

Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Emigré Enterprise

Most immigrant scientists from the former Soviet Union are lucky if they can get a job at least remotely related to their areas of expertise. But one such scientist, cryogenics expert and software engineer Alexander Narinsky, has figured out how to work the system and help colleagues in Russia at the same time.

Narinsky works as a computer programmer in Fairfax County, Virginia, but in his spare time, he has banded together with a fellow émigré, electrical engineer Alex Stone, to set up a company that will arrange for Russian scientists and engineers to be used "on the spot" to perform scientific and engineering projects, such as computer software programming jobs, for American companies. It's a win-win proposition, says Narinsky: U.S. firms can get jobs done for about a tenth of what it would cost to hire local professionals—and scientists in the new Commonwealth of Independent States, whose salaries may be worth no more than \$20 a month, will get hard currency to help tide them over lean times.

The new group, International Scientific and Technology Communications, is as yet little more than a name and a fax number. But it has already come to a preliminary agreement with a small company in Springfield, Virginia, Sorites Group Inc., which designs software programs for economic forecasting. Sorites president John Sneed says the kind of work his firm does can be broken down into autonomous units that can be farmed out to "anyone with access to a PC." At the moment, he says, labor is expected to come from "a collection of free-lancers in Moscow"—in fact, he now has 60 résumés of Russians ready to go to work for him. And he says if things work out, the company may set up a Moscow office. Sneed points

out that contractees could amass several thousand dollars a year each—enough to induce some top scientific talent to drop whatever they are doing for a little moonlighting. "Properly done, this could sustain the Russian scientific establishment in relatively grand style because of the wage disparity between East and West," he says.

Narinsky, who started his U.S. career working in a pizza parlor, and Stone, who launched his as a New York cab driver, are betting on it: They see no limit to their potential role as middlemen between Russia's starving scientific and technical community and lucrative markets in the West.

Stanford Responds To Sexism Charges

Gerald Silverberg, the Stanford neurosurgeon who was accused of sexism by his colleague, Frances Conley, has been removed from his position as

acting chairman of neurosurgery.

Conley resigned from Stanford's neurosurgery department last July, after Silverberg was named acting department chair. She said the appointment reflected tacit approval of his sexist

attitudes—which, she alleged, included his habit of calling women "honey"—as well as a general pattern of sexism at Stanford.

But Conley returned to Stanford last September after the university appointed a committee to look into her allegations. It was that committee's confidential report that prompted Stanford president Donald Kennedy and medical school dean David Korn to meet with Silverberg and ask him to step down. *Science* was unable to reach Silverberg, but last week he told reporters that he had seen the report, and that it men-



Silverberg

tioned "minor insensitivities" on his part, but contained nothing that would require disciplinary action. "I don't believe I have done anything wrong," he told *The San Francisco Chronicle*, "but I understand they

[Korn and Kennedy] have an obligation to protect the university's good name." Neither Korn nor Kennedy would comment on the matter.

Wanted: Profs Who Will Teach

Another report decrying the imbalance between teaching and research in higher education may not seem particularly noteworthy—except this one is by some of the nation's hottest young researchers. Namely, 53 recipients of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) prestigious Presidential Young Investigator's (PYI) awards.

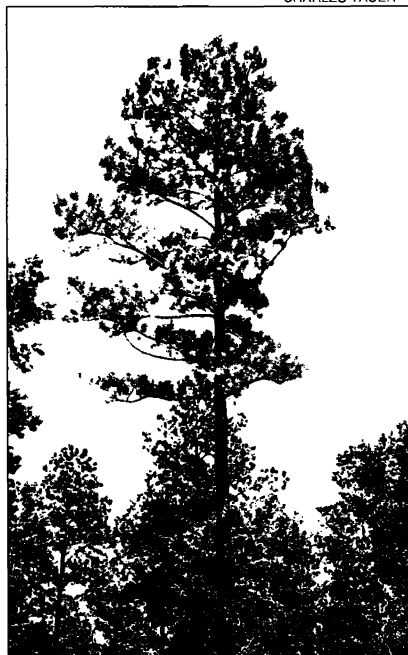
"The lack of support, indeed, occasional downright discouragement, of faculty achievements in teaching...is among the most pressing problems in higher education," say the former PYIs in "America's Academic Future," a report based on an NSF-sponsored meeting held last November in Washington. The group contends that academic tenure and promotion criteria need to be restructured to stress teaching as well as research. In addition, they recommend the endowment of more chairs for teaching excellence, more funding for instructional innovation, the development of a peer-based measure of teaching quality, and legislation that would spur industry to contribute technology and employees to education.

The PYIs also say the federal budget should put more emphasis on undergraduate education. One ironic step in that direction has taken place already: The PYI awards no longer exist, having been replaced by two new programs, one of which is the Presidential

Unraveling the Loblolly's Secrets

CHARLES TAUER

Breeding better trees has not been the sort of project guaranteed to win a scientist fast tenure. They take years to mature and decades may pass before the progeny of a cross can be evaluated. But Ron Sederoff and David O'Malley of North Carolina State University at Raleigh have now created a shortcut with a genetic map of the loblolly pine, a major source of wood pulp and paper products as well as timber that normally takes 12-15 years to mature. Using polymerase chain reaction techniques to amplify and analyze pine DNA, the researchers plotted about 200 markers on the tree's twelve pairs of chromosomes—in effect, the most extensive map ever made of a woody plant. Within a couple of years associations will emerge between the genetic markers and specific traits. By screening the DNA of seedlings, scientists will be able to know which trees they want to run with. "In the past, a lot of time and space were wasted on crosses and offspring that did not amount to much," says Sederoff. No longer.



Faculty Fellows, designed for those who turn in stellar performances in both research and teaching.

Postmaster Follows The Times

What do the postal service and biotechnology have in common? United States Postmaster General Anthony M. Frank. Frank is leaving his job this month to help run an Oakland, California, biotech company called Acrogen that makes vaccines and diagnostic test kits.

Frank is a former banking executive who co-founded Acrogen in 1987, then left in 1988 for Washington, D.C., where he has attempted to bring private enterprise-style efficiency to postal practices. But getting the mail there on time is not where his heart is. "I love to see the interaction of science and money," he says.

Rockets for Sale

For sale or rent by owner: rockets, rescue spacecraft, automated docking systems, ground antennas, one used space station in constant need of repair. Priced for quick turnover.—Contact B. Yeltsin.

The Russians haven't yet resorted to the classifieds, but the collapse of the Soviet Union—along with its huge military budget—has forced its reeling space program to auction off some of its wares simply to survive. These assets, which include the Mir space station, the huge Energia rocket, and the Soyuz-TM spacecraft, are "international treasures" that may become "endangered species," said Roald Sagdeev, former head of the Soviet Institute for Space Research, at a Senate hearing called by Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) last week.

Outgoing NASA administrator Richard Truly testified that the agency is particularly interested in the Soyuz-TM, Russia's version of the old Apollo vehicles, as well as an automated

Conservation Collaboration in Kenya



Zebras are among hundreds of species at Mpala Ranch.

Kenya, Princeton, and the Smithsonian Institution are getting together to launch a center for conservation research on Kenya's Laikipia Plateau. The new entity, the Mpala Wildlife Research Trust, is based on a 48,500-acre cattle ranch owned by Baltimore, Maryland, businessman George L. Small, who in 1989 created the Mpala Wildlife Foundation. Anthropologist Richard Leakey, director of the newly created Kenyan Wildlife Services, is one of the prime movers behind the plan. At a press conference at the Kenyan Embassy in Washington, D.C., Leakey explained that the facility is expected to train Kenyans for conservation and wildlife management. "We do not want this to be a foreign research center in our country for the benefit of foreigners," Leakey said. Early on, however, most projects will be those cooked up by Princetonians—for example, Daniel Rubenstein, chairman of Princeton's department of ecology and evolutionary biology, headed out to Mpala in January with a group of students for research on the longterm effects of grazing by wildlife and cattle. Smithsonian scientists are also planning to put together a database of zoological and ecological information gathered at the ranch.

docking and rendezvous system. Truly said the Soyuz-TM could serve as the "assured crew return vehicle" required for the proposed U.S. space station for use in shuttle delays, medical crises, and other emergencies. Technical teams from NASA may soon travel to Russia to evaluate this option, according to Truly.

And then there are the large ground antennas that formed the Soviet Union's deep space network. By acquiring tracking time on these, Truly said, "we could get a great portion of the Galileo mission done." If the troubled spacecraft's high-gain antenna cannot be fixed, NASA would use the extra ground stations to ensure a nonstop flow of data from Galileo's one working transmitter.

Added Science for Young Minds

A mathematician at the University of California, Riverside, has taken a widely used seventh grade social studies textbook—Houghton Mifflin's *Across the Centuries*—to task for what he calls "a pervasive pattern of flaws, goofs, and misunderstandings" of math and science.

At one point, notes John de Pillis, the book describes an Indian belief that the body consists of the five "natural elements" earth, water, fire, wind, and space under the heading "Science Context." At another, the text correctly defines the "knot" as a unit of nautical speed, but then employs the redundant phrase "knots per

hour." What's more, de Pillis says, the book is prone to sloppy, content-free generalizations—such as stating that Isaac Newton's "biggest contribution" was "providing an explanation for the universe which was very large in scope."

When de Pillis wrote to Houghton Mifflin pointing up some of the book's weaknesses, company vice president Ray Shepard admitted some errors but would not acknowledge others. For instance, Shepard wrote, "We do not say the Indian idea of five natural elements is science." And he defended as sound several historical examples de Pillis had attacked as misleading—such as one suggesting that Ptolemy's biggest mistake was wrongly estimating the earth's size, when Ptolemy's bigger goof was placing Earth at the center of the universe. Contacted by *Science*, Shepard requested time to compile some documentation but did not return subsequent telephone calls.

High Biology Posts

Two biologists have just received an additional measure of job security: Nobel laureate Torsten Wiesel, who took over as president of Rockefeller University upon the resignation in December of David Baltimore, has been appointed to a 3-year term. And Jasper Rine, who has been acting director of Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory's Human Genome Center since the July departure of Charles Cantor, has been named the center's director.



Torsten Wiesel