Russia's 'ironic curtain' leaks underground humor

United Press International
LOS ANGELES — Have you
heard the joke from Afghanistan,
homrade? Or the one about Brezhev's shoes?

Nicolai Abbotchekov asks Vladimir Costellovich: "Why are our troops staying so lovakia.

ng in Afghanistan?' Reply:
"They are still looking for the peole who invited them.

That is the first Russian joke about fghanistan to reach the Western orld, says Emil Draitser, a former Moscow comedy writer who now eps track of underground Russian

Rebuilt city hums again

United Press International YUNGAY, Peru — It has been nearly 10 years since a mile-long, nalf-mile wide mass of glacial ice, nud and boulders thundered down a eep canyon at more than 200 mph, ourying Yungay under 80 million ubic feet of debris.

But life hums again in the rebuilt Martyr City of Yungay" a decade fter the the worst natural disaster in corded history of the Western

The earthquake of May 31, 1970, entered in the Pacific Ocean and easuring 7.7 on the Richter scale, lled outright an estimated 60,000 ple. It injured another 50,000 d destroyed 186,000 dwellings.

A U.S. Geological Survey expert, r. George Ericksen, called the amage "almost unbelievable, posssurpassing in magnitude such tastrophic events as the Mt. Pelee uption of 1902 on the island of artinique and the eruption of esuvius in the year A.D. 79 that uried the city of Pompeii."

The earthquake's destruction cened on Yungay. Thousands of tons rocks and ice from the peak of eru's highest mountain, 22,000-ot Mt. Huascaran hurtled into two kes. The overflow mixed with the all of debris that crushed Yungay nd the nearby, smaller town of Ran-

"I was east and just above the town asturing my animals when every-ing started shaking," said Augusti-

After, there was a calm. All the ldings in the city fell down, and en I heard the rumble coming from caran. It covered the whole city less than a minute. No one could

Other towns along the canyon ed Yungay's total devastation. heir survivors were left homehungry and frightened.

was scared," said farmer Grio Ulloa, a mountain dweller sse land lies above the neighbor-city of Caraz. "Our house fell m and I thought at least now it stop. It didn't. The earth moved n and Huascaran fell.

decade after the catastrophe, merce bustles in the market of a ly prefabricated new Yungay th of the rocky plain covering the

The earthquake all seems like a eam now," said farmer Ulloa's ughter, Mercedes, 24. "Still, once while, I wonder if it will all hap-

humor from Los Angeles, aided by his joke-intelligence network behind the ironic curtain.

But Draitser, a scholar of the subject, recognized it instantly:

'This is an old joke. I heard it years ago about Soviet troops in Czechos-

'Many underground jokes have been in existence for many years and the names and places change to fit new circumstances and persons," he

"When I first got to the West five years ago, I read some emigre jour-nals published 50 years ago. Some of the jokes I had heard from friends in Moscow just the month before.

'In Russia, we can recycle the jokes that are never printed or heard on radio or television. For instance:

Why is there always a meat shortage in Moscow?

We are moving toward communism so fast the animals cannot keep

Draitser, 42, a professor of Russian literature at UCLA, was for more than 10 years a humor writer for Russian publications including: "Izvestia," the humor magazine; "Izvestia," the humor magazine; "Krokodil," Soviet movies and tele-

Draitser came to the United States in 1974 when a satire on a play back-fired and he was suddenly "unemployable." Krokodil published the play just as the playwright was promoted to a high-ranking editorship. Why America? Thank fellow satirist Art Buchwald.

Buchwald is widely known in Russia because they print all his columns making fun of the White House, the CIA, things like that. Almost every week in Russia you can read something by Buchwald. "I thought 'Oh God, they have

"I thought 'Oh God, they have such freedom there.' In Russia you prepared to give my blood for the would be in jail for even thinking such things as Buchwald does, much less writing them.

'What amazes me about America all at once. ACA COMMON CONTRACTOR

totalitarian mind still is not used to such frontal attacks on governmental personalities

While working on his doctoral dissertation on Russian satire, and a col-lection of stories on "America through the eyes of a Russian," he has published a book-length collection of underground jokes, titled "Forbidden Laughter."

He keeps abreast of the latest on the Moscow jokeline through coded letters from fellow humorists in the Soviet Union. He does not fear for them, he said, because "So far, I'm not on the (KGB) list of dangerous people. They have more important people than me to go after.

"But I imagine if I would be kid-napped by the KGB my little book would sell in the millions right

Here are some examples of jokes from Draitser's "Forbidden

Jew asking KGB for permission to emigrate to Israel:

"Every night my neighbor bangs on the wall and yells 'As soon as we put an end to the Soviet regime we'll

take care of you Jews."

KGB official: "Why leave the best country in the world for that? The regime will last forever. Jew: "That's my second reason.

Brezhnev to cosmonauts:

"The Americans were first to land on the moon, so we will be the first to land on the sun.

Cosmonauts: "Comrade, we will be burned to death. Brezhnev: "Do you think we know

nothing? We arranged for you to land

working class, drop by drop. Voice from audience: "Why drag

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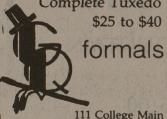
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