

On Saturday, July 27, 1963, a relative of Lee Oswald, a member of the community at the Jesuit House of Studies, asked Mr. Oswald if he would address the scholastics on his experiences in Russia. The request was not unusual, for the scholastics try from time to time to have either prominent persons or others who have something interesting to relate speak to the scholastics on their experiences. Because Mr. Oswald was an American who had gone to live in Russia and who had returned, obviously for a reason, it was thought that he might be able to communicate the nature of the Russian people themselves better than any official reports might. Those who went to listen to him expected to hear a man who had been disillusioned with Soviet communism and had chosen America to it. What they heard was only partially this.

The major points of Mr. Oswald's address and details from it are given below, probably never in verbatim form, but always true to his intent, at least as he was heard by a number of people.

He worked in a factory in Minsk. When he applied for permission to live in the Soviet Union, the Russian authorities had assigned him to a fairly well advanced area, the Minsk area. He said that this was a common practice: showing foreigners those places of which the Russians can be proudest.

The factory life impressed him with the care it provided for the workers. Dances, social gatherings, sports were all benefits for the factory workers. Mr. Oswald belonged to a factory-sponsored hunting club. He and a group of workers would go into the farm regions around Minsk for hunting trips. They would spend the night in the outlying villages, and thus he came to know Russian peasant life too. In general, the peasants were very poor, often close to starvation. When the hunting party was returning to Minsk,

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it would often leave what it had shot with the village people because of their lack of food. He spoke of having even left the food he had brought with him from town. In connection with the hunting party, he mentioned that they had only shotguns, for pistols and rifles are prohibited by Russian law.

Some details of village life: in each hut there was a radio speaker, even in huts where there was no running water or electricity. The speaker was attached to a cord that ran back to a common receiver. Thus, the inhabitants of the hut could never change stations or turn off the radio. They had to listen to everything that came through it, day or night. In connection with radios, he said that there was a very large radio-jamming tower that was larger than anything else in Minsk.

More about the factories: factory meetings were held which all had to attend. Everyone attended willingly and in a good frame of mind. Things came up for discussion and voting, but no one ever voted no. The meetings were, in a sense, formalities. If anyone did not attend, he would lose his job.

Mr. Oswald said that he had met his wife at a factory social.

The workers, he said, were not against him because he was an American. When the U-2 incident was announced over the factory radio system, the workers were very angry with the United States, but not with him, even though he was an American.

He made the points that he disliked capitalism because its foundation was the exploitation of the poor. [He was disappointed in Russia because the full principles of Marxism were not lived up to. The gap between Marxist theory and Russian practice disillusioned him with Russian communism.] He said, "Capitalism doesn't
** implied by him but not stated directly.*

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work, communism doesn't work. In the middle is socialism, and that doesn't work either."

After his talk a question and answer period followed. Some questions and his answers:

Q: How did you come to be interested in Marxism? to go to Russia?

A: He had studied Marxism, became convinced of it and wanted to see if it had worked for the Russian people.

Q: What does atheism do to morality? How can you have morality without God?

A: No matter whether people believe in God or not, they will do what they want to. The Russian people don't need God for morality; they are naturally very moral, honest, faithful in marriage.

Q: What is the sexual morality in comparison with the United States?

A: It is better in Russia than in the United States. Its foundation there is the good of the state.

Q: What impressed you most about Russia? What did you like most?

A: The care that the state provides for everyone. If a man gets sick, no matter what his status is, how poor he is, the state will take care of him.

Q: What impresses you most about the United States?

A: The material prosperity. In Russia it is very hard to buy even a suit or a pair of shoes, and even when you can get them they are very expensive.

Q: What do the Russian people think of Khrushchev? Do they like him better than Stalin?

A: They like Khrushchev much better. He is a working man, a peas-

ent. An example of the kind of things he does: Once at a party broadcast over the radio, he had had a little too much to drink and he began to swear over the radio. That's the kind of thing he does.

Q: What about religion among the young people in Russia?

A: Religion is dead among the youth of Russia.

Q: Why did you return to the United States? (The question was not asked in exactly this way, but this is its content.)

A: When he saw that Russia was lacking, he wanted to come back to the United States, which is so much better off materially. (He still held the ideals of the Soviets, was still a Marxist, but did not like the widespread lack of material goods that the Russians had to endure.)

More points that were contained in the main part of the talk:

He lived in Russia from 1959 to 1962. He only implied that the practice in Russia differed from the theory, never stated it directly. The policy of Russia was important:

1) After death of Stalin, a peace reaction.

2) Then an anti-Stalin reaction.

3) A peace movement, leading up to the Paris conference.

4) The U-2 incident and its aftermath.

At the factory, he had trouble at first meeting the men. They did not accept him at first. He joined a hunting club. He belonged to two or three discussion groups. He praised the Soviets for rebuilding so much and for concentrating on heavy industry. He said at one point that if the Negroes in the United States knew that it was so good in Russia, they'd want to go there.

Another question:

Q: Why don't the Russians see that they are being indoctrinated and that they are being denied the truth by these jamming stations?

A: They are convinced that such contact would harm them and would be dangerous. They are convinced that the state is doing them a favor by denying them access to Western radio broadcasts.

Summary Oswald speech 7/7/62

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(SA John J. ... 11/24/62)
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