

This is an appendix to the Radio History of Swan Island.*

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That article of mine cited a communication from E. Howard Hunt. Mr. Hunt wrote to me about Central Intelligence Agency activities on Swan Island in 1954. The CIA directed these and related actions against the Guatemalan government. He and David Phillips set up a “Black” propaganda radio station on Swan Island and perhaps several in neighboring countries. The programming, done by Phillips, sought to overthrow the regime, duly elected, of Col. Jacobo Arbenz. It succeeded.

Not long after he wrote to me, he wrote to Esquire Magazine.** He responded to an article it had published about Jack Richardson, another CIA officer. Hunt compared their Agency work: “... like Jack Richardson, I was fortunate to have a career I cared about in interesting parts of the world....” But he first made his point: “... Richardson and I were engaged in carrying out the nation’s business, and I was proud of that.”

I have been urged to publish Mr. Hunt’s letter. After he wrote it to me, he conveyed all rights in it to me. There follows a scan of his letter. The letter and all rights in it belong to me, and I assert all legal and moral rights with

respect to it, especially that its authorship and ownership always be recognized and that its integrity be always maintained.

I have come to believe that, at all times, Mr. Hunt acted in good faith and all honesty in “carrying out the nation’s business.” He paid a high price for his loyalty and integrity. His loyalty to it exceeded that of the nation he served to him.

I know that Mr. Hunt wanted the world, and its historians, to know what he had done, with whom he had done it, and to whom he had done it, and why. Hence, any reasonable “fair use” may be made of some of the text (but not the image) of his letter to me, respecting its integrity.

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*Bartholomew Lee, “Swan Island, its radio history including the CIA and the revenge of United Fruit” 23 Antique Wireless Association Review 115 (2010), accessible at:

www.californiahistoricalradio.com/CHRSPix/BartLeeSwan.pdf.

** Esquire, May, 1999 at page 18.

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E. HOWARD HUNT
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December 6, 1998

Dear Mr. Lee:

Thanks to you, via Bill Snyder, I have your excellent and very interesting monograph on wireless espionage. All of us who worked at espionage recognize the incalculable value of the craft and its contributions.

As to Swan Island, it was, and perhaps is, a piece of real estate owned, leased or occupied at the time by a cooperative radio communications company that may have had a tie-in with United Fruit. Its transmitters were made available to our task force, specifically to Dave Phillips, who developed a propaganda writing team of experienced Guatemalan refugee writers. They put together the broadcasts that in no small way contributed to the success of our effort to rid Guatemala of Col. Arbenz.

I would suggest looking into David Atlee Philipps' books for more information on Swan Island. One incident I recall, is the "invasion" of a boatload of "students" (à la Iran) resolved to take back the island from gringos. We couldn't permit that and did not, not at a time when, as the Bard put it, the horny hand of Time was on the prick of noon. (Figuratively). Dave was my propaganda chief while I dealt with political matters involving the succession.

With thanks and cordial regards,



The name
"Pan-American"
comes to mind.

Mr. Lee