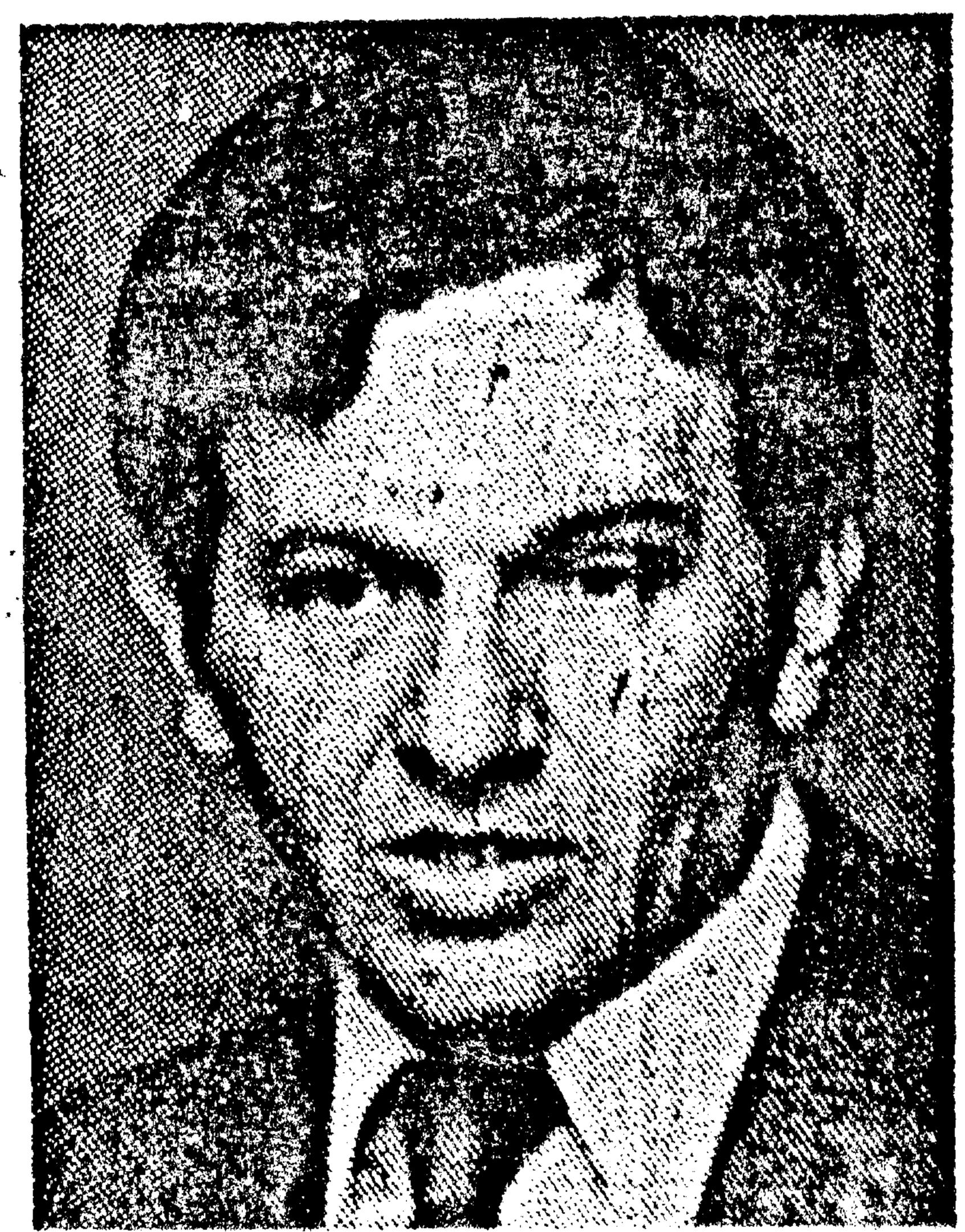
## Humor Struggles On In the Soviet Union

By RICHARD F. SHEPARD

MIL DRAITSER is a 42-year-old humorist born in Odessa, in the Soviet Union, who wrote a funny article about somebody's play and learned that the joke was on him. The somebody was really not a nobody and Mr. Draitser received the highest Soviet awards for humor: loss of work and eventual emigration.

The culmination of this little Soviet drama took place in 1974, when Mr. Draitser left Moscow for Los Angeles. where he teaches Russian at the University of California. However, on Monday afternoon, Mr. Draitser, whose English is better than he gives it credit for, was in Brooklyn, also once a source of national humor.

He was talking to a gathering at Long Island University's Brooklyn Center. and his topic was "Humor and Political Satire in the U.S.S.R.: Official and Un-



The New York Times/Sara Krulwich

Emil Draitser

derground." Because talks that have colons in their titles are rarely funny.

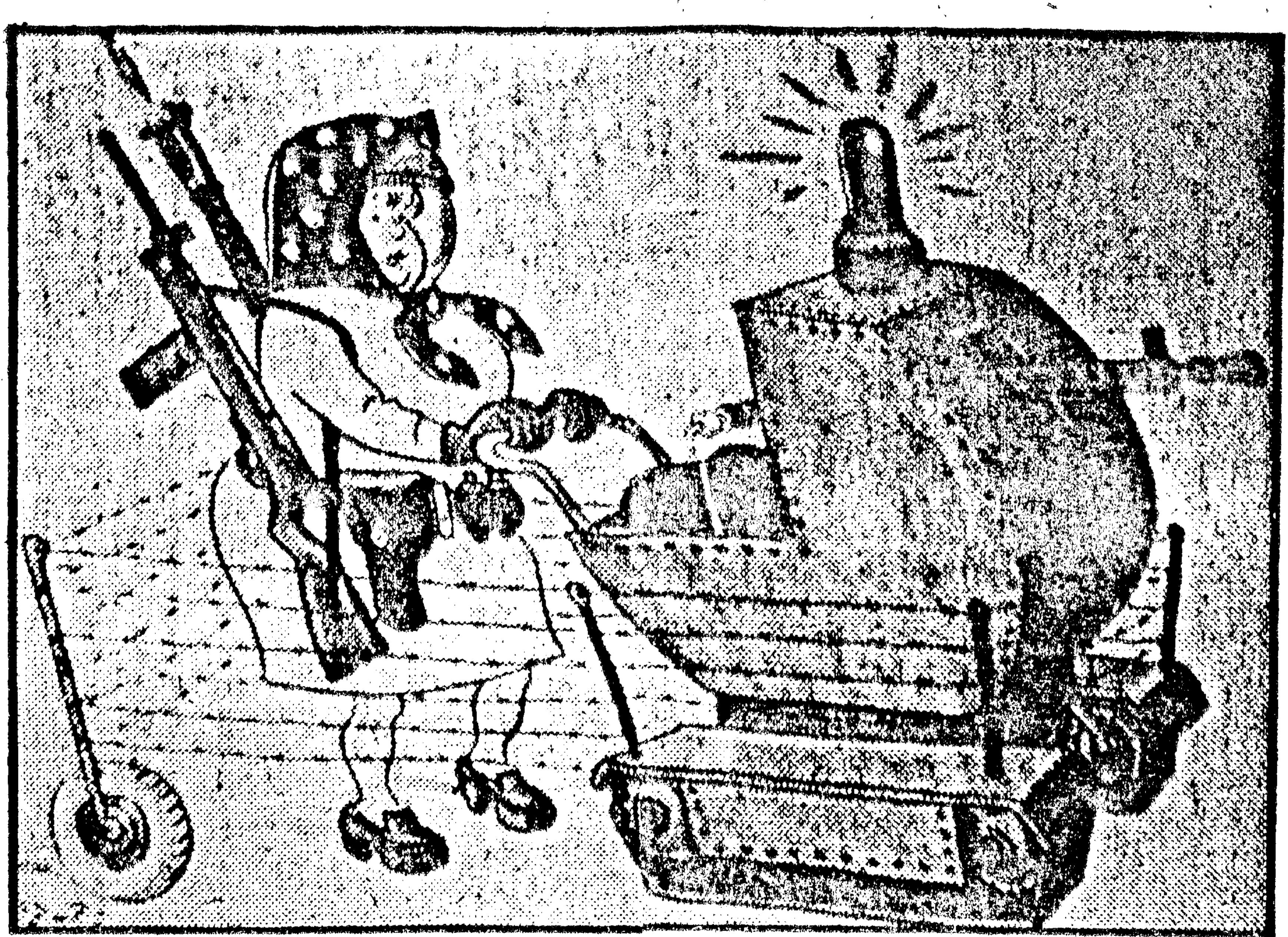
especially on campuses when they are given, as this one was, under the sponsorship of agencies such as the departments of English and political science and the United Nations Graduate Program, there was little reason to believe that the session would produce much more ho-ho than ho-hum.

However, expectations of academic aridity were soon dashed by Mr. Draitser, who is on a lecture tour of campuses. He has a keen humor that spills over into what he has organized as an essentially serious classification of the one-way approaches to Soviet humor. He was part of the system, a write-toorder humorist whose work appeared in Krokodil, the Soviet humor magazine, and on radio and television.

"In the Soviet Union you can only laugh at what is not a threat to the state," he told his audience of 80 students and faculty members. "The movie director tries to hint at something, but with such timidity and an eye on the censor that the result is, he is the only one who knows of the satire when the film is finished."

Mr. Draitser examined, with specifics, the quality of humor in Soviet radio and television (very low) and videotape (which has helped the censor cut out things that used to slip through in live programming), in periodicals (writers must know whom to touch with their rapier wit but are at a disadvantage because there is no Soviet Who's Who to separate the touchables from the untouchables), through cartoons (always safe to publish if they are putting down the United States or China), and anecdotes circulated by word of mouth (the one medium that the Government cannot control).

"You can criticize the bad quality of goods, but you are forbidden to mention the chronic shortages of food," Mr. Draitser said. "You can criticize absence from work, waste of money and drunkenness. Satiric barbs have a purpose, to tear some things bad for the state to pieces, but you are not allowed to inquire into the causes. Self-censorship is part of the creative process."



"How safe it is to walk in New York" is the caption of cartoon published in Krokodil, the Soviethumor magazine.

## A Tale of Two Drunks

These comments were the serious part. Even the slides showing Krokodil cartoons — how to walk the streets of New York, depicting a woman pushing an armored baby carriage — were not rousers. But then came the anecdotes. Many were repeats of those found in Mr. Draitser's slim paperback, a veritable Joe Miller of Soviet jokes called "Forbidden Laughter (Soviet Underground Jokes)," just issued as a bilingual edition by the Almanac Publishing House, in Los Angeles. Jon Pariser did the translations and an artist who goes under the name of Igor did the illustrations. Mr. Draitser, who has learned the system heré, suggests that purchasers send \$5.95 to Maxim's Book Distributors, P.O. Box 480451, Los Angeles 90048. End of commercial, on to spacemen. stories.

in Moscow. Sees another fellow with hand raised, feels sorry for him, he looks frozen. Drunk picks up other fel- Mr. Draitser had no Afghanistan low, carries him home to help him rehas dragged in a statue of Lenin.

"This story was printed, read and laughed at," Mr. Draitser said. "It's a Czechoslovakia so long?" satire on the endless statues of Lenin with outstretched hand found in every

town in the country.""

The ethnic joke has not caught on, but people laugh at jokes about Radio Armenia, which is no different in fact than any other radio in the Soviet in these jokes, a naive question in the orthodox Communist tradition is put and a sharp answer is given. Example:

"Is it possible to build Communism. in a randomly taken capitalist country, for example. Holland?"

"It's possible, but what did Holland ever do to you?"

Anecdote: President Leonid I. Brezhnev congratulates Soviet astronauts after the Apollo-Soyuz flight but says that the Americans are winning the space race. Therefore, the Politburo has decided on a landing on the sun.

"But we'll be burned alive," say the

Do you think we don't understand A drunk raises his hand to hail a cab anything," Brezhnev answers. "Don't worry, we've planned details. We've arranged for you to land at night."

jokes on tap, but he told one that made cover. When he gets home, he finds he the rounds after the takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1967.

"Why are our people remaining in

"They are looking for the people who invited them in."