

Opinion

Mikhail Gorbachev's beauty is only skin deep

Mikhail Gorbachev's vibrant leadership has created a sensation in the West. Western leaders, who had become accustomed to dealing with doddering old men, are scurrying to find responses to his new policies. Through his initiative and charm, Gorbachev is quickly transforming the world's perception of Soviet leadership.



Brian Frederick

Last week over 190 delegates and experts from around the world gathered at Texas A&M for a conference devoted to discussing the changes Gorbachev is bringing to the Kremlin. The delegates did not gather at this 33rd MSC SCONA conference to find solutions to the problems the Soviet Union poses. They came to discuss and come to a better understanding of Gorbachev's policies and what they portend for the West.

In the three years since Gorbachev became General Secretary, the Russian words "glasnost" and "perestroika" have become buzzwords in the American media. Like the words "democracy" and "freedom" in a politician's mouth, these

terms vaguely connote something good, though we are often unsure exactly what they mean. Our media gives us the impression that the Soviet state is becoming our moral equal through Gorbachev's reforms. Through the speakers and discussion at the SCONA conference, the delegates were able to cut through media hype and Gorbachev's brilliant public relations efforts to gain a clearer picture of "glasnost" and "perestroika."

"Perestroika", or restructuring, is Gorbachev's plan for rebuilding the Soviet economy and making it more productive. The Soviet economy has always been extremely sluggish. It still fails to produce sufficient amounts of the most basic consumer goods, and the quality of goods actually produced is poor.

"Perestroika" seeks to stimulate the Soviet economy. It will wean factories from government subsidies, forcing them to produce profitably or go out of business. It will place more responsibility and opportunity to exercise initiative on factory managers and workers. It seeks to reduce the centralized control of the economy and introduce it to some control by market forces. It is supposed to enable communism to deliver the better life promised to Soviet citizens for decades.

Yet "perestroika" can not be attained merely by decree. The Soviet economy is plagued with corruption, absenteeism, alcoholism and incompetence. Gorbachev has initiated "glasnost" or openness to make these problems public and root them out. No longer will they be glossed over and ignored as in the past. Now they are to be ruthlessly exposed.

"Glasnost" attacks corrupt high officials who were winked at in the past. *Pravda* has recently run stories on the corruption of high party officials in Moldavia and the Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan. In both cases, Gorbachev had a number of high level officials shot or imprisoned for corruption.

"Glasnost", then, entails an openness about internal Soviet problems, problems which hinder the economy. It brings them into the light where they can be addressed. This self-criticism is an essential part of "perestroika", the rebuilding of the Soviet economy.

Last week's conference also clarified what Gorbachev's policies are not intended to accomplish. Gorbachev is an orthodox communist. As he himself says, "glasnost" protects only that expression that serves communism's purposes. It does not permit criticism of communism, and it is not about to bring

Soviet citizens freedom of the press or any other freedom as we know it in the West.

Gorbachev's policies affect only internal Soviet affairs. He has not changed the ultimate aims of Soviet foreign policy, though he has refined his rhetoric and methods. Capitalism remains communism's mortal enemy. Soviet rhetoric declares that we must peacefully coexist, but as one speaker at the conference put it, communists perceive peace as "war continued by other means." Gorbachev has not made the Soviet Bear a domesticated pet with which we may safely dwell.

Gorbachev is younger, better educated than his predecessors. He is a master of public relations. His charm is winning, so much so that Margaret Thatcher has called him "a man she can work with", while Europeans and Americans alike fall under his spell. Yet this makes him more dangerous than former Soviet leaders. He is subtle. Krushchev boasted "we will bury you." Gorbachev wins our hearts with smiles while pursuing policies that may eventually prove his predecessor right.

Just because Gorbachev has loosened some of the state's controls, posthumously rehabilitated some purged leaders and signed a missile treaty with the

United States does not make his moral equal and does not make worthy of our trust. He controls a repressive state where police power remain undiminished. And he did not get to the top of his party as a gentleman.

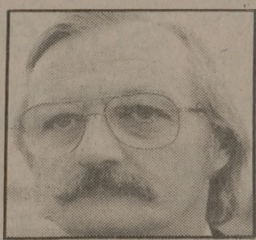
We should not put our hope in Gorbachev or in his policies. History gives us no basis for believing that scraps of paper or secret kind leaders sufficiently guarantee peace. Living in the nuclear age frighten us, but it should not deprive our reason. Signing treaties and giving hands with the smiling General Secretary may advance the careers of politicians, but it does not provide a sound basis for our national security.

Ultimately, we are responsible for our continued freedom and strength. Strength and resolve, not trust in concessions, are the only means by which we can preserve what we hold dear. A smiling, dynamic leader may give hope for substantial change in our rival. But we do well to remember that underneath the charm, humanity remains the same.

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

We are the reporters, we have taken control

My, how embarrassing for George Bush. It was bad enough to get creamed in Iowa by his arch-rival, Bob Dole, but to finish behind Pat Robertson! The vice president of the United States — envoy to China, director of the CIA, ambassador to the United Nations, Lion of Rather conquerer — losing to a Bible salesman who talks to hurricanes and changes the course of God. Wait, I think I've got that backward, but you get the idea.



Donald Kaul

Can you imagine him walking into a debutante party this week and having an acquaintance greet him with:

"I say, old man, why so glum? Don't tell me you didn't win those Iowa caucuses, or whatever they call them."

"Caucuses. No, Bob Dole won them."

"Well what did you expect? They're a rough bunch out there; farms and all that. Dole is one of them. Second place isn't bad."

"Didn't finish second either. Pat Robertson did."

"What! Robertson? The fellow who talks to hurricanes?"

"Moves hurricanes. Talks to God."

"Oh dear, that is too bad. Have you thought of going back into the oil business?"

Things aren't that bad yet but unless George starts kicking a little pussycat in New Hampshire — or whatever it is that he kicks — they will be soon.

All the bad things they said about the Iowa caucuses seem to have come true. Dick Gephardt's live-in campaign triumphed on the Democratic side, and Pat Robertson humbled the vice president, even though Robertson didn't have as many people on his side. What he had, as it turned out, were people who showed up for the war. It's hard to beat fanatic dedication with genteel commitment.

The press did its usual expectations number on Iowa. Gephardt was considered a winner because he won, Sen. Paul Simon was considered a loser because he finished second, and Gov. Michael Dukakis was considered a winner because he finished third. On the Republican side, both Dole and Robertson were big winners with their first and second-place finishes, but Bush was a big loser in third. Go figure it. The press is very hard on candidates who let them down.

As a card-carrying member of the news profession it pains me to admit it, but the press has all but taken over our presidential nominating process and is running it into the ground. We have almost arrived at that Alice-in-Wonderland state where things mean exactly what we say they mean and nothing else. You can finish first, second or third in a race, but you won't know whether you've won or lost until we tell you.

There is no really rational reason Vice President Bush, given his close association with the President, should feel mortally wounded at his miserable showing in Iowa where the Reagan years have been hard. The Robertson thing was embarrassing, true, but not that unexpected given the susceptibility of the caucus system to a candidate like the Reverend. In short, the sitting vice president of the United States should be able to absorb a loss in Iowa — and one in New Hampshire for that matter — without getting knocked out of the race. Those are small states. Let's hear what California, New York, Texas and Florida have to say before we go writing off vice presidents.

But the word has come down that Bush must win New Hampshire to remain a viable candidate; so he must.

I think it's just a matter of time before we get rid of the voters altogether. We'll just tell the people who they would have chosen had they the chance.

The fact is that political reporting in this country has fallen victim to Super Bowl journalism. Rather than report on an event directly and honestly, with a sense of proportion, we descend on it in droves and let hysteria take its course.

The Iowa caucuses are perhaps the purest example of this. More than 3,000 out-of-state news personnel were in Des Moines on the night to the caucuses, almost enough to interview each and every caucus attendee. In the week before the caucuses, Paul Simon spoke to a luncheon meeting of 31 business people. There were 103 news people there.

There's something basically screwy about that. It would be different if things were turning out well in spite of it, but they're not. Our presidents over the past 20 years have been a sorry lot. Not since the era immediately preceding the Civil War have we seen such a collection of mediocrities and eight-balls lurch through the White House.

And if it keeps up, you'll be listening to a State of the Union address delivered in tongues. By a faith healer.

There's got to be a better way.

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BEN SARGENT
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Mail Call

Our faculty deserves a club

EDITOR:

As of late, there have been several individuals from fraternities and sororities passing petitions around requesting signatures in an attempt to halt completion of the faculty club. I ask that you, as good Aggies, do not sign this petition.

There is not a more deserving faculty at any university in this great nation. Our faculty does not have a place where they can meet as a group to discuss topics of interest, bring honored guests, entertain prospective faculty, et cetera. They do need such a place.

If these frat boys a sorority girls could put forth such a centralized effort for a respectable cause, there is no telling what good things they could do for our community.

Daniel W. Martillotti '90

Jackie, let's do beers

EDITOR:

I would like to take this opportunity to "criticize and condemn" the Faculty Senate. An article in the Feb. 9 *Battalion* describes a lengthy debate over a resolution condemning the

granting of tenure to coach Jackie Sherrill. The Senate whine that the "Board of Regents apparently doesn't stand or doesn't respect faculty rank."

I find it hard to sympathize with a group that apparently doesn't understand or doesn't respect the rank of someone burdening myself and fellow zips with final exams in one semester.

Dr. David R. Anderson should wisely follow the example of his peers, who tabled his resolution. Since a successful President Vandiver has yet to be named, I would assume Professor Sherrill is still in the running. That could lead to quick disbandment of the Faculty Senate.

I congratulate Professor Sherrill on his recent appointment and would like to do so in person. Contact me, and we'll go out for a drink. Maybe you can get me into the new faculty club.

Shaun M. Morrison '88

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The Battalion

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BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathart

