

**Information and the Crisis Economy** by *Herbert I. Schiller*  
(Ablex, Norwood, 1984), pp. xv + 133, ISBN 0-89391-278-6.

Herbert Schiller's bleak vision of a world remodelled by information technologies contrasts markedly with conventional wisdom. Proponents of the information age present a view of a liberated world in which individuals can exercise their democratic rights. Schiller presents a contrasting view. In Schiller's world, governments and the private sector work hand in hand in an attempt to rescue a world plagued by inflation, unemployment and recession. But in doing so they create a world where national and individual autonomy disappears, where legitimate discourse is impossible and where the rights of nation states are sacrificed for the needs of transnational corporations.

Schiller's view of a world out of control is reinforced by the stock market crash of October 1987. The analyses of the crash which blame its severity on computerised programmed selling orders could become additional examples in support of Schiller's thesis. Schiller would say that the information technologies harnessed by the large corporations sacrificed international economic stability for the immediate interests of the corporations.

But is there a way out? Can the international webs of information technology be used for humane ends? Must information technologies only serve the needs of the large corporations? Schiller sees some glimmers of hope. He notes that his ideal of 'democratic communication' has rarely, if ever existed, in any political formation. He suggests that the emergence of over one hundred nations since the last world war offers some hope. While the voices of the emerging nations are small in comparison with the major powers, he feels that concerted political action could lead to a change in the balance of power. He also suggests that popular theatre, video and other fringe media activities could lead to a revitalisation of human communication. But when these relatively minor developments are compared with Schiller's overall analysis, one is left with little hope.

It is difficult to assess this work. Schiller does not argue a case in a conventional sense. Rather, he presents a case based on example. In the end the reader is overwhelmed by the weight of evidence and not by the force of argument. The book will be read and appreciated by those who share Schiller's vision of the world. But for those who require a more conventional argument *Information and the Crisis Economy* will provide less satisfaction.

**Peter B. White**  
La Trobe University

**Technical Progress and Soviet Economic Development** by *Ronald Amann and Julian Cooper (eds.)*  
(Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986), pp. 214, ISBN D-631-14572-9.

Soviet technological performance, for sometime, has preoccupied both the academicians as well as policy-makers in the East as well as in the West. This preoccupation is basically substantiated by the role the Soviet economy plays, and could play, in the world economy and in world politics. It also reflects the