

## Robert Bowie Reports On Russia

# *Bowie Brings Back Fresh View of Russia*

By DARRELL WEST

Have you ever wanted to visit Russia to find out what it is really like? Prof. Robert Bowie, who teaches Russian at Miami, was able to do this during the summer.

Bowie was one of 23 Russian teachers from the United States selected by the International Research and Exchange Commission. While there, he studied Russian at Moscow State University.

Though Bowie was there less than three months, he was able to make some observations about life in the Soviet Union. He said that the young people in Moscow that he met "were very friendly. They were more outgoing and open than their parents who still remember Stalin and the knock on the door in the middle of the night."

Bowie continued, "You could walk up to the average citizen in downtown Moscow

and discover many diverse viewpoints."

Some would readily admit the faults of their country along with the virtues. Others were openly hostile to Americans. "In this respect they were very similar to America," he said.

"Propaganda signs were posted all over Moscow," Bowie remarked. But the people seemed numb to them just as Americans seem numb to the signs advertising certain products, he said.

The Russians were very curious about America in general. While he was there, the newspaper headlines a story in which Jane Fonda talked about the many starving babies in the United States. Several Russians came up to Bowie and asked him if this was true.

Though Russian citizens were curious about America, they were very apathetic toward the affairs of their own country. When asked how Solzhenitsyn was viewed by the people, Bowie said, "The average man on the street doesn't care if a few civil liberties are taken away."

Other things are more important to them.

One unusual aspect of Russian university life, Bowie related, was the dormitory life of the students. All the dorms were interconnected so as to create one gigantic dormitory. The individual dorms were co-ed. There were parties almost every night. After the students drank their vodka they threw the bottles out the window of their multi-story dormitory.

He said, "All through the night you could hear the bottles breaking on the sidewalk below. It seemed strange because the Soviet officials seemed to tolerate it. They never stopped the students even though it continued the whole summer." They don't smoke pot though because of the severe penalties (4-5 years in prison) if caught.

Bowie said if he had the chance he would visit Russia again. It would be a wonderful opportunity to study a culture both similar to and different than ours, he remarked.