



Looking Back

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Looking Back is a nostalgic reflection on the shortwave scene of yesteryears, written from the personal experience of the author, who has been DXing the shortwave bands for over seven decades.

Cuba Libre

No, not rum and Coca Cola! But, Cuba before 1959, when Fidel Castro drove out the old dictator Batista, and formed the independent communist state in North America ("Free Territory of America", as they like to call themselves on Radio Havana Cuba).

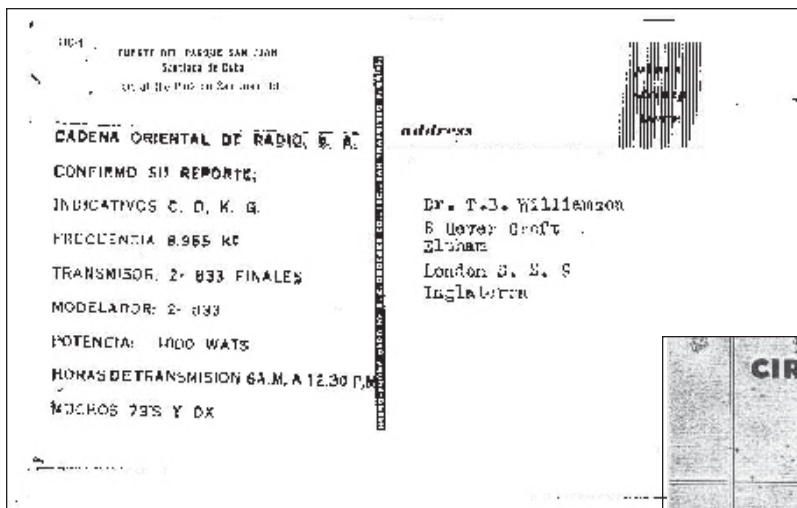
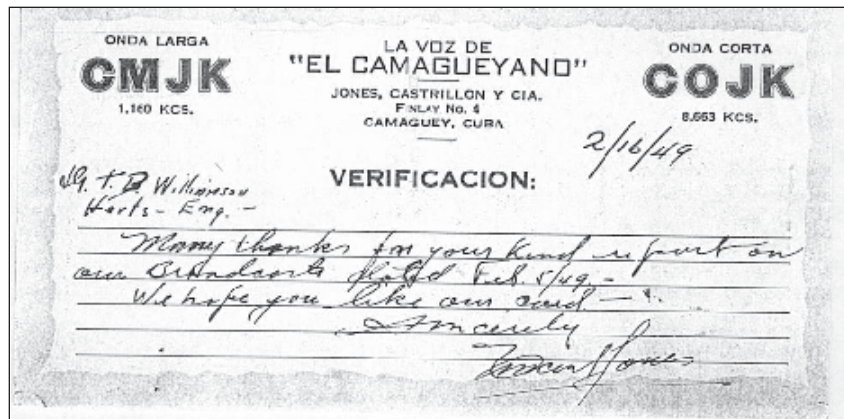
Sometime after this, the melody "Bayamera" became the national anthem, and you can hear the opening bars in the interval chimes of RHC from time to time.

However, those with a longer memory may remember the days when Cuban shortwaves contained several independent, low-powered stations, often heard around the low end of the 31 meter band. Such stations as COJK, Camaguey; COBZ, Radio Salas; COCQ, Red Nacional; and COBC, Radio Progreso; all in Havana. There were several others, in the 25 and 49 meter bands, which were often audible in England from about 2300 UTC onwards.

Most of the announcements, naturally enough, were in Spanish, but an occasional ID in English might

In addition to the above-mentioned stations, there were transmitters in Santiago (COKG) and Santa Clara. Power outputs were low, of the order of 1 to 5 kW. All of this changed when Castro took over, with Radio Havana Cuba being the only station on the air, with high power. The one exclusion is Radio Rebelde, which continues to operate on 5025 kHz for local and regional audiences.

In respect to the past, two stations stand out in my memory. COK on 11.6 MHz and COCQ on its various channels, relaying CMQ. This latter one used to sign off with the classic rumba melody "Siboney", a song title relating to the Siboney Indians, one of the original groups of Cuba and the West Indies.



COK on the 25 meter band had a powerful signal and was probably of higher power than the rest. I was never sure of its status, possibly a government operation, with programs in part from the National Sports Institute.

Until next time!

be heard. Much of the programming was of popular Cuban music and songs, but predominant U.S. commercial interests were very evident, with ads for General Electric and Philco being heard often. Most stations simply relayed their mediumwave outlet.

