

Perestroika, politics, and pub crawl

by Rob Brazeeau

On Tuesday, June 5, the Canadian Stage Company hosted *Perestroika, Politics, and Business*, a dialogue between Soviet and Canadian citizens designed to address the recent and profound political changes in the Soviet Union, and to consider what these changes may mean for the Canadian business sector.

The small auditorium filled quickly, but not with the regular crowd one might expect at an economic and political forum. The woman to my right was trying to explain the difficult concept of a pub crawl to her Soviet counterpart. The Soviet visitors were apparently taking advantage of the fact that they are the first group from their country with no governmental attache along on their visit.

Now that the Cold War is over, one of the first issues to be raised in the West regarding perestroika is how to cash in on the vast, untapped Soviet consumer economy. The Soviets, however, are not trying to Westernize their economy or government as much as stabilize and restructure them.

Sasha Yevreinov, a Soviet journalist working in Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), was quick to point out that he sees the Soviet Union moving not toward capital-

ism, but social democracy, like Sweden, where education and social programmes are supported by the government. Yevreinov was the most outspoken, eloquent, and humorous member of the panel, and easily the crowd favourite. Irina Troilina, a college English teacher in Volgograd, Geoffrey Carr-Harris, a Canadian businessman, and Nikita Kozmiriuk, a Soviet businessman, rounded out the four member panel.

Considering the forum was supposed to be about business opportunities in the Soviet Union, I expected the last two panelists to be the most informative. I was mistaken. Carr-Harris was a thoroughly uninspired speaker who rendered long, highly rhetorical answers to simple questions, and Kozmiriuk declined his opportunity to make an opening statement. He did, however, answer questions posed to him, and his quip that "Lithuania wants to be a distinct society" (which was met with laughter and applause) clearly showed his informal tone.

Because of the ambivalent remarks of the business representatives, the forum quickly turned into a discussion of Soviet culture. Troilina provided a description of her country at which the Politburo would have winced. It seems the West has no monopoly on prostitution and drug abuse, and she

attributes the pervasiveness of the Soviet problem to suppression of the humanities in Soviet universities. She informed me that both students and teachers are enjoying increased freedom, but that the physical sciences and medicine are still the mainstays of Soviet education. She said that until social sciences establish themselves as serious disciplines, things will not likely improve in her country.

Troilina was surprised by the

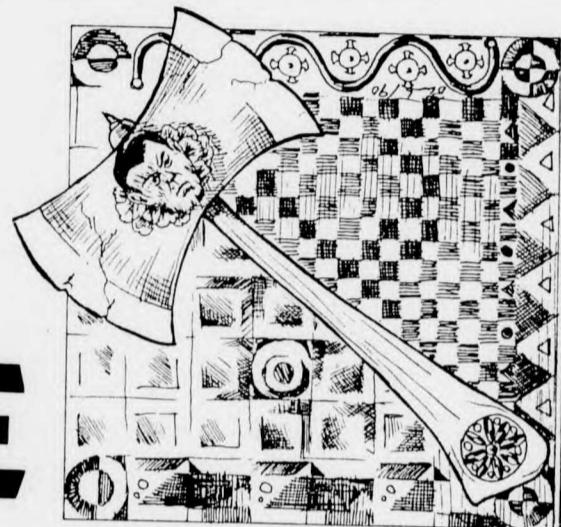
wealth and resources of UofT, and although in favour of free education, thought that Canadian tuition was reasonable considering the extensive services that our universities provide. Specifically, she observed that Soviet universities need more research equipment.

As the potentially provocative issue of Canadian and Soviet joint economic ventures was not explored in great detail, the forum served more as an outlet for pri-

vate citizens to interact without the intrusion of any governmental body. In these early days of perestroika, the fact that free discussion is allowed supersedes the importance of what is actually talked about.

The Soviet visitors provided a candid and informal discussion of Soviet politics and culture but what did they learn about our culture? Perhaps the pub crawl showed them all they really wanted to know.

I WRITE WITH AN AXE



by Brett Gellert

I was just reading in a magazine that scientists in the U.S. are making trees that smell terrible so people won't cut them down at Christmas. The stuff that makes these trees different is a mixture of different things including "fox urine and skunk essence."

Now, I'm only a History/English major, I'm no scientist, but how in the hell would you get fox urine? Imagine the poor jerk who walks into his boss' office.

Boss: Johnson, I've got a special job for you today.

Johnson: What's that, sir?

Boss: I want you to go out and get me six or seven gallons of fox urine. And, oh, Johnson, if you can, pick up some skunk essence.

Can saving a few trees every year be worth getting stranger every day.

Who can forget the hoopla over the Hubble Telescope? Scientists were peeing their pants with excitement over the possible pictures that would come back. I don't know about you, but with all the hype, I was expecting something like a hamburger stand hovering somewhere near Pluto. Or at the least a few aliens mooning the camera as they shot by on their way to a party. But what do we get? A few pictures of stars. I think these guys have been watching too much Public Television. From the limited scientific education that I have, I know that any moron can see stars at night as long as there aren't any clouds.

Scientists should be working on things that benefit humanity. I mean sure the pictures are nice, but will they make our cafeteria food edible? I have serious doubts about this, except that space pictures may reveal the origins of the soup of the day. I don't personally believe anyone should have to wear protective clothing to eat soup, but then I'm old-fashioned.

What scientists should really be working on is a way to get smoke out of a crowded pub. Now, I know what the smokers are thinking: let's hold him down and test his reflexes with a wrecking ball. Smoking is part of a good pub. The problem is that the smoke doesn't thin out. The air gets so thick that commercial airliners at neighbouring airports are grounded. By 10:00 on most nights, pick-up lines are spoken through gas masks. Why won't scientists work on a way to get the smoke out of the pubs? Maybe they could find a way to package it and sell it to people who don't actually have the time to put a cigarette to their lips, but still want that feeling of nausea.

Science is being wasted on pictures of space that aren't even the right exposure. NASA says the pictures are enhanced by a very complicated system of computers. I always use FUJI film and I never have any problems. If they can put a satellite in space, why can't they put up a FUJI franchise? But before we have a FUJI development booth orbiting the earth, we need food that doesn't recoil when it's struck with a fork. Maybe scientists can create an edible film. It would certainly be better than cafeteria food.

Convo-vacation



photo by Tova Weisblatt

Summer convocation was the big thing on York campus this past week. Everyone got into the act, including the Atkinson Day Care graduates pictured above.

York University conferred honorary degrees to 10 people this year including a well-known Canadian actor, a leading civil servant, a Nobel prize winner in Chemistry and the president of a Japanese university.

Osgoode Hall Law School celebrated its 100th anniversary with a special convocation ceremony at the Pantages Theatre downtown.



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