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PANEL 1 NATIONAL IT POLICIES IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOV[ET UNION

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PANEL 1

NATIONAL IT POLICIES IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION

Panel Chair: Seymour Goodman, University of Arizona, USA

Panelists: Dmitri S. Chereshkin, Academy of Sciences, USSR
Adrian Davidoviciu, National Commission on Informatics, Bucharest, Romania
Tomasz Jarmoszko, The MOSAIC Group, University of Arizona, USA
Wladyslaw Turski, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland
Tibor Vamos, Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary

A common denominator of the recent dramatic changes in most countries of CMEA (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance) has been the movement away from strong forms of centralized planning and toward more market-oriented economic systems. In some cases, this movement has been relatively bold and aggressive (e.g., Hungary) and in others much more hesitant and exploratory (e.g., the USSR). The widely recognized notion in these countries is that the power of the state to control the economy must be curtailed and replaced at least to some extent with market forces if reforms are to succeed. Another common perception, however, is that the state should play the crucial role in building the information technology (IT) infrastructure - telecommunications, standardization, education, etc. - that is so vital to economic growth and social change. The contradictions inherent in these two views, and in other reform policies currently under way in East-Central Europe and the USSR, will be discussed by the panelists.

The panel will focus on two primary issue areas: state IT policy and economic integration with world IT markets. The questions to be addressed will include the following:

- What kinds of policies should be set by state bureaucracies?
- Should there be restrictions on privatization of state IT enterprises?
- What mechanisms will promote competition in the IT sector?
- Will there be safeguards against misguided central priorities?
- Should there be protection of domestic markets and, if so, which industries should benefit?
- Will there be a need for continued application of CoCom restrictions on trade and technology transfer?
- Are there competitive commercial IT niches for the East-Central European countries and the USSR?
- Will measures be undertaken to protect intellectual property rights?

The Soviet and East European panel members are prominent policy makers and academicians in their countries. Dr. Davidoviciu is the Vice-President of the Romanian National Commission on Informatics, a governmental body set up to coordinate national policies on computer and related technologies. Professor Chereshkin, Director of Technical Sciences, Institute of Systems Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, has worked closely on the informatization plan for the Soviet Union and has authored several articles on the issue. He is also a member of the Supreme Soviet Subcommittee on Communications and Informatics. Mr. Turski, the first president of the Polish Informatics Society and a professor of computer science at the University of Warsaw, has for years advocated a more coordinated national informatics policy in Poland. Professor Vamos, a former director of the Computer and Automation Institute (SZTAKI) of the Hungarian Academy of Science, is a long-time, astute observer of informatics trends in East-Central Europe.

Professor Goodman is the founder and the director of the MOSAIC Research Group in the Department of MIS at the University of Arizona. He is a nationally recognized expert on global trends in computing and has recently served as chair of the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council Committee to Study International Developments in Computer Science and Technology. Mr. Jarmoszko is a senior analyst with the MOSAIC Research Group and has authored or co-authored a half dozen papers on the issues to be discussed by the panel.