV audio (Unid TV channel)	100.5	Europe Plus (dance mx)
87.5	Dorozhnoye R (pop) __SPB__	100.9	Piter FM (pop) PITER_FM
88.0	Retro FM (70s/80s/90s) RETRO_FM	101.4	Eldorado (rock/pop) ELDO RADIO scrolling
88.4	Avto R (pop) *_ABTO_*	102.0	R Roks (classic rock) ROKS_____
88.9	Yumor FM (talk) YUMOR_FM	102.4	Metro R (pop) METRO RADIO scrolling
89.3	Vesti FM (talk) ID, no RDS	102.8	Maximum (rock) MAXIMUM scrolling
89.7	R Zenit (rock) _ZENIT_/CHAMPION	103.4	DFM (dance) DFM scrolling
90.1	R Ermitazh (EZL) ID "Radio Hermitage"	103.7	Detskoye R (children's, ambient) DETI_FM_
90.6	R Dlya Dvoikh RDDFM.RU	104.0	Nashe R (rock/alt) RADIO NASHE scrolling
91.1	Keks FM (pop) KEKS_FM_	104.4	R Shanson (songs) RADIO SHANSON
91.5	Ekho Moskvyy (talk) no RDS	104.8	R Baltika (Russian pop) scrolling RDS
92.9	R RSN (news) __PCH__	105.3	Love R (pop) LOVE
95.0	NRJ (pop) NRJ_95.0	105.9	R Monte Carlo (pop) MONTE CARLO
95.9	Neva FM (pop) NEVA.FM_	106.3	R Record RECORD DANCE RADIO
97.0	R Dacha (pop) RADIO DACHA scrolling	107.0	Mayak no RDS "Rock Weekend"
98.3	UNID carrier	107.4	Business FM, RDS: BUSINESS
98.6	Nostalgia FM, jingle & scrolling RDS	107.8	Russkoye R (Russian pop) РУССКОЕ_

