

Those Talented Machines— How They'll Run Your Life



There's almost nothing that today's electronic brains can't do better—and faster—than you can!

By CARL BAKAL

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, the Air Force unveiled a machine with a most extraordinary talent: a mechanical translator capable of turning Russian into English far faster than any human being can. Whereas the average human needs quite a time to translate a page of Russian into English, the new device can do the same job in just 30 seconds!

The high-speed translator is, of course, that highly complex device known as a computer or "electronic brain." The heart of computers of this type is an elephantine memory mechanism in which are stored—in the form of some code—all the information and instructions needed for the job to be performed. In the case of the translator, the memory mechanism is a 10-inch, disk-shaped glass "dictionary" which contains a 55,000-word Russian-English vocabulary in the form of concentric tracks of black and white spots, each representing a word or phrase.

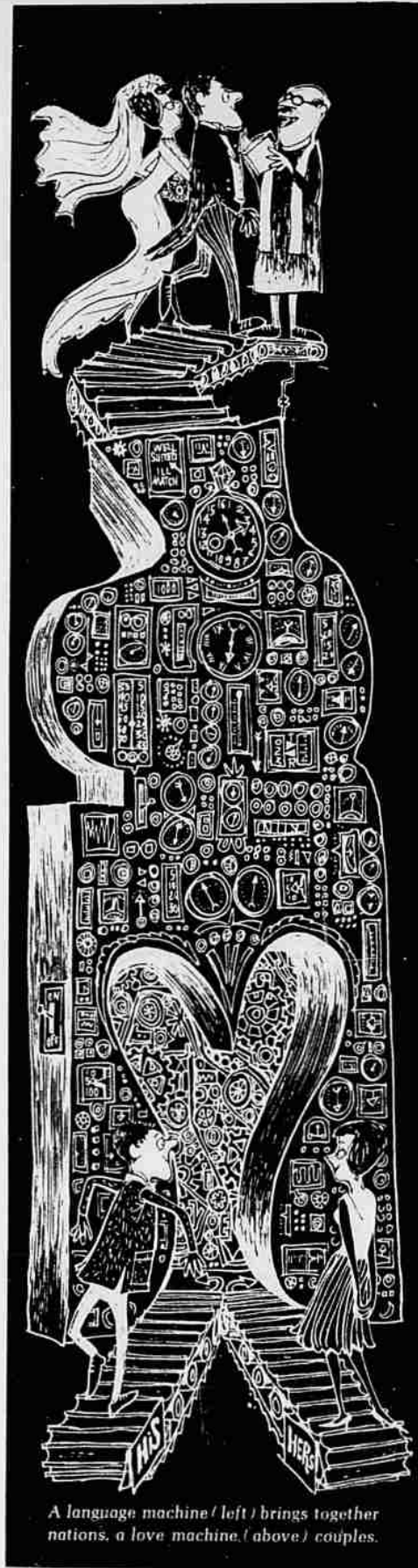
Electronic brains have been doing intricate tasks like this for years and promise to have a greater and greater impact on your everyday life.

In what may well presage a mechanical matchmaker of the future, stunt-master Art Linkletter some years ago used Univac, one of the electronic brains, on his "People Are Funny" TV show to match a young couple according to various characteristics. Univac has so far proved to be as reliable as a Cupid as it had previously been in predicting election results. For the machine-sponsored romance blossomed into marriage, and the Univac couple turned up on the Linkletter show recently to celebrate their first anniversary.

Whether machines will ever be devised to mend broken hearts is questionable, but electronic brains have already proved their ability to diagnose physical ailments relatively as well as physicians working with the same information. Into an IBM computer some years ago were popped punched cards summarizing the symptoms of 350 patients. Each card was coded on the basis of a questionnaire filled out by the patient.

The machine correctly identified 48 percent of the patients' ailments. A physician,

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A language machine (left) brings together nations, a love machine (above) couples.

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