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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Programs it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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Letters

Indo-European inaccuracies

A sentence in the article "Indo-European Pursuits" (SN: 2/25/95, p.120) implied that Turkic and Mongolian are Indo-European languages: "Four successive spreads of Indo-European language families followed: proto-Indo-European around 5,500 years ago, Iranian about 4,000 years ago, Turkic nearly 2,000 years ago, and Mongolian between 1,500 and 1,000 years ago."

I seem to recall that Turkic and Mongolian are *not* Indo-European languages; rather, they are classified as Altaic languages. Have they been reclassified?

*Kathleen Meyer
Bemidji, Minn.*

The sentence should read, "Four successive spreads of language families followed...."

— B. Bower

Still another crisis will face the Kremlin

when the Feb. 25 issue of SCIENCE NEWS reaches Moscow. The map on p.121, depicting hypothetical homelands of the speakers of proto-Indo-European, shows a number of big green Xs labeled "Bodies found in China" — located right in the heart of Russian Siberia.

*Steven Lloyd
El Segundo, Calif.*

If Chinese authorities are disturbed by the historical possibility of technological imports by Europeans, they may be more upset by a modern "foreign influence" which exiles Xinjiang Province to central Siberia. And whatever their political sensibilities, residents of the Ukraine will surely be dismayed to learn that they are now in the midst of the troubled Caucasus.

Perhaps the meeting planned to reconcile disputes between archaeologists and linguists should include cartographers and geographers.

*Roger Newman
Washington, D.C.*

Both readers are right — but the errors were ours, not the researchers'. — The editors

Here is a brief synopsis of a story passed on to a Hmong student by her grandfather:

Far, far in the past, the Hmong people lived in China. They were tall and strong, with blond hair and blue eyes. A conflict arose between the Hmong and the Chinese. The Chinese slaughtered the Hmong men and forcibly married the Hmong women. To prevent the annihilation of their culture, the Hmong survivors undertook their long trek out of China and eventually ended up in the mountains of Southeast Asia.

If this story is actually an icon of the Hmong culture and not just an old man's tale, it would be fascinating for linguists (and geneticists) to take a closer look at possible links between the Hmong and the mysterious inhabitants of ancient Eurasia.

Old stories often hold surprising truths.

*Susan Harrison
Clements, Calif.*

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