

# opinion

## Language barrier computerized

by Dick West

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Many of the thousands of vacationing Americans who will visit Europe this summer speak a pseudo-language called "Phrase Book French."

The real pseudo-linguists among them also will be proficient in "Phrase Book German" and "Phrase Book Spanish" and perhaps "Phrase Book Italian."

What these tongues have in common is that none bears any resemblance to an actual language, living or dead.

Probably the ultimate put-down for a vacationer in Germany is to approach a pretty young Fraulein and start to ask her, "What is your surface wind velocity?" (Was ist Ihre Bodenwindgeschwindigkeit?)

"Vahss ist ee-ra," the phrase book cryptographer begins. Whereupon the Fraulein interrupts.

"Sorry, I don't speak English," she snarls, spinning on her French heels and stalking away in the general direction of the "fernsprecham" (FAYRNshresh-ahmt), or telephone exchange.

Such humiliations are now compar-

tively easy to avoid.

According to some literature I have received from Control Data Corp., "Simple language courses in French, Spanish and German" are becoming available on home computers.

The courses "are designed to provide American tourists with sufficient mastery of the three languages to be able to travel reasonably well from one place to another, find lodging and order food in restaurants," the company says.

Suppose you are dining in a fancy French cafe and wish to order an omelet (omelette) well done.

No longer will it be necessary to whip out the old phrase book and, while the waiter hovers impatiently at your elbow, look up "bein cuit" (b'yehngKWEE).

Now all you have to do is plug in the old computer.

What Control Data has in mind, I gather, is for vacation-bound Americans to learn a smattering of French, Spanish and German before they go aboard.

That seems to me a bit unimaginative.

Think of the points you could score with your waiter if you plug in your computer right at the table, the better to com-

municate how you like your eggs (oeufs).

May I suggest the "oeufs durs" (hard-boiled)?

Sure you could learn the words the hard way, in advance. But this way, all you have to do is point to the appropriate place on the computer screen. You don't even have to make a stab at pronouncing it.

One of the computer courses contains about 500 "common words and phrases" an American tourist is likely to need while shopping. I don't know what the words are but I can attest from personal experience that 500 won't cover it.

Here are just a few of the lines likely to come in handy for an American tourist shopping in Germany:

"Zu welcher Ortschaft fuhrt diese Strasse?" (What town does this road lead to?)

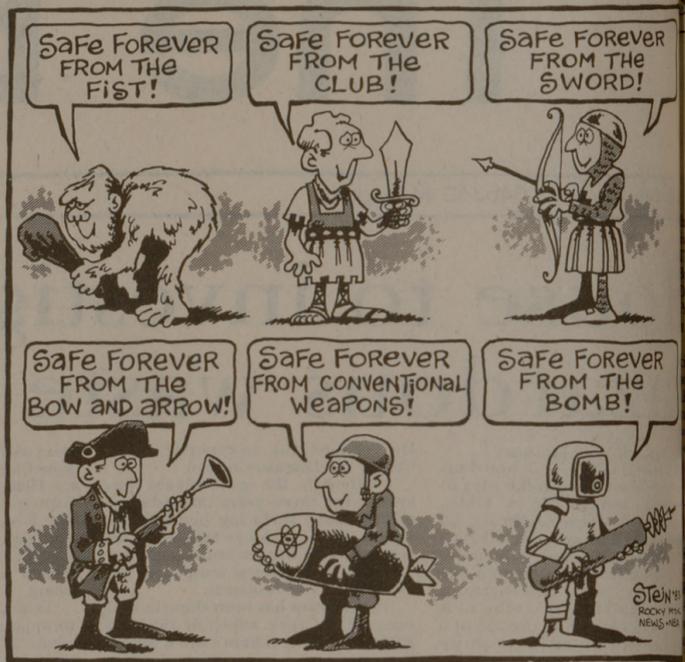
"Wo konnen wir den Fluss kreuzen?" (Where can we cross the river?)

"Ich habe mich vergiftet." (I have been poisoned.)

"Machen Sie eine Zeichnung davon." (Draw a picture of it.)

"Ese wird Ihnen nichts geschehen." (You will not be hurt.)

"Hilfe!" (Help!)



## El Salvador: Why is the U.S. there?

by Art Buchwald

Q: Why are we in El Salvador?

A: We are in El Salvador to protect it from Nicaragua. The Sandinista Marxist government of Nicaragua is training Salvadoran rebels to take over the elected government of El Salvador with Cuban and Soviet military equipment.

Q: Why are we in Honduras?

A: To train rebels to take over the government of Nicaragua with American equipment.

Q: Then U.S. policy is to defend the government of El Salvador, while working for the overthrow of the government in Nicaragua.

A: That is correct.

Q: How are we doing?

A: Not very good in El Salvador. But much better in Nicaragua.

Q: Would you say it's easier to overthrow a government in Central America than it is to preserve one?

A: I think I could say that.

Q: Why?

A: As soon as a government takes over in Central America it turns against its own people, becomes corrupt, and commits atrocities against its domestic opponents in order to stay in power.

Q: This is true in both El Salvador and Nicaragua?

A: It is with this difference. Since we are supporting the present El Salvador government we have to overlook their shortcomings and abuses to protect our own national interests. At the same time we cannot tolerate the shortcomings and abuses of Nicaragua since they are being supported by the Communists.

Q: Did the Nicaraguans start getting aid from the Communist countries because we were giving aid to the El Salvadorans? Or did we start supporting the El Salvadorans because the Nicaraguans were getting help from the Communists?

A: That's a chicken and egg question. The fact is the United States opted to support El Salvador and the Soviets decided to support Nicaragua. Once the sides were chosen it became a whole new ball game.

Q: Central American governments have been overthrowing each other for

hundreds of years. The people there to benefit no matter who takes over, should the superpowers get involved.

A: Because in the past, the revolution usually were between one faction of military and the other. Whoever over always pledged good relations to the United States. As long as we could business with the new government saw no reason to intervene. But the American coup d'etats took a nasty turn once the Cubans got involved. They started training people to support governments who refused to have good relations with us. That's when we had to enter the CIA.

Q: How do you keep the Central American government in power from dumping its own people?

A: By supplying the leaders with enough military equipment to make sure they can maintain control.

Q: Do you make any effort to improve the lot of the majority of people who are being dumped on?

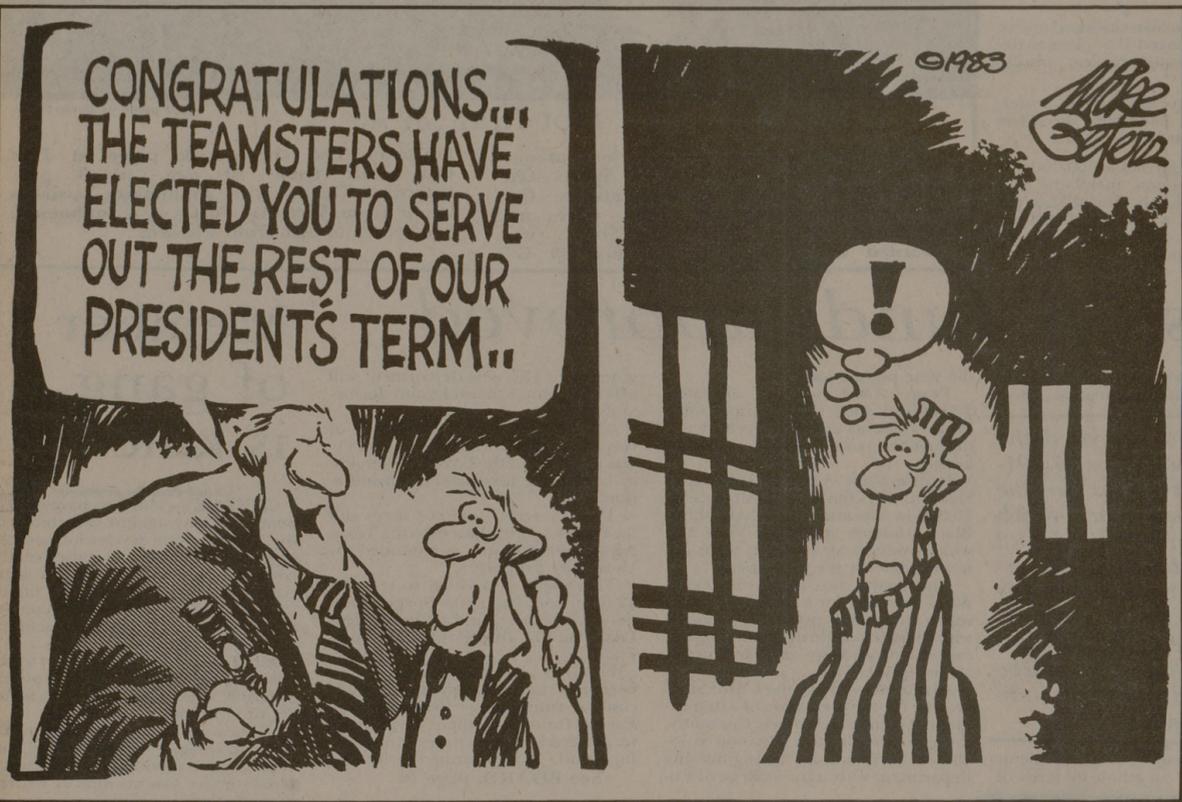
A: You try to persuade the government you're supporting that it's in its interests to do this. But that's a long process and you can't change a country's habits overnight. They've had a long tradition of dumping down there and until recently the peasants accepted their own lot. Now that the Communists have gotten into the act, the people are reacting negatively to being dumped.

Q: What's wrong with that?

A: Because, as in the case of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, they came into power promising the people who were dumped on that things would be different under their regime. As soon as they got control they started dumping on people themselves.

Q: So our choice in Central America is not to stop the dumping, but support governments dumping on the people who are friendly to us, and destabilize ones dumping on the people who are not friendly to the Soviet Union.

A: Now you've got it. We can't allow a Marxist government in Central America that dumps on its people, but we can't support one who depends on us to stay in power.



## Letters: Tuition rate hike supported

Editor:

It is time for some Aggies to begin to look at the whole picture concerning tuition. Texas has the lowest tuition of any state in the country. The cost of running a university has dramatically increased over the last decade while the tuition rate has remained the same \$4 per semester hour. I do not believe it is unreasonable for the taxpayers of this great state to ask the students to shoulder a little higher percentage of the cost of their education. After all, the students benefit from their

education with a higher paying job upon graduation.

I have never before put much stock in the ability of student government to do productive work. However, I was very pleased to learn the Legislative Study Group conducted thorough research and arrived at a position based on real-world economics instead of emotion. The work of the LSG was excellent and every Aggie should be proud of the job they did as the image of our student body was raised considerably in the state capital.

Douglas Jones '85

## Church says thanks

Editor:

On behalf of the Oak Grove United Methodist Church of Bryan, we would like to express to Alpha Phi Omega our most sincere thanks for the excellent job they did of painting our church and parsonage this Saturday. The tremendous effort that was put forth by this group in scraping and painting these buildings was deeply appreciated. We want to thank the group for selecting our church as one of their community service projects and commend their team leaders: Andy Hernandez Jr., pledge class president; Robert Carvazos, pledge class vice president; John Weaver, sub-committee for equipment chairman; Libby Whitter, pledge master; and Allan Rubin, assistant pledge master, for a job well done and well organized.

Alpha Phi Omega can be proud of the fine job they did at Oak Grove United Methodist Church. The work APO did at Oak Grove creates a positive image of Texas A&M students — not only do they receive from the community, but they also give much in return. We cannot repay such kindness, but we pray that God's blessings will be on APO and their efforts. We appreciate the time given to this project because we realize how limited a student's time is. Such demonstration of love and concern shown by the fraternity cannot be forgotten. Whenever we look at our parsonage and church building, we will be reminded of APO's gift of love to us.

Rev. Manuel Grajales V.  
Pastor, Oak Grove United Methodist Church

### The Battalion

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Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

#### Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed and show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or phone (713) 845-2611.

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## Military aid not answer to Salvadoran conflict

Editor:

President Reagan has asked Congress for support for his policies in Central America, proposing military aid totaling \$110 million for El Salvador. Reagan claims that the U.S.-backed government in El Salvador is "making every effort to guarantee democracy, free labor unions, freedom of religion, and a free press..." (Houston Post, April 28).

However, evidence collected by Amnesty International and other observers suggests that the present regime has been guilty of human rights violations on a large scale, including rape, mutilation, the murder and disappearance of clergymen, teachers, union leaders, peasants and refugees. Although atrocities committed by rebel forces in El Salvador have been widely documented in the U.S. news media, little mention has been made of the abuses of the present regime, and U.S. military aid continues to this nation, where the arms supplied are used to commit these atrocities.

The rebellion in El Salvador (and the

general unrest throughout much of Central America) is the result of years of oppression by military dictatorships which have been supported by the United States government. The present conflict is not a struggle of democracy versus communism, it is a battle of oppressed forces seeking to hold power by whatever means available, including atrocious killings and waves of terror.

There are no military solutions to the problems of El Salvador — the killing and coups have only worsened the situation. Americans need to ask, "Is the Salvadoran regime the kind of government that we want to support? Should the United States be taking a side in the conflict? I urge everyone to write his congressman, asking them to oppose further military aid to the El Salvador government and the military dictatorships of Central America, and to offer support for allowing the people of Central America to freely choose their own government."

Frank McDonald