

OPINION

Gorbachev deserves support

Those who chided Gorbachev for being too soft when selecting people for top posts are naive. They fail to understand that Gorbachev's craftsmanship and courage are not even nearly matched in this country.

Navigating for so many years through his unpredictable top aides — the very top of them plotted the coup — has been a difficult job. Look at what Gorbachev has helped accomplish: glasnost and perestroika, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, warming up of the Cold War and his returning to the Kremlin! Gorbachev deserves as much credit for his survival of the coup as Yeltsin. Without what Gorbachev has done, Yeltsin could not have accomplished what he has.

People love heroes and there is no denying that Yeltsin is a hero now. The bad news is: we too often kiss conspicuous protesters and hiss at those who keep the chiming of the liberty bell by working with outright conservatives. Yeltsin got a big round of applause when he quit the system and plunged into a safe enclave. He continues his fight, not in the forefront, but in the safety of millions of his supporters. Gorbachev did not quit, though he only has his personal guards and his family to support him. Even Yeltsin opposed him, vehemently and boorishly.

Yeltsin is an asset in the forces to liberate Russia. So is Gorbachev. The

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Guest Columnist

conservatives are a harsh reality in the Kremlin. They will not quit. Someone has to handle them, effectively and diplomatically, until the time comes for them to go. If Gorbachev followed suit behind Yeltsin and quit, we know who would be hosting in the Kremlin. We hardly want to see that.

Americans are impatient. In a system where Pizza Huts and congressmen are eager to cater to every whim of their clientele and constituency, things are relatively easy. Communism is stubborn, and it rusts the system that is built upon it. In the machine of Soviet communism, millions of its parts are rusty. Many communists are in powerful positions. The deposed coup plotters are but a few of them.

It is easy to rope the neck of the statue of the founding father of the KGB and pull it down. But it won't remove the living statues running the government.

In free America, we are quickly forgetting how to compromise. Our system grants all our caprices. Even a killer feels licensed to pursue murder as a hobby. One recent mass murderer was not caught until he murdered some 50

innocent souls. He left the court claiming that he had slain 15 more than the 37 of whom he was convicted of killing. The sensation of control was, he soberly announced, the sole motivation. He wanted control over, not compromise or cooperation with, the society he still calmly hates. In many ways we are like him.

In a communist framework, this hate-based sense of control generates Hitler-like dictators and power-hungry mind-despots. To combat them requires one of two qualities: a higher sense of control energized by hate or an extraordinary courage and expertise to democratize through compromise. Marshal Joseph Stalin possessed the first. President Mikhail Gorbachev has been trying to cultivate the second.

The president of the United States works under far less psychological pressure than his U.S.S.R. counterpart. The man who vacations at his Kennebunkport beach does not worry about his vice president planning a coup. Dan (not Rather) is too servile and incompetent for that mission. The president of the U.S.S.R. is in triple jeopardy. He wishes to side with the people but cannot put a rope around the neck of his hard-line colleagues. By choosing the only way he has, which is to push the reform forward as much as it cannot be pulled back by the powerful hard-lin-



ers, Gorbachev suddenly finds himself disfavored by all.

Hard-liners tolerate Gorbachev before the intolerable comes. It came, then the coup. The liberals quit him, led by Yeltsin, followed by the honorable foreign minister. People are unhappy, too, incited by impatient liberals such as

Yeltsin, the Russians rise against Gorbachev. He has done so much for them; he cannot even please them. Being sandwiched is bad enough. Gorbachev is trichived.

The winds of liberty must, we hope, keep blowing in Russia. We can help them by patting Gorbachev on his shoul-

der and giving him a "go ahead," in his unique way. He once said he knew Russia better than any one else in that land. He should not have to say this to convince the people of the United States,

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International AIDS conference provides few surprises

AIDS has become one of the most serious public health problems of our time. Last month, nearly 10,000 AIDS researchers, activists and journalists gathered in Florence, Italy, to focus world attention on the human immunodeficiency virus and its effects on our society. Many [ep]e may have followed the events of the meeting as they occurred. I was in Florence caring for our two small children while my wife, an infectious disease physician, attended the meeting. This report is a "behind-the-scenes" view of what happens when what someone called the "Super Bowl" of science meets up with a major tourist destination.

Arriving at Milan's Malpensa Airport, one is instantly reminded that Italy is very different from North Carolina. Airplanes are kept at a distance from terminal buildings, and police armed with automatic weapons abound. The signs are multilingual, and car rental and the agencies are multinational, so we are soon on our way down the autostrada to Florence. Our little Fiat moves along in the middle lane at about 130 kilometers per hour, passed by a series of large, expensive, extremely fast sports cars and luxury sedans. The road, while excellent, is also extremely expensive. The three-hour drive to Florence costs about \$24 in tolls.

Despite our planning for a few days to acclimate to the time change after flying, our children, Daniel, 3, and Amanda, 6 weeks, do not like car travel. We do our major driving during nap

Jon Klein
Guest Columnist

time. Our son goes to sleep at 1 a.m. our second night, after which the baby cries for two hours. During times like this I am extremely thankful for my wife's presence — this is all her fault.

All four of us are relieved when we check into the Villa Belvedere, a small hotel in the hills above Florence. There are flower gardens ("I planted all these flowers last night," Daniel announces), a view of the city, and even a small swimming pool. After naps and a swim, we drive down to town to register for the meeting. It is Saturday, and the conference starts Sunday evening.

My wife, a "conference delegate," gets in line with her BRING THIS CARD TO THE MEETING WITH YOU card behind 20 other people. The line moves quickly, and she emerges from the registration area 10 minutes later, complete with the program and other handouts. As at previous AIDS meetings, participants receive a free bag to carry these books and papers in, and to help you recognize which half of the people in your hotel, restaurant or museum are also from the meeting. "The bag" must be picked up across the street in another building. Before we do that, and somewhat anxious over the legitimacy of my credentials, I go to register as "Press." Six staff people sit behind

tables, and only one other person is being registered in the room. Not only do I get big smiles and my pack of handouts, I also get "the bag," complete with a special media guide to the AIDS meeting, explaining the services and resources available for my comfort.

The only thing the press does not get is the two-volume set of books containing the abstracts of 1,300 scientific papers being presented over the next five days. However, the meeting press secretariat issues twice-daily press releases and frequent press conferences. They go to great lengths to make sure we know what they have determined will be the "important" studies.

A special building is reserved for press. Two hundred personal computers complete with software are available free. Special international phone lines are in place, and lounges with closed circuit coverage of the meeting are scattered about. Daniel plays with a computer while I pile my press releases on Amanda's stroller. Although the delegates' area is a mob scene, there is no line at the press snack bar or at the bank window. The meeting staff will arrange interviews on request. There is a Persons With AIDS (PWA) media liaison, and Act Up and other groups provide almost as many press releases as the meeting organizers and scientists do.

There is much talk regarding the recent U.S. immigration decision to bar HIV-positive people from the country. The eighth meeting, scheduled for Boston in 1992, may be canceled. If not, the

activists suggest, they will shut it down themselves. I considered asking to interview the director of the Harvard AIDS Institute, but, holding the two children, I decided it would be easier just to listen to him at the press conference.

Overall, there are few truly "new" events at the meeting. In fact, there really is little news here. Many of the scientific studies that make their way into the press releases and into the daily newspapers are not really new. Some of the immunization studies provide a faint glimmer of hope, but, as summed up by the Indian Minister of Health, the treatment of AIDS/HIV and even distribution of condoms, much less pharmaceuticals, is well beyond the ability of developing countries that have been hardest hit by the epidemic.

In some ways, the meeting is a three-ring circus, or really a four-ring circus, paralleling the four different tracks established for the scientific content. There is the basic science group, several hundred scientists enthusiastically discussing membrane potentials, cell biochemistry and something that sounds like electromorphic film-flam. Then there is the social science and public health track, consisting of folks who do health promotion and prevention in developed and developing countries. The third track, clinical treatment issues, is about treating the various opportunistic infections and cancers that afflict people with AIDS/HIV infection. And the fourth track is activism.

In other ways, this is also a very tense

meeting. Many delegates are from the United States and from Western Europe. Despite subsidized registration, many researchers and public health officials from developing countries cannot attend. Many U.S. government public health staff people were also unable to attend, as part of a backlash against "unnecessary" travel, and there is anger that CDC and NIH staff travel to this meeting is equated with John Sununu's junkies to campaign events or stamp auctions. There is also anger from patient activist groups, both U.S. and others, about the lack of significant progress in treating HIV disease.

Despite this lack of therapeutic breakthroughs, the clinical treatment track is as busy as the nearby street market. In the commercial exhibits, the pharmaceutical manufacturers have impressive displays. Many of them are also sponsoring special institutional "clinical updates." Held in nearby luxury hotels, these include dinners or breakfasts and state-of-the-art talks by leading researchers who just happen to study one or more of the manufacturer's products. Many of the pharmaceutical firms also host nightly hospitality suites with free-flowing liquor. One company has offered to pay air fare and hotel bills for certain researchers willing to attend their clinical updates. The irony, my wife states, is that most of the invitees would attend this session anyway; and she goes, despite passing on the financial support. Imagine what it might cost this company to bring the 200 physicians at

that dinner to Florence for six days each. And this for one drug to treat one opportunistic infection.

The other major irony of this meeting is the relationship between the International AIDS Society (the primary sponsoring agency) and the press. The press does not pay registration fees. During the opening reception I was in line for food in front of two reporters from the Cable News Network (CNN). The CNN folks were excited when they saw the fairly lavish buffet table. "Wow!" said one. "You'd never get food and wine like this back home for free." "Well," I said, "You know, it's not really free," and the reporter acknowledged, "Oh, yes, that's right, 'they' are paying for this."

You see, the press has developed the same parasitic relationship with the meeting organizers that some researchers have developed with pharmaceutical manufacturers. If research money is in drug trials, even if there is little encouragement in a new drug, we can study different doses, different formulation, different combinations and so on. In the same way, the press has been lulled into reporting what the meeting organizers think is important. The meeting becomes news because the organizers and press say it is. The political barriers to effective education and effective prevention remain, and for those infected, the news is still not very good.

Jon Klein is a Chapel Hill resident who attended the 7th International AIDS Meeting.

Sanctions against South Africa need end

Now that South Africa, partly in response to international sanctions, has begun its long trek toward democracy, President George Bush has rescinded the sanctions that Congress imposed on that country in 1986. Although South Africa has fulfilled all the conditions laid down by the sanctions law, President Bush has been criticized for acting prematurely. Full democracy has not yet come to South Africa, it is said. Until there is one person, one vote, or at least until one person, one vote has become more imminent, critics want the sanctions to stay in place. If Bush had heeded this advice, he might have harmed, rather than promoted, the interests of South Africa.

Those bulwarks of the apartheid state that were considered particularly objectionable — racist laws, states of emergency, detention without trial — no longer exist. What remains is minority rule. But it has not been U.S. policy to cut off normal economic relations with a country merely because a majority of the people have no voice in the government. Most of the black African states would fall afoul of this standard, as would most Arab nations.

Take Iraq, for example. The principles of majority rule are doubly, or even triply, violated in that country. The minority Sunni community controls the government — minority Shiites and minority Kurds have no significant role. But, unlike the case in South Africa, the government is not even democratically responsible to the dominant Sunni minority. The reigns of power are held by the Tikrit mafia — from Saddam's home town — and Saddam rules supreme over them all. Yet, no one called for economic sanctions against Iraq until after it invaded Kuwait.

China is certainly not founded on the principle of majority rule. It is most certainly not engaged in discussion with dissident representatives over the most effective means to make the transition to democracy. It has not released its political prisoners or legalized opposition parties. But what sort of sanctions against China are the Democrats calling for? They want to revoke that country's most-favored-nation trade status. They are not calling for a ban on trade or investment.

Eric Longley
The Noise of Folly

A case could be made for giving China and Iraq more slack than was given to South Africa. Before August 1990, Iraq was an important regional power, whose destabilization might have encouraged the spread of Iranian fundamentalism. And China is a superpower that you simply can't kick around like you can kick around a bunch of Afrikaaners. The black African nations have fragile economies that sanctions might devastate, the Arabs have oil and shouldn't be alienated, etc.

But when you get right down to it, the differential treatment of South Africa can be traced to good old-fashioned hypocrisy. A white oligarchy tyrannizing over a black majority is considered to be worse than a non-white oligarchy or a simple dictatorship. Racial politics, in the case of South Africa, did what bare considerations of justice would not have done.

Please don't get the impression that I am against hypocrisy. I think hypocrisy is a good thing, in moderation. God save us from a foreign policy that is exclusively dominated by damn-the-consequences moralists, or by good-relations-with-scumbuckets pragmatists. Hypocrisy — or, to put it more gently, the accommodation of competing political, moral, economic and social imperatives — is the oil that keeps the gears of government in more or less harmonious operation. It is unrealistic to ask that our relations with every country on earth be measured by so-called "objective" standards that make no provision for the needs of allies and the requirements of domestic politics.

Hypocrisy is indeed "the tribute that vice pays to virtue" and that occasionally makes people and nations behave morally but inconsistently, rather than be consistently amoral. It was morally right to impose sanctions against South Africa, and the failure to treat other countries in the same way does not detract from this.

Having said all this, we must recognize that South Africa is not the only

country in the world in which conditions are not ideal. Unless we are on principle opposed to trading with a non-democratic country, we must be willing to accept something less than absolute perfection in a nation with which we do business. We should take into account the astonishing progress South Africa has made since 1986 and that it promises to continue making. And we should ask whether the political objectives we seek outweigh the harsh economic consequences of continued sanctions.

Mark Mathabane, for one, thinks it is time for the United State to reinvest in South Africa. The black South African expatriate and author, who lives in Kernersville, N.C., argues that South Africa needs economic development. He is aware that political and economic progress go hand-in-hand and that the former is useless without the latter.

If the West keeps sanctions until a black majority government comes into power, then that government could well inherit a devastated economy with record unemployment. Such a situation would promote political instability, which would make the economy take a turn for the worse, and so on. South Africa might then follow the path that has led too many black African states into economic ruin and dictatorship.

The proper course would be to encourage Western businesses to return to South Africa, so that, by the time a black-majority government comes into power, foreign investment will have provided a base for prosperity and stability.

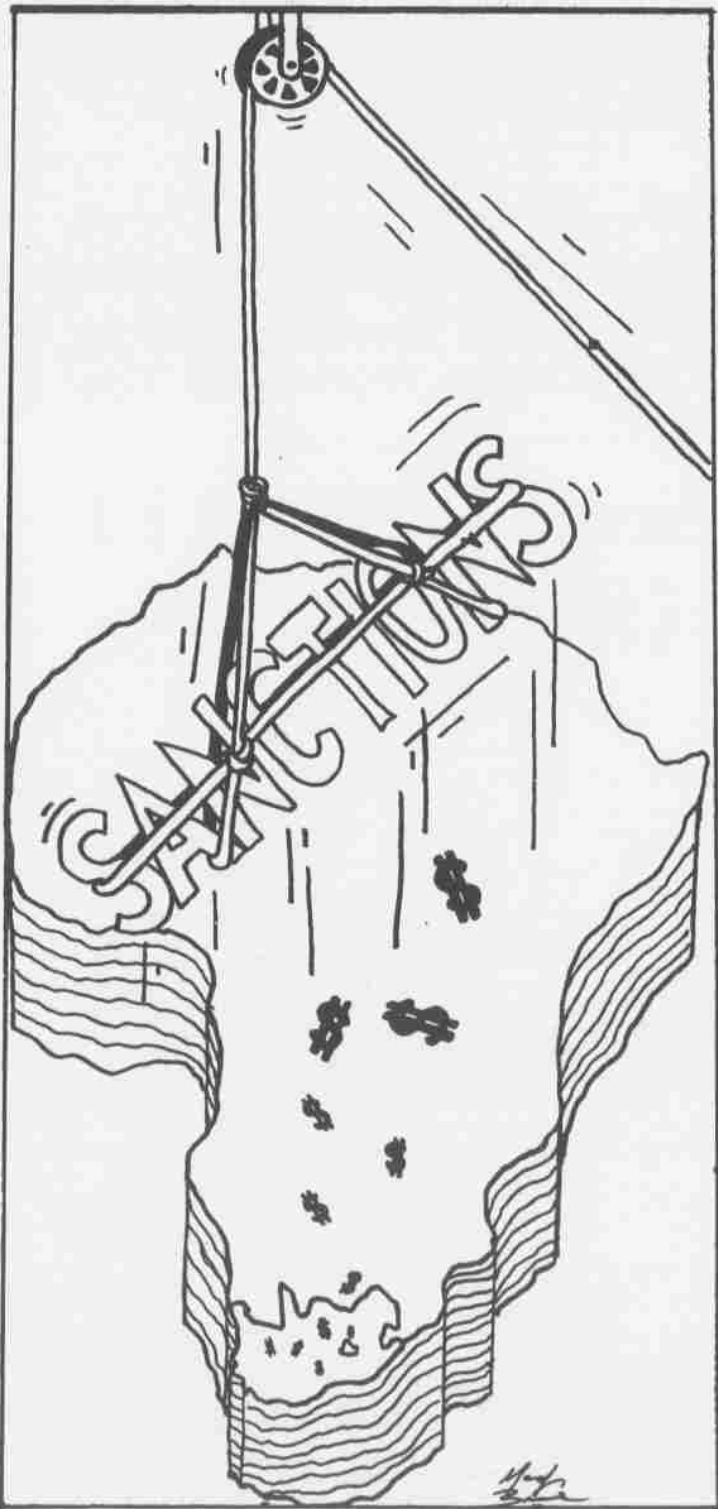
There are still obstacles that hinder American businesses from doing this.

In addition to the uncertain situation in South Africa itself, there are the sanctions laws in effect in many states, municipalities and colleges. Some municipal pension funds will not invest in companies that do business in South Africa. Some laws and city ordinances provide that companies that do business in South Africa cannot get government contracts. This is sure to be a deterrent to many companies.

Local sanctions laws raise issues that go beyond South Africa. They pose the question — who runs the foreign policy of the United States? Are the president and Congress exclusively responsible for foreign policy, or can cities, states and universities take a hand in it, too? If they can, then I don't see why they can't set up their own individual state departments and appoint their own ambassadors to other countries. And other countries would be well-advised to have ambassadors in every state capital, city hall and university administration building in the country.

In my view, foreign policy is the responsibility of the federal government. The evaluation of the situation in South Africa is a job for Washington, not for Pierre, South Dakota or the City of New York. Now that the federal government has declared that sanctions should be lifted, local governments should follow suit. If they do not, the Bush administration should follow through on its threat to force them to do so.

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Columnists needed

The Daily Tar Heel is currently accepting applications for weekly columnists. A sample column must be turned in to the editor or the editorial page editor by Aug. 30.

Openings are presently available in the positions of humor columnist and conservative columnist. However, the DTH is also open to suggestions for columns covering other areas. The DTH is not seeking columnists who write on general topics. Columns should cover a specific angle such as feminism or minority affairs.

Please include a cover sheet with a description of your column's angle, your name, telephone number and address.