

Leukemia takes life of Gorbachev's wife

MOSCOW (AP) — Deeply scorned in Russia while she lived, Raisa Gorbachev was inundated with veneration and praise after she died yesterday of leukemia — a sharp, and belated, swing of the nation's emotional pendulum.

The wife of the last Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, died at the Muenster University Clinic in Germany at the age of 67. Her husband and their daughter were with her when she died, her docent style said.

Mrs. Gorbachev had been as reviled at home as she was admired in the West. Many Russians derided her for her stylish clothes, her lacarab noise, and most of all, for carving out a public role for herself.

Even the love and support Mrs. Gorbachev so openly showed for her husband created resentment in Russia.

Now, ordinary Russians are speaking out in admiration of the Gorbachevs' love and professing admiration for the ex-president and first lady.

Telephones and fax machines at the Gorbachev Foundation were flooded with calls yesterday from ordinary people and politicians, foundation spokesperson Irina Malikova said.

"It's a very big tragedy," one mourner, who gave only her first name, Irina, said. "I'm just very sorry."

President Boris Yeltsin, a bitter rival of Gorbachev in

the twilight years of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, sent a telegram expressing grief and condolences.

"With pain I learned about the tragedy that has struck your family," Yeltsin and his wife Naina wrote to Gorbachev. "You have lost the most loyal and devoted friend. Gone is a wonderful person, a beautiful woman, a loving wife and mother."

Yeltsin ordered a government plane to fly to Germany to bring Mrs. Gorbachev's body to Russia today.

The turnaround would be striking anywhere else. It is less so in Russia, which has been accused in the past of damning the living and then turning them into national heroes in death.

Alexander Pushkin, the great 19th-century Russian poet, wrote in his blank-verse drama "Boris Godunov": "Commoners hate living powers; they can only love the dead."

Some prominent examples include Russia's last czar Nicholas II, who was denounced as a weak and tyrannical ruler by his subjects, but elevated to a near-icton — with the Orthodox Church actually considering canonizing him — in recent years.

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was ridiculed by his contemporaries for a lack of finesse and education but lauded after his death for exposing dictator Josef Stalin's repression. And writer and poet Boris Pasternak, the author of *Dr. Zhivago*, saw his books banned by Soviet authorities and censored by the public until they jumped on his bandwagon in the late 1980s.



MRS. GORBACHEV

Nations lag in exploitation laws

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — Commercial sexual exploitation of children is growing, despite promises from more than 120 countries to halt abuse, pornography and sex tourism, according to children's rights workers gathered in Bangkok yesterday.

While there has been progress in recent years, there is still a lack of political will and concrete action, activist Carol Smolenski said.

"The problem is getting worse as the world is shrinking," Smolenski, of the U.S. arm of ECPAT, a global non-governmental organization fighting child exploitation, said.

The activists said the easy availability of sex on the Internet — including pedophile chat lines and advertisements from companies that organize sex holidays — is among the key reasons why sexual exploitation of children is a bigger global problem than ever before.

Activists from more than 50 countries were attending a conference to review implementation of the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Sweden in 1996.

In all, 122 countries joined the congress. But so far, only 19 have come up with national plans to

combat child prostitution and pornography through legislation, improved law enforcement and attempts to boost public awareness. At the Stockholm congress, participating countries promised to do so by the end of 2000.

Smolenski said that up to a quarter of foreign child-sex offenders in countries such as Thailand, Taiwan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Costa Rica were from the United States.

Since legislation to punish U.S. citizens who commit child-sex offenses abroad was adopted five years ago, only two have been prosecuted, she said.

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