editorial

Gorbachev signals a Kremlin turning point

Pre-arrangements for a change of power in the Kremlin had likely been worked out long in advance. But for most Westerners, the death of Soviet Premier Konstantin Chernenko and his replacement with Mikhail Gorbachev seemed to happen overnight. The death of Chernenko was unofficially announced by the American news media on Sunday night. By Monday morning, Gorbachev was announced as the new Communist Party general secretary.

Gorbachev represents a break from the long line of ailing Soviet leaders. For the first time in Soviet history, the supreme position of political power has been passed on to a relative youngster by Kremlin standards. Gorbachev is the youngest of the 11 men who make up the heart of Soviet political power, the Politburo. He is also the only lawyer on the Politburo and the only member who is a graduate of Moscow University.

At only 54 years old, Gorbachev represents a new generation of Soviet leaders. The son of Russian peasants in Stavropol, a fertile farming zone north of the Caucasus Mountains, Gorbachev was a child during the Stalin purges and the German occupation during World War Two. His dramatic rise to political power began in 1950 and included close association with Mikhail Suslov (Kremlin powermaker during Brezhnev's days) and Yuri Andropov, the former Soviet premier. Gorbachev's understanding of agricultural issues, his political connections and his commitment to routing out economic corruption within the Kremlin earned him a good name and strong political following.

While it is doubtful that the Soviet Union will undergo any immediate radical changes in its social, political, or economic philosophy under Gorbachev, his leadership does mark a turning point. It shows that the mantle of power has finally shifted to the younger generation. Gorbachev has already earned the praise of some Kremlinologists as being a "liberal." Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, after meeting with Gorbachev, stated publicly that she liked him. The Sunday Times of London reported that his easy-going style charmed the British people.

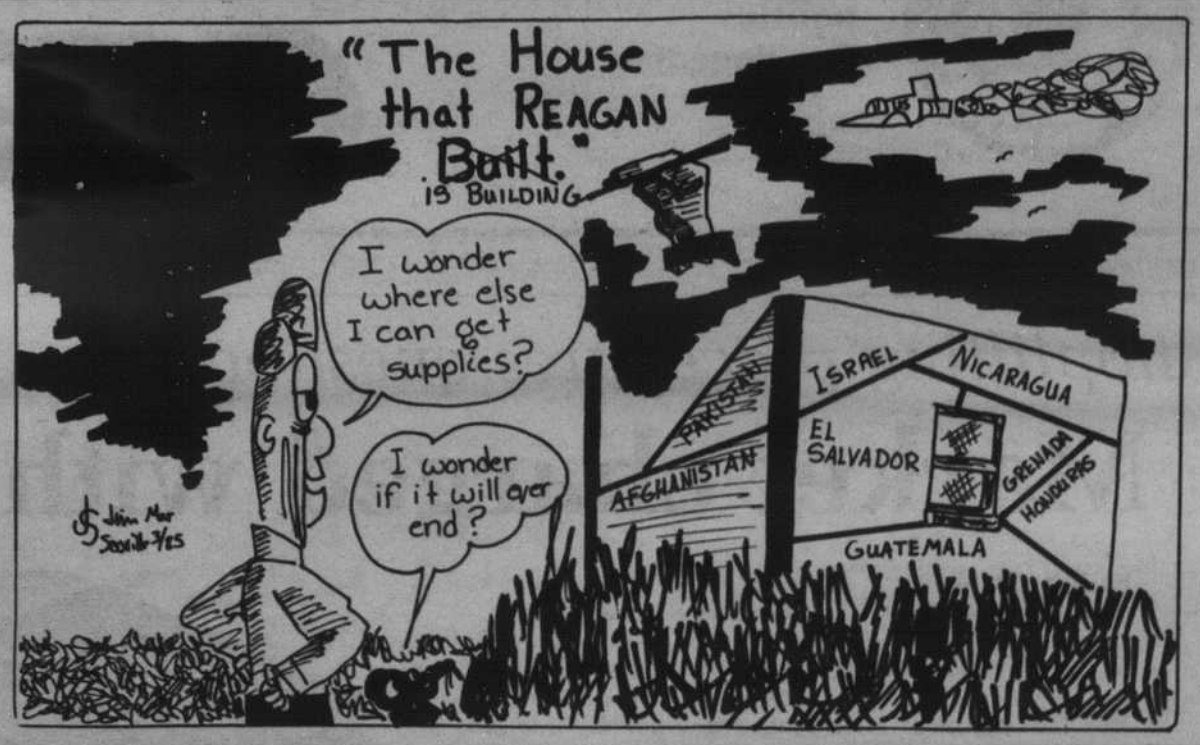
Who is the "real" Gorbachev? Is he the easy-going gentleman who charmed the British? Or is he just a front for the same old Kremlin politics? No one is sure. Unlike Andropov and Chernenko, however, at 54 years old, Gorbachev is likely to be around for a long time. Considering his youth and his pragmatic style, he might well prove, from the western standpoint, to be one of the better Soviet leaders to emerge in years. Time will tell.

Professor will be missed by students and faculty

The death of Sociology Professor Albert Szymanski has shocked many members of the University community. It is hard to understand what would make someone take their own life. Whatever the reasons, Professor Szymanski will be greatly missed by those who knew him.

Professor Szymanski was a hardworking scholar who defended his radical politics with carefully researched facts. He was the author of many books and articles on class struggle and socialism in the world today. In the classroom, he welcomed debate and he never shied away from tough questions. He encouraged students to learn the facts before speaking out on economic and political issues.

The death of Prof. Szymanski is a loss to the entire academic community. His example of hard work and his many scholarly contributions, however, will live on.



letters

Please enroll

Along with many other students, I was shocked by the Women's Referral and Resource Service display on pornography, although I agreed with its presence and purpose. However, I was much more appalled by the indignant, self-righteous, and frequently vicious responses to that display. Specifically, letters have been appearing regularly in the Emerald, apparently composed by people anxious to display their ignorance and publicize their support for a rampantly misogynous society. The majority of these letters are far from being reasonable presentations of opposition to the display; instead, they are personal attacks against Laura Romano, the directors of WRRS, or women in general. The immaturity of these tactics is astounding.

Individuals such as Vince Adams have no excuse for their stupidity and bigotry, since they obviously have not taken advantage of the opportunity to educate themselves. I strongly suggest, as others have suggested before, that these people enroll in Women's Studies 101 — there are two sections being offered next term. There is no reason for so many confident assertions of misinformation to be taken seriously at a university.

Jennie Bricker
English

Confused again

Oh dear, I think "Uncle" Ron is confused again.

He calls the contras the "moral equivalent" of the early American revolutionaries. Well, that's not very nice. The fact is that the contra army is mostly composed of ex-Somoza National Guardsmen, ruthless U.S. "soldiers of fortune," and mercenaries from South Africa, Israel, and a few other places. George Washington would not be flattered by that particular comparison.

Then "Uncle" Ron compares the contras to the French Resistance fighters of WWII. Wrong again, Ron. The majority of the active French Resistance fighters were socialists and communists. The resistance fought against right-wing fascism, not for it.

Oh, one other thing. "Uncle" Ron says that "not one inch of soil has fallen" while he's been riding high in the saddle. By that I suppose he means that U.S. corporations have not lost any access to cheap labor or raw materials. Well, I don't mean to rudely awaken him, but I think that our "Uncle" missed something during one of his little naps. Maybe he should look at what happened in the West African country of Upper Volta (now called Burkina Faso) in August, 1983.

Roscoe Caron
Eugene

Very insulting

It certainly would be hard to come up with a better way to insult the University's foreign student population than the current display in the EMU lobby disclaiming the Buddhist and Islamic religions, compliments of the Maranatha campus ministry.

Their attitude towards Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and other beautiful religions is a perfect example of fanatic ethnocentricity so prevalent in America these days. Almost daily, members of their sect verbally accost anyone unfortunate enough to pass by the EMU knoll during lunchtime. I wonder if, even once, it has occurred to any of those proselytes that, contrary to their beliefs, people are indeed interested in God's word, but would prefer a less self-righteous and perhaps more personal means of finding it.

To those few Maranathas I have met with a sincere interest in following Christ's teachings, it should remain your number one goal to find ways to share your beliefs without insulting people, or judging others. In the words of the Ol' Boy himself, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." Loosen up and embrace, rather than exclude the world.

Philip Mitchell
Creative Writing

Superiority

Many thanks to whomever decided to take that disgusting pornographic stuff out of the display case in the EMU lobby. Depictions of violence against women are so vulgar and unappetizing.

Personally, I prefer Maranatha's more subtle authoritative brand of pornography to that of Hustler, any day. Why confine our attack to one gender when we can do violence to the entire non-Christian world and its religious systems — and without ever raising a whip or a chain?

We insecure members of the Christian West need to be reassured of our religion-based cultural superiority, occasionally. Justification for Manifest Destiny and all that, you understand. Otherwise, we have anxiety attacks and start abusing our own women — the depiction of which is rather more repulsive, evidently, than the displaying of bigoted ideas, even when such bigotry eventually leads to our dropping bombs on uncivilized (read un-Christian) heathens in distant corners of the globe.

When I think that I wasted years of my life as an undergrad, seriously studying the various religions of the world, well, I could just kick myself. If only I had been exposed to Maranatha's insightful and in-depth comparative study of religion five years ago, so much unnecessary brain-strain could have been avoided, and I could have begun feeling superior all that much sooner.

Thanks Maranatha, for achieving heaviosity and showing me the error of my ways. And nothing personal, of course, to those Buddhists and followers of Islam on campus. After all, Buddha and Mohammed, however inferior, were probably really nice guys. May they rest in peace.

Yvonne Vowels
Graduate

oregon daily **emerald**

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