

THE FOUR YOUNG MEN sitting in a radio station reception room on a muggy and windless August evening in 1963 were all perspiring in sticky summer clothes, restlessly moving in their chairs and smoking cigarettes. All except one, that is, who appeared to be as cool and refreshed as a just-made snowball. He sat relaxed but not slouched in the chair, and except for his thinning brown hair, looked his 23 years. He looked clean-cut and he wasn't smoking. His clear, narrow, parrot-like face that perched on an almost bull neck was dry.

This was quickly noticed by a blond-haired man with a ski-jump nose, particularly since the quite-dry young man was wearing a foreign-looking woolen suit and had just come off the steaming hot New Orleans streets.

A fifth person then walked in, and without any preamble, said, "Ed Butler, I'd like you to meet Lee Harvey Oswald."

Poker-faced the two stood up, shook hands and curtly nodded at each other. They sat back down, not three feet apart, and Butler took the first mental note of what was to become a valuable detailed inventory: "His hand was soft and clammy," Butler recalls, "and I was a little relieved to know that he too was churning inside."

This was the night of August 23 when Ed Butler met Oswald in a debate on WDSU radio on a program called "Conversation Carte Blanche," exposing for the first time the bizarre activities of Oswald and bringing them to the attention of the public. The Who, What, Why, and How of the dreadful happening in Dallas ninety-three days after this debate is still going on throughout the country. "It will probably for sometime," Butler believes, "because it has all the ingredients. Once an issue has been made popular and profitable, everybody comes to feed at the trough."

The 32-year-old Butler is the Executive Vice President of The Information Council of the Americas (INCA), an organization he conceived in 1959 while lying flat on his back in a U.S. Army hospital in Virginia where he was recovering from stomach ulcers. INCA became a reality a year later after Butler had an article entitled "The Forgotten Army" published in the *Public Relations Journal*, in which he outlined the methods and means to fight Communism, particularly Castro, by mobilizing the advertising and communication industry.

When Oswald came to New Orleans that summer of 1963 to promote the so-called "Fair Play for Cuba Committee" he drew people and publicity. Reporter Bill Stuckey of WDSU was the first to spot and interview him, later arranging to have him appear on "Con-

versation Carte Blanche." Butler was the logical selection to spearhead the debate.

As catalyst to the debate, Oswald had run into Carlos Bringuier who headed one of the most active anti-Castro refugee organizations in New Orleans. Oswald attempted to break up a meeting Bringuier was staging on Canal Street and the two had a fist fight. Police arrested and booked both and made them appear in city night court.

Later, Bringuier came to INCA headquarters, then at 620 Gravier Street, and bumped into Bill Stuckey who came to talk to Butler about Oswald. They both met a weary and harried Butler who was trying to shore up INCA's sagging financial position. Faced with an assortment of bills and a staff to pay, INCA's bank balance was less than four hundred dollars. Butler had talked to Dr. Alton Ochsner, President of INCA, and both agreed the organization had accomplished too much by their distribution of anti-communist educational materials throughout Latin America to think of giving up or calling it quits.

"I was looking at my list of New Orleansians to call on for money," Butler remembers, "when Bringuier walked in and told me about the fight. He was going to court that night. He said Oswald would probably have to pay a \$10 fine (which he did). Later Stuckey came in and again Oswald was the subject. Though we were in a financial crisis I remember I couldn't get him out of my mind."

The next day, August 19, Butler was asked to debate Oswald along with WDSU newsmen Stuckey, Bill Slatter, and Bringuier. Butler knew he had no choice, little time, and less chance for INCA if the debate went badly.

"I immediately decided to take on Oswald after I listened to what he told Stuckey in a prior interview. I realized he was a real pro who knew a lot about Cuba. He sounded like he was mentally quick, with a piano-roll delivery of the Communist line. I got a background on him, his living in Russia, the people in the 'Fair Play For Cuba Committee,' and what he had done elsewhere. To be quite frank I was scared.

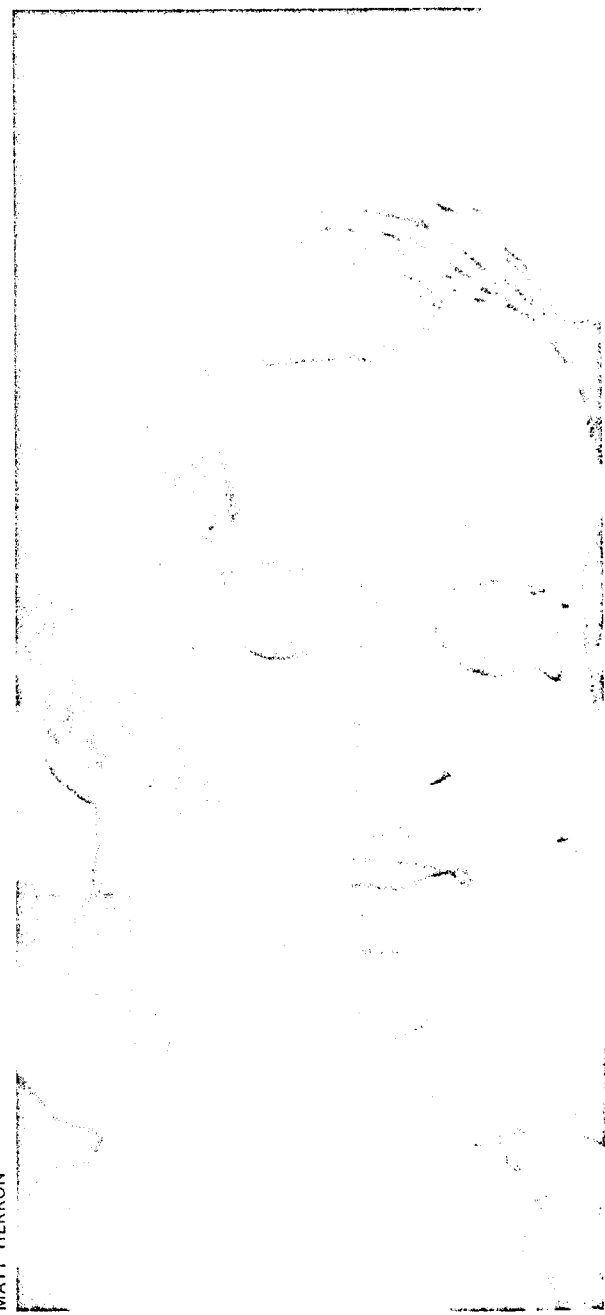
"I knew almost by heart the Communist history, the methods, the means, the changes and so forth. So, I didn't know what to expect from Oswald, except the worst. And I was worried because I didn't have enough time to prepare. I remember I got my brother, Rhett, and a tape recorder and went to the studio. I also had a prepared news release that I sent out just before we left in which I exposed Oswald as a defector to the Soviet Union. This was done to spread the word as quickly as possible. After meeting Oswald in the reception room and shaking his hand I began to feel a little better. I started



The time: Three months before Kennedy's death
The place: WDSU's studio
The event: Ed Butler's confrontation with a future killer . . .

Oswald: Prelude to Assassination

By Eugene A. Sheehan



MATT HERRON

to talk to Stuckey who had introduced us, and I mentioned to him that I thought a certain local businessman was 'progressive' in his advertising policies. Oswald immediately broke off his patter with Bringuier at the world 'progressive' and looked at me with his eyebrows deeply arched. When he realized I had applied the word in a capitalistic sense his glance changed into a smirk of utter disgust. I felt much better then because I knew in the Red Catechism 'progressive' always indicated the proletarian forces led by the Party, and I had used the word in a blasphemous sense.

"As he was to do several times later during the debate he sneered or leered at me, but he never laughed or smiled. Stuckey and Bringuier noticed he was particularly antagonistic to me, flashing a look of what had to be impersonal hatred, since Oswald knew nothing about me or the organization I represented.

"I felt positive then I was going against a dedicated, committed Communist whose entire approach was well-rehearsed and strictly impersonal. He showed this in quite subtle ways. For example, most people while arguing or trying to work out a problem perform certain minor actions that are causeless but commonplace — like whistling, or cracking their knuckles, snapping their fingers, or laughing freely and loosely over a minor mistake or clumsy move. Oswald never once displayed any of these minor actions."

"Kill Kennedy?" Butler interrupted himself suddenly, slamming his hand on the desk. "A man like Oswald knew this philosophy. The doctrine gave him the reason, the way, and the permission to kill almost anyone. Me, Kennedy, Dr. Ochsner, anyone. I—I, people just don't realize there are still hundreds of Oswalds walking the streets today. Why I have tapes on some and have debated against them. These aren't kooks or beatnik intellectuals having a fling . . ." He trailed off and was silent for several moments. Then he clamped the ever-present cigarette holder and glowing Kent between his teeth and continued:

"Oswald obviously had read a lot. He talked on a college graduate level but pronounced on a high school level. For example, *concise*, he pronounced, *co-incise*; *superfluous* became, *super-flu-tous*; and *sphere* became, *spear*. His voice was clear and firm, convincing and almost polished, with no traces of a New Orleans accent. He pronounced *New Orleans* like an Easterner.

"He was very up-to-date on the changes and new phrases being used by the Castro-type Communists. Remember it was the time when Moscow was talking 'peaceful co-existence' and Castro was trumpeting for the re-establishment of diplomatic, trade, and tourist relations with other member countries

of the Western Hemisphere. So it was easy for me to date him by his use of words. Instead of using *line* (as in the Party line) he used *posture* or *orientation*. Of course the key word was *Marxist* which he admitted to being, not a Communist."

Butler was impressed with Oswald's technical ability as a propagandist and his use of technique. "In the debate he used most of the tricks of trade: defense paralleling, a technique that is used to link and smear by implication (he called Butler, his organization and the State Department, *rightist* and *rightist organizations*); target narrowing, used defensively to avoid dangerous or embarrassing side issues (he didn't want to discuss the leaders of his Committee, the difference between Marxism and Communism, or his trip to Russia); subject expansion, slogan building, and theme repetition. To put it another way, he was in the clean and well-lit prison of one idea. He was sharpened to one painful point. Only intellectual amputation—making him stop thinking—could have saved Oswald from his course of action."

By the end of the debate Butler recalled that Oswald had never shown a trace of confusion or embarrassment, even when Butler confronted him with evidence that Oswald had sought to renounce his citizenship. Butler said that he actually tried to turn the disclosure to his benefit, declaring that his stay in Russia qualified him to repudiate charges that the Fair Play Committee and Cuba were Communistic.

Butler remembered that after the debate he wanted to leave the studio immediately in order to try and spread the word to all media that night. In addition, he was craving to have a Mountain Dew (he consumes two six-packs of the carbonated citrus drink daily). Before he could leave, Oswald came up to him and pulled a black notebook out of his coat pocket. He asked Butler his full name, the name of his organization and its address. "His tone was completely intimidating."

Then Butler raced over to WVUE-TV and told news announcer Richard Wright what had occurred in the debate. Wright put him on the 10 p.m. news show and Butler told the audience about Oswald. He then returned to his office, listened back to the tapes of the debate and drank two Mountain Dews.

When asked about the debate, Dr. Ochsner said, "The results speak for themselves. Oswald dropped out of sight immediately after the debate and left New Orleans shortly thereafter. I knew at the time he was a real hazard but INCA did everything it could to expose him nation-wide."

Though the rest is a matter of history there are a number of interesting sidelights. A few days after the debate But-

ler was questioned by the F. B. I. concerning Oswald. Shortly afterwards, he remembered, a red-haired young man who had come to his office two months before and applied for a job with INCA, Kerry Thornley, who had been in the Marines, was living in the French Quarter, and knew Oswald quite well. After the assassination this same Thornley was to be quoted as saying he was going to write a book about Oswald and tell the true story.

In the hours immediately after the President was shot, Butler and the INCA staff churned out news releases about Oswald in order to offset the "rightist" and "John Bircher" charges flying about. Within forty-eight hours he was asked to appear before the Senate Internal Security Sub-Committee with his tapes and files. On the airport bus to Washington he heard on the radio that Ruby had killed Oswald. "I got goose pimples and I couldn't get the Van de Lubbe case out of my mind," he said. "He was the Belgian Communist caught walking out of the burning Reichstag and the Nazis used him for the showcase trial in 1933 to wipe out the Communist menace. The two cases were almost identical."

While in Washington he briefed Congressman Hale Boggs, who invited him to be a member of the Warren Commission that had yet to be formed. When Butler informed Boggs he was not an attorney the matter was dropped.

Looking back on it, Butler feels that the current rehashing of the events, the wide-spread changes and offering of new theories are, in the main, baseless conjecture and not germane to the question. "The press is and has been posing the wrong question, namely, 'Did Oswald act alone and was he ordered to act?' The right question to ask is, 'Why did Oswald do what he did and was he incited to act?' You will never know what really happened until the Communist nations are free and such information becomes available. I believe Oswald was incited to do what he did because of nearly nine years of Communist reading and indoctrination. He became a word mechanic, an expert in word ordnance with an arsenal of word weapons. President Kennedy's death proved that words are the ultimate weapons. Words can be shot around the world faster than any missile, blanketing any country to motivate the minds of men.

"Oswald had become inflamed with the Communist idea and he was motivated. Why did he pull the trigger and how was he incited? It could cover a book." So said the only known propaganda specialist ever to confront Oswald, Edward S. Butler, as he sipped on a Mountain Dew and scanned a report on Spartacist Party activities in New Orleans.