

Glasnost perestroika and the high-tech blues

(UNB-PR) If political scientist Miron Rezun seems a little harried at times, it's probably because he is involved in tracking two of the most volatile, changeable fields known to man: technology and Soviet Union politics.

Dr. Rezun's latest book, *Science and Technology in the Gorbachev Era*, is nearly ready to go to the publisher, but constant changes in the Soviet political scene and in technology keep him busy with revisions. "I'm going to have to draw the line at some point and simply stop writing. Otherwise it will never get finished," he said.

His research began about a decade ago. "In the later '70s and early '80s it occurred to me that the Soviet Union was falling behind in the field of technology. If it didn't adapt to modern technological devices and programs, it would fall even farther behind and its productivity would fall off and put its whole economic system in danger of collapse," Dr. Rezun explained.

The computer revolution in the west was leaving the Soviet Union behind in an age dominated by technology rather than the pure or theoretical science upon which the Soviets had always concentrated.

An accomplished polyglot, Dr. Rezun visited the U.S.S.R. and interviewed academics and military officials. He read Soviet literature on how technology was applied and where deficiencies lay.

It was clear they were ten years behind in computer technology, but that was just the beginning. Devices such as photocopiers and typewriters—common as dust in western offices—were restricted in the Soviet Union. By '85 and '86, the information age still had not dawned there.

Dr. Rezun sees both ideological and structural

reasons for that. "Soviet ideologues saw the study of computers as a bourgeois pseudoscience at odds with Marxist doctrine, and that set the Soviets back a long time. It was only in response to military needs for missile guidance systems that any progress in computerization began," he explained.

The same sort of roadblock was encountered in the field of genetics. Stalinist dogma held that deterministic principles of environment were the mainstays of growth and development, so Soviet agriculture made almost no use of established techniques of mutation and hybridization in the improvement of livestock and crops.

One of the structural barriers to computerization in the U.S.S.R. has been the lack of any sort of infrastructure to support widespread computer use, Dr. Rezun points out. The unavailability of everything from disks and spare parts to service and maintenance expertise made it extremely unlikely that computer ownership could become widespread, even if the government would allow it. In fact, computer use was limited by the state to the highest levels of the military and the bureaucracy. There was no "trickle down" to the civilian economy. Also, the refusal by much of the western world to well computers to the Soviet Union limited their technology to whatever could be developed at home or purloined from the west.

As recently as 1982, warnings by army chief of staff Marshall Nikolai V. Ogarkov that the Soviet Union was concentrating too much on nuclear weapons and not enough on electronics, were largely ignored. Since the advent of perestroika and glasnost under Gorbachev,

Ogarkov's warnings are being re-examined in a more receptive light.

By the mid '80s the Soviets had begun to recognize how far they'd fallen behind. Their system wasn't producing computer literate youngsters and the military was worried. Computers were increasingly necessary at all levels for efficient military planning and operations, not to mention the use of high-tech weapons. Most Soviets didn't even have keyboard skills and the reason was obvious: no keyboards.

"Soviets now seem to realize that a truly technological society depends on the popularization of technology," Dr. Rezun said. "That's what glasnost and perestroika are about. Now they're producing their own computers and trying to improve the infrastructure. People are being allowed to own not only their own computers but also companies that build and sell computers and make software. They're also improving the links between the civilian economy and the highly secretive military-industrial complex. But they have a long way to go." Dr. Rezun says the "affordable" home computer offered in Moscow department stores still costs 6,000 rubles or about 20 months income for the average Soviet family. A Russian-made IBM clone sells for more than \$17,000.

Some Sovietologists think the move toward more openness and less apparent concentration on military objectives is a ploy by the Soviet Union to increase the flow of technology from the west and use it to support the sinister military and political ambitions we've always accused them of. Dr. Rezun thinks that's too simplistic a view. "What's driving the changes in the Soviet Union is

the realization that standard of living and quality of life improve with modern technology," he maintains. "People want those improvements, and if the

Soviet Union doesn't act accordingly it will fall so far behind as to be relegated to the status of a 4th- or 5th-rate power within two or three decades.



Political scientist Miron Rezun

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Food For Thought - World Home Economics Day

by Peter Tracy

World Home Economics Day was celebrated on Tuesday by UNB students in conjunction with affiliated organizations in over 90 countries.

To mark the occasion and to promote nutrition education at UNB, Home Economic students set up several beautiful and informative displays in the lobby of D'Avray Hall.

They also prepared and served many delicious dishes, featuring samples of food native to New Brunswick and several international recipes.

Prof. Mary Breau's Nutrition class promoted "Healthy eating, New Brunswick style", with a display of local food and popular Maritime recipes. Fortunate passers-by were treated to homemade seafood chowder and baked potatoes

with exotic toppings.

Interested persons also received a computerized nutritional analysis of their favorite recipe.

Prof. Breau thought the project was a great success, although the majority of people who stopped were interested more in the food than listening to the group's message.

Prof. Nena Gleason's students prepared a selection of international dishes which included food from South America, Mexico, and The Middle East.

Included in this array of delicious food were two relatively new and exotic creations, Chocolate pasta and Apple Torte made with Tofu.

Gleason congratulates all involved in this successful presentation of healthy food and nutrition education displays.



Kathy Young serving food to Nicole Birch at the latest World Economics Day at UNB.



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