Computer Makers Bye Soviet School Market By DAVID E. SANGER Special to The New York Times New York Times (1857-Current file); Apr 4, 1985; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times pg. A11

Computer Makers Eye Soviet School Market

By DAVID E. SANGER

Special to The New York Times WASHINGTON, April 3 --- The Reagan Administration appears to be prepared to cooperate with Soviet efforts to put personal computers in secondary schools, according to industry officials negotiating export licenses.

"We expected it would be more difficult, so I was quite pleasantly surprised." said Albert A. Eisenstadt, a vice president of Apple Computer Inc. who was here last week to discuss computer exports with Commerce and Defense Department officials. "They just want to make sure we do it right." The Government's apparent willing- They are likely to involve Apple Com-

ness to aid the companies in entering | puter Inc., the Cupertino, Calif. comthe Soviet market, after several years | pany that makes the popular Apple II of debate about potential security risks, comes at a time of heightened interest in computers in the Soviet Union. Last week, the ruling Politburo, led | the Soviet Ministry of Education. by Mikhail S. Gorbachev, directed the Soviet Union's 60,000 high schools to begin training in computer science. Meanwhile, Soviet foreign trade officials have stepped up efforts to purchase thousands of microcomputers, from the least powerful home models to advanced new machines.

Industry sources indicate that the first deals appear only months away.

line of machines, and Sinclair Research Ltd., a British manufacturer of home computers now negotiating with

Commodore International Ltd., the leading American maker of home computers, said it expected to begin serious negotiations with Soviet foreign trade officials in the next month.

"The level of interest has clearly risen," said a computer executive who has been involved in negotiations. The Government, he said, "is clearly looking for some relatively harmless ways to create some openings, but there are

members of the Administration who are not totally in agreement."

Any computer exports to the Soviet bloc, for use in schools or elsewhere, are subject to new regulations geared to the processing power of the computers. Based on an agreement reached chines in significant volume. last summer with the Western allies, the regulations allow the free export of the most basic home computers similar to those made by Commodore and Atari - but limit the number of more advanced personal computers exported at any one time.

Most Western experts suspect that the Soviet Union will seek to make volume purchases of only the most inexpensive computers, those intended for schools. More powerful machines, like I.B.M.'s personal computers, seem destined for scientific institutes and perhaps the military. A few of the ma-

chines used in both schools and the in- lest, we are not going to stand in the nologies needed to make their own ma-

makers say much of the encourage-American companies from selling cializes in Soviet science policy. computers the Russians could easily | "Remember that in this country, the obtain in Japan and Britain.

they are used for education.

"As long as they are not ruggedized and the performance levels are mod-

stitutes are likely to be Soviet-made, way," said Stephen D. Bryen, the but Soviet officials have admitted that Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense they have been unable to master the for International Economic Policy, semiconductor and disk-drive tech- who is watching computer exports. Some academics question whether

the conditions exist for personal com-In the United States, computer puters to flourish in the Soviet Union.

"They are trying to catch up by issument they are receiving comes from | ing orders from the top," said Loren R. the Commerce Department, which has Graham, a professor at the Massachuargued that it makes no sense to bar | setts Institute of Technolog who spe-

computer revolution started from Now even the Defense Department, below, from demand by consumers which has taken a harder line, seems who told the manufacturers what they unperturbed by the thought of export- needed. You are not going to see that ing thousands of machines, provided happen in the Soviet schools, or anywhere else in Russia."

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