

Europe, Iraq and Middle East on Barnier's Menu **INSIDE**

Barnier Embarks on First Official Tour with Visits to Germany and Russia.

FOR HIS FIRST VISITS ABROAD as France's new foreign minister, Michel Barnier went to Berlin and Moscow in April to meet with his counterparts, Joschka Fischer and Sergey Lavrov. Traditionally, newly appointed French ministers of foreign affairs dedicate their first official visit to Germany, France's most important European partner. Barnier, a committed European, has asserted his determination to promote France's role in the European Union, which, according to him, should evolve into a real political union. The French foreign minister already shares a long-standing friendship with his German counterpart, Joschka Fischer, and the two discussed the future of the European Union, as well as the situation in Iraq and current events in the Middle East.

During his visit to Russia, Barnier and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov expressed their desire to see the United Nations play a more important role in Iraq during the ongoing transfer of power to the Iraqi people. Barnier declared that "we have to find a way to put an end to this tragedy," and that the solution should involve the creation of a credible sovereign Iraqi government, the organization of an international conference, and the holding of elections in January 2005. Barnier and Lavrov also discussed the issue of international terrorism, as well as the situation in the two former Soviet Republics of Georgia

and Moldova. France's foreign minister expressed concern over the question of human rights in Chechnya, calling for a political resolution to its protracted conflict with Russia. ■ ■



During his visit to Washington, D.C., (on April 23-24), Minister of State for the Economy, Finance and Industry Nicolas Sarkozy (right) met the French community during a reception at the French Embassy hosted by Consul General Jean-Pierre Alex-Lyoudi, in the presence of Ambassador Jean-David Levitte (left) (see our article on page 5).

(Photo Courtesy: Aida Senna)

Letters Bring D-Day Back to Life

TO MARK THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY of the D-day landings in Normandy, Jean-Pierre Guéno, director of Radio-France publications, compiled the letters and personal diaries penned by Allied soldiers and civilians in the summer of 1944, as they witnessed the liberation of France. The resulting book, *Paroles du Jour J (Words of D-day)*, was published on April 22 in France, in collaboration with the Caen Memorial, the D-day Museum in New Orleans, the Imperial Museum of London and the National Archives of Canada.

Thousands of letters were sent to and from the coasts of France, as the postal service was the only means for families, friends and lovers to keep in touch. The American military even created a microfilm mailing system that reduced the weight and volume of the mail sent by airplanes by up to 98 percent. The texts, written on special forms, were photographed on 16mm film, mailed,



American soldiers disembarking on Omaha Beach on the morning of June 6, 1944.

(Courtesy: U.S. Information Service)

developed and printed, and finally delivered to their recipients. This technique became known as "V mail" (V for victory). Their poignant contents describe the horrors of war and the pride felt by the U.S. soldiers as they participated in the liberation of France. Most of the letters were addressed to mothers, rather than to girlfriends or spouses, because most of the soldiers were barely 20 years old when they were sent to fight in France.

About 300 of the veterans who took part in the Normandy landings will be hosted during 3 nights for free in 31 prestigious Parisian hotels from June 4 to June 7. "We wanted, through this gesture, to show that contrary to what some people contend, the French people remember their liberators," declared Didier le Calvez, vice-president of the Four Seasons Hotel. He noted that a single night in these Parisian palaces costs between \$600 and \$840 during the high season. The hotels include Le Crillon, Four Seasons, Plaza Athénée, Le Raphaël (where General Eisenhower installed his headquarters), Le Ritz and Le Bristol (which was to be used as an anti-gas shelter for Americans in case Paris was bombed). The veterans, coming from 13 countries—mainly the United States, Canada and Great Britain—will receive the Legion of Honor on June 5 in Paris.

U.S. President George W. Bush, French President Jacques Chirac, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, joined by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, will meet in June on the Normandy beaches to commemorate the D-day landings. For more information about the ceremonies, please visit www.liberation60.gouv.fr. ■ ■

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President Jacques Chirac and Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Oran.

CHIRAC CALLS FOR "FRIENDSHIP TREATY" WITH ALGERIA

On April 15, French President Jacques Chirac became the first foreign head of state to visit Algeria following President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's re-election. The two leaders reviewed the progress made in implementing last year's Algiers Declaration, in which the two nations vowed to boost their political, economic, cultural and scientific cooperation. Chirac announced his desire to further strengthen these bilateral ties through the signing of a treaty of friendship between France and Paris. Such a treaty, similar to the 1963 Elysée Treaty between France and Germany, would help the two nations move past the traumatic experience of the Algerian war.

(Photo courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

CHIRAC VISITS RUSSIAN SATELLITE COMMAND SITE

French President Jacques Chirac became on April 10 the first Western leader to visit Krasnoznamensk, the top secret space center 25 miles west of Moscow which is the control point for all of Russia's satellites, including its military satellites, and which also serves as the launch center for Russia's intercontinental ballistic missiles. Russian President Vladimir Putin said his decision to invite Chirac to the site should "point to Russia's transparency and openness in security matters." Russia is currently working on a plan that would improve its satellite-based early warning defense systems.

FRANCE SUPPORTS SPAIN'S CANDIDATE FOR IMF

The French government threw its support behind Spain's finance minister Rodrigo Rato as its preferred candidate to head the International Monetary Fund (IMF). France had initially proposed Jean Lemierre, but withdrew its proposal after Lemierre was re-elected president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development on April 19. A European has traditionally headed the IMF, as European nations are the main source of its funding.

NEW BRUSSELS THINK TANK

France, Germany and ten other European nations (including Britain, Italy and Spain) recently appointed French economist Jean Pisani-Ferry to set up a new economic think tank in Brussels. The new think tank will bring fresh ideas to the European economic policy debate, with a more open and international perspective than existing think tanks. The center, with an annual budget of 3.5 million euros, will initially be funded by its founding states, but Pisani-Ferry will also seek corporate sponsors.

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Defense Minister in Haiti

Michèle Alliot-Marie Visits French Troops in Haiti

WHILE VISITING HAITI in mid-April, French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie highlighted the Franco-American cooperation taking place in the Caribbean nation. According to Alliot-Marie, the joint peacekeeping being carried out by 2,000 American troops and 1,000 French legionnaires and gendarmes in Haiti testifies to the close relationship between the two countries.

Alliot-Marie affirmed that the French forces "are contributing to the restoration of excellent relations between France and the United States after the tensions which existed between the two countries [during the Iraqi crisis]." She added that the joint operation in Haiti has provided the world with a renewed "demonstration of the partnership and alliance which has existed for many years" between France and the United States.

The defense minister also lauded the French troops' contributions to bringing peace and stability to Haiti, which is nevertheless still wracked by crimes such as racketeering, looting and abductions. Haiti spiraled downward into a pattern of violence earlier this year which eventually culminated in the departure of then-President Jean

Bertrand Aristide.

Both the United States and France have strong ties with the island nation of Haiti. A former French colony which gained its independence in 1803, Haiti

retains many elements of French influence—Creole, Haiti's language, is derived from French for instance. Because of Haiti's proximity to the United States, the two also have a long history of relations.

In addition to the French and American troops, 600 Canadians and 400 Chileans are stationed in Haiti as part of the multinational peacekeeping operations.

"Vive la Reine!"



President Jacques Chirac accompanies British Queen Elizabeth II to her country's Embassy in Paris.

(Courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

During her state visit to France (April 5-7), Britain's Queen Elizabeth II advocated a strengthening of the relations between her nation and France. Noting the past history between the two countries, she emphasized that the two have had excellent relations since 1815. French President Jacques Chirac agreed, adding that "the durability, depth and diversity of our ties overcome our divergences."

Recent polls carried out by BCA-ICM show that a majority of each country's population trusts the inhabitants of the other, thus bringing new meaning to the phrase Entente Cordiale.

Last French Coal Mine Closes its Doors

FRIDAY, APRIL 23 MARKED THE END of an era as France closed its last remaining coal mine, moving definitively into the age of cleaner energy sources. With nuclear power already accounting for nearly 80 percent of the country's energy needs, and natural gas for most of the rest, the closure of the final mine of La Houve, near the eastern town of Creutzwald, was mainly a symbolic event.

For some 200 years, coal mining in France long provided a major source of energy, and employed as many as 200,000 men by the beginning of the 20th century—peaking at some 300,000 during the reconstruction of post-war Europe. However, the age of coal mining began its decline in the 80's, when France froze new hirings and set up early retirement plans for its miners (the industry had been nationalized following World War II).

The advent of nuclear power, electric trains, and gas fuels made the coal industry's doom inevitable as the nation sought

to find cleaner and more efficient power sources. In 2002, there were only three mines left in France, two of which were shut down last year. This move away from coal is taking place throughout western Europe, but coal continues to be an important source of energy in countries where it can be mined much more cheaply—the United States, for instance, relies on one billion tons of coal to meet around half of its yearly energy needs.



The Future of French Energy (Courtesy: European Communities)

Looking to the future, financing for new nuclear reactors using pressurized water (*réacteur à eau pressurisée*—EPR) is already in the works. Minister for the Economy Nicolas Sarkozy, speaking to the National Assembly on April 15, said the new reactor will be "ten times more safe, ten times less expensive, and will produce

anywhere from 15 to 30 percent less waste" than reactors using current technology. This should guarantee an even cleaner future for France's environment.



Happy Birthday "French Tuesdays!"

THE FRENCH, FRANCOPHONE, and francophile communities of New York City recently celebrated the first anniversary of the French Tuesday club. Created in March 2003 by two Frenchmen to bring together these communities for evenings of networking *à la française*, the club now includes over 1,500 members.

Pierre Battu and Gilles Amsellem originally created the group in order to give other French nationals in the city that never sleeps a chance to get together for *soirées* of "discovery, personal and professional networking." They set up these francophone *rendez-vous* every two weeks, each time in a different location around the city.

Soon, francophile Americans started to show up as well, and the club's popularity grew exponentially! Where 50 peo-

ple attended the first meeting, now 400 to 500 regularly attend the Tuesday get-togethers. Mostly between the ages of 25 and 40, these francophones and francophiles, including many young and dynamic members of the French expatriate community, have formed a group in which to mingle and feel at home. Battu and Amsellem have deliberately limited the club's membership, in order to maintain a minimum level of familiarity and comfort among the members.

The two leaders are currently discussing in which direction to take the club, but they have already proposed certain theme evenings, for instance French Tuesdays dedicated to fashion or painting. In any case, after a very successful first year, French Tuesdays have become a veritable institution in New York's French community. For more information, please visit www.frenchtuesdays.com.



A multifaceted Francophone community

(Courtesy: French Tuesdays)

Cajun Dictionary Online

IN LOUISIANA, CARS, or *voitures*, do not run on *l'essence* as they do in France; instead, *les chars* use *la gasoline*. These are just two examples of common Cajun words which differ from standard French. In March, an online Cajun dictionary was launched as part of a new Web site dedicated to the different forms of French spoken around the world.

Spoken mostly in southern Louisiana, Cajun French is the language used by descendants of the Acadians, French settlers from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia who were driven out of Canada by the British in the mid-eighteenth century. Cajun French is distinct from Louisiana Creole, though as both were derived from French, they exhibit many similarities.

Despite significant differences which exist between Cajun

and standard French, the former is actually just a dialect of the latter. According to French instructor Amanda LaFleur-Giambrone of Louisiana State University (LSU), "Some people are under the impression that there's an enormous difference between Cajun and standard French, [but] 80 to 90 percent of the words are the same."



Keeping the tradition alive

(Courtesy: Putumayo - Album cover)

The new Web site, launched by Canadian lexicographer Claude Poirier, offers links to dictionaries of French dialects from Francophone regions as diverse as Quebec and Morocco, Réunion and Switzerland. The Cajun resources presented on the site were developed by LaFleur-Giambrone and researchers at the

University of Louisiana-Lafayette and Indiana University. For more information, visit www.artsci.lsu.edu/fai/Cajun or www.tlq.ulaval.ca/bdlp.

French Electronic Music is in the Air

AFTER NEARLY THREE years, French electronic pop masters Air, a duo formed by Jean-Baptiste Dunckel and Nicolas Godin, returned to North America for a full-blown spring 2004 tour. The band is touring to promote their recently released album, *Talkie Walkie*.

Air has become renowned for its very special musical style, alternating between disco sounds and pop music, a mix which gives their melody both retro and futuristic elements, creating a wonderfully contradictory tension. The group was created in 1995, but really started to hit it big after its second album, *Moon Safari*, came out in 1998 (it included the popular singles "Sexy Boy" and "Kelly Watch the Stars"). In 2000, the group recorded Sofia



(Courtesy: Air)

Coppola's *Virgin Suicides* soundtrack and that same year, the jazzy sound of *Playground Love* was a major hit in the United States.

After experimenting with more aggressive styles, the French duo has returned to a happy balance between the wonderfully droll lushness that saturated *Moon Safari* and the more textural atmospheric music that worked so well as the backdrop for Sofia Coppola's feature film debut. One of the singles of their new CD, *Alone in Kyoto*, even appears in Coppola's second movie, Oscar-nominated *Lost in Translation*, and it reverberates with Japanese-style guitar and strings.

The 2004 Air live tour started on April 2 in Austin and is to end on May 3 in Oakland, CA. More information on the tour is available on the Air Web site, www.intaimet.org.

IN MEMORY OF A DEDICATED AMERICAN

A Maine legislator in the 1960's and early 1970's, Philip Jutras was not only dedicated to the United States. He first experienced all things French after being born in a French-speaking Canadian family in Massachusetts. As a soldier in World War II, he landed on Utah Beach, and soon found himself in Sainte-Mère-Eglise—the first French village liberated by American troops in the D-day invasion. In 1972, while visiting the French family that had taken him in during the war, he fell in love with their daughter, and moved to France in 1974 to marry her. He also became the volunteer curator of the French town's D-day museum, built in the early 60's to commemorate the courage and sacrifice of France's American liberators. Under his direction, the museum, shaped to resemble a parachute, grew in notoriety, and he himself became a well-known spokesperson for U.S. veterans. He even appeared as the elderly veteran in the opening scenes of Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan," and he gave President Bush a tour of Sainte-Mère-Eglise in 2002. In recognition of his contribution to the French-American relationship, Jutras was awarded the Legion of Honor in 1994. He died on April 4, at the age of 87, in his adopted town of Sainte-Mère-Eglise.

AMERICANS IN PARIS, LITERALLY

French-American relations are once again the subject of literature, with the release of an anthology entitled *Americans in Paris*. Edited by Adam Gopnik, the anthology presents a historical compilation of Americans who have grown fond of the French capital. It includes the Parisian experiences of Americans throughout the ages, including those of some of the country's founding fathers, such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, and some of America's greatest 19th- and 20th-century artists and writers, such as Mark Twain and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

AMERICAN SAILOR BEATS FRENCH RECORD

Steve Fossett, an American adventurer, gained the new world record for sailing around the world on April 5, thereby dethroning past French champion Bruno Peyron. Fossett and his crew of 12 internationals (one of whom, Jacques Vincent, was French) beat the record aboard a 125-foot maxi-catamaran christened *Cheyenne*. Fossett and his team completed the journey in 58 days, 9 hours, 32 minutes, and 45 seconds, beating by almost 6 days the record previously set two years ago by Peyron. Fossett can now add this new record to his repertoire of 50 other records which he holds or has held in the past. His next challenge: to fly nonstop around the world in a jet, without refueling.

WHAT EXPLAINS FRENCH CINEMA'S SUCCESS IN THE U.S.?

According to Catherine Verret, director of the American branch of Unifrance (www.unifrance.org), an organization in charge of promoting French cinema abroad, the success is explained "thanks to movies that proved to be original," and to the skill of the directors and producers who filmed them. Many of them, such as Luc Besson ("The Fifth Element," starring Bruce Willis), Mathieu Kassovitz ("The Crimson Rivers"), François Ozon ("Swimming Pool"), Mathieu Kassovitz ("Gothika," starring Halle Berry), and Florent Emilio Siri ("Hostage," again with Bruce Willis—who reportedly contacted the French director himself!) are shooting their movies in English with American actors, and thus broadening their audience. Though they have adopted English, the world's lingua franca, these French directors and producers continue to uphold the French cinematographic tradition of bold, sexy, and sophisticated films.

Such new and innovative approaches seem to have made Americans more aware of France's cinematic *savoir-faire*—regardless of whether the film is in English or in French. Furthermore, film distributors, who traditionally privilege Hollywood's high-profile, money-making blockbusters, are becoming less reluctant to showcase more original films as their theaters become ever bigger. Indeed, movie enthusiasts are beginning to find it easier to watch flicks that offer more than "Dude, Where's my Car"-like material without having to venture to their nearest artsy-fartsy film house. ■ ■

FRANCE GOES HOLLYWOOD IN EVERY WAY

Famed director Luc Besson is in the process of creating France's version of Hollywood. The \$100 million project, slated for completion in 2006, will convert a factory located in Saint-Denis, a suburb just north of Paris, into a world-class studio. City officials hope this will in turn attract other movie companies to set up shop in the area. Besson's reason for taking on such an ambitious undertaking? "I am attempting to bring to French cinema what my adventures [abroad] have enabled me to do... to provide the opportunity for other French directors to work with complete freedom."

In Depth Review

PROFIL

French Film Hits in U.S.



There seems to be a new passion in the U.S.—and it is not Mel Gibson's version. For the past ten years, the popularity of French cinema in the United States has been increasing remarkably. In the late 1990's, critics were already talking about a "New, New Wave of French Cinema." "Amélie," which enchanted millions of Americans after the gloomy period following 9-11, embodied this intensifying success, which was subsequently confirmed by other French movies.

A Succession of Successes

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, and notably thanks to Jean-Pierre Jeunet's "Amélie" (2001), featuring the adorable Audrey Tautou, the number of French films released in the U.S. has dramatically increased, while the income they generate has more than doubled.

With \$34 million in U.S. profit, "Amélie" holds the record for the most revenue earned by a movie made in French. As



Jacques Perrin's Academy Award-nominated documentary "Winged Migration" made 7.6 million.

(Courtesy: Sony Pictures Classics)

for the biggest success for a French movie made in English, acclaimed French director Luc Besson holds that honor for "The Fifth Element," starring Bruce Willis. The film, which Besson also wrote, made more than \$63 million in the United States.



Vincent Cassel in the "Brotherhood of the Wolf"

(Courtesy: MCA / Universal Pictures)

For more information on French films, visit www.imdb.com. And be sure to check out the upcoming Festival de Cannes's site at www.festival-cannes.org (we'll cover the 2004 edition of the world-renowned festival in NFF 04.06).

Palme d'Or in Cannes.

Many may not realize

that the imaginative "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," starring Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet, was directed and co-written by Frenchman Michel Gondry. Having only debuted since late March, the film has already raked in \$28 million in the U.S. and can be seen in 575 different theaters across the nation.

Louis Le Terrier and Corey Yuen's "The Transporter" was written by Luc Besson and showcased on 2,573 screens. The film has earned \$25 million to date in the States and can be found gracing a plethora of cable channels.

Christophe Gans's French language film, "The Brotherhood of the Wolves," has earned \$11 million since its release in the States and has been nominated for dozens of American film awards.

The French animation sensation, "The Triplets of Belleville," written and directed by Sylvain Chomet, captivated the audiences of 463 theaters across the States and made almost \$7 million (see our review in NFF 03.14). Along with commercial success came a deluge of U.S. awards and nominations, including an accolade from the New York Film Critics' Circle, which named it 2003's "Best Animated Movie." Not bad for a movie with only 3 sentences of dialogue!



Adorable Audrey Tautou in "Amélie," the highest grossing French film to grace U.S. screens.

(Courtesy: Miramax Films)

Due in part to the success of these movies, the United States has become the largest market for French cinema abroad. A record 37 French films and 21 co-productions were released in the United States in 2003, grossing an all-time high of \$67 million. This year, 16 French films have already been released with an additional 50 expected from now until early 2005. ■ ■

THE REST OF THE BEST

"L'Auberge Espagnole"	\$3.8 million
"8 Women"	\$3 million
"The Man on the Train"	\$2.4 million.
"Monsieur Ibrahim"	~\$2 million.
"Irréversible"	~\$1 million.
"To Be and to Have"	~\$1 million.
"And Now Ladies and Gentlemen"	~\$1 million.
"Bon Voyage"	Just released!



François Ozon co-wrote and directed "Swimming Pool," a French thriller that has grossed more than \$10 million.

(Courtesy: Focus Features - François Ozon)



Sarkozy to Tackle Deficits, Unemployment

The French finance minister met with several top U.S. officials during his stay in D.C.

FRENCH FINANCE MINISTER Nicolas Sarkozy was in Washington, D.C., on April 23 for the spring meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Sarkozy also met with a number of top American officials, including National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of the Treasury John Snow, and Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan. Sarkozy, who was minister of the interior until a recent cabinet reshuffle, has worked closely with the American government on issues related to security and terrorism.

As the new minister of finance, Sarkozy has announced that his top priorities are to increase job growth and reduce the government's deficit. Sarkozy intends to meet these goals by

reviewing all state spending. Spending which fosters future economic activity will be maintained or increased, while all other spending may be subject to cuts. According to Sarkozy, deficit reduction is so important to future growth that "there will be no taboos," when decisions are made to cut spending.

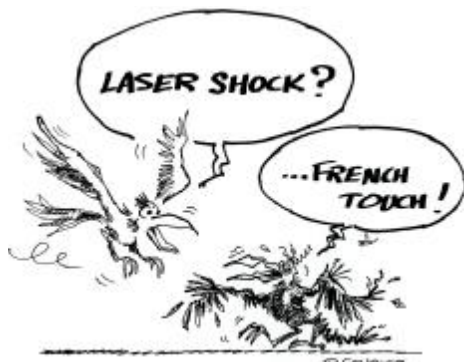
Additionally, the further privatization of public industries will be pursued, as will policies promoting competition. Sarkozy is also considering selling government property holdings and gold from the Bank of France to reduce debt. Confident that his measures will improve France's economic position, he explained "We must manage the affairs of State as the head of a family would ... in a reasonable way. No ideology." ■

Laser Keeps Birds off French Runways

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED what would happen if a bird got sucked into an airplane engine during takeoff? Well, it happens surprisingly often, and it is quite damaging (both to the bird and the plane). While these incidents rarely result in human fatalities, they do provoke expensive damage to the plane's engine: the price to replace a single blade of the engine's reactor amounts to around \$32,000, while the cost of repairing an entire engine can easily exceed \$1.5 million. Many techniques are therefore being employed to keep birds off runways, but French researchers, inspired by Dr. Evil's nefarious plots in the Austin Powers movies, have come up with a novel one: a robot-controlled laser beam.

This laser was tested for the first time at an airport in Montpellier, home to a tenth of France's annual bird-plane

collisions because of its proximity to the Camargue marshes (the area's flocks enjoy congregating on the airport's runways when the water's surface becomes too choppy). Twenty centimeters wide and with a range of two kilometers, the laser continually sweeps the runway.



When touching a bird, the beam gives the equivalent of a slight, but totally harmless, blow, thus chasing it away.

Unfortunately, the laser relies on water droplets in the air to work, so it is ineffective on sunny days. However, unlike traditional bird-chasing methods involving loud noises, the birds do not grow tolerant of them, and the laser does not disturb neighboring humans. In addition, at a price of 100,000 euros, they are a relative bargain, representing only one-third of Montpellier airport's total budget for fowl control. ■

Feline Friends Go Way Back

IT'S NO SECRET THAT CATS are one of the most ancient domesticated animals, but recent discoveries show them to be even more ancient than previously believed, by a whopping 5,000 years. French archeologists working in Cyprus, under the direction of Jean Guilaine of the Collège de France, found the skeleton of a cat lying alongside that of a Neolithic man buried with several offerings. While previous research indicated that cats had been domesticated as early as 2,000 B.C. in Egypt, scientists date the new finding back to 7,000 or even 7,500 B.C.



The discovery was made at the site of the Stone Age village of Shillourokambos in Cyprus. As there were no native feline species on Cyprus 9,000 years ago, man must have brought the animal over from the continent, presumably to combat the mice

on the island. Guilaine emphasized that while the cat his team discovered was certainly not wild, it is impossible to conclude with certainty that it was fully domesticated (he preferred to describe it as tame).

Dr. Jean-Denis Vigne, of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, stated that the numerous offerings in the tomb suggest the person buried was of particular importance in his village. In addition, since the cat's bones were found a mere 20 cm from the man, one can assume that they were meant to be buried together. This proximity suggests not only a strong tie between man and feline, but also implies a strong spiritual tie between cats and the afterworld, as the cat was quite possibly believed to accompany the man after his death. ■

GREEN LIGHT FOR ALITALIA-AIR FRANCE ALLIANCE

On April 7, the European Union's competition authorities gave their blessing to an alliance between Air France and Alitalia (Italy's main airliner), provided the two relinquish some of their flight slots between France and Italy so as to ensure an adequate level of competition in the market. Such an alliance will better position the two companies to face a persistently morose travel climate, and may eventually lead to a merger between the two. Indeed, Alitalia has expressed a strong interest in joining the new Air France-KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines) group that is currently being formed.

NEW MAMMOTH DISCOVERED

A French expedition, led by paleontologist Yves Coppens, is in the midst of uncovering a mammoth named Yukagir who died around 18,560 years ago at the age of 40. This will be the first time a mammoth will be exhumed from the tundra with its full coat. The male mammoth began to emerge from a Siberian river bank in late 2002, but it was only this spring that his recovery has proved feasible. Yukagir is sure to reveal a good deal of information about the environment in which he lived. Indeed, not only will he emerge with a full coat, but also with a head, a number of muscles, a complete forefoot and a majority of his digestive system intact.

ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE A380

The construction of the future Airbus A380—which is to become the world's largest passenger jet—is one step closer to fruition. The cockpit and both sections of the middle and rear fuselages arrived on April 8, after much anticipation, at the final assembly plant in Blagnac, near Toulouse (where Airbus's headquarters are located), where the convoy was met with much applause. If all goes according to plan, the plane will be completed by May 28. This first prototype will not fly, however, undergoing instead tests to verify the plane's durability.

QUEEN MARY II'S "FLAVOR OF FRANCE"

Sixty-seven years after its elder sibling, *Queen Mary*, sailed, *Queen Mary II*—the largest passenger ship in the world—made a stop in Cherbourg, France, on April 14 during its first European tour, entitled "Flavor of France." Built in France, the behemoth is 345 meters long, 45 wide, and 74 high, and has a crew complement of 1,300. It can transport 2,600 passengers, who can while the time away in its theater, lounge, library of about 8,500 works, or spa.

FRENCH WATCH MORE TV THAN AMERICANS

A recent study shows that the average French citizen spends 3 hours and 22 minutes watching the television every day. The French thus seem to be bigger fans of the tube than Americans: a similar study conducted in March by the University of California, Berkeley, found that Americans watch an average of 2 hours and 50 minutes of television a day. Sitcoms and movies, and fictional programs in general, rated the highest among the French, with documentaries and reality television coming in a close second, and news programs coming in third.

DIVORCE LAW REFORM

New legislation voted on April 14 by the National Assembly removed adultery as automatic grounds for divorce. Legislators believed such a statute was archaic, and they also hope to bring an end to ugly court scenes bearing witness to alleged adultery. The new divorce law continues to recognize domestic violence or "breaches of marital obligations" as grounds for a divorce, and it greatly simplifies procedures, particularly in the case of divorce by mutual consent.

FRANCE EARNS SPOT IN DAVIS CUP SEMIFINALS

On April 11, France's Nicolas Escudé defeated Switzerland's Michel Kratochvil 3-2 in the decisive final match of the Davis Cup quarterfinals, guaranteeing France a spot in the semifinals this coming September. The result also moved France to the number 1 position in the ITF Davis Cup Nations ranking. In September, France will face Spain, whose team eliminated the Netherlands in their quarterfinal match. The other two semifinalists are the United States and Belarus. The final will be played in December.

FRENCH LOTTO ONLINE

French lotto fans no longer need to leave the comfort of their homes to try their luck at the lotto. At www.fdjeux.com, registered users over the age of 18 may now set up a personal account allowing them to play online, although no bet may be less than 10 euros or more than 500 euros. Administrators claim that the online system will allow them to better regulate the amount one person can spend, thus reducing the likelihood that users will become dependent on the games. The site includes both drawings and scratch-and-win games, and will also allow sporting bets.

eberrated unions include Gerard Depardieu with Glen Close in "102 Dalmatians" and with Leonardo DeCaprio in "The Man in the Iron Mask." Beloved Juliette Binoche has starred in "The English Patient" with Ralph Fiennes and "Chocolat" with Johnny Depp. And let us not forget Jean Reno and his unforgettable roles in "The Professional," "Mission Impossible," "French Kiss," and "Ronin" (the last alongside American icon Robert De Niro) and the unforgettable Olivier Martinez, who starred with Diane Lane in the sexy thriller, "Unfaithful."

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP BUCKS SLOW GROWTH TREND

French business continues to show its strong support for charitable work and cultural initiatives, despite the economic slowdown. The 15th annual survey of corporate sponsorship, released on April 20 by Admical, showed that corporate sponsorship remained stable throughout 2002 compared with 2001. President of Admical Jacques Rigaud declared, "The simple fact that corporate sponsorship has been maintained despite a difficult economic climate demonstrates that it is no longer considered a luxury, but truly seen as a long-term commitment." Companies spent 343 million euros in 2002, primarily on cultural sponsorship, but also to support local charities and the environment. Rigaud expressed his confidence that a 2003 law providing additional tax incentives to corporate sponsors will help bolster their spending.

Lepeltier recently unveiled a national action plan to help preserve tropical forests that are currently in danger of extinction throughout the world. The plan specifies that by 2010, 100 percent of the wood bought by France will be eco-certified, meaning that it will originate from forests managed in an environmentally respectful manner. And by January 2005, French customers will start seeing labels on certain pieces of furniture guaranteeing their eco-friendly origins.

France is one of Europe's biggest tropical wood importers and can therefore play an important role in the protection of tropical forests. Indeed, some of the country's biggest companies (Bolloré, Pinault, Lapeyre, for example) are involved in the trade of tropical hardwoods. Moreover, France owns the largest tropical forest of any industrialized nation—8 millions hectares—through its overseas territories.

According to Greenpeace, one-quarter of the tropical

High Ratings for

taining to the AIDS epidemic.

"Since they no longer hear about AIDS, people have been under the impression that the epidemic is over," explained Doctor Christine Rouzioux. In order to give the French a wake-up call, the TV stations decided to unite their forces, and took turns broadcasting AIDS-related programs over the three-day period. Viewers could choose from a variety of different shows, including documentaries, programming for children and adults, telethons to raise money for the cause, news reports and testimonials. One particularly successful program was "Artists against AIDS," which highlighted French rock star Pascal Obispo.

Minister of Culture and Communication Jean-Jacques Aillagon insisted that, "The television channels did not act under government pressure. It was through a voluntary, civic-minded initiative that action was taken." Sidaction, the association that initially proposed the campaign, has brought in



DESPITE THE FACT THAT


French television channels TF1, France 2, France 3, France 5, Canal +, M6 and Arte are usually in the midst of fierce competition, all rivalries were cast aside on April 23 through April 25 for a common goal: the dissemination of information per-

Eco-Friendly Steps for Exotic Woods

FRENCH Minister for Ecology Serge

wood imported by France goes to the public market. Only 1 to 2 percent of the wood sold through this channel is currently eco-certified.

To fight against illegal wood imports, the action plan insists on strict customs controls and specific environmental criteria for public purchases.

Tropical forests—home to 80 percent of the Earth's plant and animal species and thus the planet's main source of biodiversity—are severely endangered. They are shrinking by 1 percent every year and environmental associations claim that they may disappear altogether within 50 years. 



Paradise Saved
(Courtesy: Markus Koch)



Le Baiser de L'Hotel De Ville, 1950
(Photo by Robert Doisneau)

FRANCE IS FOR LOVERS

The French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) saw the celebration of Easter as an opportunity to poll the French on their beliefs and values, both religious and secular. Paris has long been recognized as a city for lovers, and the French have a time-honored, and many believe merited, reputation for being romantics. The study, released on April 10, seems to prove the stereotype correct, finding that 96 percent of the French believe in, and value, love—making it the most widely held ideal in France. It is followed by happiness (with 92 percent), forgiveness and success (88 percent each), peace (75 percent) and money (68 percent).

Religious values were somewhat less widespread. IFOP reports that 55 percent of the French believe in God (compared with 66 percent in 1947), and 37 percent believe in heaven and hell. Jesus is the religious figure most believed in, with 55 percent of the French professing their belief in him, followed by Buddha (7 percent), Luther, Mohammed, and Moses (3 percent each).



Saint-Exupéry's Plane Discovered

Le Petit Prince's author died when his fighter crashed off France's coast during World War II.

AFTER 60 YEARS, one of the world's greatest mysteries was solved when the plane of French author and aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was found just off the coast of Provence. Pieces of the wreckage were brought up for analysis last fall, but it was not until April 7 that experts confirmed their origin. The mystery surrounding the disappearance of Saint-Exupéry, best known for his book of international acclaim, *Le Petit Prince* ("The Little Prince"), had reached mythic proportions and was the subject of many wild speculations.

Last seen boarding his plane in Corsica for a mission to the Rhone River Valley on July 31, 1944, no further trace was found of Saint-Exupéry until 1998 when a bracelet bearing his name turned up in a fisherman's net near Marseilles.



Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
(courtesy: Embassy of France)

Despite the skepticism surrounding the authenticity of the bracelet, this discovery jogged the memory of a local scuba diver, Luc Vanrell, who remembered having seen plane debris in the same area some ten years before.

Once France's Cultural Ministry granted permission, the remaining pieces were brought to the surface for examination. Only about 10 percent of the plane was recovered, but a tail piece with a tiny serial number, 2734 L—the same as Saint-Exupéry's plane—provided the final piece of indisputable evidence. However, fans wanting to keep the mystery alive need not be disappointed, as experts say there is still no way of knowing why the plane went down.

The recovered pieces will be on display before the end of the year at the Bourget Air and Space Museum in Paris.

Black is Beautiful

"EACH RACE HAS ITS OWN BEAUTY," wrote Charles Cordier, a French sculptor born in 1827. Such a statement was, sadly, ahead of its time, as many Europeans still regarded people from Africa as members of an inferior race. Cordier, however, was a precursor of a more modern, more enlightened mindset. His artwork was deeply influenced by the abolition of slavery in France in 1848. In fact, his first model was a Sudanese who had traveled as a slave through Turkey, Italy and Russia and had become a model after he was freed in France. According to Cordier, the first exhibit of the Sudanese man's bust in Paris "was a revelation for the whole artistic world," because his approach reflected a new debate in the wake of the antislavery movement.

Cordier wanted to show the equality of races in terms of

beauty, and not only in terms of political and social rights. He portrayed Africans that he admired not only for their physical beauty, but also for their dignity despite the suffering they had experienced as slaves. For him, black people were human beings, and not mere curiosities for the entertainment of white men—as they were still largely seen at the time. Indeed, despite its artistic value, his work was originally acquired by the Museum of Natural History. Cordier found further inspiration during the various trips he made to Egypt, Greece and Algeria, where he moved to in 1890 and died in 1905.

The Musée d'Orsay will hold an exhibit of Cordier's work in April 2004, and it will then move to Quebec between June and September and then on to New York from October until January 2005. Please visit www.musee-orsay.fr for more information.

The Forerunners of Photography

The Musée Marmottan Monet will showcase 220 photos from the 1839-1918 period

FOR THE FIRST TIME in its history, the Institut de France will present some of the most remarkable pieces from its exceptional photography collection. Its collection is characterized not only by its historical significance (it includes some very old documents that bear witness to important milestones in the history of photography) but also by its quantitative importance (it consists of around 40,000 photographs and countless antique items), by its esthetic qualities, and, finally, by its very eclectic nature (the collection encompasses scientific photos, portraits, war reporting, and landscapes).

Because displaying all 40,000 photos would clearly have been impossible, a sampling of 220 of those dating from the 1839-1918 period were selected for the exhibition. Visitors can



A trailblazer
(Courtesy: Institut de France - Schlumberger)

see historical documents such as the first astronomical pictures of the moon, taken in 1857, the geological work conducted by Aimé Cuvier (with his 1860 photographs of the Alps), the archeological discovery of the Antinous temple in 1894, and the first X-rays taken of the human body in 1896. The exhibition shows not only the photographs, but also the hopes, disappointments and goals of the field's first practitioners, including Daguerre, Niépce, Talbot, and Bayard, the founding fathers of photography. A selection of their letters brings their thoughts and desires to life.

The exhibit, which runs until June 27, is without a doubt a must-see for amateur photographers. For more information, please visit www.marmottan.com or www.institut-de-france.fr.

NOTRE DAME RESTORED

A Christmas storm with hurricane force winds in 1999 caused damage all around the French capital, and Notre Dame Cathedral was not spared. Work has been under way ever since and the scaffolding will finally come down in the first week of May, if all goes according to plan. During the 974,000-euro project, 12 stone carvers and 6 sculptors helped to remake the large stone pieces that fell in 1999, while 14 other artists did the detail work to identically restore the figures and decorations. Several problems unrelated to the storm were identified and addressed during the renovations, with the result that Notre Dame has never been in better shape!

COGNAC FILM FESTIVAL: U.S. AND ASIA IN THE LIMELIGHT

Cognac's 22nd edition of its *Film Policier* (Detective Movie) Festival, held earlier this month, saw a high percentage of American and Asian entries. Among the 12 feature films in competition, 4 were American and 4 from Asia. Johnny Hallyday, a French rock star, was a member of the jury judging the films. The Grand Prize went to South Korea's Bong Joon Hu for the film "Memories of Murder," and America's Wayne Kramer won the jury's prize for "The Cooler."

PARIS 1400 AD

A new exhibit at the Louvre in Paris examines the capital's history during the 1400s, a period dominated by the Hundred Years' War. With over 270 pieces on display, including manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, weapons, and textiles (among many more), the exhibit demonstrates that despite the ongoing war, Paris remained at the forefront of artistic innovation, often through the contributions of the many immigrants it attracted. For more information: www.louvre.fr.

BRIGITTE BARDOT DVD

Brigitte Bardot, French icon of the 60's, released a new DVD in April entitled *Divine BB*. Three re-mastered shows from the 60's, comprising 34 of her songs, will be on the DVD, including duets with Serge Gainsbourg and Sacha Distel, as well as excerpts from a documentary on her *Brigitte Bardot Show*.

"FLORAL ADVENTURES"

The Parc des Expositions de la Beaujoire in Nantes is home to this year's International Flower Show. The theme for 2004 is "Floral Adventures," and visitors will be invited to explore the history and origins of the featured plants and to admire their stunning beauty from May 7 to May 17. For more information visit www.comite-des-floralies.com.



Garden of the Tuileries in Winter, 1900, Camille Pissarro

(Courtesy: University of Michigan Museum of Art)

THE CHANGING GARDEN

The University of Michigan Museum of Art has unveiled an exceptional and refreshing exhibition combining art and nature. Entitled "The Changing Garden: Four Centuries of European and American Art," the exhibition has been presented to the public since March in Ann Arbor and will go through May 23.

Through prints, drawings, illustrated books, photographs, and several paintings, the show traces the changing tastes and aesthetics of European and American gardens from Louis XIV's Versailles to New York City's Central Park and San Francisco's Crissy Field. The exhibit features more than 150 works depicting public and private gardens by nearly 100 artists, including many French ones such as Bonnard, Daumier, Fragonard and Pissarro. The museum also offers many diverse activities in conjunction with the exhibition, such as family guided tours or public lectures and talks. For more information, please visit www.umma.umich.edu.

"Manet and the Sea"

The Philadelphia Museum of Art presents a unique take on Manet's work

THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART'S exhibition, "Manet and the Sea," is an innovative grouping of works by one of impressionism's best known artists (indeed, Manet's

1863 "Le déjeuner sur l'herbe" is considered one of the first impressionist paintings). The 19th-century art movement, characterized by the use of light, loose brushwork, fluidity, and pastel colors, has long been celebrated for its landscapes. This exhibit, produced by the Philadelphia Museum of



On the Beach at Boulogne, 1869, Edouard Manet,

(Courtesy: Frantisek Hakl)

Art in conjunction with the Art Institute of Chicago and the Van Gogh Museum of Amsterdam, takes a novel, unique approach by focusing on the sea through an exhibit of the marine paintings of Edouard Manet.

"Manet and the Sea" groups together the major works on the sea and water by Manet, as well as works by Gustave Courbet, Eugene Boudin, James McNeill Whistler and fellow impressionists Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, and Berthe Morisot. Manet, an avid sailor and a frequent visitor of France's coastal areas, was particularly influential on the emerging movement through his

distinctive treatment of water. The "Beach at Boulogne," "On the Beach," and "Venice—The Grand Canal" are just three of his seascapes being showcased in Philadelphia. Renoir's "Sunset at Sea" and Monet's

"Garden at Sainte-Adresse" are also on display

Trips to the sea were important to 19th-century Europeans, who considered it good for one's health to occasionally take in the air and get out of the city. With the development of railroads in France during the late 19th-century, vacations to the sea also became much

more convenient, and thereby increasingly popular as a getaway for the upper classes from the hectic affairs of city life. This gave Manet, during his many excursions to the coast, the opportunity to paint not only the sea, but also the high society of his age.

With close to one hundred works, including paintings, watercolors and drawings, the Philadelphia Museum of Art's "Manet and the Sea" is an innovative exhibit of impressionism and its vision of water. In Philadelphia until May 31 before traveling on to Amsterdam, "Manet and the Sea" is not to be missed! For more information, please visit www.philamuseum.org.

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