SYNOPSIS OF MID-LATITUDE RADIO WAVE ABSORPTION IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

Radio wave absorption data covering almost two years from Europe to Central Asia are presented. They are normalised by relating them to a reference absorption. Every day these normalised data are fitted to a mathematical function of geographical location in order to obtain a daily synopsis of radio wave absorption. A film of these absorption charts was made which is intended to reveal movements of absorption or absorption anomaly. In addition, radiance (temperature) data from the lower D-region are also plotted onto these charts. No conclusions are drawn; the new procedure to evaluate absorption data is -- at the present stage of processing -- merely intended to stimulate discussion and interest.

INTRODUCTION

Radio wave absorption in the HF range occurs predominantly in the ionosphere's D-region, i.e., at heights where absorption L is proportional to both electron density and collision frequency ν. Since ν is very well predictable via atmospheric pressure (cf. e.g. FRIEDRICH and TORKAR, 1983) it is the electron density N_e which determines the day-to-day variations of L. At high latitudes all changes of N_e are attributable to variations of the ionising fluxes i.e., of charged particles; at low or middle latitudes, however, the fluxes responsible for the formation of the daytime D-region (solar Lyman-α, X-rays, etc.) do not vary drastically, not even in the course of a sunspot cycle. The observed day-to-day variations in mid-latitude) radio wave absorption by factors of 2 to 3, notably in winter (winter anomaly), are therefore generally attributed to changes in the concentration of nitric oxide (NO), the only component of the middle atmosphere (mesosphere) which can be ionised by the relatively strong solar H Lyman-α-line. The following analysis is plausible if one assumes that changes in the NO-concentration are the principal cause for changes of absorption.

DATA BASE AND NORMALISATION

There have been numerous attempts to study the morphology of winter anomalous absorption (e.g. BEYRON and WILLIAMS, 1976), in recent times notably by SATO (1981) who used f_min data from stations in Europe, the USSR and North America. The aim was to find a connection to geomagnetic activity, but the analysis is severely hampered by the relatively coarse classification of f_min.

In the present treatment we use absorption, i.e. loss of signal strength relative to absorption-free reflection. Both the methods A1 (vertical incidence) and A3 (oblique incidence, i.e. reception of a distant transmitter) are used. Table 1 gives the acronyms of the various data sets, path lengths,
Figure 1. Absorption measurements of the available stations. HA is the daily integrated riometer-absorption at Narssarsuaq, Greenland, and RZ the Zurich sunspot number, all other acronyms are explained in Table 1. Between bars indicates 60 dB, the smooth lines are the simulated reference absorptions and the dashed lines show the days used as examples for absorption patterns (Figure 3).

AA and AB which use the same transmitter but different receivers (distance of the path mid-points ca. 120 km). Hence the observed rapid variations must be considered to be of ionospheric origin and not — as one might be tempted to believe — poorly maintained equipment or local interference.

Due to different path lengths, frequencies and the type of measurement (daily integrated absorption $L_{RI}$, noon-absorption $L_{NOON}$ etc.) the various data sets show necessarily different seasonal trends and variabilities. Hence the observed absorptions at various locations may be covered up by the above mentioned, expected systematic effects. Therefore a procedure was sought by which in a first approximation these differences can be eliminated.

Consequently a reference absorption for each data set and each month was calculated. For this purpose electron densities were computed for the
Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Mean Absorption Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|            |        |      | Summer                 |
|            |        |      | Winter                 |

1) not used in the further analysis, possibly ground wave propagation
2) not used in the further analysis
3) monitors the 31 and 49 m broadcast band; approx. linearly related to Rome-Athens on 6,060 MHz
4) EXE and SAWTA, 1979
5) except March 22 to June 30, 1976; cos θ = 0.2
6) except December 1975 to February 1976; (p)
7) applies to Rome-Athens

frequencies and (path mid-point) coordinates. Subject to the availability of the raw data, daily integrated absorption (L_0, cf. ROSE and WIDNES, 1977), was used, otherwise values at noon or some constant solar zenith angle were employed. Figure 1 shows the daily values of all stations from October 1974 to June 1976.

The lowest curve is the sunspot number, whereas the uppermost curve represents the average daily riometer absorption at Korsarsuaq (Greenland). The latter is included as a measure of particle influx into the auroral zone, since a connection of charged particle fluxes and mid-latitude absorption has often been sought (e.g. MAHLUM, 1967; TORKAR et al., 1980). However, only the northernmost data (JR) of February and October 1975 possibly show some direct influence of particles. On the other hand, even the relatively large sunspot numbers in August 1975 do not show up as enhanced absorption in any of the data. In most data one can clearly observe the larger absorption in winter, however, all show a larger variability in winter. Of special interest are the data sets

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Mean Absorption Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horby-Kohluergen</td>
<td>2.135</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>55.46, 12.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juliusburg</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>54.46, 11.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiel-Neustrelitz</td>
<td>2.755</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>53.89, 11.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norddeich-Neustrelitz</td>
<td>2.614</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>53.56, 10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norddeich-Lindau</td>
<td>2.614</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>53.56, 10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Bilt</td>
<td>1.850</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>52.18, 5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg-Prague</td>
<td>6.090</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>50.10, 10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coburg-Crast</td>
<td>2.830</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>48.76, 11.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postov-on-Dan</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postov-on-Dan</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Ata</td>
<td>1.700</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Ata</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prilina-Sofia</td>
<td>1.412</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
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<td>Thallis</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aranjuez-Alamoso</td>
<td>2.830</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aranjuez-Balmera</td>
<td>2.830</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patras</td>
<td>1.700</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashkhabad</td>
<td>1.800</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>47.26, 10.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Notes:
- All stations are located in Europe.
- The data is from 1974 to 1976.
- The study focuses on solar activity effects on absorption levels.
- The sunspot numbers are used as a reference for absorption levels.
corresponding conditions of each station (noon, \( \cos \theta = 0.2 \) or at four typical solar zenith angles \( \theta \) with equal time-spacing for \( T \)) using the ion-chemical model for low solar activity described elsewhere in detail (TORKAR and FRIEDRICH 1983). In this steady-state computation the neutral atmosphere, including the minor species, is taken from other published models, in particular [NO] from HUCGN et al. (1981). Absorption was then computed by a VXR ray-tracing calculation over a spherical Earth. The full SEN and WYLLER (1960) magnetionic formulation were employed, the magnetic field taken from CAIN et al. (1967) and the collision frequency set proportional to pressure from the AERL seasonal atmospheric model (CGLE and FANTOR, 1978). The proportionality factor of \( 6.7 \times 10^8 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{e}^{-2} \text{h}^{-1} \) is the one recommended by FRIEDRICH and TORKAR (1983) based on a number of rocket measurements of \( \gamma \). The reference absorption thus obtained is indicated in Figure 1 as smooth lines. Outside winter one can see reasonably good agreement for the data KN, NL, CG, TL, AA and AB. There is notably an excess of the simulated absorption of HK. This may be due to ground wave propagation at the fairly low frequency (1.178 kHz) of the path which is mainly over sea water. Another feature of the simulated absorption is, that at higher latitudes in summer the observed absorption ([NO]) is consistently higher than in the model (JR, KN, NL, DB, LF and also PS).

For further evaluation the daily absorption values were divided by the corresponding reference absorption. This new quantity (absorption enhancement AE) removes the different sensitivity of the various measurements provided the geometry of the ray (penetration into the ionosphere) is the same.

AE should, therefore, be proportional to an electron density ratio or the square of the ratio of ion production rates; if one assumes that NO and Lyman-\( \alpha \) is the dominant production process of the absorbing D-region, AE is equal to \( ([\text{NO}] / [\text{NO}] \text{ref})^2 \).

Before combining all absorption measurements, normalized via AE in the above manner, it was tested to what extent the various data sets measure the same physical phenomenon. Figure 2 shows relative contributions of the various layers of height \( h \) to the total absorption of some of the stations using the reference ionosphere (summer), where \( l_r(h) \) is defined as:

\[
l_r(h) = \frac{l_r(h)}{l_r} = \frac{l_r(h)}{L} \text{db/km}, \text{km}^{-1}
\]

One can see that the height regions contributing to absorption differ greatly from station to station. For want of more uniform data, all absorption measurements were nevertheless treated as if they represented the same height regions. Hence an absorption "drift" from e.g. JR to AS could just as well mean a downward motion of enhanced electron (or NO) density at both stations.

CONSTRUCTION OF ABSORPTION PATTERNS

The normalized data (absorption enhancement AE) still include variations due to very local effects. Instead of constructing AE-patterns by interpolation between the individual measurements, all AE-values were fitted by analytical functions. The number of locations, or — more importantly — the number of simultaneously available measurements, restricts the order of the analytical expression which can be fitted to the data. The simplest form is a plane in general position requiring only three, preferably evenly spaced, points. A somewhat higher level of complexity — a circular paraboloid — was chosen which is determined by four parameters, namely location and value of the maximum, and the curvature. This form is employed at the present stage of the analysis; higher orders have been tested, but found to lead to unrealistic excursions. In
Figure 2. Relative absorption contributions of different heights of some stations together with the average absorption profile of all data sets (summer).

An attempt to account for the different height coverages (cf. Figure 2) weights \( w \) were given to the different data sets according to:

\[
 w = \frac{1}{T} \int \frac{dh}{T^2 dh}
\]

Here \( T \) is the average specific absorption of all measurements divided by the average integral absorption. Its height variation is also shown in Figure 2. Table 1 contains these weights for January and July, but for the further computation these weights were also established for all other months.

Furthermore contained in this table is the mean height of the absorption derived from the same model computations. Those data which are based on \( L_0 = L_0/(1+n) \) were given additional daily weights according to the quality of the fit \( L = L_0 \cos \phi \) which led to the establishment of \( L_0 \) and \( n \). For every day four parameters were determined by fitting a paraboloid to all \( \log(AE) \)-data by a least-mean-square procedure. In the film contours of absorption enhancement of 0.8, 1.0, 1.3, 1.6 etc. are shown. In order to avoid too rapid fluctuations of the absorption \( (AE) \)-patterns, running means of the four parameters are used, i.e. 50% of the day in question and 25% each of the previous and following days.

The curves are fitted to the data in geographic Cartesian coordinates and the contours of constant absorption enhancement then transformed to the projection in which the satellite temperature data are available. In the film only those stations which provided data on the day in question are indicated by small circles. Figure 3 shows two examples where however, all possible stations are indicated with their acronyms. From October 1975 on radiance (temperature) data of the P/MR (Pressure Modulator Radiometer) of the University of Oxford aboard the satellite Nimbus-6 are available. The weighting function of the highest channel 3000 peaks somewhere just below 80 km. The temperatures at that height are surely not decisive for enhanced electron densities (electron loss rates), but may be an indication of an unstable atmosphere, turbulence and — in consequence — of transport of NO into the D-region.
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The quality of the presently available raw data does not permit to draw final conclusions concerning the magnitude or the motions of absorption. More careful screening of the absorption data is envisaged, but also the reference absorption model, which mainly hinges on the adopted [NO] model, may have to be revised. For the derivation of velocities of absorption patterns it may perhaps suffice to use the running mean as a reference, thereby avoiding errors introduced by an unrepresentative reference absorption.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES