

(Are you wired?). That's not really so, observe Barmé, a Senior Fellow at the Australian National University, and Ye, a Chinese journalist, but high technology has indeed arrived. "The question on everyone's mind—the Chinese government and its critics alike—is whether it will also be a cultural and political Trojan horse."

Chinese scientists put together the country's first extensive network of computers in 1993; two years later came the national university system, with e-mail connections to the outside world as well as within the country. However, Barmé and Ye point out, just a small number of graduate students and professors, mainly in science and engineering, actually have access to the Web.

Overall, only 150,000 Chinese are "wired"—not many in a land of 1.3 billion. According to a Beijing marketing firm, only 1.6 percent of Chinese families own a computer. Even so, the government is worried. The Public Security Bureau (PSB) in Beijing is attempting "to build a digital equivalent to China's Great Wall," Barmé and Ye write, by requiring Internet service providers to block access to "problem" sites abroad. Off-limits are most of the Western media, as well as the China News Digest, an on-line service run by Chinese exiles. "Eager for a slice of the action, the major global networking companies—Sun Microsystems, Cisco Systems, and Bay Networks, among others—cheerfully compete to supply the gear that makes [blocking access] possible," the authors observe.

Individuals who are, or wish to get, wired are closely regulated. They also need to pay: "Figure a monthly net-plus-phone bill of Y350 (US\$42)—roughly half a recent college graduate's monthly salary," say the authors.

The regime makes use of the information technology itself, of course, Barmé and Ye note. "The ever-vigilant PSB [is linked by a closed network] to every major hotel and guest house where foreigners



Computer keyboards can't accommodate the 3,000 Chinese characters. One solution is software that recognizes written characters.

stay. The minute you register at your five-star joint-venture hotel, Comrade X [at the PSB] and his associates know you're there."

Ultimately, the regime may find the information revolution impossible to control. "The one certainty," say the authors, "given the headstrong Chinese bureaucracy and the Maoist mentality that spawned it, is that China's adaptations of the Net will be unique, and probably bizarre by Western standards."

## Russia's Science Crisis

"Rough Times in Russia: Post-Soviet Science Faces a New Crisis" by Dan Vergano, in *Science News* (May 10, 1997), 1719 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

American scientists may bemoan the tighter research budgets of the post-Cold War era, but their plight is nothing next to that of their Russian counterparts. "Of all the people reeling from the collapse of the Soviet Union," writes Vergano, a science writer, "scientists rank among those who have fallen the furthest in terms of pay, prestige, and professional opportunity."

In 1991, the Soviet Union boasted a scien-

tific work force of 1.5 million people, and a big research budget, as much as 80 percent of it for military projects. Since then, the number of working scientists, Vergano reports, has plummeted by an estimated 600,000, or 40 percent.

Western security analysts had feared an exodus of Russian scientists to other nations, he says, but "an internal brain drain" has taken place instead. Economist Irina

Dezhina, of Moscow's Institute for the Economy in Transition, estimates that for every researcher who leaves the country, 10 have jumped into businesses such as banking or computer sales. The Soviet Union probably had three times as many scientists as necessary, says Harley Balzer, a regional specialist at Georgetown University, but it is largely the "creative" ones who are getting out of the field. "Russian science is deteriorating faster than I can write about it," he claims.

U.S. and other Western aid has helped to keep Russian nuclear scientists from taking their knowledge to hostile nations, Vergano notes. The U.S. Department of Energy's Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention, for example, supports some 2,000 former weapons scientists in an effort to direct their

research into other fields. The International Science and Technology Center in Moscow, funded by the U.S. State Department, has spent \$121 million for the same purpose.

For most Russian scientists, however, the situation is grim indeed. One-fourth of the country's 4,500 science institutes received no funding from Moscow at all last year. In some locations, scientists went on hunger strikes. The director of a nuclear weapons laboratory, reportedly despondent over his inability to pay his researchers, killed himself.

The science institutes are sometimes part of the problem. "Horror stories abound," Vergano writes, "of scientists who win rare grants, only to see the funds disappear to pay utility bills or even, as many suspect, to line the pockets of administrators."

## *Europe's March of Folly*

"European Union—A Disaster in the Making" by David Pryce-Jones, in *Commentary* (June 1997), 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Scheduled to adopt a common currency (the Euro) by 1999, the nation-states of Europe continue to march toward some sort of political federation—and also to disaster, warns Pryce-Jones, a British political analyst and novelist.

"Europe" today, he notes, "still has no sovereignty, in the true meaning of that word, but is rather a stew of German federalism, French *dirigisme* [state intervention], protectionism, corporatism, and mass welfarism—all enshrined in an Orwellian language naturally known as Eurospeak and intelligible, if at all, only to the presiding Eurocrats."

But every European country, including Britain, he points out, now has two heads of state—its own and the president of the European Union (EU), Jacques Santer—"two capitals, two parliaments, two flags, and, above all, two systems of law: national law, and the law decreed by the European Court of Justice." Conflicting statutes are breeding a disrespect for law itself. "European elites increasingly treat public life as a vast patronage system, there for the plundering," he says. Almost \$10 billion of the EU's \$89 billion budget for 1995 "disappeared through corruption and fraud," according to auditors, but unofficial estimates are much higher.

The rise of a supranational Europe is producing unintended consequences, Pryce-Jones writes. "As the nation-state surrenders

to something larger than itself, it is leaving behind a vacuum, and ethnicity is filling that vacuum fast. . . . Basques in Spain, Flemings in Belgium, the IRA in Britain, Corsicans in France, all threaten the social and political cohesion of their respective nation-states." Nationalist xenophobia is increasing. Europe's roughly 20 million immigrants, legal and illegal, are often blamed by popular opinion for weakening the nation-states' old identities.

"Historically," Pryce-Jones argues, "the nation-state has satisfied but also controlled nationalism, which otherwise builds up like underground gas, to explode when it can." But the new Europe's weakened states aren't as effective. "Strange new groupings" have flourished, such as the Northern League in Italy, Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front in France, and Jorg Haider's Austrian Freedom Party.

The creation of a supranational Europe is "a utopian experiment which is mustering the very same destructive forces it claims to be eliminating," Pryce-Jones concludes. Though the nation-states are surrendering their sovereignty, national interests remain. "On the day these interests collide," he fears, "there will be nothing except the Euro and a half-formulated anti-American ideology to hold together the artificial scaffolding that is Brussels, and ward off a general collapse in anger, disillusionment, and violence."