

Take me to your leader. . . This example of mechanical wizardry can walk, talk and shake your hand.

A NEW LOOK AT ENGINEERING

Soviet professor contrasts U.S., USSR education

by Carol Strasser

College is a very different experience for Russian and American students, separated by half a world and 50 years of ideology.

For the Russian student, tuition is free and housing is cheap, said Yuri Sarkisyan, an engineering professor from Soviet Armenia on campus for UNL's Engineering Week.

Because it's considered a favor to the state to go to school, the state pays each student a stipend to cover living expenses.

A Russian student spends about 40 hours a week in class but isn't likely to have much homework.

Extracurricular activities and problems with professors are likely to be handled by the Youth Communist League, a "very vital force" in the lives of Russian youth between the ages of 14 and 28, Sarkisyan said.

And the job hunting anxiety common to most American students doesn't exist in Russia. Students "never hunt for a job" since the state takes care of job placement.

"In a communist country you do whatever they need," Sarkisyan said. The state is "pretty fair" in its placement of graduates, he added, although students often aren't satisfied with salaries.

The state prepares specialists on a five-year plan according to the demand in industry, he explained. The number of people trained in each profession is determined by the society's need.

Students must take tough entrance examinations to attend college, and only about one out of three applicants is accepted. The curriculum is split into day, evening and correspondence courses, all of equal importance in the college system, he said.

American students can enter graduate school immediately after graduating from college but Russian students must gain two years work experience before continuing their studies. Graduate students also receive a stipend, he said.

Most students live with their families, and there are no demonstrations like those which hit American campuses.

The older a professor is, the more he's respected. No professor is required to retire as long as he's in good health.

The orientation toward education is different too, he said. "Russian students know more about the U.S. than U.S. students know about Russia," he said.

"Every Russian child can name all the American states." They often know more about American literature—about Hemingway and Steinbeck—than U.S. students, he said.

The students aren't oriented to the profit system, he said, but towards becoming "good members of society."

If a student is smart in many subjects, he would probably choose to study mathematics in college more than literature or history. "If a student is gifted, why not use it in a direction more useful for society?"

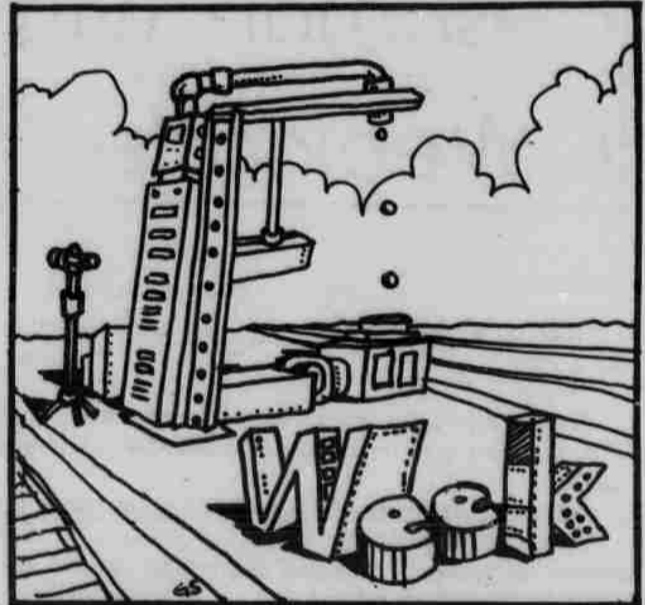
Music, art and literature are important in Russian

life. Books are cheap, and a good textbook costs about one ruble (about one dollar). The state-owned movie industry produces many educational films, and television is completely educational.

The state also controls publishing. Sarkisyan, who published his first book at 22, said, "You can't publish anything you want." However, he said the remuneration is high if it is determined that the book is necessary or useful to society.

The Soviet Union has no drug problem since it is considered anti-society to use drugs. There are very severe penalties for drug use, he said.

Alcoholism is a problem, he said, and students are allowed to begin drinking in high school. The religious prohibitions against alcohol are missing because religion doesn't play a very important role in society.



Sarkisyan went to graduate school in Moscow and teaches at the Polytechnic Institute in Yerevan, the 2,752 year-old capital of Armenia.

He was brought to the United States in August by the International Research Exchange Board, which exchanges Russian and American educators on a one-to-one basis, he said. He's doing research on kinematics at Stanford University in California.

This is his first trip outside the Soviet Union. He has visited several American cities on his lecture tour but considers California the "best corner in America."

He was "impressed by the level of technology and automation" in the U.S., Sarkisyan said. "Everything is done to save time—to make money." Everything is used in the best manner possible to please the customer.

Sarkisyan is scheduled to leave the United States in June but said he has applied for an extension in order to make a presentation at an October conference in San Francisco.

Sarkisyan will speak at the Nebraska Union Centennial Room Friday at 11:00.



Oops. . . Strike one in the egg throwing contest, one of several events in the E-Week Field Day, held Thursday at Pioneers Park. The purpose of the annual event, according to one participant, is "To go out and get all hot and tired and then go drink beer."