

# Russian studies co-ordinator resigns

Dr. Norman Pereira, initiator and coordinator of Dalhousie's Russian Studies Program, resigned early this September, handing the Program's leadership over to the Russian Department.

Pereira, an associate professor of History and Russian, said he was relinquishing his position because the program could be run more smoothly if responsibility was shifted to the Russian Department.

The Pushkin Program, as it is also called, will now be jointly coordinated by J. Barn-

stead and I. Vitins, assistant Russian professors. Pereira said it seemed sensible to make the transition this year as he is leaving on sabbatical in June. In this way, Barnstead and Vitins will gain the experience of running the program while Pereira is still at Dalhousie.

Dr. Y. Glazov, Head of the Russian Department, said Pereira carried a heavy workload as coordinator of the Russian Studies Program over the last three years and made a very worthy contribution to the Department.

The program is the only

undergraduate one in Canada where students constantly study in Russia for a period of over four months. Others are primarily run over six week periods during the summer, while at Dalhousie, up to 12 students a year are sent to the Pushkin Institute of Moscow from January to April.

Those participating in the Program include third and fourth year Russian students, as well as MA students, who are selected on the basis of their knowledge of Russia and their ability to speak Russian. Applications are received from across Canada, but usually a third of those selected are Dalhousie students.

According to Barnstead, they are "driven hard" during the fall before leaving for Moscow, taking four intensive preparatory courses at Dalhousie. The schedule at the Pushkin Institute includes six days a week of very formal classes in grammar, literature and history.

The Pushkin Institute has commented on the improved quality each year of the students who undertake this pretraining session before arriving in Russia, and the level of preparation is expected to be even higher this fall.

Jack Robinson, a Dalhousie Masters student in Russian History who made the trip last year, spoke enthusiastically about his stay in Moscow. He said the students found the four months of immersion considerably improved their ability to speak Russian. They were given the opportunity to interact with the people and to experience their ways of life. "The best part was being there", said Robinson.

However, Pereira said one problem encountered with the Pushkin Institute is that their courses have been set up mainly to prepare Russian language teachers.

"This fits in with the

objective of the school, which is to train foreigners to teach Russian in their respective countries," he admitted, "but for the many students from Canada who are pursuing careers as translators, journalists or lawyers, the Institute is not ideal."

As a result, the new co-ordinators are looking at other programs with more flexibility. Barnstead said a

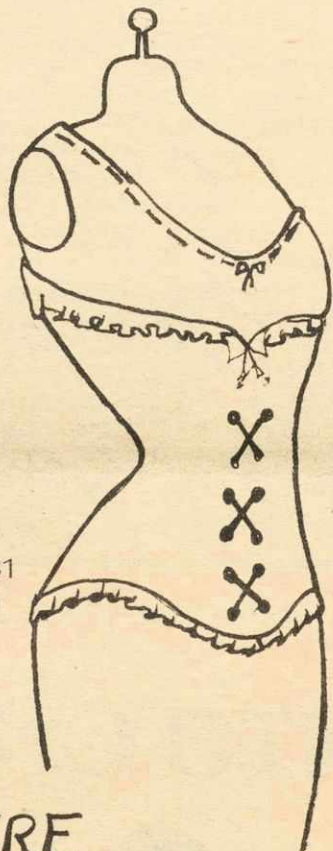
proposal has been made for three students to attend a Leningrad State University next year.

"The Leningrad Program is more advantageous for undergraduate students because it is geared toward improving language ability rather than the teaching of Russian", he said.

Other possible changes in the Russian Studies Program include expansion to include more participants, and higher initial requirements.

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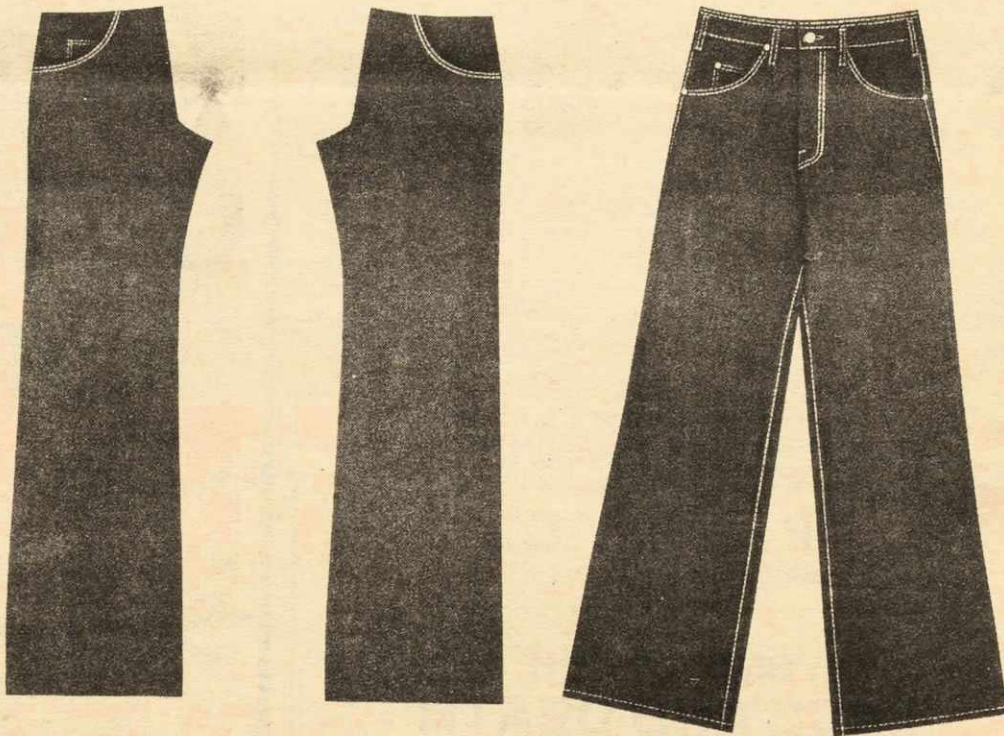
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