To thousands of equipment-starved amateurs the warehouses full of surplus equipment was a blessing, and the BC-348 series of receivers, left center, and the command sets, upper right, were rulers of the ham shack. To manufacturers of new equipment, such as the futuristic console, left, and the advanced receiver, above, the horn-of-plenty surplus was a curse that marked the end of the road for many of them. Profits were made, amateurs stayed on the air, but what happened to progress?
Two weeks after the end of World War II, one of the largest assembly buildings on earth hummed with purposeful activity. As far as I could see down its half-mile length, the building was filled with just-completed, four engine, heavy bombers. The aircraft, gleaming with Air Force insignia, were surrounded by mechanics and technicians.

One-by-one, the planes were rolled out the door of the building where a tank truck gave each one a few gallons of high-octane fuel. With a cough, then a roar, and belching blue exhaust flames, the engines were started. After a few minutes, the engines were turned off, the remaining gasoline was siphoned from the tanks, and the bomber was officially turned over to the government.

After a pause, a tractor was hooked to the nosewheel of each aircraft and it was towed slowly to the end of an ever-growing line of similar planes. At the front of the line, another tractor pulled a bomber into position under a crane which supported a two-ton lead ball, swinging at the end of a cable. After a second flurry of paper work, the technicians and mechanics moved away from the doomed aircraft.

The lead ball was hoisted high into the air and let fall with a thunderous crash amidships of the bomber. Its spine was broken, the wings collapsed, and the landing gear was crushed. Again and again the lead ball was dropped until the new bomber was a mass of wreckage. A puffing bulldozer then swept the corpse into a huge pile of rubble and the next plane was brought into position under the crane.*

The foreman in charge of demolition, wearing a yellow hard hat, approached me. "You a radio ham?" he yelled above the din. Before I could answer, he said, "Why don't you go down the line and take some of the radio equipment out of the planes? Anything you can remove without a screwdriver is yours. A pity to waste all this surplus radio gear. There's tons of it in the warehouse, too, and the taxpayers will never see it; that's for sure!"

The foreman was wrong.

At the end of World War II, amateurs were allowed back on the air, but, for most of them, it was a slow start back to normality. Many hams were still overseas in the armed forces, and those at home had little equipment. In many cases their receivers had been sold to the Government during the war, and several war-production drives for panel meters had stripped the erstwhile hamshacks of indicating devices. Although new receivers were becoming available, they were selling for about twice the price of comparable pre-war receivers. Yes, amateur radio seemed to be getting off to a slow start, indeed.

Unknown to most radio amateurs, a vast fortune in communications equipment belonging to the War Assets Administration and the Defense Supply Corporation, agencies of the United States Government, was stored in bulging supply depots scattered across the United States and abroad. This is the story of some of that equipment, and the impact it had on amateur radio.

It all began quietly enough. In mid-August, 1945, the

*Similar scrapping of aircraft and radio equipment was reported in the newspapers for Guam, Japan, and England.
ESSE WILL BUY ANYTHING ELECTRONIC

Attention Factories, Hams, Dealers, Individuals

WE NEED AT ONCE!
We are Especially Interested in Large Quantities

- BC-348 Receivers, AC or DC models
- BC-312 Receivers
- BC-221 Frequency Meters
- SCR-522 Transmitters & Receivers
- Hallicrafters BC-610 Transmitters

Any factory built transmitters and receivers such as Hallicrafters, National, Temco, Collins, RCA, RME, Hammerlund, Milten, Meck, Harvey-Wells, Meissner, Sonar, MCMurdo-Silver, Conset, Stancor, Bud, etc.

Amateur or commercial sets
- Large stocks of tubes
- Large stocks of transformers
- Large stocks of condensers
- Large stocks of resistors
- Large stocks of speakers
- BC-224 Receivers
- BC-342 Receivers
- Police type VHF transmitters and receivers for mobile application
- Collins ART-13 Transmitters
- APS-13's
- SCR-269F or G Fairchild or Bendix ADF's
- Headphones in quantity lots
- Microphones in quantity lots
- Field telephones
- Sound-powered telephones

The wartime system of priority allocations was scrapped, permitting sale of communications equipment to the general public without a "show of necessity."

In the November, 1945, issue of QST, the Hallicrafters Company announced that it was offering "government radio and electronic supplies" for general distribution, under contract SIA-3-24 with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. A coupon was included with the full-page advertisement, soliciting inquiries about bidding for the various items.

But, the red tape prevailed.

AMATEURS! HAMS! EXPERIMENTERS!

NOW—TRANSMITTING TUBES
AT SENSATIONALLY LOW PRICES!

- 105 ACORN TUBE Directure Amplifier Over 19c-
- 1525 Transmitting beam power amplifier
- 20 Micropho 11c-.\-
- 105 cock, over 10c.-
- OD15R30 Voltage Regulator Tube
- S14582 1250 Wave-Hunt Vangnum 19c-
- 1500 Pulsor 39c-
- 105 D9 Pull Pull 51c-
- 105 D9 Pull Pull 11c-

Although large businesses seemed able to buy some choice items, little material appeared in the ham marketplace.* Then, in early 1946, a trickle of war surplus equipment began to show up at the larger radio distributors, such as Harrison Radio in New York. By midsummer, the trickle had become a stream as more and more radio amateurs began to show up at such as Harrison Radio in New York. By midsummer, the trickle had become a stream as more and more radio amateurs began to show up at

"In 1946, a letter to the Sales Agency of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation brought a reply to contact the manufacturer of the equipment. A follow-up letter to selected manufacturers brought an answer that told me to contact the RFC Sales Agency! War veterans could apply through the Smaller War Plant Corporation office for a certificate to buy surplus radio equipment directly from the RFC, provided that the applicant was in the radio repair, test, sales, manufacturing, or similar electronics business. The certificate could not be issued to amateurs, or to the public at large. By late 1946, the RFC had been severely cut back, the Smaller War Plant Corporation was defunct, and the military began direct, sealed-bid sales to the public. The system had collapsed of its own red tape!"

distributors obtained government surplus radio equipment.

The coming of "Surplus Sam"
I don't think anyone, including the government, was really aware of the great quantity of communications equipment that had been built during the waning years of the war.

By mid-1946, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation had gone out of the surplus business, and the military, frantic to unload their stocks of equipment, began to sell it at closed bid — by the pound — to any and all bidders. Most radio distributors, unwilling to get into the junk business, stood aside while a new breed of entrepreneurs stepped into the picture: The surplus dealers who handled nothing but government surplus equipment. Within just a few months, the price of surplus equipment dropped sharply, and the flood reached full tide. For only pennies on the dollar, a radio amateur could outfit himself with a station that looked like a military communications post! Overnight, unknown surplus dealers sprang up, and the heretofore obscure Esse Radio Company of Indianapolis, Indiana, ran four-page advertisements in CQ magazine, showing their surplus stocks and a photograph of their three-story warehouse. In the same issues...
of CQ, R & M RADIO ran two-page advertisements featuring more war surplus goodies. By February, 1948, as more and more equipment reached the market, some of the ham magazines resembled war surplus catalogs!

**The manufacturers**

Needless to say, the flood of surplus radio equipment knocked the new-equipment market into a cocked hat! Who tended to make obsolete the flood of old-style, war-surplus triodes.

Meanwhile, the character of war surplus equipment slowly began to change in a subtle way. Some pieces of equipment, not necessarily the best, had disappeared from the market. The cumbersome and unstable BC-375 aircraft transmitter, bought by hams mostly for parts, became unavailable; and the BC-654A coded radio messages over point-to-point communications networks on the mainland of China.

The BC-654A transmitter-receiver, and other good items of communications equipment, had been purchased by Israel in the early years of that country. In addition, during the Korean War, the United States Government bought back certain choice items of equipment that it needed, but would buy a $275 receiver when it was possible to buy an acceptable war-surplus receiver for only $49? Why buy a $45 transmitting tube when you could get the same tube — surplus — for only 49 cents!

Of course, under these circumstances, many manufacturers went out of business. Some of them introduced new products, many of which didn’t even get off the ground. TAYLOR TUBE COMPANY closed its doors and EIMAC, one of the largest independent tube manufacturers, survived only because it brought out a new line of high-gain tetrodes that transmitter-receiver combination that covered the frequency range between 3.7 and 5.8 MHz had disappeared. Where did they go, who bought them, and why?

Looking back on those days, it appears that Nationalist China had bought enormous stocks of surplus radio equipment which eventually fell into the hands of the Chinese Communists. By the mid-1950s, West Coast Amateurs were cursing those old BC-375 transmitters which had showed up on the 80-meter band, chirping and blurring their were in short supply.

In 1950, a prominent war-surplus junkie confided to me that he had made a quick $60,000 in two days by buying war-surplus transmitting tubes from the United States Army at fourteen cents a pound, and selling them to the United States Navy at $35 apiece!

**The deadline**

By 1951, the huge stocks of good war-surplus material had been virtually depleted and the equipment left for sale, such as oxygen bottles, tuning boxes, dynamotors, and out-of-band crystals, was mostly junk. The party was over, and on the
• New device opens up the world of Very Low Frequency radio.

• Gives reception of the 1750 meter band at 160-190 KHz where transmitters of one watt power can be operated without FCC license.

• Also covers the navigation radiobeacon band, standard frequency broadcasts, ship-to-shore communications, and the European low frequency broadcast band.

The converter moves all these signals to the 80 meter amateur band where they can be tuned in on an ordinary shortwave receiver.

The converter is simple to use and has no tuning adjustments. Tuning of VLF signals is done entirely by the receiver which picks up 10 KHz signals at 3510 KHz, 100 KHz signals at 3600 KHz, 500 KHz signals at 4000 KHz.

The VLF converter has crystal control for accurate frequency conversion, a low noise rf amplifier for high sensitivity, and a multipole filter to cut broadcast and 80 meter interference.

All this performance is packed into a small 3” x 1 1/2” x 6” die cast aluminum case with UHF (SO-239) connectors.

The unique Palomar Engineers circuit eliminates the complex bandswitching and tuning adjustments usually found in VLF converters. Free descriptive brochure sent on request.

Order direct. VLF Converter $55.00 postpaid in U.S. and Canada. California residents add sales tax.

Explore the interesting world of VLF. Order your converter today! Send check or money order to:

PALOMAR ENGINEERS
P.O. Box 455, ESCONDIDO, CA. 92025 — Phone [714] 747-3343

horizon appeared a small cloud — no bigger than a man’s hand: television interference, TVI.

Since 1948 the number of television sets had increased sharply and, by 1950, many amateurs were in serious trouble with television interference. The surplus equipment, designed over a decade before and hastily pressed into operation by eager amateurs after the war, was simply not clean enough to meet modern operating standards.

To top it all off, ESSE RADIO COMPANY and other surplus stores were running magazine advertisements offering to buy back the surplus equipment sold to hams only a short time before! Overseas buyers were looking for good war-surplus radio gear, and many amateurs were at last willing to unload all of the military equipment in favor of communications equipment that better fitted their needs and the changing state of the art.

The popularity of single sideband finally signalled the doom of the surplus market. True, even today, bits and pieces of World War II radio gear are for sale: It looks as if the popular Command receivers will go on forever. But, the days when an up-to-date Amateur station boasted a BC-348 communications receiver, a 500-watt BC-610 transmitter, a BC-221 frequency meter, and a modified SCR-522 for two-meter work are probably gone forever.

The grand old radio equipment of World War II, rendered obsolete at last by the combination of age, TVI, ssb, and solid-state devices, is now only a collector’s item, bringing back memories to old-time hams who served their country well in the greatest of all wars.

HRH