

Russian bear is not cute and huggable

Mikhail Gorbachev poses the biggest threat to the United States since the invention of the credit card. The Soviet leader is a platinum pass buying friendship and cooperation. He smiles now and we pay later.

Or . . . Mikhail Gorbachev poses the biggest opportunity to the United States since the credit card. The Soviet leader is a capable and effective head of state who realizes that fundamental changes must take place if his country is to maintain its standing on the world stage. Gorbachev wants to live in peaceful coexistence and is an all-around good egg.

As usual, the truth is a volatile mix of two extremes. Mikhail Gorbachev poses a *challenge* and whether that challenge becomes a threat or an opportunity depends solely on us.

We must be firm but fair. We should not trade away our assets in anticipation of future good behavior. We should demand a strong political profit in exchange for our vast economic resources, technological know-how and relaxed military stance.

Our foreign policy should never be directed toward creating favorable conditions for Gorbachev in the Politburo. Even partially basing our decisions on this would be unwise because: a) it doesn't serve our best interests, it serves his and b) we wouldn't be very good at it.

No one doubts that dealing with the Soviet Union is a difficult nut to crack. The question before us is which presidential candidate will be better suited to the task.

Bush certainly has the resume. Among his list of credits are ambassador to the United Nations, the first ambassador to China, head of the Central Intelligence Agency and professional mourner.

Furthermore, the Republicans would argue, Bush's opponent has absolutely no foreign policy credentials. Dukakis is a governor without any practical experience and shouldn't even pretend to be qualified to handle this task. They, of course, conveniently forget that Ronald Reagan was also a governor with no practical experience.

But there is a difference. Reagan laid out a foreign policy objective clearly and forcefully through his well-publicized monochromatic views.

Bush stands by those views. Except for disagreeing with Reagan's current opinion that the Russian bear is just as cute and huggable as the teddy bear, his foreign policy would be a continuation of what the current administration has begun. Whether you agree with it or not, that policy is there to be examined and discussed.

Dukakis is another story. He applauds the I.N.F. Treaty, but also supports a nuclear freeze and doesn't think our deployment of missiles had anything to do

Michael Giltz

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with the Soviets coming to the bargaining table. Dukakis has also stated unequivocally that the Space Defense Initiative is a complete fantasy, but now thinks that fantasy is worth spending a billion dollars in research on.

The comments of Zbigniew Brzezinski are most interesting. The national security adviser to President Carter has just been named by Bush to a national security task force that also includes Henry Kissinger.

The New York Times of Sept. 13 quotes Mr. Brzezinski as saying he is "a card-carrying Democrat," but agreed to join the task force because "I just have the feeling that Dukakis's view of the world is basically out of touch with the difficult realities of the world."

Those difficult realities involve dealing with the Soviet Union, a country that is radically different from ours. Two recent news stories highlight this.

In the one story, wire services around the world carried a brief mention that the Soviet Union was going to republish a handful of books that had been banned.

One of the books being made available again is a massive tome on ballet. This major reference work had been pulled off the shelves for one reason: it contained a photograph — one photograph — of Mikhail Baryshnikov, the ballet star who defected to the U.S. and thus became a "non-person" whose every trace must be erased.

The other news story involved maps. Ever since the revolution, the Soviet government has distributed misleading and distorted maps to its people, in an attempt to keep others in the dark about their terrain. Travelers have known for years that the only decent maps are available, not in Moscow, but in Washington from the C.I.A.

Now, after years of complaints from citizens who kept getting lost, the Soviet government has announced that they will start providing accurate maps.

These incidents are certainly amusing. Who can't help but chuckle when they find out that the Soviet Union guards access to photocopy machines as diligently as we guard Fort Knox? But it is the candidate who realizes the profound implications of a fear of copiers that will lead us to a safer and more stable world.

Michael J. Giltz is an English major and card-carrying film critic who just wrote an entire column about the Soviet Union without mentioning glasnost.