

FORUM

TO RADIO: *G3 WFO/A*

OK 3 TOA

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DATE	GMT	MHz	RST	MODE	TX	RX	ANT
2. XI. 1964	16.15	1.8	18/94	CW	10W	9.75	Lc 4/1m

QRA JI 53

QSL VIA CRC PB 69 PRAHA 1

73 *Jm*

Getting that QSL

Having got your contact, you will probably want to confirm the QSO in the form of a QSL card. The practice of QSL'ing has changed a lot in the past decade or so, and the days of automatic writing out of a card for every contact has probably gone for ever, although some Eastern Bloc countries still do so (judging by the number of European cards one gets). To get your QSL, you will normally need to send one, especially if the station is on the rare side, and there are basically two ways of doing this, with time and cost the main factors. These are either the use of a QSL Bureau, or by direct mail.

QSL Bureaux exist in many countries, usually as a service (sometimes free, or for a small fee) and run by National Societies, although there are many Independent ones. This is the slowest, but definitely the cheapest method, and at today's postage costs, probably the only way for routine cards. The RSGB have had a QSL Bureau for many years which is included in the Subscription as a service to members, and may be the only reason for joining the RSGB for some. Non-members may use the Bureau, but only to receive cards.

Every so often, depending on your card filling-in rate, you sort your cards into order, and send them off to the Bureau in bulk,

where they are broken down into their respective countries, and again sent in bulk to the Bureau in the destination country. Eventually they arrive with the individual stations, and the process can start in reverse. This may take anything from a month or so to several years, so you need patience as a virtue!

To receive cards, you will need, in the case of the RSGB, to send a supply of stamped self addressed envelopes to the appropriate QSL Bureau sub-Manager (who this is depends on your callsign), who then starts to fill up the first envelope until the postage weight limit is reached for the stamps, when it will be returned to you. Alternatively, you can specify that cards are to be returned every month or other period. At a guess, P.O. Box 88, Moscow, is probably the largest Bureau, handling all Russian cards.

The most expensive but quick(er) way is by direct mail, usually by Air. You will need the stations address, either obtained while working him, or via one of the International Call Books. The card is then sent, together with 2 or 3 International Reply Coupons (IRC's — obtainable from Post Offices) to pay for the return postage. Incidentally, buying IRC's can work out expensive — look for small ads offering them cheap in quantity as many stations receive more than they can use and sell the surplus.

My Manager is...

Many of the rarer stations ('rare' in Amateur radio terms means that little operation takes place from the location), especially those visiting the place specifically to dish out contacts — known as DXpeditions — use the service of a "QSL Manager" to relieve them of the burden of filling in what may amount to many tens of thousands of cards. Why any sane person would want to fill in such a quantity of cards on behalf of another person baffles me, but they do, and it is to him that you send the card, not to the original station. You will often get the Manager's callsign during the QSO, or find it published in a magazine.

If you intend collecting any Awards to adorn the shack wall, it is important that the right information appears on the cards you receive, and of course on those you send, (the other chap may be after an award and you may be the last one he needs). The most stringent requirements are those taken by ARRL for the coveted DXCC award (DX Century Club). Most HF operators aspire to this piece of paper, requiring a minimum of 100 valid QSL's from different countries. We will have a closer look at Awards next month, but the standard required by ARRL can usefully be extended to all cards. So when you frantically scribble out your details to that Easter Island Dxpediton, or the UA who wanted your card, remember the following:

- 1) The card must show clearly your callsign, date, time, frequency, signal report and mode.
- 2) The card must show no alterations or other evidence of tampering.
- 3) The country claimed must actually be on the official ARRL country list in force at the time of the claim (this list is obtainable from ARRL or the RSGB).

There are a number of other unspecified checks carried out, one will be checking some of the cards with the actual stations worked.

S-Meter reports

One of the items required is probably the most abused, yet essential part of a QSO exchange — the signal report. The existing RS (or RST for CW) code was evolved a long time ago, way before the advent of crowded bands, vastly in-