

Span: bars, water and funeral homes Students learn more than language with Study Abroad

I've just had all four of my wisdom teeth removed. Being unable to leave the house due to the effects of some semi-hallucinogenic pain killer or even entertain myself by eating solid foods, I've decided to reflect upon my summer study abroad experience in Spain and finally write the column. The Battalion requested some time ago.

GUEST COLUMN

LYNN BOOHER

Everybody smokes, eats ice cream and they take their dogs everywhere — including restaurants. Cars in Europe are smaller than Mazda Miatas, but they somehow seat four and get an average of 45 miles to the gallon.

We got to see all our favorite TV shows, but dubbed in Spanish of course. I got a big kick out of watching "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" and listening to him rap in Spanish while the other characters referred to him as "Weel"!

Salamanca, the town we stayed in, is about the size of the Bryan-College Station metroplex and by some estimates has about 3000 bars. In fact, Spain has more bars than the rest of Europe combined.

Every meal we had included hard white bread as an appetizer — except breakfast, for which hard white bread was the meal. The prices at Pizza Hut, Burger King, and McDonalds were inflated — Happy Meals are \$3.60 in Madrid — but the cool thing is you can get a beer instead of a coke.

Speaking of beer, the drinking age is 16, but the general rule is: if you can get your chin — or more importantly your money — over the bar, you can buy. I saw many a kid drinking who looked about 12-years-old.

Salamanca, the town we stayed in, is about the size of the Bryan-College Station metroplex and by some estimates has about 3000 bars and clubs. In fact, Spain has more bars than the rest of Europe combined. Our profs would hand out free drink passes on Thursdays at school. And the vending machine at school — like virtually every vending machine I saw — had beer in it.

Often, it was cheaper to buy alcohol than water. Yes, you are charged for water in Europe — a hard lesson in traveling. The neat thing was that we could drink Evian and Perrier constantly without appearing pretentious. The most expensive glass of water I saw was the one my friend bought in the Plaza Mayor in Salamanca for \$2.50.

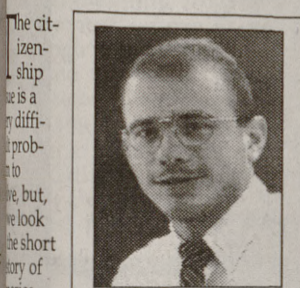
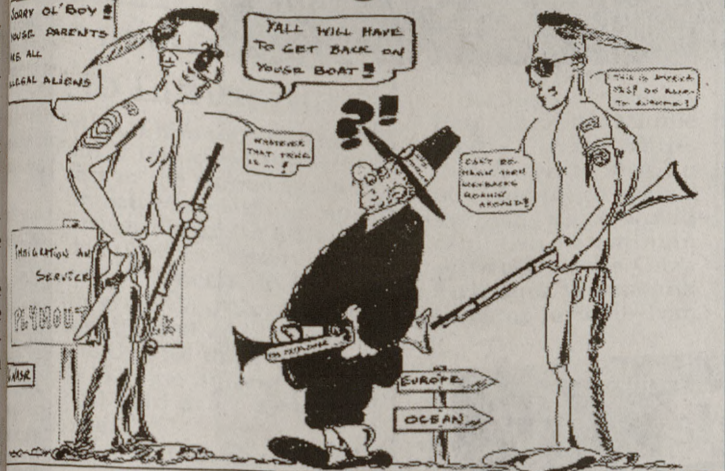
By the way — don't try to pay a tab with your American Express card. Practically no one in Europe accepts it, except the tourist shops. Visa really is everywhere you want to be.

On a more morbid note, I learned something about funerals, having lived across the street from a funeral home — which was catty-corner to three bars. Spanish funerals have a wake the night before at which the friends and relatives of the deceased stay up all night drinking and partying with the body. My housemother told me that several exchange students confused the frequent wakes for a club and tried to mingle. With all the night life in Salamanca, that's not surprising. It's quite a town.

Lynn Booher is a sophomore English and psychology major

PRO CON

Should America grant citizenship to U.S.-born children of illegal aliens?



FRANK STANFORD
Columnist



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Columnist

The United States offers a host of opportunities to a very select group of people who take the initiative. These people are entitled to citizenship and the accompanying

benefits if they accomplish two minor tasks: Enter the country illegally and bear a child.

"Yes," the United States seems to say, "YOU TOO can break our laws and undermine our legal system, and we will reward YOU and YOUR CHILDREN with these wonderful cash and prizes!!! Pat, why don't you tell them what these nice folks can expect when they get here!"

Millions of illegal immigrants flood into the United States each year unconcerned that they are breaking the law. It is not laws which fill their minds as they dodge the men enforcing the laws. Instead, they are thinking of the opportunities awaiting them here.

By now they know there are no fabled streets of gold, but they do know all too well that once they arrive on U.S. soil, the government is hard pressed to do anything about it. The laws which dictate the deportation procedures of illegal immigrants often reward the immigrants for their illegal efforts and simply punish the United States.

It seems ironic that a nation populated primarily by immigrants and their descendants is now feeling the sting of immigration, but the illegal immigration undermines the nation's ability to sustain the standard of living which first drew immigrants.

And now the nation is retaliating. One California legislator is working to change the current laws which allow — indeed encourage and reward — immigrants who ignore the laws of the very land they seek to inhabit.

What's wrong with allowing these people to seek a better future for their children? Who can it hurt? Well, while breaking the law appears to benefit the children born to the illegal immigrants, millions of U.S. citizens and those who chose to enter this nation legally are finding the price of these crimes painfully expensive.

The state of California is one of the hardest hit by the wave of illegal immigrants flooding the nation. One magazine reported that last year alone more than 100,000 illegal aliens moved into California. They and their American-born children accounted for up to 90 percent of California's population explosion last year.

How is the state to provide for the hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens and their children? The governor's office says that the immigrant population cost the state \$5 million more than it paid in taxes. That translates to lower income and higher expenses for California.

Those immigrants who seek the American dream, faded and weary as it may be, should be rewarded and encouraged to do so. There are procedures set up to aid them in their plight. But the people who seek to circumvent those laws and undermine the system which was set up to help them should be treated accordingly. And by no means should they be rewarded.

Two opposing positions and the fair and humane stance. Those born in the United States would be entitled to and subject to the benefits and responsibilities of this nation regardless of who their parents are, where they came from or how they got here.

Generally, Americans tend to be some of the most compassionate citizens of the world when it comes to helping foreigners, but generosity seems to dry up when the topics of money and a rising population arise.

"We don't have enough room for more of these people," seems to be the favorite excuse in Washington, but it really doesn't seem to be that way.

What does this country's population consist of anyway? This public is not and never was an essential club of white Europeans who traversed the Atlantic to settle this place fair and square. Most of the original settlers (illegal aliens) were outlaws and religious outcasts willing to risk their lives for a new beginning. The citizens at the time had no choice but to accept the new arrivals or fight them. We wiped them out, stole their land and now open the doors to the rest of the world.

When the rest of the world showed up, their American-born sons became citizens. So how do we deny citizenship to any child born on this soil? The fetus of an illegal alien is unaware of his parents' legal status — not mention immigration quotas. And are we "full" of people or anything? If Japan is "full," we aren't. Our nation can support many times the current population, just not with the current flow of tax revenue.

Now, I'm all for everyone carrying his or her own weight in his part of national responsibility, but taxes are paid by citizens and illegal aliens. Pending legislation or not, illegal aliens work in this country, pay taxes, and in many cases, they receive government services as well.

Instead of erecting a 30-foot Berlin-esque wall along the entire Mexican border, there's no way to effectively thwart the illegal immigrants. So, let's spend countless millions of dollars in futile bureaucratic padding to determine whose is legal and whose is not. We should just continue to grant citizenship to all babies born on American soil, regardless of the parents' legal status, and allow them to work and pay taxes.

Not only that, but their parents should be granted green cards at the very least. Essentially, our system's immigration "problem" stems from misappropriation of government services and furthering negative attitudes towards illegal aliens and children.

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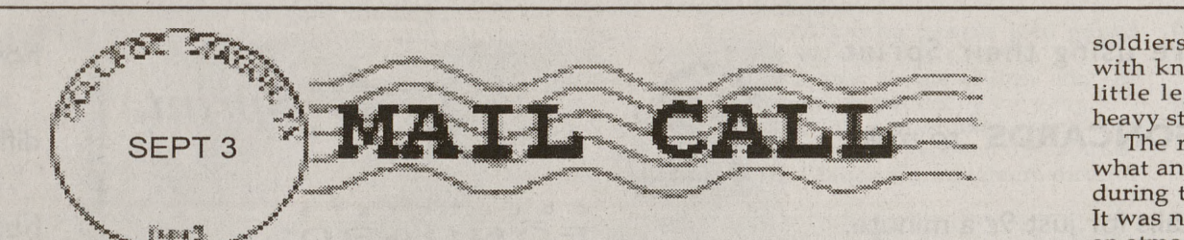
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CIA documents reveal truth behind Cold War

The New York Times reported on Sunday, Aug. 29, that the CIA is preparing to open its files and to provide information about its covert activities during the Cold War period. This information should be of special interest to the A&M community, since Texas A&M enthusiastically supported the Cold War and provided military personnel to help armed struggles brought about.

The article cites a memorandum from 1954 which makes the CIA responsible for creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty here in this country in order to win approval for the policy of confrontation with the Soviet Union.

It spread fear of a Soviet Union which, as we know now, was groundless. The CIA and its political allies here in the U.S. were also responsible for virulent anti-communism, the kind of anti-communism represented by the likes of Barry Goldwater, who saw a communist in anyone who disagreed with government explanations of the "threat" from the Soviet Union.

The notion that the Soviet Union was a threat to U.S. security was groundless, since the Soviet Union barely survived World War II in tact. As everyone also knows, it collapsed in our own time, due to the heavy burden of military spending imposed by the arms race with the United States.

We must not forget that the U.S. had its main ally during the Cold War period the rump state of West Germany. This was the surviving part of a country which had invaded

the Soviet Union in 1941 and whose armies were responsible for murdering and starving at least 20 million Soviet citizens.

The Germany which the U.S. re-armed in 1954 was a country whose leaders, apart from the socialists, were either former Nazis or had had close ties to the Nazi party. A good example is Kurt Georg Kiesinger, a conservative politician who became Chancellor of West Germany in 1966. He had been a Nazi party member and had worked in the propaganda department of the party.

These men and others like them were the leaders of the country which the United States turned against the Soviet Union.

The Times report also details how the CIA overthrew the democratic government of Guatemala in 1954, though the government had not sought Soviet aid, and was not in any way a threat to U.S. security. It had, however, confiscated land belonging to the United Fruit Company.

The CIA then installed a regime in Guatemala which is unsurpassed in brutality. It has ruled the native population by terror for the last 40 years. This terror is graphically described by Susanne Jonas in The Battle for Guatemala (1991). She writes about a recent attack by the Guatemalan army on a village of natives:

"At about 1:00pm, the soldiers began to fire at the women inside the small church. The majority did not die there, but were separated from their children, taken to their homes in groups, and killed, the majority with machetes

Then they returned to kill the children, whom they had left crying and screaming by themselves, without their mothers The

soldiers cut open the children's stomachs with knives or they grabbed the children's little legs and smashed their heads with heavy sticks" (p. 145).

The report in the Times merely confirms what anyone who has read about U.S. policy during the Cold War period already knows. It was no secret that the government created an atmosphere of psychological terror during the 50s and that it was the CIA which had invented the Red menace.

This was re-invented as the "evil empire" by Ronald Reagan and his friends like Phil Gramm. Nor was it a secret that the United States collaborated with ex-Nazis to build up West Germany. Nor was it a secret that the United States had overthrown the government in Guatemala, and that it was the CIA which trained and even commanded the death squads which were responsible for murdering the local population of indigenous peoples.

These reports are important because they confirm what critics, let's say "left" or "liberal" critics, of U.S. foreign policy had said all along: namely, that the Cold War was mostly a hoax, and the aim of U.S. foreign policy was not to spread democracy, but to protect U.S. business interests by any means available, including murdering children.

The Cold War is over. A&M was at the forefront of fighting the Cold War, and it was at the forefront of spreading Cold War ideology. It supported cold warriors such as Ronald Reagan, and it founded an institute (the Mosher Institute for Defense Studies) to keep the Cold War going after it was almost over.

I hope that A&M can take a new turn, and that the Mosher Institute can be replaced by an institute for peace studies. The aim of the institute would be to prepare Aggies for the cause of peace: to help demobilize the military; and it should also prepare Aggies to struggle for the cause of justice, to see in the terror regimes of Latin America the real threat to American ideals.

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