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COVER: "Modern science and technology is blooming like a spring flower," reads one of the many posters that emphasize and encourage China's efforts to modernize. See stories beginning on p. 284. (All photos in China section by R. J. Trotter unless otherwise credited.)

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The Chinese Experiment

China is the world's largest ongoing experiment. A variety of scientific, technological, political and economic ingredients are in the test tube, and everyone is waiting to see what happens. Can the Chinese leadership's recently revived interest in and emphasis on science and technology help them modernize and march into the 21st century in step with the industrialized nations of the world? We'll have to wait a while for an answer, but a group of U.S. science journalists* recently had the opportunity to see the Chinese experiment up close.

Our 15-day, five-city tour was arranged by the Scientific and Technological Association of the People's Republic of China and jointly sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the National Association of Science Writers. The tour began in Beijing (Peking) and proceeded south by rail and air through Changzhou, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Guangzhou (Canton). We met with government officials in charge of science policy, scientists, technicians, university professors and physicians. We saw scientific institutes, research facilities, universities, hospitals, factories, farms and communes. Our hosts were more than accommodating in their attempts to show us what we wanted to see and our requests, when logistically possible, were usually met.

The tour was not supposed to be political, but politics plays a pervasive role in Chinese life. Much of what we saw and heard had ideological content, and it wasn't always easy to tell where politics left off and science began. We saw many of the things we had asked to see, but we also

saw many of the things our hosts wanted us to see. And basically, they wanted us to see two things—how "backward" they are in most areas of science and technology, and how hard they are trying to catch up. A clear message was that they want and need our help. An implied message was that they are hard-working potential contributors who deserve our help.

The seriousness and enthusiasm with which the Chinese have taken up the challenge of modernization was evident throughout our tour, especially in their efforts to bring science to the people. Signs, posters, banners and symbols of modern science and technology are visible everywhere. Children and teenagers are encouraged to become actively involved in, read and write about science. Within the past year the Chinese have organized 4,000 popular science writers and have produced 1,500 more science publications than in the previous year. They have at least 30 popular science periodicals, including the Chinese translation of SCIENCE NEWS.

This issue of SCIENCE NEWS describes much of the science and technology we saw in China, with an emphasis on Chinese medicine—the one major area in which differences between the Chinese and Western approaches are most evident, and the area in which we are most likely to learn from the Chinese.

Two weeks certainly provides only a brief glimpse of a country as large and as complex as China, but we are grateful for everything our hosts were able to show us and we wish them success in their experiment.

—Robert J. Trotter



*Barbara J. Culliton, chairman; David Perlman, the San Francisco Chronicle, deputy chairman; George Alexander, the Los Angeles Times; Frederic Golden, TIME; Ronald Kotulak, the Chicago Tribune; Joann Rodgers, the Hearst papers; Cristine Russell, the Washington Star; Walter Sullivan, The New York Times; Robert Trotter, SCIENCE NEWS.