

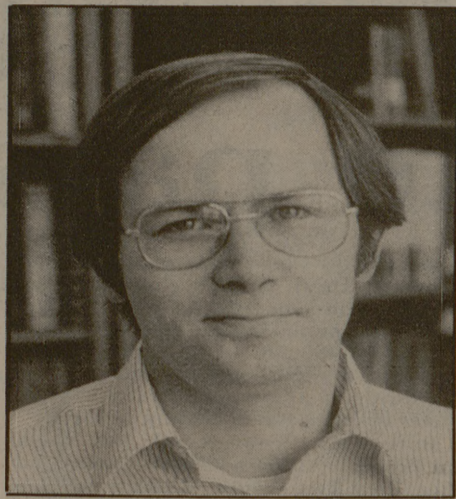
VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY
OCTOBER 5, 1978

Shortages fuel Russian black market

First of a 2-Part Series
By DR. JEROME LOVING



Dr. Jerome Loving

Now that Francis Crawford of the International Harvester Co. is safely out of the Soviet Union, I would like to tell the students and faculty of Texas A&M University something of my experiences in Russia last winter, specifically my own "activities" in the black market.

For three months my family and I lived in Leningrad (old St. Petersburg), where I lectured on American literature as a senior Fulbright Fellow for the U.S. Council for the International Exchange of Scholars. Our experiences could fill many such essays as this one, but today I want to dwell on the standard of living Soviet Union citizens have to contend with and therefore why the black market is such a thriving enterprise in that curious country.

The term "black market" is not used much in our country because our technology and commerce give us all we want, provided we have the money. But things we take for granted in America Russians can't get easily or at all, regardless of how many rubles they have. Fresh fruit and vegetables, for instance, were not available in the markets during the winter months except on rare occasions, such as Communist holidays.

Meat is expensive and weighed on the scale for the buyer with the bones placed on top of the cut. Once bananas came up for sale and a line formed around the block. Then a shipment of skinny Arkansas chickens caused near pandemonium. Of course, Russians get in any line they see, for they know it will have something they need.

food, of course. Russians can hardly ever find for sale their best vodka, which is produced generally for export and tourists. Clothes are easier to find, but expensive. A man's shirt can cost 25 or 30 rubles—even though the average monthly income is about 120 rubles.

Anything stylish (read "western") is gone the day it goes on sale. This surprised me, for I found most of the Russians to have new and fashionable winter coats. I discovered from my more candid students that this was due to the black market and a rather intricate network of national corruption.

When a fresh stock of desirable coats, dresses, or whatever comes into a department store, the clerks buy most of them for family and friends. Say 100 coats arrive; the staff buys 95 of them, one goes in the display window, and four are available for general sale! Of course, many of the 95 find their way onto the black market.

Cosmetics for women are even harder to come by. One cold winter afternoon my wife and son were searching Nevskiy Prospect (Leningrad's Fifth Avenue) for a gift store in which to spend some of the rubles the University was paying me for my lectures. (Russian money is worthless in all but Communist countries.)

Finally they came upon a store that looked promising, but they couldn't get close enough to look in the window because it was surrounded by shoppers forming a loosely gathered line. My wife asked one of those queuing up and was told it was a cosmetics store. A new and infrequent shipment of Polish products had just arrived.

Later we learned from our students that these cosmetics are crude compared to those in America and West Europe. Other delicacies such as panty hose can be found only on the black market and cost seven or eight rubles.

Therefore, when I read in the newspapers that Crawford had been accused of dealing in the black market, I wasn't at all surprised. For as an American in the Soviet Union you are a very special person indeed.

First, you can give people news from the West, information they never receive (except for Voice of America broadcasts) unedited and often obscured by *Pravda* (Truth). TV news is no better: when they show a map of America, it is distorted into looking like an overweight Florida (puny America).

Second, you can give much-needed English language books to students and intellectuals. But most importantly you carry those green U.S. dollars that buy so much on the black market. And you have those western clothes so dearly wanted by young Russians.

Americans and other foreigners are constantly approached on the streets by people offering to buy their money or their clothes. Every day my wife and I received offers for our jeans, up to 150 rubles for a single pair.

Dr. Loving is an English professor at Texas A&M.

Editor's Note: Friday's article details Loving's own reluctant dealings in the Russian black market.

TOP OF THE NEWS

CAMPUS

Book contest open until Oct. 30

Students currently enrolled at Texas A&M may enter the sixth Student Book Collectors Contest until Oct. 30. Contest prizes include eight \$100 awards and three \$25 honorable mentions. Contest rules and an entry form are included in brochures available near the first floor circulation desk in Sterling C. Evans Library. An entry consists of an annotated bibliography of 25 titles from a collection, short statement describing the collection and a completed entry form. Finalists will be asked to bring the 25 books to the library for final judging. Winners will be announced at a Nov. 3 awards ceremony.

STATE

UT bus drivers might strike

Shuttle bus drivers at the University of Texas, who transport thousands of students and faculty to and from school-may strike soon. Members of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1549, which represents the Transportation Enterprises drivers, late Tuesday gave their leaders permission to call a strike "any time from this moment on." Transportation Enterprises operates the shuttle buses under a contract with UT. The union has walked out twice in six years, the last time in 1976 when the strike lasted four months. Union president Robert Griffith said the union has had a contract since the 1976 strike and has received no pay raises. He said a negotiation session with TEI is scheduled for Oct. 11, "but we may be on strike by that time."

Indictments expected in bribery

Indictments were expected to be returned today by a federal grand jury in connection with an alleged \$1 million bribery scheme perpetrated against Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. The Dallas Morning News said it has been told by sources that among those expected to be indicted on federal racketeering charges is R.A. (Pete) Acker, retired Southwestern Bell vice president for data systems. Federal prosecutors have already indicted a former executive of a small Collins County bank Monday for failing to report to the Internal Revenue Service the transfer of more than \$45,000 to Acker from Dallas businessman Joel McQuade, who was also investigated in the case.

WORLD

Finnish army plane crashes

A Finnish army plane carrying 15 prominent citizens crashed into a lake, killing all on board including three members of Parliament, a military spokesman said today. The right engine of the DC-3 turboprop caught fire and exploded one minute after taking off from Kuopio Airport in central Finland Tuesday, the spokesman said. The pilot tried to make it back to the airport but crashed 200 yards short, killing all 15 aboard including the three crew members in the army's worst air accident ever. The passengers were participating in a civil defense course that the Defense Ministry regularly gives to prominent Finns. Finland's worst civilian crash was in 1961 when 29 persons died.

Ships collide in Mediterranean

An Algerian ship sank in the Mediterranean early today after colliding with an Italian vessel, and 26 of the Algerian crew were missing, the Cartagena Navy command said. A base intelligence official said an air and sea search was launched for the 26 men reported missing from the 1,598-ton Algerian ship *Colo*. The collision occurred 60 miles east of the Cape of Palos and the Italian ship involved was the 8,390-ton *Expreso Marilyn*, the spokesman said. The Italian ship was not badly damaged and continued under its own power.

Mourners gather at St. Peters

A hundred thousand mourners gathered Wednesday in rain-swept St. Peter's Square in Vatican City as the Roman Catholic Church said farewell to Pope John Paul I, the smiling pope whose humor and humility captivated the world during his 34-day reign. The pope, the former Cardinal Albino Luciani died of a heart attack last Thursday at the age of 65. Ninety five of the cardinals will choose John Paul's successor beginning in a secret conclave Oct. 14 attended the mass, but two of them did not take an active part in the service because they did not feel well. Dignitaries from 114 nations, including Mrs. Lillian Carter, the mother of the U.S. president, attended.

Cargo transport aids cosmonauts

A Soviet Progress cargo transport roared into space today with 5,000 pounds of supplies for Soyuz 29 cosmonauts Vladimir Kovalenok and Alexander Ivanchenkov, who have been in orbit for a record 111 days. Informed Soviet sources said Kovalenok and Ivanchenkov, who began their record-breaking mission on June 15, will return to earth later this month after stowing the fresh supplies and Tass said Progress 4, carrying a 2½-ton cargo of fuel and supplies, was launched Tuesday. If all goes well, the unmanned capsule should dock with the orbiting Salyut 6 space laboratory approximately 48 hours after its launch.

WEATHER

The weather for today will be partly cloudy with mild temperatures and a 30% chance of thundershowers. The high will be in the upper 80's with a low in the upper 50's. Winds will be southeasterly 5 to 10 mph and stronger increasing winds tonight as a cold front passes through the area.

THE BATTALION

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words and are subject to being cut to that length or less if longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit such letters and does not guarantee to publish any letter. Each letter must be signed, show the address of the writer and list a telephone number for verification.

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Letters to the Editor

Grass sitting demonstration against memorial

Editor: This letter was prompted by the act of a student sitting on the grass in front of the Memorial Student Center, Tuesday Oct. 3.

I think the actions of the person who was sitting on the grass surrounding the MSC Tuesday morning were selfish and childish. He was aware of the respect most Aggies show for the memorial and knew the response he would evoke from passers-by. He seemed delighted by the attention he was receiving.

I viewed his actions as a demonstration against the memorial and think this type of person is not worthy of the affluence and security our veterans of wars have provided our country.

—Ron Greenwade, '79

some cases, some Corps leaders really do support a lot of that nebulous B.S.)

Why am I mentioning this? Your late night quads, food fights, and other not-so-publicized activities no longer exist on the Quad. They "the establishment" have alleviated the so-called problems. They merely mention the fact that they will do away with Corps family-style meals which would, of course, disintegrate the basis of Corps life. The Corps, not being just ROTC members as other college ROTC units, is closer to a fraternity than just a sleazy ROTC detachment. The entire basis of this concept stems from all the good bull things that go on around here—not just marching to chow and quietly sitting down to dinner. No. Occasionally we like to raise hell.

Too bad, non-regs. They now have you to control, but not as easily as they control us. So have a fun time while you can in the spirit of Animal House, or Saturday Night Live, or Steve Martin or any other excuse the establishment wishes to use for our fun-loving nature. Just remember this: we Corps Turds love A&M and senior boots and non-regs that don't moon us and don't sit on the MSC grass out of respect for those Ags who died in WWII.

Don't worry Corps members, I know some of you will disagree with this; I won't try to change things you believe are right simply because someone told you they were right. It wouldn't do any good and I know it. I have no say-so about what goes on around here, but after having been a radical, struggling through school for three years (1.97 GPR) I have had more fun riding my motorcycle through the dorm and coming in drunk during the week as a fish than you can imagine. I have mellowed, ready to die, tired of getting demerits and sitting weekends. Obviously it did not do good, all those weekends I sat, as I still feel the same and no establishment can change the way I feel, just piss me off.

To all a good change.

—James L. Hime, '79

Animal effects

Editor: That hilarious motion picture, "Animal House," has really had quite profound and pronounced effects on the contemporary Texas Aggie psyche. And, to be sure, this "Animal House" fever according to many periodicals, is sweeping college campuses all over America—as well.

At A&M this fever ostentates itself in various ways — from throwing apple pie across the dining hall and instantaneous moonings, to an increased incidence of highly gross language in public places. (Indeed, the tossing of the "apple pie" is very symbolic, isn't it?)

Having made this observation during the month of September with many other Aggies, I would like now to make some important points.

First of all, the picture "Animal House" was a satire on such animalistic behavior as well as a comical comment on the stiffness of the ROTC. That is to say, by being a satire, it was not filmed — as far as I can see — as a model for appropriate human behavior.

The second point I should like to make relates to the "Animal House" fever per se. In relation to Aggie land this simply demonstrates one distinct thing: that we have succumbed to the influence of American film as readily as the "average" American student; which reveals two things: (1) It reveals that we lack the integrity supposedly inherent in Aggies. (2) And also, it reveals that we, the average Aggie, lack simple manners and common courtesy.

Fellow Aggies, we came to Texas A&M to learn how to protect ourselves from the "law of averages." Let us give it a try.

—Walter Lawrence Prehn, III, '79

Not all water

Editor: I would like to stress a few points relating to coverage of the "Dunn Hall Massacre."

So far, all news relating to last Wednesday's fight has put Dunn Hall in an interesting light. The articles and editorials give the impression that Dunn Hall was expecting a nice, clean water fight; while the evil war mongers on the north side, totally devoid of school spirit, conspired to throw oranges, other rotten fruit, and pig manure.

The story was only partially complete. I freely admit that the north side used eggs, peaches (rotten), and heaven forbid, water balloons. What was not talked about, and seems to have been ignored, was a few tricks set up by the "peacefully" intentioned Dunn Hall residents.

I personally tripped over some fishing line tied between the trees. Any oranges thrown by the north side were picked up after the initial assault of water was met by a large barrage from Dunn Hall. Also used by Dunn Hall residents were tomatoes, wet rolls of toilet paper, hardened clumps of detergent, and shaving can bombs.

This is hardly what I would call an innocently planned water fight. The final issue is the big one. The pig manure. I freely admit that it was brought by a few northside residents; but, I put down all claims that this was an organized plan of the entire north side. The manure was brought by a few residents from the north side, of their own accord. From there many north side residents stepped aside while, admittedly, some did help.

What was also not stated was that the Dunn Hall residents were not too

squeamish to steal a trash can full of manure and use it of their own volition.

This article is not to clear all guilt from the north side. It is rather, to make people realize that Dunn Hall was not as innocent as they tried to show. I also think some of the Aggie Spirit is lost by manure fights. I personally abstained from that part of the war. But also, I think something is missing when the news media will not dig deep enough to give an unbiased account of a situation.

—David Teich, '82

Editor's note: There was never any Battalion news article summing up the incident, or outlining the various claims that have been made in letters to the editor about the situation. A caption under the pictures simply stated what was happening in those pictures. The purpose of an editorial (which also ran on the event) is to present an opinion.

Rude Aggies

Editor: Last Tuesday's MSC grass episode made me ashamed to be an Aggie. It seems odd to me that the entire Texas Aggie Band could walk past the MSC last Saturday afternoon on the way to yell practice and not a soul yelled at our visitors and students who were on the grass. I was nearby and was rather proud that even our red-ass Aggies had learned the meaning of courtesy. My strengthened Aggie pride was dashed on Tuesday when only one person had the courage to help a person being persecuted. In my mind those who stood up for Lindsey Scoggin were the only true Aggies there. I am sure no Aggies died in hopes of saving democracy for the likes of the rude Aggies at the MSC. If it has to be a choice between hatefully upholding tradition or abandoning it, I'm afraid some of our die hard Aggies will be creating 2 percenters — the very thing they detest.

—Susan Beckman '79

Seen worse

Editor: Concerning last Friday in Sbsa: I personally do not know of anyone who came to that great dining hall for the sole purpose of raising hell or to out do any dorm or previous years. I have been here since the fall of 1974 and I believe I can safely state that I have seen worse. I, personally, can not condemn dorm yells or Aggie yells in Sbsa. I do get a little disturbed at a chicken leg hitting me in the back during a yell. Hell, that is not good "bull," but I'll live.

Concerning the idea that food fights raise food cost, I ask about the \$47,000 for the computer register system which works every now and then or about the workers who stand at the doors doing nothing. I'd also like to know how the students somehow manage to steal \$20,000 worth of silverware each year, that a lot of silverware per student.

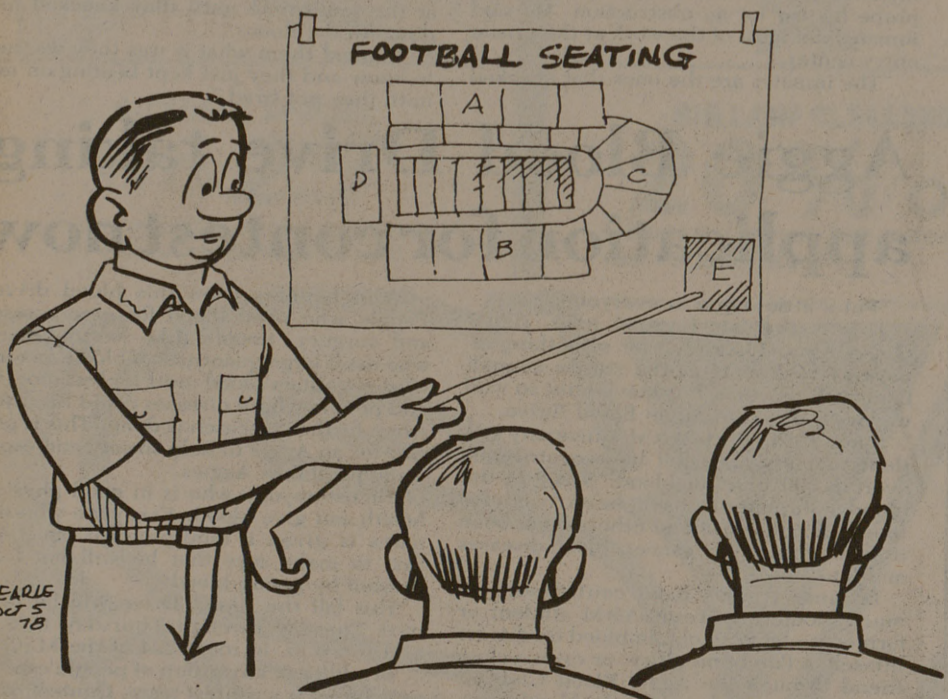
I will say one thing, I will still yell in Sbsa on Fridays before a home game, that is harmless, words don't hurt — a plate might.

—Scott Farthing, '78

P.S. Blaming the "food fight" on the movie "Animal House" is very far-fetched. It's like saying "We've Never Been Licked" made Texas A&M what it is today.

Slouch

by Jim Earle



"ADMITTEDLY, THESE ARE FAR FROM IDEAL, BUT WE DO HAVE A NEW BLOCK OF SEATS AVAILABLE FOR THE GAME AT A REDUCED PRICE!"

EARLE
OCT 5
78