P.S. to the NEWS
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RELEASE: September 21

MOSCOW TELEPHONE BOOK

In the Soviet Union, the best selling, most sought-after book is not the life of Marilyn Monroe, or the inside story of a successful espionage agent, or the suppressed writings of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. This most popular book has no pictures, pornographic or otherwise. Although it sells for $16, it doesn't describe anything as interesting as sports, sex, or spying.

The name of this best selling book is the Moscow telephone directory which recently was made generally available for the first time in Soviet history. Until now, Moscow has been the only great metropolitan center without easy access to a phone book. Only those with a need-to-know were permitted to own, or even see, a phone book. There is no routine distribution to telephone owners.

The Soviet Government policy has always been to make it as difficult as possible for tourists to find Soviet addresses and phone numbers. They are usually told that such information is not available. Hotel operators in the larger hotels have a telephone book, but hotel patrons are not permitted to look at it. A phone book is not available for reference in public places.

Just because a new telephone book has been published does not mean that it tells all you ever wanted to know about phone numbers in Moscow but were afraid to ask. The telephone numbers of all foreign residents, including the thousands of diplomats, newsmen and businessmen who live in Moscow, have been deliberately omitted.

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This suppression of telephone information is characteristic of a Communist police state which systematically suppresses communication between individuals.

For example, the U.S. women's swimming team, which recently returned from the World University games in Moscow, got a good education in Soviet thought and speech control. Not only were their rooms bugged, but security was so tight that they had to show their passes six times between their hotel rooms and the elevators. Guards patrolled past their doors all night long.

The U.S. swimming team had first-hand experience with one of the most dictatorial techniques of preventing communication between individuals: forbidding people to talk to each other in the subways. The girls were laughing and joking to each other when a Soviet guard came over and admonished them, "It is forbidden to talk on the subway."

Another way in which the Soviet Union suppresses communication between individuals is by its system of internal passports. Thus, Nobel-prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn cannot live in Moscow with his wife because, although her passport is stamped with approval to live in Moscow, his is not. Solzhenitsyn recently made a strong statement criticizing "the insulting and coercive passport system under which one's place of habitation is not chosen by oneself, but is decided by the authorities, and under which the right to travel from town to town, and especially from the countryside to the city, must be earned like a kindness."

Those U.S. officials who suffer from the delusion that the Soviets have "mellowed" and are growing more like the West should leave their ivory towers and learn the facts of Soviet life from our women's swimming team and from Russian intellectuals such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Andrei Sakharov.

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