

# Opinion

## Understanding what communism really means

The key challenge facing the United States today is how to respond to the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership. This week, MSC SCONA's conference "The USSR: The Kremlin in Transition" affords students the opportunity to become better informed on developments such as *glasnost* that could affect our relations with the Soviet Union.



**Brian Frederick**

Our perception of communism in the Soviet Union significantly affects our policy toward it. Seeing the Soviet Union as the "evil empire" generates policies very different from those produced by the view that communism is a benign system, and the Soviets are willing to peacefully coexist with us. The key problem, then, in formulating correct policy is determining communism's real nature. That established, we can evaluate Gorbachev in the proper context.

Perhaps the best way of accurately appraising that nature is by examining

communism's history and the writings of its founders.

Communism in the Soviet Union is generally built on the works of Marx and Engels and specifically upon Lenin's adaptation of their theories to Russian reality. The writings of these men and others such as Nikolai Bukharin, the chief party theorist at the time of the Revolution, establish the ideological foundations of the present Soviet State.

According to Marx and Engels, all history is "the history of class struggle." Whether that of serf against lord or of worker against capitalist, the struggle between oppressed classes and their oppressors is history's unifying theme.

The State "is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another." Feudal lords used the feudal state to oppress their serfs, while capitalists use their liberal bourgeois states to support their exploitation of the workers.

Communism seeks to liberate the world's workers from their oppression. At the heart of this liberation is the abolition of private property. "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains," declares the Communist Manifesto. "They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries unite!"

The workers are to be freed by a

world-wide revolutionary movement that forcibly overthrows the bourgeois state. According to Engels, "A revolution is an act in which one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets, and artillery." Once the bourgeois state is overthrown, a "dictatorship of the proletariat" is established to ruthlessly suppress all bourgeois remnants in society. Once all other classes are destroyed and a classless society attained, class conflict ends and the state "withers away."

Lenin, Bukharin and the other Bolsheviks built the Soviet State on these basic tenets. Perhaps their biggest challenge was building socialism in backward Russia without the spontaneous world revolution in advanced nations that Marx had predicted. Since socialism did not triumph simultaneously in all countries, there would be a period of struggle with the remaining capitalist countries before those nations eventually succumbed to communism.

This struggle will continue until the last capitalist nation falls and the world's workers are united in a "world-wide socialist republic." Lenin writes, "Only after we overthrow, completely defeat and appropriate all the bourgeoisie in the

entire world, and not only in one country, will wars become impossible." Peace for communists is the ultimate destruction of capitalism, and a state of war with capitalist nations will exist until the last one is destroyed.

Lenin and Bukharin point out that communism's ultimate ends remain constant. However, the means employed to attain those ends vary as changing circumstances require, and any means that attain desired ends are good. "Whatever helps in the struggle is good, whatever hinders, is bad," Bukharin writes. Even short-term agreements with capitalist states are permissible if they advance the long-range goals of communism.

Terror is one of communism's necessary tools. Lenin declares, "We have never rejected terror on principle, nor can we do so." History shows that Lenin and his successors employed terror to good effect and still do.

It is an often-made mistake to blame communism's brutality on Stalin alone who far surpassed Hitler as a killer. In 1918-19 under Lenin's aegis, the Cheka (a KGB forerunner) executed a thousand persons a month. The system of labor camps in which millions suffered and died was established under Lenin and did not end with Stalin's death.

According to Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who spent years in Soviet labor camps, the only difference between Stalin and later Soviet leaders that Stalin arrested 100 people while the arrest of two persons would suffice to frighten the people. Lenin since have returned to the policy of resting only the two persons needed to keep the people in fear.

Today Gorbachev relies upon the same basic methods that other Soviet leaders have used. Labor camps, prisons are still used to deal with "enemies of the state." Psychiatric hospitals in which people's brains are destroyed by drugs may have replaced mass killings, but the principle of terror, now refined, remains the same.

To accurately evaluate Gorbachev and his "new" policies, we must compare communism's history and published aims, which speak eloquently of its nature. If we are to formulate effective policies towards the Soviet Union, we must address Soviet realities. To ignore or discount these realities for whatever reason can only be detrimental to our nation.

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

### Mail Call

#### An ignorant editorial board

EDITOR:

In reference to *The Battalion* editorial board's recent editorial against the U.S. Surgeon General's plan to test the students of an American university to determine the prevalence of AIDS in that population, I must say that I am disturbed if not surprised by the board's ignorant stance.

Of course, a group consisting of several undergraduates would know enough about epidemiological surveys to say that another group consisting of hundreds of physicians, epidemiologists, biostatisticians and public health professionals does not know what it is doing.

The board's objections to the use of this survey are based on ignorance, not on reason. In the first place, the survey is designed to provide information on the population of American university students by use of anonymous sampling. Second, the survey is not meant to measure the portion of the population that "knows or suspects they are infected" (i.e. high risk categories); the survey is meant to sample the general population of the school. It should be obvious that people who "know or suspect they are infected" has probably been counted in another survey.

The board's final absurdity, asking what useful information could come from testing one university is the worst of all. Do the board mean in all its wisdom that it has never heard of standardizing data? Well, standardization is performed on every piece of epidemiological data that is published. Without standardization, there is no way you can compare data on two different populations. With standardization you can compare the prevalence of a disease at "a Midwestern private college" with the prevalence of the same disease at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Possibly these reasons are why the U.S. Public Health Service spends their time listening to epidemiologists instead of ill-informed editorial boards. It might help students to do the same.

Ray Hatcher '84

#### Shocked at culture shock

EDITOR:

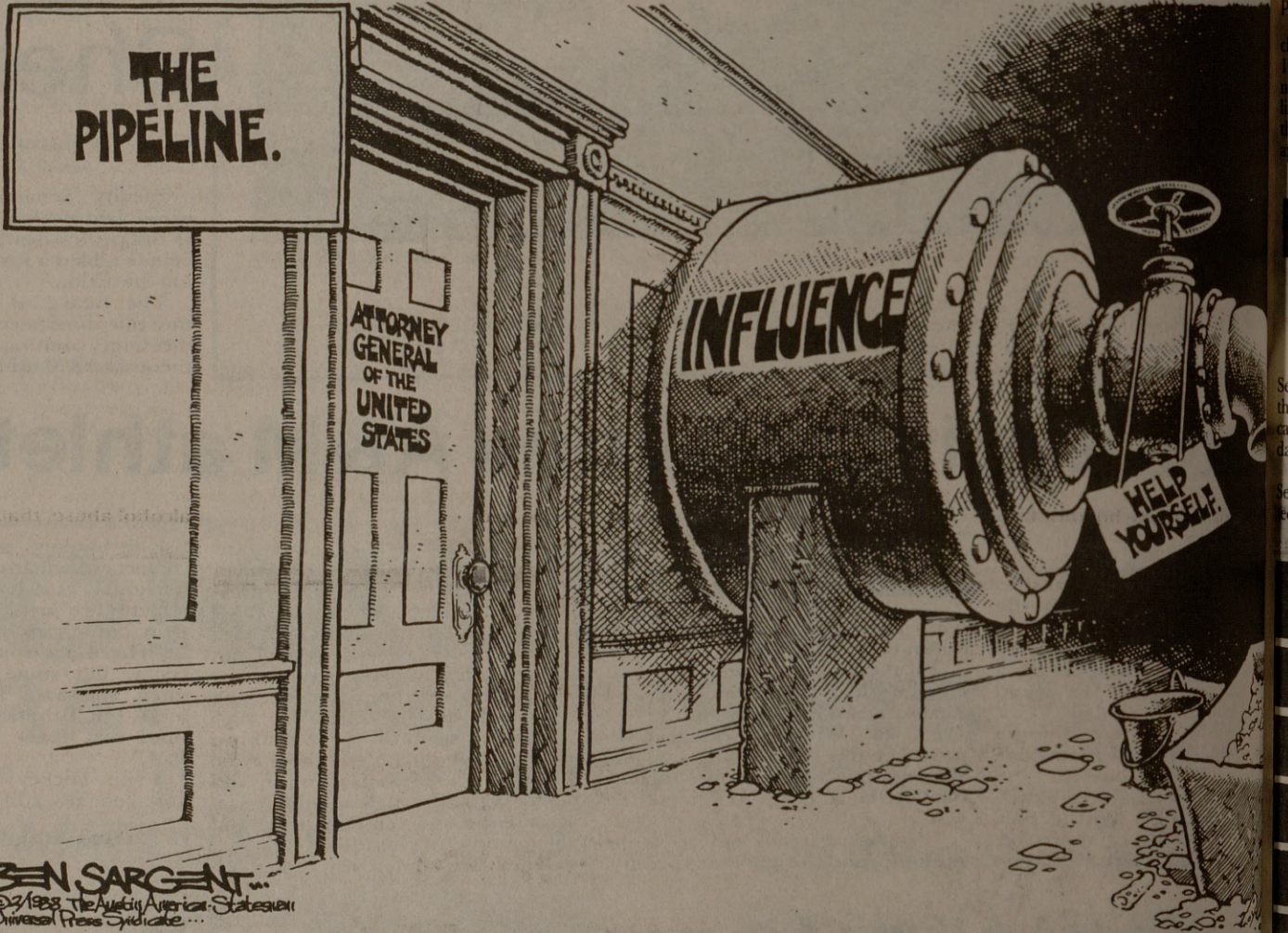
Recently, I experienced a shock. I was reading "Poverty: A culture shock" in you *At Ease* magazine. The article was about Jill Galarneau's trip to Harlingen. She states that she was hurt because never before had she encountered such an example of poverty in its purist form. Granted that the Rio Grande Valley is generally one of the poorest SMSAs, but if she had wanted to see poverty, she need not have visited the Valley. She could have seen stark examples at home in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Also, so as not to give readers the wrong impression, the Valley is not a giant ghetto; it has pockets of affluence, as well as a thriving tourist industry.

She continually referred to the inhabitants of the Valley as Mexicans. They are no more Mexican than I am English. Even worse than this, she employed some terrible stereotypes. "Mexican girls love to have babies — regardless of whether they are married or financially able." I simply could not believe this gross characterization. Teenage pregnancy is a problem that transcends racial barriers. Furthermore, the "unbathed children playing in the weeds" must have been extremely dirty for you to notice while passing in a car. Some journalistic license perhaps?

These are but a few of the most absurd statements in her article. Jill, I suggest you follow your initial reaction and join the Peace Corps. It would be educational. Perhaps in time, you will not only see, but also understand and be able to separate myth from reality.

Thomas D. Ovenden  
graduate student

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.



### Florida has something for everyone

ORLANDO, Fla. — Florida is one of my favorite states. It's generally warm here, the golf courses are flat, and I like suns rising over oceans. You can see a lot of that in Florida.



**Lewis Grizzard**

Florida's fun. My family started bringing me here when I was 7. I played in the sand, rode the waves and ate cotton candy.

A young man can fall in love quickly in Florida. It happened to me on a number of occasions, from the dazzling white beaches on the Gulf to the packed streets of Ft. Lauderdale in springtime.

I met Sandra in Panama City. She would be nearly 40 by now. I met Allison and danced with her on the pier in Daytona when I was 16. She promised to write me. She never did. Probably lost my address.

I am forever and ever a Georgian, amen, but I wish we could be a little more like Florida at times.

You can get down a bet legally in Florida. You can go watch the dogs run or even make a wager in a jai alai fronton, whatever that is. But I like the horses best.

Sometimes, I bet the favorite. Sometimes, I bet the long shots. I even bet because I like a horse's name. I'll never forget the time "Harmonella" came in a winner at 15-1 and I had him across the board.

We celebrated at Joe's in Miami. The stone crab claws were even better than I had remembered them.

Florida's got something new going now — its own lottery. The first day it opened a couple of weeks ago, Floridians bought \$13.5 million worth of tickets.

It's fun. Tickets cost a buck. You buy them at 7-Eleven stores.

You scratch across the ticket with a coin revealing a plate of numbers. Three matches, you're the winner of either \$2, \$5, \$50, or up to \$5,000.

You can also win free ticket into the bigger lottery drawing that will pay a million.

"I think of all the guys we used to put

away for running numbers," a Florida attorney was saying. "Now, we got this days work." I said.

"We split whatever we get," he said. "Twenty-five hundred each isn't a bad day's work." I said.

We won \$6, another ticket and another try into the big game. That's better than I do in Vegas.

The state of Florida is going to put the money from the lottery towards education.

We could have a lot of what Florida has in Georgia. We have beaches, and you ought to see the women at Buckhead.

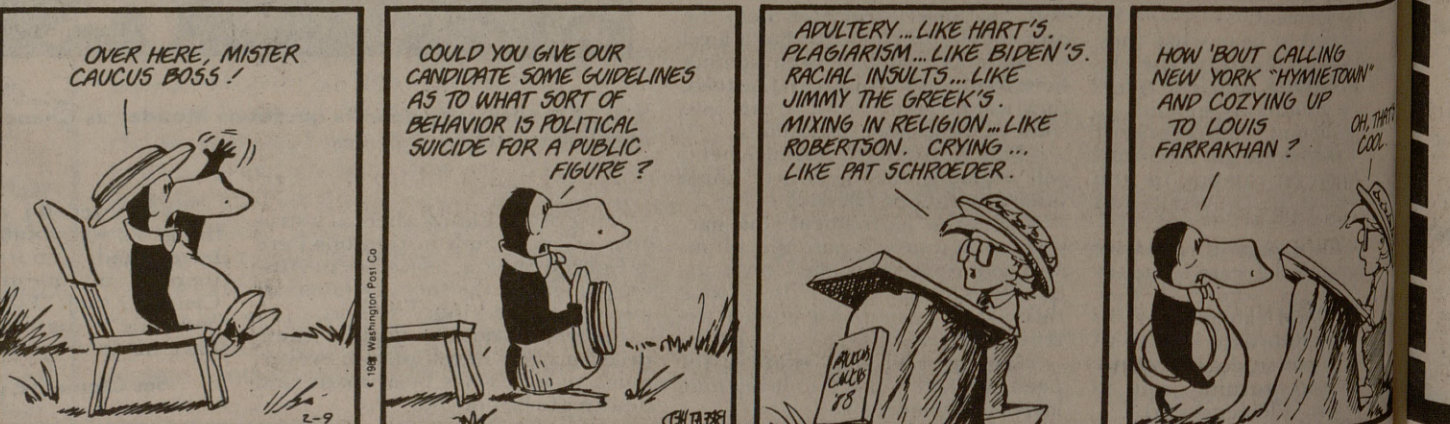
We also could have dogs and horses running and we could have a state lottery and we could upgrade our own educational system, and I don't think we would be all that upset as long as the money went to good use.

Of course, none of this will happen. Florida's got Mickey Mouse out at Disney World.

We've got him in the governor's office.

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### BLOOM COUNTY



### The Battalion

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