

# Gorbachev's former classmate discusses Soviet leader's ideas

By B.J. Thomsen  
Of the Emerald

If Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's plan to revive the Soviet economy is to work, he must have an efficient and effective bureaucracy, said Alexander Riasanovsky, a University graduate.

But Gorbachev's plan is hurting the bureaucracy responsible for implementing the plan, Riasanovsky said during a lecture entitled "Gorbachev's Dilemma of Power" on Thursday.

Gorbachev is applying pressure from the top for better efficiency, and as more computer technology is implemented into the system, bureaucratic jobs will be eliminated, Riasanovsky explained.

Gorbachev was a classmate of Riasanovsky's when they attended Moscow State University in the Soviet Union. A Rhodes Scholar currently teaching Russian History at the University of Pennsylvania, he has taught at Swarthmore, Princeton and Harvard Universities.

According to Riasanovsky, Gorbachev is similar in many ways to Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin in that they are both graduates of Moscow State University and are the only leaders of the party who have had a formal college education. Gorbachev is trying to make the Soviet system more efficient and streamlined as Lenin did, he added.

Like Lenin, Gorbachev sees the need for an internal watchdog to keep the the Soviet system efficient and uncorrupt, he said. Lenin saw the labor union as the watchdog of the revolution, but Gorbachev sees this task as better performed by the "intelligentsia" or educated.

"He (Gorbachev) is contemplating putting more and more acreage into private use," to increase efficiency, he said, and noted that although precise figures are not available, between "4 to 6 percent of land being farmed in the Soviet Russia is now being farmed by peasants."

The peasants work on collective farms, but they have small plots of their own. Whatever they grow in these plots, they are allowed to sell on the free peasant market, he said. This tiny percentage of peasant-controlled land produces more than half the entire country's agricultural output, he added.



Alexander Riasanovsky

It is this tremendously efficient output that Gorbachev hopes to harness by putting more land under private control, Riasanovsky said.

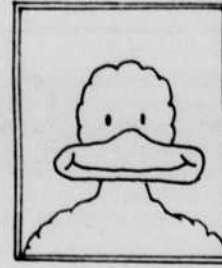
The land controlled by the peasants is out of bureaucratic control, he said, and if that percentage is increased, as Gorbachev would like, many of the bureaucrats may be phased out of a job or be retired early, he said. This is not a popular idea among bureaucrats and will be a problem for Gorbachev, he said.

He noted that being phased out of a job may not be so bad under the present system, considering that Lenin killed bureaucrats that could not adapt to his system.

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