

Opinion

The real reason Yurchenko returned to the Soviet Union

By ART BUCHWALD

The spy community in Washington is talking of nothing else but the turnabout of Soviet spy Vitaly Yurchenko. Only a few months ago he was the CIA's prize Soviet canary. Then, without warning, he turned up at the Russian Embassy and announced he was going home.

Forget his story about being drugged and kidnapped. The truth is that Yurchenko was not tortured but was badly handled by the CIA. It was not Vitaly's love for the motherland that drove him back to Moscow, but rather his disenchantment with the American way of life.

This is what happened. Yurchenko, while in Rome, was persuaded to defect by a CIA agent who offered the KGB officer wine, women and song, not necessarily in that order.

"Sing to us, dear Yurchenko," the CIA man said, "and we promise you riches beyond your dreams: a safe house, \$1 million in cash, a gold American Express Card and a free trip to Hawaii for two, ground transportation and gratuities not included."

Yurchenko, who always wanted to see Hawaii, accepted the offer. He was immediately flown to Langley, Va., to be debriefed and tested for AIDS. As for his million dollars, the CIA people said they would invest it for him in a good tax shelter.

Then the counterespionage boys went to work. "Sing to us, Vitaly, sing to us the

names of moles and double agents and spies who are still out in the cold." Yurchenko started to sing in a beautiful baritone that only great Soviet defectors possess.

All went well until Yurchenko demanded the safe house he was promised.

A CIA real estate agent took him out to the Virginia countryside. They drove up to a dirty, gray, weather-beaten cabin with broken windows, rotting stairs and a large hole in the roof.

"What's safe about this house?" Yurchenko said.

"The KGB would never think of looking for you here. We'll let you buy it for \$500,000."

"Why should I pay for a house?"

"We always make our defectors pay for their safe houses. The CIA is not in business for its health," replied the agent. "Look, we're not taking advantage of you because you're a dirty commie traitor. Every house in Virginia sells for \$500,000."

Yurchenko bought the shack from the CIA and received an advance of \$150,000 to fix it up.

Unfortunately just when he got the house the way he wanted it the KGB found out where he lived and burned it down on Halloween. Yurchenko escaped out the back window and three hours later arrived at CIA headquarters shaking. He demanded his money be returned since the house wasn't safe at all. The matter went as high as the director

of the Covert Real Estate Division, who told him that the Central Intelligence Agency had a firm policy. As long as the house was safe when the CIA sold it to a defector, the agency was not responsible for the KGB burning it later on.

Yurchenko was hurt and confused. The CIA put him up in a Holiday Inn and said, "Sing, Yurchenko, and you'll find a BMW in front of your door and a girl like the one in the Calvin Klein ads."

So Yurchenko sang some more. He still would be singing today if the CIA had not made one tremendous blunder. They had invested the rest of Vitaly's money in a Maryland savings and loan. When Yurchenko went to make a withdrawal the cashier told him they had run out of money and slammed down the window in his face.

Enraged, the spy returned to Langley and confronted Bill Casey. The director said there was nothing he could do. "The CIA has no intelligence as to which savings and loan banks are solvent and which ones aren't. If you had come to me earlier I would have tipped you off on some good stocks."

That did it for Yurchenko. Since he was wiped out he decided to return to Moscow and face the music. His last words as he boarded the plane were, "I don't want to live in a country where your savings aren't insured by the FDIC."

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

Mail Call

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. 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 be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

No limits for God

EDITOR:

In his letter dated Wed., Nov. 20, Mark Sheppard expounded briefly on his view of cults. I quote him here as writing, "To anyone really seeking the truth, I recommend understanding the cults . . . which takes the shroud off of these groups and exposes them for what they really are: perversions and distortions of Biblical Christianity."

Sheppard, perhaps the extent of such words as "perversions" and "distortions" escapes you. Or, can it ever be that the God you worship can and only love (how should I put this?) YOUR doctrine of religious expressions?

Tsk Tsk Mr. Sheppard. How can you, a mere human, put such limits on that which has no limits — namely God?

Perhaps sir, the true distortions are in your selfish attitudes about God and the sad perversions are your attitudes towards those who recognize God in His limitless manifestations.

Frank M. Hale Jr. '88

Stay home

EDITOR:

Dear Loren Steffy: We are tired of the backseat-driver type journalists who make strong opinions about something they know very little about, like you.

Why should you be so judgemental about what other people at the University do when we usually don't mind that a highly opinionated, narrow-minded person such as yourself can put your uneducated assumptions in a place where thousands of people can read and be affected by them?

It seems that you came here as many other people have, to get a higher education and get a step up in the world. There is nothing wrong with the Texas A&M is merely a stepping stone for those who choose it to be, but for those who want to make being an Aggie an extracurricular education as well as a life time experience, A&M still has at least one tradition that anyone who becomes very involved with.

Bonfire is like nothing you have ever experienced in your life. I have never heard or read anything negative about bonfire from anyone who has given part of their time to help build it.

Either you are the first or you have never given any of your precious time. Why don't you leave things that you know nothing about alone. It is obvious that bonfire is not a "waste" of your time or a "waste" of your effort. So if you're going to have bad feelings about bonfire, I suggest that when you burn, you stay home.

Rob Spiller
Bill Carson

In need of correction

EDITOR:

I don't normally respond to letters to the editor, but a number of misconceptions in the letter of Mark Barbieri and Matthew Sullivan (Battalion, Nov. 26) cry out for correction.

It is hardly "deceptive" or "inaccurate" to suggest that a liberal arts background can lead to corporate success. A series of articles in *Harvard Business Review* over the past few years has repeatedly shown that managers in Fortune 500 companies often begin their education with a solid training in the liberal arts. That's not to say that there's anything wrong with technical training; it's just that practice in reading, writing, and thinking can keep you from becoming a "bean counter," as Lee Iacocca, one of my favorite engineers, puts it.

I have a feeling that the real issue is the last sentence of Barbieri and Sullivan's letter: "We guess liberal arts is desperate for people." I teach in liberal arts departments and I'm hardly desperate for students. Overcrowding forced me to turn people away from both of my regularly scheduled classes this semester, and I took on in addition a private study in Biblical Greek because my students asked for it. And lest anyone think my experience atypical, the Registrar's office tells me that the College of Engineering (Mr. Barbieri's home turf) lost 37 students from 1984 to 1985 while the College of Liberal Arts gained 1040 majors during the same period. Liberal Arts Faculty Council discussed setting up an enrollment management policy last spring, but we're going to try to keep up with the demand without doing anything that drastic. I have a feeling that as A&M moves toward its "world class" status, its students are learning that there are several equally valid ways to succeed.

As Ann Landers would put it: Messrs. Barbieri and Sullivan, wake up and smell the coffee!

Craig Kallendorf
Departments of English and Modern Languages

Cults hard to define

EDITOR:

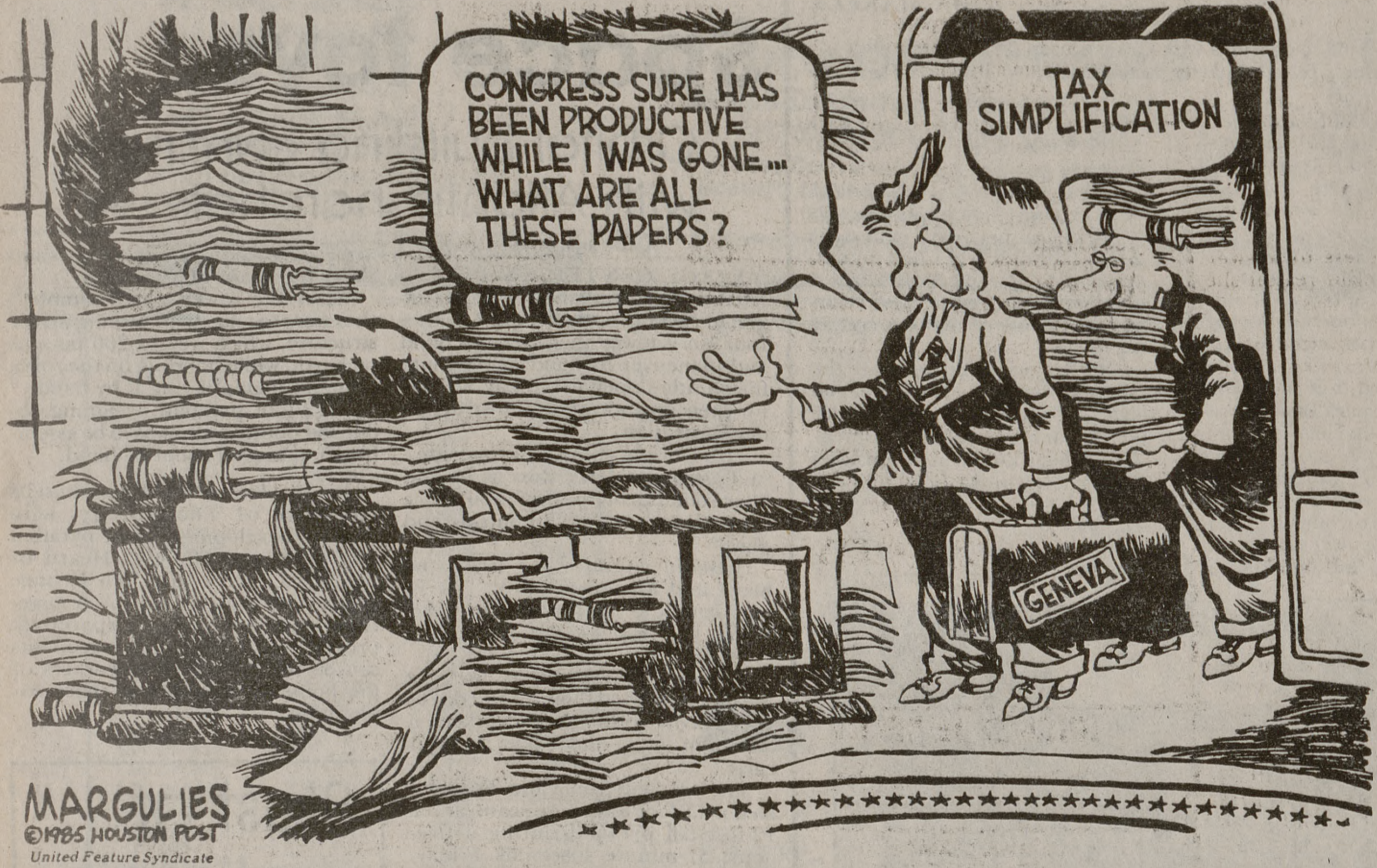
I didn't write before; I will now. Mark Sheppard's (Nov. 20) letter about recent Battalion report list "EST" and "Zen Buddhism" (among a lengthy list of organizations, religious and otherwise, characterized as "cults." A cult is loosely considered by these writers as (something like) an "alternative," "basically alien religion" incompatible with the dominant religion of a particular culture. Without wishing to attach such importance to any such arbitrary, invidious distinctions, I would like to offer the following.

Eastern Standard Time (EST) is not a cult, and the est organization operates in several other time zones as well. Graduates of est training are on very little about that training (blind agreement being one of the staples of a cult). The list of est graduates includes clergymen (in dominant religions; I'm not sure if Catholics and Jews count), authors, educators, academics. Most would disagree that est is a cult. Many could agree that nothing in particular. The same is true of, say, four years of college.

Zen Buddhism is a branch of Buddhism, which has been a major religion much longer (c. 500 BCE) than Protestant Christianity (c. 1500). North American Fundamentalism (c. 1900). Buddhism is the dominant religion in several Asian nations (for example, Sri Lanka). Zen in particular has exercised extraordinary influence on the history and culture of Japan. Zen continues to flourish in many centers in the United States since its introduction here in the early part of this century. Zen exists at Texas A&M as a manifestation of College Station's place in the world community (gha). "Spring comes, the grass grows by itself."

Other cultists are encourages to make their views known.

Steven M. Carr



Letter to readers What makes a Battalion editor?

By RHONDA SNIDER

The question most asked of me this semester has been, "How is The Battalion editor selected?"

Since applications are due today, it's a good time to answer that question.

The Student Publications Board has the job of selecting editors for The Battalion and the Aggield. The board meets each spring to choose The Battalion summer and fall editors and the Aggield editor, and meets again in the fall to

choose a Battalion editor for the spring.

The seven-member board is made up of three students, three faculty members and one administrator. The student members are appointed by the student body president, who appointed himself this year. The head of the journalism department, Dr. Edward J. Smith, is also head of the board. He is a non-voting member, except in case of a tie.

These members review candidates' applications and interview the applicants. I expect about five people to apply for editor this semester.

Tuesday the board will meet to interview the candidates. After each candidate has met with the board, the members will vote and a new editor will be selected.

Those who apply for editor of The Battalion must meet certain qualifications: a 2.0 overall GPR which must be maintained during the term in office; at least one year of experience in a responsible editorial position on The Battalion or a comparable student newspaper or at least one year of experience on a commercial newspaper or at least 12 hours of journalism including Journalism 203 and 303 or the equivalent; the 12 hours must include completion of or enrollment in Journalism 301 (Communications Law) or the equivalent.

The editor will serve for one semester, and must re-apply if desiring to serve as editor for another semester. The Battalion spring editor will serve the last week or two of this semester through April 25.

Typically, editors serve for only one semester, because they have the strange habit of graduating, which is what I'll be doing Dec. 13.

Another bit of trivia about past Battalion editors: The last eight Battalion editors (over the past four years) all have been women. Bill Robinson was selected to serve as editor for the Fall '84 semester, but died from injuries sustained in a car accident before he officially took over. The last man to serve a full semester as editor was Dillard Stone, editor from May 1980-April 1981.

Whether it's a man or a woman selected on Tuesday, one thing's for sure, their first task will be one of their most difficult. Before the new editor takes over he or she will have selected the entire spring Battalion staff of 50 or so people.

And their second task will be equally as difficult — working out a budget of salaries to pay that staff. Staff members are paid per issue that they work. Salaries currently range from \$33 per issue for the editor and managing editor to nothing for editorial assistants who volunteer their time.

The new editor's next big task will be to lead the new staff in putting out the last newspapers of the semester.

I wish the best of luck to all those who will be trying for editor, and I wish a heap of success to the new editor in approaching his or her new tasks.

Rhonda Snider is a senior journalism major and editor for The Battalion.

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editor or Board of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.
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