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LHO "On The Radio": Reactions and Comments
(or, "Video Killed The Radio Star")

To some readers this may all be old news if not "old hat," but I'm sort of excited about it. I recently purchased tape recordings of LHO on Latin Listening Post and on the New Orleans radio "debate." I had read the transcripts, but hearing Oswald's voice reinforced some impressions and forced me to think about his words more carefully.

First, some general impressions. I'm impressed! I see what people meant about this young man seeming so cool and confident, "inspiring confidence" or whatever. He is flawless, unflappable. No pause before answering even the toughest questions.

I have done a lot of radio in the last five years. The last two years, all my friends and relatives are impressed that I never hesitate to speak or answer; give long, clear thoughtful responses, and I don't fluff or fluster. That's because there are only 78 questions covering all of assassination lore that any media person can think of, and I've had to answer each one 3-5 times (some, 20 times). But, if I listen to me answering those same questions, and to my general performance, in my first two years of radio, I'm quite different: I stutter, sputter, mispeak myself, etc. My act is not "programmed" and my presentation is not polished.

Lee is terrific! He never hesitates a beat. His answers are long and clear; he never has to organize his thoughts. And these are his first outrings (right?). Either he is an absolute media natural or he "practiced" long and hard, filling his mind with the complex, measured answers and wealth of knowledge that tumble out so effortlessly on cue, as if computerized. He is exceptionally articulate-

my senior Political Science majors should sound this good (and know this much). "What's your definition of democracy?" the interviewer asks. Lee responds - no pause, evenly, thoughtfully.

Some "hot head." He is almost dispassionate. No edge in his voice. The host asks a loaded question. Lee laughs gracefully and says, "That's what you call a loaded question, but I will attempt to answer it." And with no pause, he does answer. And very well. Too bad this kid never got on the Albert Sweitzer College debating team. He was certainly ready for prime time in the Big Apple - the Long John Nebel show (if true). Here's a tough question: interviewer asks why Cubans flee Castro's regime but Nicaraguans don't flee theirs. This is not your every-day question that everyone could answer effectively without pausing. His answer is great and instant, and calm: 300 years of repression under Samosa and no new, positive political force to create positive turmoil [I'm grossly paraphrasing, but it is a very good answer].

What's interesting is that he definately seems prepared or programmed for these two appearances. Like all smart media personalities, he brings out the same 6-8 points in both appearances, even though one is an interview and one a "debate" - i.e., he knows beforehand what points he wants to get out regardless of the questions asked, and even uses the precise same examples to illustrate his points.

And his knowledge is very impressive. Even if it's not totally accurate, it sounds so and is delivered authoritatively. He really did his homework. He discourses on what in my trade is called comparative government (the evolution of African colonial states, Marxist Ghana, socialized medicine in England) crops,

economics and trade policy complete with stats (U.S., Cuba, Latin America), Cuban-American relations, class and politics in Cuba-Batista to Castro, the Cuban labor situation before and after Castro, United Fruit's exploitative role, Allan Dulles and the "defunked" CIA. "It's leadership is defunkt." (I still question how many self-respecting Marxists would think that Dulles' firing somehow defunked the CIA, but I know a lot of folks in spook culture who thought that) Let's see: there's Ike's foreign policy toward Cuba, press censorship under the Truman administration. This kid may be winging it, but he talks like a Georgetown Poly. Science major, or maybe he was tutored by one: now I can see what McVicker in Moscow meant about LHO seeming "tutored" by others.

Lee talks about the votes of certain countries at inter-American meetings within the last year (countries under U.S. influence). During the "debate" he says that the Mr. Lee, who is the national FPCC head, had recently traveled to Cuba and was under indictment because of it. (Anyone know if this was true. Was it in the paper? Did FPCC literature convey this to LHO? Or did he have independent briefing sources?)

The interviewer asks Oswald if he's traveled in Latin America. Lee says - only to Mexico. I believe the host was genuinely impressed with the apparent scope of Oswald's data bank. Lee states he's not a Latin American expert and says: "One does not have to travel through Central and South America. One does not have to see the poverty in Chile or Peru or the

suppression of the Samoa (sic) brothers in Nicaragua in order to draw one's conclusions..." This "Samoa" miscue is the only one I could find. Maybe Lee's data bank was filled verbally rather than from the written word: maybe the s was deemphasized. "How," asks the interviewer, "do you get your information covering Latin America affairs and conditions if you've been only to Mexico?"

LHO responds that FPCC in New York corresponds directly with Cuba and that's where FPCC gets its information. Is it true that they corresponded? So, implicitly, Oswald is saying that his broad store of knowledge came from FPCC in New York? Is the possible? Did they mail him primers, position papers, extensively substantive pamphlets? We know that Oswald's data bank was not filled via the New Orleans public library: I am reminded that of the 34 books that he checked out that summer, ~~none~~ *none* were on Cuba or even Latin America or any of the topics on which he was so well versed (except maybe Thunderball, Moonraker, Goldfinger, From Russia With Love, and Five Spy Novels).

At another point LHO says that "AP and UP" cover Cuban affairs very well and thus, much of what he says is known by "anyone." I'm not so sure- certainly it would take some purposeful boning up, even if AP and UP did provide all the facts.

SubstantiveOdds and Ends

1. I'm still bothered by how, during the "debate," LHO makes the FPCC sound like an underground cult. It's his job as secretary to "protect the members' names." Also, how he reiterates, by way of the worst-case scenerio, that FPCC is not communist controlled: "We are not at all communist controlled regardless of the fact that I have experienced living in Russia, regardless of the fact that we have been investigated, regardless of any of those facts the Fair Play For Cuba Committee is an independent organization not affiliated with any organization." A good reiteration and summary - but for whose side?
2. He describes the CIA as a "covert" organization; uses the word covert twice. Was that a household adjective in 1963? Did people use the term as frequently as in the 1970's?
3. During the debate LHO assests that at no time while he was in Russia was he out of contact with the American embassy. Either he is lying ^{on} the radio or the official version is wrong: LHO's whereabouts was supposedly unknown for quite some time.
4. Oswald tells the interviewer that he and "several" FPCC members had a demonstration at the trade mart. Another exaggeration to make FPCC appear potent? Or was there someone else besides LHO and Charles Steele?
5. One of LHO's pet themes is that the FPCC is a political minority and deserves, in a democracy, free and full expression (he says

this in both appearances) and deserves the right to be heard, etc. With this rhetoric Lee would indeed seem like a great candidate for AAUP membership. Yet, if we are to believe Michael Paine, LHO was disdainful of the need for, and basic purposes of, the ACLU- after attending a meeting (then wrote national ACLU asking to join and asking how to get in touch with the local chapter, then he wrote to the Communist Party and claimed to have met persons with "marked class awareness and insight" at the Dallas ACLU, and asked for instruction on how to "heighten" the Dallas-ACLU's "progressive tendencies." Then he opens up the ACLU-FPCC Post Office Box in Dallas. Ideological confusion, or blazing witch-hunting paper trails?

6. Oswald said during his interview that he had been to Mexico. Isn't it true that he had not ever been to Mexico yet, although he would go there after this interview. I am reminded of his letter to the national FPCC (written April 19, 1967) in which he describes a hostile incident of placarding, allegedly taking place in Dallas but seeming to be prescient about what was going to happen in the New Orleans street scuffle. I wonder whether LHO had really been to Mexico unknown to the official record, whether he lied about going to Mexico in order to build his credibility as an expert, or whether he knew that he would go to Mexico in September on what he thought was more FPCC business (or funny business).

Maybe I simply can't stand the idea that 24-year-old who never took his Ph.D. oral exams could do so well on his first

live radio stint - Too bad Barbara Walters could not have interviewed him that summer: "Tell us, Lee, how would you like Cuban and American history to remember you?"