

Opinion

AIDS paranoia

AIDS statistics are expected to jump today as the federal government expands its definition of what causes the disease, but Americans still react to AIDS with more paranoia than compassion.

The government action will open the door to much-needed treatment for thousands of victims who could not qualify under the old restrictions. In Houston, which has the nation's fourth-largest number of AIDS victims, that treatment will soon be hard to come by: The nation's first AIDS hospital, which opened last September, is preparing to close.

The hospital is a victim of fiscal reality — AIDS is an expensive disease to treat — but its closing leaves the city's AIDS victims with no treatment facilities within hundreds of miles.

And elsewhere in the country, AIDS victims continue to meet with hysteria or hostility. Clifford Ray, whose three sons have the AIDS virus, will move his family from Arcadia, Florida, rather than brave community reaction to his sons' enrollment in public school. The boys' presence sparked a boycott of their elementary school. Soon after the boycott's end, the family's house caught fire in a blaze Clifford claims was started by a firebomb.

As AIDS continues to spread, community attitudes will decide whether victims receive help or hindrance in their fight against the disease. It's time to put away the paranoia.



Light of glasnost grows dim in Russia

America has heralded Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, or openness, as the beginning of real reform in the Soviet Union.



Brian Frederick

Glasnost is said to provide greater freedom of expression for Soviet citizens as well as criticism of problems in Soviet society that in the past were not publicly discussed or admitted. Even criticism of the Party has been implied.

Coupled with Gorbachev's economic innovations, *glasnost* gives us the impression that the ideals of free enterprise and individual liberty are making inroads into the Soviet system. The Soviets apparently are becoming more like us. But we must ask whether *glasnost* is really effecting fundamental changes in the Soviet Union.

This summer, I went to the Soviet Union with a group from Texas A&M and spent nearly six weeks studying Russian language and culture. I also attempted to evaluate whether what I had read about *glasnost* was accurate.

After a question-and-answer session with two professors from Moscow State University, it began to become apparent to me that *glasnost* was not changing Soviet society as I had been told. One professor said the Soviets are working very hard to improve their image with the West. This statement enabled me to put much of what I saw in Russia into perspective.

During our several weeks in Moscow, most of us made some Russian friends. Noting numerous inconsistencies in their stories and actions, my roommate and I began to suspect that they were arranged friends. What better way could there be to improve a tarnished image than to assign some nice young Komsomol members to make friends with foreign students to make sure they have a good time. Then, when the foreigners return home, they will talk about their wonderful friends and how Russia was not as bad as they had expected. After all, they saw no labor camps. But then labor camps were not on the itinerary.

Glasnost is part of this image-building program. Commonly translated as "openness," it gives the impression that the Soviet Union is gaining freedom in the Western sense of the word.

Actually, *glasnost* translates literally as "publicity," a word with a connotation different than that of "openness."

I have a Soviet propaganda poster that depicts what form this publicity is to take. It shows the light of *glasnost* shining on a black marketeer, a drunkard, and a shirker. They are fleeing as another man publicizes their deeds. The accompanying text says, "Now, as never before, we need a little more light, in order that the party and people may know everything so that we may have no dark corners which may again be soiled by mold... Therefore, we need a little more light."

Glasnost seeks to deal with deviates within the communist system by publicizing their deeds. No longer will official corruption, drunkenness and absenteeism be winked at, for they hurt the economy. It is not without reason that some Americans believe these new policies are intended to revitalize the sluggish Soviet economy in preparation for war, an intention quite different from the much-heralded desire for "openness."

Cosmetic changes have been made. For example, rock records are now recorded and produced in the Soviet Union, and rock groups are officially sanctioned. A couple of years ago, this was not so, our friends told us. Yet it seems that rock is only tolerated by the officials. A woman who works for a cultural bureau in Leningrad told me that rock music is considered uncultured, a serious charge in the Soviet Union. Such a lukewarm endorsement causes me to question the permanence of these changes.

After I returned home, I met a Russian emigre whose daughter by his first marriage lives in Moscow with her mother. For seven years, she has refused to communicate with him.

This spring, he received a five-page letter from a friend in Moscow. Pages one through three and five were from his friend, but page four was from his daughter. The transitions from page to

page were done in such fashion that the letter flowed as if written by one person. Furthermore, she had carefully written that page in aespian language to avoid censorship.

She wrote that she had refused to communicate with him because her mother holds a high position as an electrical engineer. She feared the consequences to her mother and herself if she were known to be corresponding with her emigre father. It was much safer to renounce him.

This happened during the opening of *glasnost*. The emigre's friends in the Soviet Union report that nothing has really changed for the average citizen. The hype about reform, they say, is a show for foreigners.

Thus we must not be too quick to believe the Kremlin's propaganda. The Communist regime has been one of the most brutal governments ever to exist. The same ideology that justified the destruction of millions under Stalin has never been repudiated and remains in force today. This government still operates labor camps and psychiatric hospitals for those who will not toe the party line.

Seven decades of dealing with the Soviets should have taught us not to take the Russians' words at face value. They have proved to be liars, treaty-breakers, and masters of disinformation as they pursue their long-range goal of world revolution. We should not be so naive as to believe that the leopard has changed his spots. Instead, let us make the reasonable assumption that they will continue to act as they have in the past. Let them prove the sincerity of their words with real action and lasting results.

Glasnost is not the first big step on the road to a free society in the Soviet Union. At best it is a very limited program. At worst it is a facade calculated to deceive the West. Though we may hope for a free society in the Soviet Union, we should not let wishful thinking obscure our perception of reality. And until actions bear out the talk in a significant way, it remains wishful thinking to view the Soviet Union as becoming more free.

Brian Frederick is a senior Russian and history major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Wanted: Effective diet that includes deep pan pizza

BIG SPRING — I just started another diet.

I never try the same one twice, and I've done almost all of them once.

I've done Diet Center, Herbalife, Weight Watchers, the banana diet, the egg diet (you eat eggs until you can't look at an egg for a year), even the eggplant and zucchini diet.

They were all good diets. They just didn't include the one item that I can't live without.

Pizza.

What's wrong with deep pan pizza with everything on it? Doesn't it include lots of nutritious vegetables? And bread has been a dietary staple of man since prehistoric times.

As I was saying, I started a new diet. I won't name it, so anyone connected with the diet won't be embarrassed by this testimonial.

It is outlined in a book on the bestseller list. I prefer a book to attending meetings with a lot of other fat people — I mean, heavy people.

The book explains the why and wherefore of how it works physiologically and psychologically, which made me feel intelligent, even though I didn't understand it all.

I finally skipped a few chapters to get to the point: What I get to eat.

I was so depressed after I read it, I almost didn't try it. It turned out to be a diet.

I heaved a sigh, noticed my girth as I did so, and decided to give it a whirl.

First, I had to clean out the refrigerator, of course. It doesn't do to begin a diet with a half-gallon of ice cream in the freezer or cans of cinnamon biscuits.

Then, for my Last Supper, I had

Alisha Goldman

Guest Columnist

spaghetti, with two pieces of bread, and ended with the ice cream. I also drank my last two Cherry Cokes.

The next step is a trip to the grocery store to re-stock the refrigerator. This is the investment phase.

I strolled slowly down the pasta aisle, but didn't touch anything. And the taco shells and cans of refried beans I left on the shelves.

I said farewell to the potato chips, too. But at the soft drink aisle, I faltered and nearly gave in.

The toughest section was the dessert area. I'm sure it beckoned to me. I steered as far away as I could, but there it was, in sight most of the time.

Finally, I had made it to the checkout counter. Fresh fruits and vegetables were overflowing in my cart — I could eat all the salad and fruits (three or four a day) that I wanted.

Instead of the usual loaf of soft, luscious bread, my cart also contained dry, hard Wasa crackers and rice cakes.

I had a big box filled with tuna fish cans and pounds of chicken breasts.

Later, I sat down to my first diet meal, fairly pleased with myself.

It consisted of: Half a can of tuna fish with one teaspoon of light mayonnaise (no relish allowed); a rice cake; alfalfa sprouts; a lettuce and cucumber salad — no dressing; and a glass of water — one of seven required daily.

I did it. I ate a nutritious, low-calorie meal.

But afterwards, visions of Blizzards danced in my head.

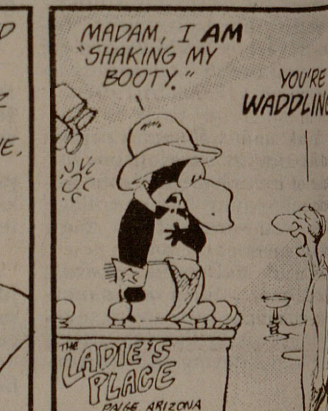
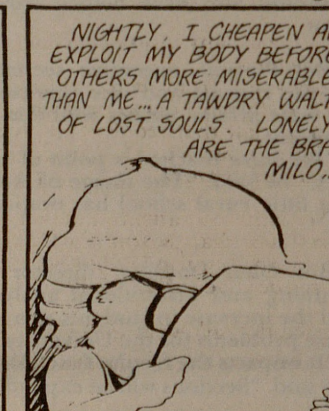
One thing about it — I didn't have any dirty pots and pans.

It was life in the diet lane again.

But if it ever gets too tough, there's still a frozen pizza in the fridge.

Alisha Goldman is a staff member of the Big Spring Herald.

BLOOM COUNTY



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