

Editorial Page

Tel.: 825-3747

The Terrace Bay-Schreiber News is published every Wednesday by Laurentian Publishing Limited, Box 579, Terrace Bay, Ont., P0T-2W0 Tel.: 807-825-3747. Second class mailing permit 0867. Member of the Ontario Community Newspaper Assn. and the Canadian Community Newspaper Assn.

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Single copies 40 cents.
 Subscription rates: \$15 per year / \$25 two years (local) and \$21 per year (out of town).

To Schreiber

Thanks to everyone who signed the letter of support that was sent to me here in Auckland.

It's a real boost in my confidence knowing that there are that many of you in my corner.

My first fight here was a quarter-final bout Sunday night (N.Z. time) against Tanzania.

Domenic Filane



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The News welcomes your letter to the editor. Use this space as your forum to comment on any issue of common interest. Please address letters to:

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Please sign your letter and include your phone number

The old Russia is gone forever--too bad

"In the United States you have freedom of speech. You can go up to Ronald Reagan and say, 'I don't like Ronald Reagan.' In the Soviet Union you have the same thing. You can go up to Chernenko and say, 'I don't like Ronald Reagan.'"

That is a very old joke, told by the Soviet defector/comedian Yakov Smirnoff 'way back in 1984 when the world was a very different place.

Today, Comrade Chernenko is dead, and Mister Reagan tours the globe as Rent-A-President, displaying the skills he honed during eight years in the Oval Office--viz: smiling and waving.

But more to the point, the old Russia is gone, too. Back in the late '60s, the American author Norman Mailer wrote, "One of the reasons it's very, very hard to get pro-Russian for more than a few weeks is that we keep coming face to face with the face that the Soviet Union must probably

be the most boring country in the history of nations".

That was true in the 60s, true in the 70s--even true for most of the past decade. But sometime in the mid-80s the world began to be aware of a roly-poly Russian with a strawberry birthmark on his balding head, a man who taught the world two unfamiliar Russian words: glasnost and perestroika.

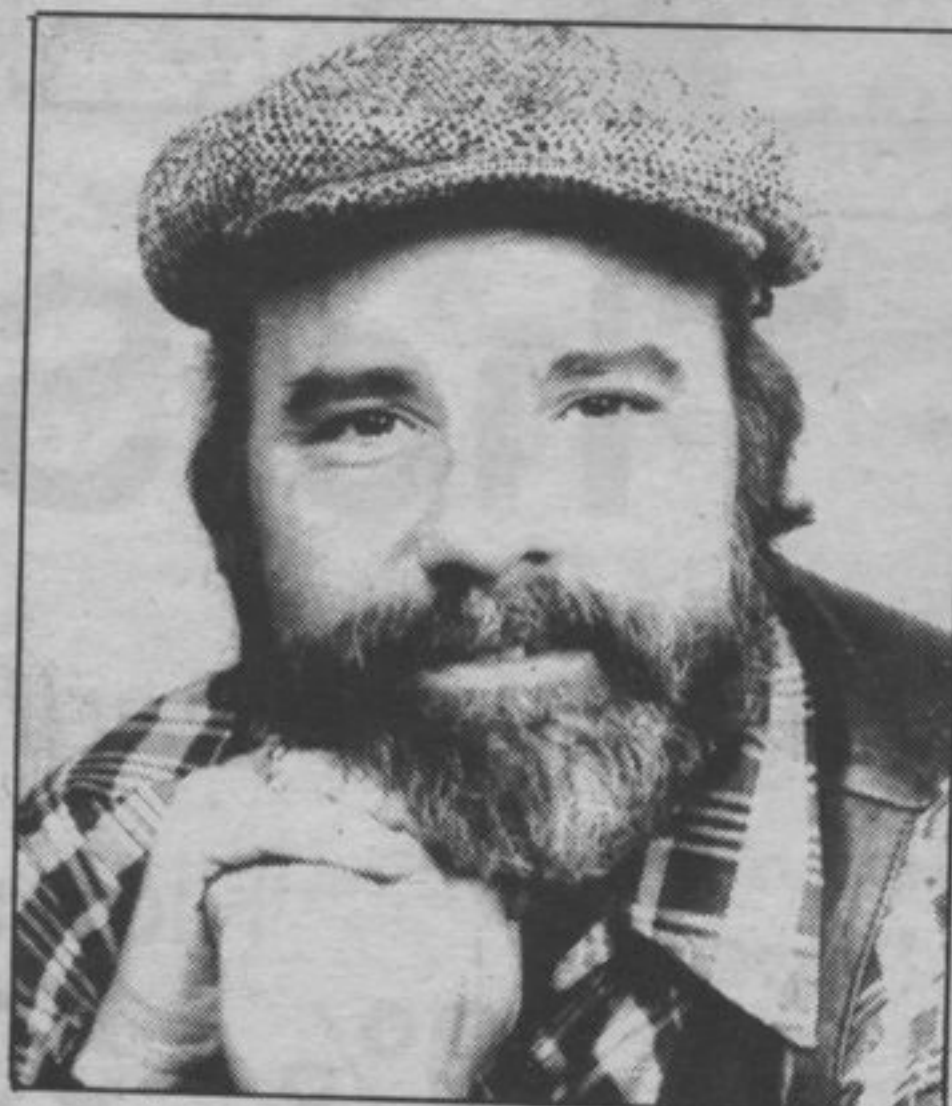
And suddenly the frozen giant called the Soviet Union broke an eight-decades-old deathgrip of hidebound ideology to become one of the most volatile geopolitical pressure cookers on the face of the earth.

Which is wonderful. I can think of few more glorious tableaux in my lifetime than the sight of East Berliners and West Berliners drinking champagne together on that crumbling obscurity of a wall that used to bisect Berlin. I'm thrilled that the wind of freedom is gusting through Poland, Romania, Lithuania and all the other east European

nations held in thrall these many years.

I hesitate to bring up the down side, to introduce a gloomy, pessimistic note, but friends, if the old Russia is gone forever...

What are we going to do



Arthur Black

for Russian jokes?

We have a potentially serious shortfall situation here. Ethnic joke crops have been drying up all over the world. It is no longer politically or socially acceptable to tell

Polish Jokes, Jewish jokes, Scottish, Irish or Newfie jokes.

For the past few years the only ethnic strains hardy enough to withstand direct buffetings of humour have been WASPS and the Russians. And with all due respect to the former (some of my best friends, etc.) WASPS are not, when all is said and done...

all that hilarious.

But the Russians...hoo boy... now there was a veritable vineyard of vintage hilarity.

You heard about the American tourist who went to a Moscow dentist with a toothache? "Tooth must come out," said the dentist, "but is costing one thousand dollars."

"A thousand dollars!" yelled the American, "why, where I come from it costs twenty dollars to pull a tooth!"

"In Russia is more expansive," said the dentist. "Ve haff to pull it through your ear. You can't open your mouth in Russia."

You heard about the Muscovite who stopped his friend running down the street to ask him where he was going?

"To Voronesh to buy meat," his friend replied.

"That's crazy!" said the Muscovite. "The only meat for 300 miles is right here in Moscow."

"I know," he said, "but the lineup starts in Voronesh."

Which reminds me of the latest Russian joke I've heard. A Russian stands in a lineup for hours. Finally he's fed up, curses, throws down his hat and snarls, "I can't stand these lineups anymore. I'm going to shoot Gorbachev."

Two hours later the would-be assassin returns and joins the lineup. "What happened?" the others want to know.

"I decided to get back in this line," he said. It's shorter than the lineup to shoot Gorbachev."

Hmmm. Maybe Russian humour's healthier than I thought.