

## Michel Barnier New Foreign Minister

*After reshuffle, Dominique de Villepin is appointed minister of the interior and internal security*

**F**OLLOWING THE MARCH 28 regional elections, the government led by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin has been revamped and now counts 43 ministers, minister delegates and secretaries of state. Among them, 14—including 5 ministers—have been nominated to government for the first time. Two of the most powerful ministries have changed hands: Dominique de Villepin, formerly the minister of foreign affairs, is the new interior and internal security minister, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be headed by 53-year-old Michel Barnier.

"The new government will have to pursue the course of the reforms indispensable for the future of our country," said President Jacques Chirac during the first cabinet meeting



**Dominique de Villepin (right) congratulates his successor, Michel Barnier.**

(Courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs - F. de La Mure)

of the new government on April 2.

The new foreign minister, Michel Barnier, declared himself "touched by the trust shown in me by both the

president and prime minister, and proud of succeeding Dominique de Villepin, who headed this Ministry with talent, intelligence and energy."

Barnier will be assisted by two minister delegates. Claudie Haigneré will be in charge of European affairs—Europe's first female astronaut, she was the minister delegate for research and new technology under the previous Raffarin government—and Xavier Darcos will be responsible for cooperation, development and francophony.

Michel Barnier had previously been the European commissioner for regional policy and institutional reform, a position he had held since 1999. While in Brussels, Barnier managed the second largest E.U. budget after agriculture,

spending around 30 billion euros a year on infrastructure projects in the E.U.'s poorest areas.

He was first elected to the French National Assembly in 1978, when he was 27, then he became a Senator from 1997 to 1999 for his Savoie region. He was appointed minister delegate for European affairs under the Juppé Government (1995-1997). He also very successfully presided over the Organizational Committee for the 1992 Winter Olympic

Games, which were held in Albertville, Savoie.

Shortly after his nomination, Barnier explained that "the construction of Europe will be at the core of France's foreign dealings," under his leadership, but that he will not neglect France's many

other diplomatic relationships and initiatives. His appointment is considered a sign of the French government's goodwill towards the European Union, which is currently facing major challenges and so needs the support of its strongest members to implement necessary reforms.

Speaking of the crucial French-American relationship, Barnier emphasized that he "will be working with the U.S. to recast and renovate the long-lasting alliance with our American friends." He also called for strong U.S. ties with the European continent in general; according to the new foreign affairs minister, "the American people have to trust Europe, and of course this trust has to be reciprocated." 

### COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

*Despite several important changes, Minister of Defense Michèle Alliot-Marie, Minister of Justice Dominique Perben, Minister of Agriculture Hervé Gaymard and Minister for Sports Jean-François Lamour have retained their portfolios. The principal ministers forming the new government are:*

**Ministre d'Etat,  
 Minister for the Economy,  
 Finance and Industry**

Nicolas Sarkozy

**Minister of Education  
 and Research**

François Fillon

**Minister of the Interior  
 and Internal Security**

Dominique de Villepin

**Minister of Labor**

Jean-Louis Borloo

**Minister of Justice**

Dominique Perben

**Minister of Defense**

Michèle Alliot-Marie

**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Michel Barnier

**Minister of Health**

Phillipe Douste-Blazy

**Minister of Agriculture**

Hervé Gaymard

**Minister of Culture  
 and Communication**

Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres

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AMBASSADE DE FRANCE  
 AUX ETATS-UNIS



## FRANCE PAYS TRIBUTE TO VICTIMS OF MADRID BOMBINGS

On March 15, French President Jacques Chirac paid tribute to the 190 victims of the March 11 Madrid train bombings by laying a wreath at the Spanish Embassy in Paris, and observing three minutes of silence. Sirens blared and church bells rang out in Paris and across France at noon in honor of the victims, while the flags at the Elysée presidential palace and at French embassies throughout the world were flown at half-mast. The metros in Paris briefly came to a halt, buses stopped and shoppers in the Galeries Lafayette department store froze in place as all of France showed its solidarity with the people of Spain, and with all victims of terrorism.

On March 24, Chirac attended the victims' state funerals in Madrid's Almudena cathedral, along with 15 other heads of state and government, including King Juan Carlos of Spain, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

**FRENCH PRESENCE INCREASED IN KOSOVO**

French President Jacques Chirac, in order to confront the resurgent ethnic violence in Kosovo that has left at least 31 dead and more than 500 injured, pledged France's support to the president of Serbia-Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, on March 19. Specifically, Chirac announced the deployment of 400 soldiers to reinforce France's peace-keeping operations in the region. The French contingent in Kosovo already numbers 2,500, representing 16 percent of U.N. forces deployed in the province.

**FRANCE AND INDIA CONDUCT NAVAL EXERCISES**

Recent developments have furthered French beliefs that strong bilateral ties with India as well as a strong naval presence in the seas around the sub-continent are critical in the fight against terrorism and regional instability. From April 2 to 15, the two countries' navies will thus pursue their "Varuna" series of exercises, which were launched in November 2001, by conducting joint military exercises in the Arabian Sea. French-Indian relations will be further consolidated by India's decision to build at least six French designed *Scorpene* submarines in its Mazagaon shipyard.

**ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET IMMORTALIZED**

Writer Alain Robbe-Grillet, 81, was elected on March 25 to the Académie Française, the prestigious guardian institution of the French language's purity. Robbe-Grillet will succeed Maurice Rheims, who passed away last year. With more than 10 novels to his name, including *Dans le Labyrinthe* (1959), *Pour un Nouveau Roman* (1963), *La Belle Captive* (1976), *Djinn* (1981), *Angélique ou l'Enchantement* (1988) and *Les Derniers Jours de Corinthe* (1994), the former agricultural engineer is primarily recognized as the theoretician of the "nouveau roman" (new novel) movement, which he helped found. This movement calls for the rethinking of traditional, linear plot-lines, and advocates leaving as much to the imagination as possible rather than relying too much on description.

**FRENCH-FINANCED HUNGARIAN HOLOCAUST MUSEUM INAUGURATED**

The French government has helped finance the construction of the new Hungarian Holocaust Museum which will open its doors on April 15. France contributed \$500,000 to the museum's construction, a significant portion of its overall cost of \$7 million. French minister of the interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, who is of Hungarian origin, is set to attend the inauguration of the museum, which will take place exactly 60 years after Hungary's Jews were confined to ghettos before their deportation.

**E.U. Unites Against Terrorism**

*E.U. leaders agree on many vigorous new measures during the March 25 European summit*

**T**HE EUROPEAN UNION'S heads of state and of government met on March 25 in Brussels for a European summit overshadowed by the terrible train bombings that had stunned Spain and the world two weeks before. The 25 leaders focused therefore on reinforcing their common anti-terrorism policies and agreed on a number of steps, notably the creation of a Counter terrorism Coordinator to better harmonize their counter terrorism efforts (former Deputy Interior Minister Gijs de Vries of the Netherlands was appointed to the position).

The leaders discussed a package of counter terrorism measures in three major areas: judicial cooperation, operational cooperation and the fight against terrorism's financial networks. They agreed to the implementation of a pan-European

arrest warrant policy, and to the strengthening of Eurojust (the European Justice Agency) and Europol (the European Police Agency). Other measures, to be enacted by 2005, include making visas and passports more secure through the use of biometric data, forming a common European border agency, and coordinating the intelligence services of banks and other financial organizations in order to disrupt terrorist financing.

The E.U. leaders also agreed on the importance of adopting a European Constitution no later than June 17-18, when a European Council will be held shortly after the June 13 European parliamentary elections. With the European Union's enlargement to take place in May, it has become ever more pressing to reform its institutions in order to accommodate 10 new nations while preserving a single, European identity. 

**Queen Elizabeth II Visits France**

*The monarch's state visit marks the centennial of the Entente Cordiale between the two nations*

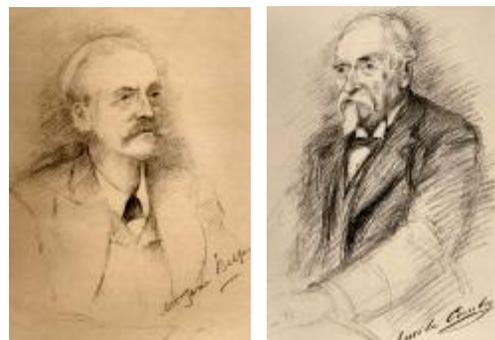
**O**NE HUNDRED YEARS AGO this April, France and the United Kingdom ended centuries of rivalry and mutual miscomprehension with the signature of the Franco-British Accords, commonly referred to as the Entente Cordiale (please see NFF issue 03.14 for more information). In celebration of this important anniversary, Queen

Elizabeth II of England and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, made an official state visit to France from April 5 to 7. This marked the Queen's fourth state visit to France, making it the country she has most visited in her capacity as Britain's head of state.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were received by French President Jacques Chirac, and a state banquet was held at the Palais de l'Élysée in the Queen's honor.

The Queen also addressed the French parliament, paid a visit to the Saumur Cavalry School in western France, previewed the future British art room in the Louvre, and toured the headquarters of Airbus in Toulouse.

The official events were accompanied by public events, such as concerts, tournaments, and art exhibits. The proceeds were donated to the fight against cancer—a philanthropic focal point in both countries.



**British Prime Minister Arthur James Balfour and his French counterpart Emile Combes, whose governments signed the Entente Cordiale in 1904.**

(From the album *Les promoteurs de l'Entente Cordiale*, 1909, illustrated by Noël Dorville and edited by G. Gounouilhou)

The Franco-British accords were signed on April 8, 1904, and ushered in an era of peace and cooperation between Britain and France. The two countries have decided to give a new impetus to the Entente Cordiale on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the initial agreement, and have reinforced their cooperation in several areas, including defense, peacekeeping in Africa, environmental protection, government reform, education and immigration.

For more information, visit [www.entente-cordiale.org](http://www.entente-cordiale.org). 

**Bush to Attend D-Day Commemorations**

*The U.S. President will join French President Chirac on June 6*

**T**O MARK THE 60TH anniversary of D-Day and the liberation of France, one of the greatest instances of transatlantic cooperation and friendship, President George W. Bush has accepted the invitation to attend the anniversary ceremonies in Normandy, along with other allied heads of state who were invited by President Jacques Chirac.

Ceremonies will take place throughout France on June 6, with one prevailing theme: honoring the valor and courage of the veterans who fought for freedom. This will likely be the last major anniversary celebration which a large number of veterans will be able to attend. For more information, please visit our Web site, [www.ambafrance-us.org](http://www.ambafrance-us.org). 



**An American cemetery in Normandy, France.**  
(Courtesy: Illinois State University)



## Clinton and Chirac Launch AIDS Initiative

*The Clinton Foundation and France will join forces to combat AIDS in Africa*

**P**RESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC and former U.S. President Bill Clinton have joined forces in the battle against HIV/AIDS. Clinton has taken on the battle against this deadly disease, which affects an estimated 42 million people, as a goal for his Clinton Foundation, founded at the end of his presidency in 2001. The current and former presidents agreed that the Clinton Foundation and France will combine their efforts during a private meeting between the two at the Elysée Palace on March 12.

The agreement signed by President Chirac calls for French cooperation with the Clinton Foundation, allowing for aid to francophone countries such as Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, and Haiti, which are all struggling with the disease. This is in line with France's strong commitment to the international fight against AIDS. France



Former U.S. President Bill Clinton and French President Jacques Chirac

(Courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

also plans to work with the Clinton Foundation on two other projects: fostering greater hospital cooperation between the developed and developing countries, with the participation of the French ESTHER program (*Ensemble pour une Solidarité Thérapeutique Hospitalière en Réseau*); and putting pressure on multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the World Health Organization, and the World AIDS Fund to help push for fair and affordable HIV/AIDS treatment programs throughout the world.

Five leading pharmaceutical companies agreed in January to reduce their prices for HIV tests and to cooperate with the Clinton Foundation in 15 African and Caribbean countries. By 2008, the Foundation hopes that these cheaper tests will be able to help 5 million people reach quicker diagnoses, and that this will contribute toward finding a cure. ■

## Forum USA 2004

*Forum promotes French science in America*

**T**HE 2004 EDITION of Forum USA took place successively in Boston (April 3-5), Chicago (April 6) and San Francisco (April 8 and 9). Organized each year since 1990 by the Mission for Science and Technology at the French Embassy, Forum USA is geared toward helping young French researchers, engineers, scientists and future businessmen, who currently work in North America, to meet French companies and explore employment opportunities in France.

In a special session in Boston on April 4, Bernard Larroutour and Christian Bréchet, directors of the French National Center for Scientific Research and the French National Institute for Medical Research, respectively, outlined their organizations' future roles in French research.

Created for young French nationals, the Forum remains open to candidates of all nationalities. Indeed,

### BNP PARIBAS BUYS U.S. BANK

France's largest bank, BNP Paribas, which ranks among Europe's largest global financial conglomerates, bought the stock of Community First Bankshares Inc, a North Dakota-based bank holding company with 46 branches in Colorado. The French group paid \$1.2 billion for the acquisition, which will strengthen its presence in the United States, where it will now control more than 500 agencies and \$44 billion in assets through its subsidiary BancWest. The Community First banks will be renamed Bank of the West, and Colorado will rank second only to California in terms of BNP branch locations. Present in 17 states, BNP Paribas is seeking to increase its presence in the western United States, and is expected to acquire more American banks in the region.

this year saw a dramatic increase in the percentage of non-French participants who came to discover what France has to offer in the field of science. ■

## Big Mac Not So Bad According to French Nutritionists

**A**CCORDING TO THE BOOK in second place on the French nonfiction best-seller list, food served by the routinely criticized American franchise McDonald's may not be as unhealthy as conventional wisdom dictates. French nutritionists Jean-Michel Cohen and Patrick Serog have declared in their *Savoir Manger* food guide that the McDonald's Big Mac and cheeseburger are actually healthier than many traditional French dishes.

Cohen and Serog analyzed the nutritional benefits of 5,000 foods available in France, including items such as jams, ice creams, sandwiches,



Le Big Mac

(Courtesy: McDonald's)

soups, candies, and breads. The Big Mac and cheeseburger were praised by the two dietary researchers because of the burgers' ratio of protein to saturated fat: 25 grams to 11 grams for the Big Mac and 15 grams to 6 grams for the cheeseburger.

Before you run to your nearest McDonald's for some healthy fare, however, there is one rather significant catch: McDonald's French restaurants primarily use French-made ingredients. Indeed, according to Anna Rozenich, a corporate spokesperson for McDonald's, "McDonald's may have been born in the United States, but in France, it's very much French." ■

### U.S. PR FOR FRENCH ECONOMY

The French Agency for International Investment (AFII) decided in March to call upon the services of the American public relations company Ogilvy & Mather to launch a worldwide campaign promoting France as an ideal place for foreign investment. The 10-million euro project will run until 2006 as it seeks to bring in business from around the globe. AFII has identified the U.S. as one of its most important target countries in this campaign.

### JEANNE D'ARC MAKES BERTH IN BALTIMORE

The French helicopter carrier *Jeanne d'Arc* and the destroyer *Georges Leygues*, which form the French Navy's training squadron, made berth in Baltimore from March 24 to March 29. The purpose of the squadron's visit was to complete the midshipmen's studies—many of those on-board attend the French Naval Academy—by familiarizing them with different cultures and civilizations. This visit, the only one scheduled in the United States this year, featured a cocktail reception on March 25 hosted by the commanding officer of the squadron, Commodore Marc de Briançon.

### AMERICAN DIRECTS MUSIC AT NOTRE-DAME CATHEDRAL

This spring, American musician John Nelson marks his sixth year directing sacred music at the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The biannual concerts which Nelson directs at Christmas and Easter have become something of a tradition at the famous Parisian cathedral. Although Nelson has led a distinguished career in secular music, directing at the Juilliard School, the New York City Met, and Carnegie Hall, among others, sacred music has always held a special, powerful meaning for him.

### SPIRIT AIRLINES CHOOSES AIRBUS

Spirit Airlines, a low-cost American air carrier, announced on March 19 plans to purchase 35 Airbus aircraft valued at \$2 billion. According to Laura Bennett, Spirit's spokeswoman, the airline also has the option of buying 60 additional planes.

### 1 DOLLAR FOR 1 EURO PROMOTION

At the Paris-Saint-Ouen flea markets, dollars may not be as good as gold, but they are definitely as good as euros. The flea market has initiated a successful "un euro = un dollar" operation on selected dates in order to attract American customers. The current exchange rate of approximately 1 euro to 1.2 dollars makes the promotion a good deal for customers paying in dollars. Although it is impossible to tell how many merchants will be participating, many are expected to.

## Major French players in the construction of Europe:



**Robert Schuman**  
(1886-1963)

He advocated the rapprochement of the French and German nations through the 1951 creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the basis of today's European Union.

**Jean Monnet**  
(1888-1979)



Monnet is considered the "architect of the European Union." He conceived of the ECSC and believed in building Europe incrementally and gradually.



**François Mitterrand**  
(1916-1996)

French President

between 1981-1995, Mitterrand was a committed European and his friendship with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl made possible the creation of the euro.

**Jacques Delors** (1925-)

Delors served as president of the European Commission



from 1985-1994, and was instrumental in pushing European integration forward, by urging the creation of a single market and a single currency.



**Valéry Giscard d'Estaing**  
(1926-)

Former French

President (1974-1981) Giscard d'Estaing became chairman of the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2001. It proposed a draft constitution in July 2003.

**Simone Veil** (1927-)

Simone Veil held several ministerial positions in France before being elected the first female President of the European Parliament in 1979. In 1998, she was appointed as a member of the Constitutional Council.



# At the heart of the E.U.

## France, Long a Proponent of European Enlargement



**M**AY 1 WILL MARK a new step in the history of European integration with the adherence of 10 new member states to the E.U. France, which has played a decisive role in Europe's enlargement process, has largely seen enlargement as a moral duty vis-à-vis countries whose tragic history of oppression long cut them off from Western Europe.

The upcoming enlargement was envisioned by French officials since the start of the European process, over 50 years ago. Robert Schuman, who suggested the creation of the European community in the fifties, argued that central and eastern Europe would eventually join as well. France has always



**The European Union (15 current members in yellow, 10 new members in blue, potential future members in purple)**

(Courtesy: Delegation of the European Commission to the United States)

believed that an ambitious enlargement would consolidate peace and stability. Therefore France was one of the first countries to support the launch of the enlargement process in 1998.

France sees many advantages in reuniting the European continent. As well as symbolizing the end of totalitarianism in eastern Europe, the Union's expansion will create new economic opportunities. Indeed, it will result in the extension of the single market to 25 states and to 450 million consumers. French investors and manufacturers will undoubtedly benefit from these new markets, and all will gain from the security of playing under the same community rules. 

## France, a Major Player in the European Venture

**S**INCE 1945, THE EUROPEAN PROJECT has been central to French foreign policy. Four considerations have made this ambitious undertaking a priority: the mutual Franco-German determination to end the conflicts that twice tore the continent apart in the space of 30 years; the need, in the Cold War context, to ensure stability and guarantee the security of the democratic nations west of the Iron Curtain; the desire to build a unified economic area that would ensure continued growth and prosperity; and finally the expansion of the Union in order to give as many countries as possible a chance to share in its benefits.

Two French politicians were instrumental in launching the building of Europe: Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet. They set up a framework of economic cooperation with a view to speeding up the establishment of closer political ties. This was the context in which the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded on April 18, 1951, and its institutions were to serve as a model for subsequent stages in Europe's integration. On March 25, 1957, the six member states of the ECSC (Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) signed the Treaty of Rome setting up the European Economic Community (EEC). The six countries pledged to further link their economies by abolishing all customs' barriers among them and establishing a Common Agricultural Policy.

Since the Treaty of Rome's signature, France, along with Germany, actively contributed to the steady progress of European integration. Major steps included:

-January 1, 1973—the European Union's first wave of enlargement, with the adherence of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark.

-1970s—this decade saw the establishment of the European Council (which brings together the members' heads of state or government), the election of members of the European Parliament by universal suffrage and the development of the European Monetary System.

-1981—Greece joins.

-1986—Spain and Portugal join the EEC.

-February 1986—the act founding the single European market was adopted. It guaranteed freedom of movement for people, goods and capital. This was largely achieved by 1993.

-1992—the Treaty of Maastricht set the stage for a common European currency and also introduced closer cooperation on certain defense and security matters. The EEC became officially known as the European Union (E.U.).

-1995—Austria, Finland and Sweden join the E.U.

-January 1, 2002—Introduction of the euro in 11 of the current 15 members of the E.U.

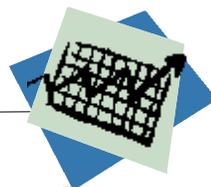
In December 2001, in view of the adherence of 10 new members from eastern Europe slated to occur in 2004, the European Union decided to set up a convention, chaired by former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to review and change the way in which its institutions and processes operate. In July 2003, the convention proposed a draft for a European constitution better designed for a union of 25, rather than 15, countries. Chances are that the first ever European Constitution will be adopted in the next few months.

Asked about his priorities as the new minister of foreign affairs, Michel Barnier said that "the priority will be building Europe with one idea in mind: to strengthen France's presence, influence, place in the European project." 

### Getting to Know You!

The French government has announced that a film describing the newly admitted countries is being distributed to high schools. The film celebrates the common values and similarities shared by the peoples of Europe.

Meanwhile, Paris is sponsoring initiatives to help the new members better understand France, and to preserve the status of French as an E.U. working language. An all-expenses paid training course on the French language and French culture (including art and gastronomy) will be offered to the representatives of the new European Union countries in a beautiful château in Provence.



## New Law Set to Boost Entrepreneurship

**E**NTREPRENEURS IN FRANCE may soon benefit from a new law proposed by the secretary of state for small and medium-sized enterprises. The proposed legislation, designed to reinforce a law passed in August 2003 which sought to encourage the creation of new enterprises, was presented to the Council of Ministers on March 17, and is expected to be submitted to the French

Parliament by the end of the year.

Addressing four issues, the law attempts first to provide a measure of security for entrepreneurs by creating a "loss-of-business insurance." The new insurance would essentially give entrepreneurs a safety net, allowing them to seize opportunities they might otherwise let slip.

The new law will also make it easier for entrepreneurs to bequest their businesses to others at retirement. Entrepreneurs will be encouraged to remain involved with their enterprises even after retirement in order to ease the business's transmittal to new owners. Another goal of the law is to aid the growth of small enterprises by crafting favorable tax policies. Finally, the proposed law advocates the development of capital-risk funds, along the lines of the American model.

The French Government hopes these measures will significantly increase the survival rate of new businesses, as it considers these to be a critical source of future job growth. At present, entrepreneurial businesses often have a very short life span, with 10 percent of new enterprises going out of business within one year, and 50 percent failing within five.

### NO MORE OIL SPILLS?

The French Ecologic Group JLMD has invented a system that can combat the spread of oil spills and the environmental damage that occurs as a result. The system, which will fit on any tanker, is said to reduce oil slicks resulting from tanker accidents by 70 to 90 percent! The system allows immediate access to the tanks of the breached ship and efficient recovery of its contents. The system does not involve the use of chemicals, or the use of motorized parts. With the JLMD system, it would have taken less than a week to pump the leakage of the oil tanker *Erika* (which leaked more than 10 million liters of oil off the coast of France in 1999) when traditional methods took 10 months to accomplish the same task.

## Big Business Back in the Black

**F**RANCE'S 40 largest companies, which together form the CAC 40 stock market index (the French equivalent of the Dow Jones), announced markedly better results for 2003 than they had for the previous year. Of the 40 firms, 35 made profits, three times as many as in 2002. Taken together, their profits reached 50 billion euros, a 41 percent increase over 2002.

These results, despite a

sluggish economy and a strong euro (which hurts French exporters), are a reassuring sign of the underlying health and strength of French companies. Indeed, several companies boasted better than expected results, and even Alcatel and Vivendi Universal, which both teetered on the brink of bankruptcy, reported operational profits (though they continue to post net losses).

### DASSAULT BUYS SOCPRESSE PRESS GROUP

French Aerospace giant Dassault has made a bid for approximately 80 percent of Socpresse, France's second largest press group, whose holdings include *Le Figaro*, France's most widely read daily paper, and the country's best-selling magazine, *L'Express*.

Dassault, manufacturers of the Mirage and Rafale combat jets, has long sought to increase its media holdings. As well as the 30 percent of Socpresse that it already owns, Dassault controls four regional press groups in Paris, and minority stakes in two radio stations. Its purchase of Socpresse will add 70 publications to its portfolio, including top finance magazine *L'Expansion* and over 30 percent of France's daily regional press.

The offer's total value was not disclosed, and the transaction must still be approved by shareholders and by E.U. competition authorities, but analysts do not anticipate any difficulties.

## French Scientists Explain Gamma Ray Mystery

**A** 30-YEAR-OLD MYSTERY concerning the strong glow of gamma rays in our galaxy has been solved by French astronomer François LeBrun of the Atomic Energy Commission and his team, composed of 17 other European scientists.

Gamma rays, electromagnetic radiation emitted during radioactive decay, have been detected throughout the Milky Way since the 1970s, when they were discovered during high-altitude balloon-borne experiments. The bursts the gamma rays emit, which occur on a daily basis, have been puzzling astrophysicists for 30 years: they simply could not determine their cause. Indeed, the rays cannot be detected from Earth since they are immediately absorbed by

the atmosphere, and no telescope existed that was sensitive enough to trace their origin.

But the European Space Agency's high-performing space telescope, Integral, has finally been able to help LeBrun and his team discover that the gamma rays in question are emitted by over 90 black holes and neutron stars surrounded by gas and dust, and they are thus not the result of a single cataclysmic event, as some had hypothesized.

Nicholas White of the Goddard Space Flight Center, commenting on these startling findings, noted that "The Universe will appear to be a very different place" once the Integral telescope has completed its examination of the Milky Way.



Gamma ray emissions plotted by Integral  
(Courtesy: French Atomic Energy Commission)

### DNA DETECTION: IT'S ELECTRIC!

A group of physicists from Pierre Aigrain Laboratory, associated with the Ecole Normale Supérieure and the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), have found that DNA can be reliably detected and identified by using electronics, thus precluding the need to resort to time-consuming chemical analyses. Known for its outside-the-box thinking, the group built a network of field effect transistors (FETs) that could detect molecular charges, thereby signalling mutations on a gene. This technology could be the basis for cheap "labs on a chip" that would enable rapid diagnoses.

### EARTH: THE ABOMINABLE SNOWBALL

Research conducted by two groups of French scientists from the CNRS and the Commission for Atomic Energy and published in the March 18 issue of *Nature*, tends to confirm the hypothesis, first developed in 1992 and 1998, that Earth was completely covered with ice 750 million years ago. The groups used a new modeling tool called Géoclim which suggested that the breakup of the super-continent Rodinia (at the time Earth's entire landmass formed one single continent) would have been enough to provoke a chain reaction resulting in a massive temperature drop of about 50 degrees Celsius.

### FNAC TO INAUGURATE ONLINE MUSIC SALES

Fnac, a major French electronics and music retailer, announced plans to launch the first French site dedicated to the online sale of music. Rodolphe Buet, Fnac's director of music and video, stated that the company "intends to become the leader in music sales on the internet in France, as we already are for in-store sales." The proposed [fnacmusic.com](http://fnacmusic.com) site will open in June and offer 300,000 titles available for download, with hopes of having an additional 200,000 added by the end of 2004. The songs will be priced between 1 and 1.5 euros.

### AUTOMOBILE STILL NO. 1 IN EXPORTS

According to recent figures published by the Committee of French Automobile Builders, cars continue to be France's leading export, edging out agricultural goods. Totalling 48.7 billion euros in 2003, automobile exports increased 2.3 percent relative to 2002, and represented 15.4 percent of total French exports (up from 14.6 percent in 2002).

## FRANCE INTRODUCES PLEA BARGAINS

The French Constitutional Council approved a justice bill in March introducing the notion of plea bargaining into French law for the first time. Plea bargaining, the cooperation of a suspect with the prosecution in hopes of a reduced sentence, is expected to greatly assist the police in dealing with organized crime by encouraging witnesses to speak out.

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES TO BE RELOCATED

The French minister for culture recently announced plans to relocate the French National Archives. Outgrowing their current location in Paris, the documents will move 10 km from the city center to metro-accessible Seine-Saint-Denis in 2008. The new location will provide over 400 km of shelving for past and future files, though historical documents dating from before 1790 will remain in Paris.

## TV GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

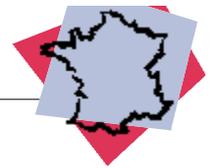
The French Ministry of Education just published a how-to guide for television intended for students. The new guidebook will help students approach television shows differently, informing them not only of technical details such as editing and sound effects, but also teaching them how to tell fact from fiction and how to view the news with a critical eye. The guide will be available in middle and high schools throughout France.

## SAILING RECORD SET FOR CIRCUMNAVIGATING EARTH

On March 9, Frenchman Jean-Luc Van Jen Heede broke the world record for sailing around the globe from east to west (a less popular route than the usual west to east circuit as it is against the prevailing winds). With a finishing time of 122 days, 14 hours, 3 minutes and 49 seconds, he beat the previous record by 29 days. His trusty single hull sailboat Adrien will dock at Sables-d'Olonne in western France until the next adventure.

## INTERNET FESTIVAL

People all over France, and in some other French-speaking countries, came together March 29 to April 4 to learn more about the opportunities opened by the Internet. Launched in 1998, the "Fête de l'Internet" is an annual week-long Internet festival which helps make the Internet more accessible to the public, teaching participants how to navigate the Web as well as showing them the diversity of information that can be found on its pages.



# France Slams World Champs

**F**EARLESS FRANCE stunned world champions England 24-21 in Paris on March 27 to complete their 8th Six Nations Cup "Grand Slam" and exact sweet revenge for their World Cup semi-final loss in Australia. This was achieved with a tremendous French performance at the Stade de France in 2003. The 24-21 final score masked the dominance exerted by the men in blue. In an awe-inspiring performance, Bernard Laporte's men outplayed England in attack and defense, taking the game by the scruff of the neck to lead by a well-deserved 21-3 at half-time. But they then had to survive a furious English comeback, which brought the score back to 24-21 with six minutes to go.

When the final whistle came, the relief among the French was palpable. Indeed a record Stade de France crowd of just under 80,000 roared for their team as they sought to bury the

bitter memory of the 24-7 World Cup loss to England four months ago. French coach Bernard Laporte insisted however that revenge was not on his mind when his side took the field, and in the end, English coach Clive Woodward had to concede that "French inspiration and flair" made the difference on Saturday night.

The Six Nations Cup is an annual rugby event bringing together teams from France, Ireland, Italy, and the three U.K. nations of England, Scotland and Wales. These last three teams and Ireland created the competition in 1883, with France soon joining in the fun in 1910, followed by Italy 89 years later. By remaining undefeated throughout the competition, France achieved what is known as a "Grand Slam" (its 8th since 1910) as it claimed the trophy. This victory by a relatively young team full of potential is a good sign as France prepares to host the Rugby World Cup in 2007.



## New Guide Promotes Republican Ideals in School

**T**HE FRENCH GOVERNMENT has taken yet another strong measure to combat racism and intolerance in public schools. The French Ministry of Education unveiled the student guidebook, *The Republican Idea Today*, which will be distributed to 300,000 public schools in order to help teachers combat and prevent racism and anti-Semitism.

The guide explains the origin and continued relevance of the principles on which public schools are based, notably equality, secularism and the respect of differences. The guide recommends that students visit former Nazi concentration camps, read books such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* and watch movies depicting the Holocaust, including *Sophie's Choice*, *The Pianist*, and *Schindler's List*. Explaining the rationale behind these recommendations, the minister said, "When you see a film

like *Schindler's List* you are clearly very moved. You understand much better the reality of racism and anti-Semitism than if you're asked to read, for example, the Declaration of the Rights of Man."

During the 1990s, an estimated 10 violent anti-Semitic attacks and 60 verbal threats were reported against Jews every year. By 2002, these figures had risen to 193 and 731, respectively. The government has seen a correlation between the increase in attacks and the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. The minister for education explained, "If we have such a rise in anti-Semitism in France it is because some children identify with the Palestinian cause and others with Israel."

The guide will be published for distribution and also available on the Ministry of Education's Web site this May. For more information, please visit: [www.education.gouv.fr](http://www.education.gouv.fr).



Scene from *Schindler's List*  
(Courtesy: Universal Pictures)

## Food Industry Committed to Fight Obesity

**I**N FRANCE AS ELSEWHERE in the industrialized world, the food industry has been held partially responsible for the increase in the number of obese individuals. France is certainly not immune from this trend: statistics have shown that, out of a French population of 60 million, 5.3 million are obese. France's National Association of Food Industries has therefore decided to take steps to prove its good will in fighting this issue, while also underlining that its measures cannot be the sole response to this problem, since several factors, including lack of exercise, contribute to weight gain.

A two-pronged approach has been favored, which aims first at heightening awareness among

food professionals, and secondly at better informing consumers. The National Association wants to keep portions of food at a "reasonable size," and it is advocating self-discipline when it comes to advertising and marketing products so as not to goad its customers into overeating. Measures targeting consumers are also likely, such as the publication of a guidebook on how to read and understand the nutritional information displayed on labels. Finally, the food industry wants to promote the French model of nutrition, which shuns snacking, as well as the country's traditional cuisine, as both are considered key factors in sticking to a healthy diet.

## DELECTABLE GRASS

The AOC label, standing for *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (protected designation of origin) and usually found on wine bottles and sometimes on cheeses, will now be used for certain types of animal feed in France. The label will guarantee that the produce in question comes from a region known to be rich in nutrients and free of pesticides and other unnatural chemicals.



## Paris Book Fest Is a Roaring Success

**C**HINESE LITERATURE recently held the spotlight at this year's 24th annual *Salon du Livre* in Paris, which attracted an estimated 200,000 people. Having declared 2004 the "Year of China" in France, it was only natural that the illustrious event should honor China's literary legacy.



**Salon du Livre in Paris**

(courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, F. de La Mure)

The *Salon du Livre* is one of Europe's largest cultural events, providing the unique opportunity to meet authors from all over the world, attend

lectures and debates, and of course buy some of the thousands of books featured.

Approximately 40 authors from the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, as well as Chinese writers living abroad, joined almost 1,400 French and foreign writers and publishers from over 20 countries. No less than 2,800 book signings were held, along with lectures on George Sand and the Napoleonic Code, both celebrating their bicentennial anniversaries this year (please see our 04.01 issue), as well as a lecture on James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

The successful turnout for this year's celebration, despite fears raised by the recent terrorist attacks in Madrid, was no surprise. Publishing in France remains the most successful culturally geared industry, ranking higher than music and cinema. Next year's *Salon du Livre* should be no different, with Russia set to be the guest of honor. 

### RUBENS EXHIBIT IN LILLE

Peter Paul Rubens's art is currently being featured in the Museum of Fine Arts in Lille, as part of the 2004 European Capital of Culture's year-long celebrations. The exhibit, which runs until June 14, highlights a retrospective of his work, displaying 160 paintings, sketches, and drawings in the largest ever gathering of his work in France. Born in Anvers, Belgium, in 1577, Rubens spent many years in Italy, was an official artist for the Spanish Archduke Albert, and was commissioned by Marie de Medici to compose large paintings to decorate her French palace. Visit [www.exporubens.com](http://www.exporubens.com) for more information.

### TALKING WINDOWS!

Lille continues to live up to its role as Europe's 2004 Cultural Capital as more than 120 participating households will transform their windows into miniature artistic galleries. This is the third year that Lille is holding this virtual art gallery in the streets, this year's theme being contemporary art. Participating households were able to pick their artist in November, and the exposition will last until April 19.

## France Celebrates Year of Poland

**A**S THE YEAR OF CHINA comes to a close, France is already enthusiastically making preparations for the upcoming Year of Poland. Covering the period from May to December, the celebration's scheduled events will focus on discovering Poland's rich cultural heritage as well as



**Dominique de Villepin and Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz in Paris.**

(courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

highlight its economic and scientific achievements. The festivities will coincide with Poland's integration into the European Union, along with nine other eastern European countries, on May 1.

Both the French and Polish ministers of culture, Jean-Jacques Aillagon and Waldemar Dabrowski, respectively, expressed their pleasure that the next European enlargement should occur simultaneously with this cultural event. Waldemar added that Europe's responsibility is now two-pronged: not only must it preserve

each member country's unique identity but it must also forge a new common European identity.

Looking beyond culture, however, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin underlined the political significance of the Year of Poland, as it presents the perfect opportunity to strengthen Franco-Polish relations at this crucial juncture in European history.

For more information, please visit the [www.nova-polska.pl](http://www.nova-polska.pl) Web site. 

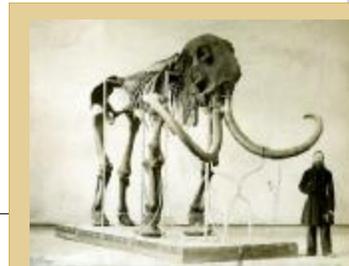
## Yves Saint Laurent's "Dialogue With Art"

**A**LTHOUGH YVES SAINT LAURENT closed his doors a mere two years ago, the celebrated art couturier has reopened his former haute-couture fashion house – only this time, to serve as a museum. The museum's inaugural exhibit, organized by the Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent Foundation, is dedicated to 42 art-inspired dresses. According to Yves Saint Laurent, who has always been inspired by paintings in the creation of his works, the 42 dresses on display are a "homage paid to the painters who exerted the greatest influence on me."

The exhibit, entitled appropriately enough "Dialogue With Art," is located in a mansion on 5 avenue Marceau,

near the Champs-Élysées, and is set to run until July 18. It showcases exquisite pieces that represent Yves Saint Laurent's relationship with art between 1965 and 1988: Mondrian dresses, Picasso-inspired capes elaborately beaded with Cubist images, and even Pop Art dresses characteristic of Andy Warhol. Other items are said to emulate Braque, Van Gogh and Matisse.

Although they will not be featured in the current exhibition, the mansion is also home to 15,000 couture accessories, beaded jackets, floor-length feathered coats, fur toques, and over 5,000 dresses. These treasures are being preserved with the utmost care, and may be displayed in future exhibits. 



**The Adams Mammoth, discovered in 1799 in Siberia**

(courtesy: Paris Natural History Museum)

### WOOLY MAMMOTHS IN PARIS!

The French Natural History Museum in Paris will feature a new exhibit entitled "In the Time of the Woolly Mammoth" starting in March and running until January 10, 2005. Russian, Ukrainian, British and German museums, among others, will loan unique items such as skeletons of woolly mammoths, ivory statuettes, as well as the complete, fully preserved baby mammoth discovered frozen in Siberia in 1977. The mammoth's ice age environment will be simulated, and there will also be examples depicting primitive man's interaction with the mammoth. Extinct for nearly 4,000 years as a result of climate change and, perhaps, excessive human hunting, the mammoth is now coming back to life in this wonderful Parisian exhibit! For more information, please visit [www.mnhn.fr/mammouths](http://www.mnhn.fr/mammouths).

### FESTIVAL DE L'IMAGINAIRE

The Ministry of Culture and Communication sponsored the 8th "Festival de l'Imaginaire," dedicated to celebrating foreign cultures. The festival featured exhibits and performances displaying the talent and genius of artists from around the world, including an Asian zither trio, Kazakh violinists, and the art of tabla tarrang. The festival was launched in Paris but also traveled around France and Europe. For more information, visit [www.mcm.asso.fr](http://www.mcm.asso.fr).

### FRENCH ANIMATION HAS GLOBAL INFLUENCE

TV France International and the French National Center for Cinematography published a joint study boding well for the French animation industry and its global ambitions. Their study, released on March 30, notes that these programs find "remarkably large audiences," which often surpass the ratings usually obtained by the channels on which they are broadcast. Thus, French animation, which leads French television and film exports, "continues to work really well" in foreign countries. The study also found that other types of French programming continue to be very successful internationally.



On April 15 through 17, French pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet will perform Olivier Messiaen's "Turangalila-symphonie" with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Messiaen, a preeminent 20th century French composer, was famous for the rhythmic language of his pieces, whose melodies were often inspired by Gregorian chant or birdsong. For more information, please visit [www.atlantasympphony.org](http://www.atlantasympphony.org), or call 1 (404) 733-5000.

# U.S. Encore for the Lyon Opera Ballet

*Philippe Decouflé's new "Tricodex" will play in Washington, D.C., and New York*

**W**ITH "TRICODEX," the Lyon Opera Ballet is returning to the United States with a unique program combining dance, acrobatics and visual effects masterminded by French cinema, circus and theater artist Philippe Decouflé, who is especially well known for having staged the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville, France.

"Tricodex," the premiere of which was performed in Lyon in March, is inspired by *Codex Serafinius*, the encyclopedia penned by Italian artist and naturalist Luigi Serafini who, fueled by an unpredictable imagination, wrote about fantastic animals, imaginary plants, insects, vegetables and machines, all denizens of another world. The ballet features 30 dancers, 150 costumes and is punctuated by video projections. It is the third in a trilogy of works by Decouflé.

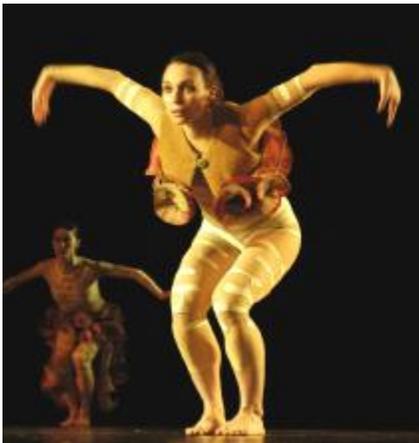
Decouflé, who initially wanted to be a clown, began his choreographic career in the 1980s with works such as "Tranche de Cake," "Trio Epouvantable" and "Vagues Café," which was awarded a prize from the French Ministry of Culture and the first prize at the International Dance Competition of Bagnolet in 1983. Aside from choreographing for stage and creating large-scale outdoor spectacles, Decouflé directs films, music videos, and television commercials. His works for stage include "Codex," "Petites Pièces Montées," "Décodex," "Triton," "Triton 2" and "Shazam!" (which delighted American audiences during the company's last U.S. tour in 2001).

Decouflé also choreographed "Tutti" for the Choreographic Research Group of the Paris Opera and directed the Musical "Dora, the Cat Who Lived a Million Times" in Japan in 1996. His first pop

music video, "True Faith" by New Order, received an MTV award in 1987 and his 1994 short film "Le P'tit Bal" received numerous prizes from several European film festivals. As the assistant to Jean-Paul Goude for "Bleu, Blanc, Goude" for the celebration of the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989, he choreographed the clog dance.

Over the last 15 years, the Lyon Opera Ballet has built up a contemporary dance repertoire with a large number of pieces in a wide variety of styles, commissioning works from young choreographers and performing pieces by major modern choreographers. The company's repertoire includes many American choreographers such as Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones, Ralph Lemon, Karole Armitage, Lucinda Childs, Susan Marshall, and Stephen Petronio. Although the high-quality members of the company were trained as classical dancers, the Lyon Opera Ballet is famous for its experimental and adventurous repertoire—"Tricodex" being an excellent example!

Michigan University's Musical Society first hosted the ballet company in Ann Arbor's Power Center for the Performing Arts in early April. The troupe will next perform Philippe Decouflé's new work, "Tricodex," at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, from April 8 to April 10, followed by performances at New York's Performing Arts Center on April 16 and 17, and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on April 20, 22 and 24. For more information on the shows, please visit: [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org), [www.artscenter.org/dance.html](http://www.artscenter.org/dance.html) or [www.bam.org](http://www.bam.org).



Scene from "Tricodex," by Philippe Decouflé  
(Courtesy: Michel Cavalca)



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