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New U.S. Approach on Iran Welcomed by E.U.

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE Condoleezza Rice announced on March 11 that the U.S. government has dropped its opposition to Iran's application for membership to the World Trade Organization. This decision bolsters the diplomatic efforts undertaken by Britain, France and Germany and backed by the European Union to persuade Iran to put an end to its nuclear fuel cycle program, which the international community fears could be used to develop nuclear weapons. The European approach seeks to offer political and economic incentives to Iran, in exchange for a commitment on Teheran's part to halt its nuclear enrichment and reprocessing activities.

The Bush administration's new approach was welcomed by Europeans. France's minister for foreign affairs, Michel Barnier, was pleased by the American gesture, which showed, according to him, that the U.S. wants to "give negotiations a chance." He added, "we are at a delicate point in the negotiations, which are fragile, but we hope to succeed."

The new transatlantic consensus surrounding Iran is the result of several declarations made by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who said that "we share the desire of the European governments to secure Iran's adherence to its obligations through peaceful and diplomatic means." She also noted that the responsibility for the negotiations' failure or success now lies with Iran; "the spotlight must remain on Iran, and on Iran's obligation to live up to its international commitments."



Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie face journalists following their meeting at the Pentagon on March 10 (see our article on page 2).

The three European countries negotiating with Iran recognize its right, enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to pursue a nuclear program for civilian purposes. But information recently disclosed by the International Atomic Energy Agency casts doubts on the Iranian government's full compliance with the treaty. Britain, France, Germany and the U.S. have agreed to refer Iran to the Security Council if it does not meet its international obligations.

Indeed, though negotiations between the European trio and Iran continue, the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany (Jack Straw, Michel Barnier, and Joschka Fischer respectively) have declared that if Iran does not comply, "then, as has been implicit in the agreements reached with Iran and well understood by all concerned, we shall have no choice but to support referring Iran's nuclear programme to the U.N. Security Council." 

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France Initiates Meeting on Reconstruction Aid in Haiti

Major international donors consider over 300 development projects

FRANCE ORGANIZED a ministerial meeting on March 18 in Cayenne, French Guiana, to discuss reconstruction aid for Haiti. The international meeting brought together the foreign ministers of Chile, Mexico, Canada, and the Dominican Republic, as well as representatives from Brazil, Spain and the United States. All these countries are major donors to the interim cooperation framework and have mobilized themselves, along with an expanded international community, to help Haiti rebuild and stabilize itself. Also in attendance were Haitian Prime Minister Gérard Latortue and U.N. Special Representative Juan Gabriel Valdés as well as representatives from the E.U. Commission, the World Bank, and the Organization of American States.

REFERENDUM ON E.U. CONSTITUTION SET FOR MAY 29

French President Jacques Chirac set the date for a referendum on the proposed constitution for the European Union on Sunday, May 29. In two and a half months, the French will decide whether to ratify or reject the European Union's first-ever Constitution. Chirac supports the proposed Constitution and hopes that the two-month campaign period will allow political parties to convince their supporters to vote "yes" come the day of the referendum.

Presided by French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, the meeting acted as a forum for the development of projects that will have an immediate effect on the living conditions in Haiti. Priorities include the maintenance and reconstruction of the island's general infrastructure, such as its sanitation, water distribution, power generation systems and roads, as well as the restoration of basic health and educational services and projects for improving good governance.

After the examination of nearly 300 projects, an agenda for Haiti has been formulated with a clear financial target and a defined timeline. Thus far, international funds nearing \$1.3 billion have been donated for the reconstruction of Haiti. France remains committed to ensuring the country's successful transition to a peaceful and prosperous democracy. 



France's Bruno Peyron reclaimed his title as the world's fastest sailor by circumnavigating the world in 50 days and 16 hours with the Orange 2 catamaran and its crew of 13. He thereby becomes the new holder of the Jules Verne Trophy, named in honor of the French author (see our in-depth on Verne on page 4). French President Jacques Chirac was one of the first to congratulate the crew, calling their exploit "superb."

RAFFARIN ATTENDS MUSEUM INAUGURATION IN ISRAEL

French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin visited Jerusalem on March 15 to attend the inauguration ceremonies for the new Shoah Museum. He came in a spirit of friendship, in an effort to "breathe new life" into Franco-Israeli relations. Raffarin insisted that the French government is doing its utmost to stamp out anti-Semitism in France, and that the French have not forgotten the atrocities of the Holocaust. "We are resolved that the past will never be repeated. The task of remembrance is also to take action," he declared, adding that France stands "resolutely by the Israelis and Palestinians down their road toward peace."

FRANCE AND YEMEN SIGN DEFENSE AGREEMENT

French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie and her Yemeni counterpart, General Abdullah Ali Eleiwah, signed a defense and security cooperation agreement on February 27. Under the agreement, the naval and special forces of both countries will participate in joint exercises, their intelligence services will exchange information, and the French will supply military equipment to Sanaa. Additionally, the accord provides for the construction of a radar installation on the island of Meon in the Red Sea strait of Bab el-Mandeb, allowing both countries to better coordinate their fight against smuggling and terrorism.

FRANCE TOP CHOICE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that France was the most popular destination for refugees seeking asylum in 2004, with an estimated 61,600 applications (overtaking the United States' 52,360). Overall, the number of asylum seekers fell sharply throughout the world in 2004, but those seeking refuge in France increased by four percent.

FRANCE CONTRIBUTES TO DIGITAL SOLIDARITY FUND

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier announced on March 14 that the French government will be contributing 300,000 euros (\$390,000) to the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF). This fund was created in the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society held in December 2003. Its purpose is to close the digital divide between the northern and southern hemispheres.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / March 23, 2005

French Defense Minister Visits U.S.

DURING HER THREE-DAY visit to the US (March 9 to 11), French minister of defense, Michèle Alliot-Marie, met with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Adviser Steve Hadley, as well as various members of Congress. Issues that were discussed included Afghanistan, Iraq, and Europe's plan to lift the arms embargo on China.

On March 10, Alliot-Marie spoke on trans-Atlantic relations at Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies. Before answering questions, she noted that "since September 11, we know that terrorism can affect everybody... We must act together to fight it, both its causes and its consequences." The defense minister later closed her speech by saying, "We clearly share the same goals: to promote peace, security and democracy. Let us now attempt to work together to achieve these goals, through dialogue and complementari-



French Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie attended a commemoration ceremony at the WWII memorial in Washington, D.C.

ty." Responding to a question on France's position in the current debate surrounding Lebanon, Alliot-Marie stated that "France has always strongly supported Lebanon's sovereignty and freedom," which France wishes it will regain "as soon as possible."

During a press briefing at the French ambassador's residence, Alliot-Marie further stressed the need for a strong and confident "strategic dialog" between the United States and France. On March 11 in Boston, the French defense minister spoke to an audience at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government where she again focused on the need for continued cooperation, saying, "The European security and defense policy is not a substitute for NATO" and "A strong Europe is not a threat to the United States." She stressed again that "We have to think in terms of complementarity between America and Europe, because we each have specific assets and special links with certain regional players." ■ ■

Generation IV Nuclear Research Project Launched

ON FEBRUARY 28, representatives of France, Canada, Great Britain, Japan and the United States met at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C., to sign a framework agreement on the development of Generation IV nuclear systems. This technology will replace the Generation III nuclear reactors that are just beginning to go online, and it is expected to be used in power generation in about three decades. "It will take probably 30 years before the first reactor is built [with Generation IV technology]," said French ambassador Jean-David Levitte, who presided over the signature ceremony. "France, with its 80 percent share of electricity production from nuclear energy and a mature industry that covers the whole range of fuel cycle operations, intends to be forcefully engaged in this Generation IV program," pledged Ambassador Levitte during his address to fellow Generation IV

International Forum (GIF) members. According to U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman, Generation IV will tackle the rising demand for energy and diverse energy resources around the world. Members of the forum have come to a consensus regarding which areas of research will be the most promising: gas-cooled fast reactor systems, lead-cooled fast reactor systems, molten salt reactors, supercritical-water-cooled reactors and very high temperature reactors. Other members of the GIF (which includes Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, South Africa, Switzerland and the European Atomic Energy Agency), may also join the framework agreement in the upcoming months. ■ ■



From left to right, French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte, U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman, British Ambassador Sir David Manning, the Embassy of Japan's chargé d'affaires, Tadamichi Yamamoto, and the Canadian Embassy's deputy chief of mission, Claude Carriere, raise a toast to the agreement.

International AIDS Meeting to Improve Funding

XAVIER DARCOS, minister delegate for cooperation, development and francophony, and Hilary Benn, British secretary of state for international development, co-chaired a meeting March 9 in London dedicated to the fight against AIDS. The event was sponsored by the U.N. and the governments of the United Kingdom, France, and the United States, and participants included U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Randall Tobias and UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot.

The meeting was entitled "Better Use of Available Money: the Three Principles in Action," and had as its goal the more efficient use of the international community's funds in the

fight against AIDS. More than 60 countries took part in the conference, including both donor countries and nations affected by the AIDS epidemic, as well as international organizations and representatives of nongovernmental groups. The meeting focused on three areas to increase the efficacy of the money being spent: better cooperation among the NGOs and donor countries that are involved in the fight against AIDS in developing countries; the clarification of the financial framework for future contributions from the international community; and the reinforcement and rationalization of AIDS programs in order to avoid wasteful duplication within each country. ■ ■



"Le Passage à Paris," U.S. Artists in France

FROM APRIL 1 to October 30, the Musée d'Art Américain in the Normandy village of Giverny, home of Claude Monet, will pay homage to the great number of American artists who flocked to Paris in the late 19th century. Funded by the Terra Foundation for American Art, the exhibition highlights the stylistic developments in French art and how these influenced visiting American artists. France's artistic movements were challenging the conventions of the day by depicting everyday subjects, focusing on the recurring themes of peasant life, picturesque villages and peaceful beaches.

Photo: Musée d'Art Américain



Charles C. Curran, *Au Luxembourg*

Embarking for Paris at some point in their professional careers practically became an obligatory rite of passage for many American artists. Learning from their sojourns, these artists adopted new styles and artistic techniques such as painting en *plein-air* (open air, or from life). Such techniques stemmed from the Impressionist belief that an artist should trust his or her eyes, that nature consists not in forms, but in reflected light, which can be conveyed through color. While originally criticized as unfinished paintings, Impressionist works were eventually embraced as candidly depicting the outdoor experience.

The Museum of American Art, founded in 1992, seeks to explore the historic and aesthetic connections between French and American artists, and to foster transatlantic exchanges. For more information, please visit the museum's Web site, www.maag.org. 



Photo: Musée d'Art Américain

Hauts de Monaco
(Oil on canvas, 28" x 23")

MONEGASQUE PAINTINGS OF FRANCE IN BOSTON

An exhibition displaying the artwork of self-taught painter Claude Gauthier of Monaco, entitled "Vibrant Impressions of the Principality of Monaco and Colorful Scenes of France," will open to the public April 2 at the Alliance Française of Boston. The display includes 20 oil paintings in the "naive genre" depicting vibrantly colored scenes from Monte Carlo, Provence and the French Riviera. Gauthier will attend an exclusive VIP opening reception held in his honor on April 6 by the Consul of Monaco in Boston.

Daniel Buren Exhibit in New York's Guggenheim

FRENCH ARTIST DANIEL BUREN will be presenting a new exposition entitled "Eye of the Storm" in the Guggenheim Museum from March 25 through June 8. The artwork will be in the museum's open space rotunda, where it will dynamically interact with the architecture of the well-known Frank Lloyd Wright spiral. In fact, Buren's new work, representing one of the four corners of an imagined cube, will span an area from the bottom floor to the sixth floor's rotunda. The structure intersects two existing walls of the museum, creating a 90-degree angle that parallels 89th Street on one side and 5th Avenue on the other, in uptown Manhattan, an effect intended to re-create the emotions inspired by New York City.

One of the most important artists today, Buren always works in situ, which means he works within and in response to a given location, changing the perspective of otherwise familiar sites. By removing subjectivity and detail from his

artwork, Buren allows the framework and environment around the art to create its meaning. His creative work focuses on the spatial and structural elements of the piece and its surroundings, creating an interactive effect that "is in fact the widening of one's field of vision," according to the artist. His signature vertical stripes and mirrored surfaces are both part of art and natural environments, found on storefronts, billboards, stairways, trains, parks, plazas, markets, theaters, bridges, galleries, and museums all over the world. For more information, please visit www.guggenheim.org. 



ARMSTRONG AWARDED SPORTS ACADEMY'S GRAND PRIZE

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier awarded the Académie des Sports' 2004 Grand Prize to Lance Armstrong to honor his sixth consecutive victory in the Tour de France. During a ceremony held on March 15, Barnier also distinguished other champions, such as Laure Manaudou (three-time Olympic swimming medalist and 1,500-meter freestyle record holder), Michel Desjoyaux (five-year record-holder of the Vendée Globe solitary sailing competition), and Brice Guyart (2004 Olympic Fencing gold-medallist).

MICHELIN TO RELEASE NEW YORK RESTAURANT GUIDE

The legendary Michelin restaurant guide, published by a subsidiary of the French Michelin tire group, has just announced that it will now catalogue New York restaurants. Slated for release in November 2005, the "red guide" will critique over 500 restaurants in New York City. Many New York chefs view the arrival of the Michelin guide as a reward for their efforts, and it has been hailed by American critics as "a grand event which recognizes the quality and

the variety of New York restaurants." Since 1923, Michelin guides have been regarded as the bible for those seeking the best meals in Europe. For more information: www.viamichelin.com.

COCA COLA MINERAL WATER IN FRANCE

The soft drink giant, Coca Cola, launched its new line of mineral water last month in France. Chaudfontaine, named after the Belgian spring from which the water will be drawn, was released into French stores in mid-March. France, the birthplace of mineral water, is home to some of the world's best known brands, including Evian, Vittel, Volvic, and Contrex, among others. But Coca Cola is confident that its water's properties will help make it a best seller as well.

Greenland Crossing to Honor French-American Explorer

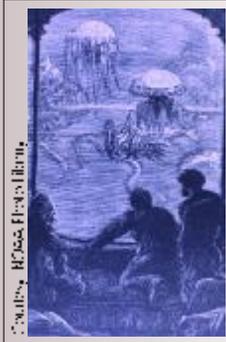
A NEW CHALLENGE will be in store in a couple of weeks for a 38-year-old French engineer, Olivier Pezeron, who intends to cross Greenland on skis and be pulled along with the help of kites. This 600-kilometer trip (360 miles), slated to start on April 22, is meant to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the death of a French-American polar explorer of international renown, Paul-Emile Victor. Pezeron and his four-person team, all of whom idolize Victor, are fully and passionately committed to their project, which will cost them approximately 60,000 euros (\$80,000). The expedition should last one month, if Pezeron's team can keep up its ambitious travel timetable of ten hours a day.

Paul-Emile Victor (1907-1995), a French-American explorer,



Paul-Emile Victor during the first French polar expedition in 1948 (Greenland)

er, writer and ethnologist, devoted his entire life to investigating the Arctic and Antarctic. At an early age, he showed a strong interest in the poles and oriented his studies to a vocation in that direction. On his first expedition in 1936, he crossed Greenland and then spent 14 months living with an Inuit family. In 1941 he moved to the U.S., where he joined the U.S. Army Air Force and helped develop polar rescue techniques during World War II. In 1947, he founded the French Expeditions to the poles (known as the E.P.F) during which he led several expeditions. A prolific writer, with some 40 scientific publications to his name, Victor and his family settled on a desert island in French Polynesia in 1977. Today a museum located in Jura is dedicated to him (www.centrepev.com). To learn more, or if you would like to contribute to the expedition, visit www.aventurearctique.com. 



Observing jellyfish from the Nautilus's viewing port (original illustration from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*).

In Depth Review PROFIL

JULES VERNE



This year marks the 100th anniversary of Jules Verne's death. Ahead of his times in many ways, the French author, considered by many the father of science fiction, continues to fascinate and surprise!

From Lawyer to the Father of Science Fiction

JULES VERNE, the author of classics such as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *Around the World in 80 Days*, and considered by many the father of science fiction, was born on February 8, 1828, in Nantes. His childhood at the family's summer home on France's Atlantic coast probably played a large part in inspiring Verne's works, which regularly mixed the maritime with science fiction.

Verne and his younger brother, Paul, would often pay one franc to rent a boat for the day and sail behind their summer house, dreaming up adventures. Since Verne's father was a lawyer, he urged his son to study law. While in Paris studying law, Verne befriended Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo. The two authors had a great influence on Verne and encouraged him to explore playwriting.

Festivities and events will be held throughout France during the upcoming year to mark the 100th anniversary of Jules Verne's death.

March 9-April 29: The Naval Museum in Paris will present a major exhibit entitled "Jules Verne: the Ocean Novel."

April 6-11: The 13th Annual Jules Verne Festival in Paris at the movie theater, Le Grand Rex.

May 19-22: Nantes will hold a large town parade and four days of festivities.

December 7-10: The Stadium of France will transform itself into a giant crater for a journey to the center of the Earth with the use of 360-degree projections, actors, acrobats and musicians.

December: Late in the month, the Jules Verne Museum in Nantes will reopen, following the restoration of its exhibits.

America and Jules Verne: a Story of Mutual Fascination

JULES VERNE, like many Frenchmen of his time, was fascinated by America and its modern, enterprising spirit. He was convinced that America would be the source of much of the world's future technological breakthroughs. He also admired U.S. authors, particularly Edgar Allan Poe, whose influence can clearly be felt in Verne's early works.

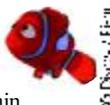
Inversely, Americans today are all familiar with Verne's famous works, and many award-winning Hollywood movies have been based on his novels. There are more film adaptations of Verne's books than of any other author's.

Disney produced a film version of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* in 1954, featuring James Mason as Captain Nemo. The film, with its famous giant squid, won an Oscar for special effects. Nemo, the leading clownfish of

Disney's 2003 animated film, *Finding Nemo*, was named after Verne's mysterious captain, but the animated clownfish version of Nemo hardly resembles the dark and complex character of Captain Nemo.

In 1957 a film version of *Around the World in 80 Days* won the Academy Award for Best Picture. More recently, Jackie Chan starred and Arnold Schwarzenegger made an appearance in a 2004 remake of *Around the World*.

The 20th Century Fox film *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, based on a comic book series, unites Captain Nemo with other literary heroes from Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde to Tom Sawyer. The motley crew of overly exaggerated superheroes plot aboard Captain Nemo's submarine to avoid a world war.



Verne soon quit law and became a stockbroker to support himself and his family. He married the widow Honorine de Viane in 1857 and had his only child, Michel Jean Pierre Verne, in 1861. He also had two stepchildren.

In 1862, he wrote his first novel, *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, and his life took off in a new direction. Verne soon paired up with publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel, and the two remained business partners as well as personal confidants until Hetzel's death in 1886. Hetzel introduced Verne to Felix Nadar, a renaissance man interested in aerial navigation and ballooning. Because much of Verne's research was done through reading, discussions about scientific breakthroughs with knowledgeable friends helped him flesh out his stories.

From the Earth to the Moon was Verne's next major novel. It is about a group of American gun enthusiasts who decide to fire a huge manned cannonball to the moon. Verne's imaginative tale has an uncanny resemblance to later space missions that would take place a century after his death.

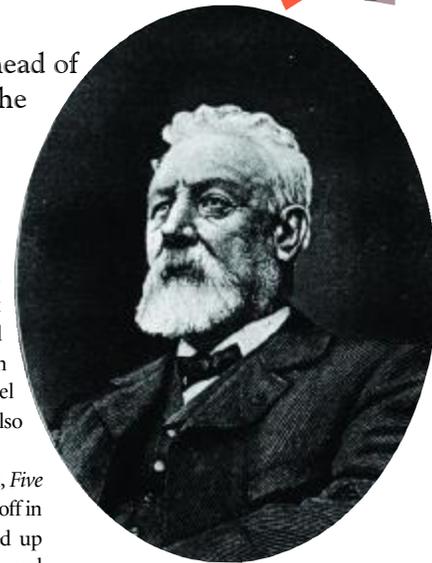
Next, Verne went to work on one of his most famous works, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, which took him years to complete. The novel was released in two volumes, the first in 1869 and the second in 1870. The Nautilus submarine, commanded by the infamous Captain Nemo and powered by a mysterious electrical force ("my electricity isn't like everyone else's," says Nemo enigmatically in the book), predated the launch of the first U.S. nuclear-powered submarine (christened the Nautilus in Jules Verne's honor) by 86 years!

In 1872 Verne completed the most popular book of his lifetime, *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Though not science fiction per se, it prefigured the increasing interconnectedness of the world, with modern transportation making distances ever smaller. In many ways, it introduced Verne's 19th-century audience to globalization!

Verne's life remained a steady flow of success until 1886. Although his works were still widely popular, it was a hard year for him personally. He was wounded in the leg when his nephew, Gaston, fired a shot at him as he was entering his home. The injury left Verne with a life-long limp. Shortly after the shooting, Hetzel, Verne's publisher and probably his closest friend, died.

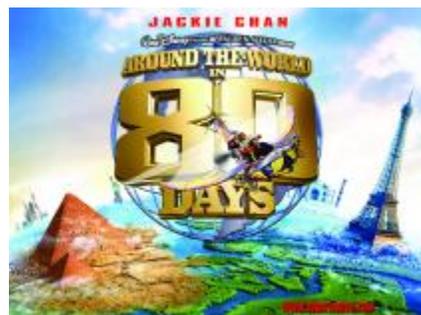
In his old age Verne's works changed from imaginative adventures to stories about his concern with the misuse of technology and the destruction of the environment. His book, *The Begum's Fortune*, warns of the danger of placing technology and knowledge in the hands of evil people.

Verne died on March 24, 1905, in Amiens, at the age of 77. Several unfinished novels, including *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, were published after his death. His son Michel edited much of the material and added missing chapters where necessary.



The Father of Science Fiction

Courtesy: NASA



The poster for the 2004 remake of *Around the World in 80 Days*, with Jackie Chan as Passepartout.



French Archeologist Solves Ancient Mystery

AFTER 25 YEARS of dedicated labor, French archeologist Jean-Claude Margueron has solved the mystery surrounding the construction of Mari, one of the first "modern cities" in human history. Located in modern-day Syria, Mari was constructed in the third millennium B.C. Unlike most cities of its time, which developed from villages or trading posts, Mari was designed expressly as a city from the start. Archeologists were puzzled as to how this city, located in the middle of the desert and in a valley devastated by the floods of the Euphrates, could develop and flourish. Through meticulous research, Margueron reveals the answer in his new book, *Mari, the Metropolis of the Euphrates*.

The ancient Mesopotamian city was originally discovered by Margueron's predecessor, Andre Parrot, in 1933. By the time Margueron became director of excavations in 1979, many of the spectacular artifacts had already been discovered. The question of why Mari was built, however, remained a mystery.

Little by little, archeologists realized that Mari was a major center of metallurgy, where the production of arms and tools was a thriving industry. The supply of copper and wood used in metallurgical production came from the Taurus mountains, which were connected to the city by a canal. The remains of an irrigation channel and another canal, which protected the city from flooding and allowed large boats to enter, were also discovered. Because Mari was conveniently located between the east and the Mediterranean and between the north and south of Mesopotamia, the city flourished, and its inhabitants left behind innumerable riches for archeologists to discover. ■■

FRANCE AND RUSSIA TO DEVELOP LAUNCHERS

France's National Center on Space Studies (CNES) signed an agreement on March 15 with Russian Space Agency Roskosmos to jointly begin developing next generation launchers through a five-year comprehensive program called OURAL. OURAL aims at incorporating Russian expertise with French know-how in the field of rocketry so as to identify the technologies that will be needed to develop a relatively inexpensive, reusable launcher by the year 2020. The CNES will spend over 200 million euros and devote over 50 workers to this new project.

CHINA ATTENDS SALON DE L'AGRICULTURE

The most populous country in the world attended the 42nd International Agricultural Fair in Paris for the first time. The event, inaugurated by remarks from President Jacques Chirac, hosted 36 Chinese companies. The nine-day Salon de l'Agriculture began on February 26 and was held at the Porte de Versailles exhibition grounds. More than 700,000 visitors came to visit the fair and see its 4,000 farm animals and products from over 30 countries, as well as new bio-fuel technologies. Vehicles that use the new fuels developed from sugar beets, wheat, corn and colza were on display.

AIR FRANCE-KLM NAMED BEST AIRLINE IN 2005

Air Transport World (ATW), a leading air industry magazine, named Air France-KLM, the result of the May merger of Air France and KLM, "airline of 2005" for its "remarkable" transformation and "philosophy of aggressive global growth." "Combining two of Europe's legendary flag carriers into the largest airline in the world should begin the much-needed rationalization of capacity while providing substantial benefits from the merger," said ATW Editorial Director J.A. Donoghue as he presented the award to Air France-KLM President Jean-Cyril Spinetta and Vice President Leo Van Wijk.

GENDARMERIE GOES OPEN-SOURCE

A small group of officers in France's national gendarmerie have convinced their superiors to switch to an open-source word processing suite, in place of industry giant Microsoft Office. The officers, who work as amateur programmers in their spare time, have created a series of highly effective applications to handle gendarme-specific workloads. One official estimates that the changeover will save 400 police-years of paperwork every year! To develop additional time-saving applications, the gendarmerie has established an in-house "programming community."

SNCF CELEBRATES PROFIT WITH NEW LOGO



The Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (SNCF), the French national railway company, unveiled a new logo to mark its first year of financial success since the year 2000. The new logo symbolizes positive change and future growth.

"News from France" Turns 20!

Please complete our enclosed survey to help us serve you better!

THE FIRST ISSUE of "News from France" came out just over 20 years ago, on January 18, 1985. It wasn't much to look at (there was no color nor were there pictures, and its basic layout was clearly the product of a rudimentary typewriter), but this didn't detract from its content, which was already up to "News from France's" high standards!

The lead story dealt with the independence movement in New Caledonia, and our first "in-depth" featured France's aid to Africa. The newsletter also announced a momentous development in the modernization of France: the imminent arrival, for the first time, of computers in ten selected French embassies, including the one in Washington, D.C.!

Things have clearly changed quite a bit in the past two

decades, and "News from France" has tried to keep up with the times. As we embark on our third decade, we are once again considering possible changes that would make our publication even better, and we would greatly appreciate it if you could take the time to respond to the short survey you will find inserted in this issue. Responding will only take a few moments of your time, and your feedback would be invaluable to us! There is no need to pay postage, you can just drop the card in your nearest mailbox.

Thank you, and we hope to enjoy your company as we continue to bring you news from France until 2025 and beyond! ■■

Toyota-Peugeot High Efficiency Factory in Czech Republic



The Peugeot 107, Toyota Aygo, Citroën C1 (left to right) will all be built in the new factory

FRENCH CAR MANUFACTURER PSA Peugeot Citroën and Japanese counterpart, Toyota, launched a commercial joint venture in Prague on February 28. The new production plant was unveiled four years after the two companies decided to undertake the effort. The plant, located just outside of Prague in the town of Kolin, is the largest foreign investment in central Europe to date and will be one of the

most efficient plants in the world. Spokesman Matej Matolin announced that when production in the factory reaches its estimated peak, it should produce one car per minute, which is faster and more efficient than all existing car manufacturing plants throughout Europe. It is estimated that by 2007 the plant will reach a production level of 320,000 cars annually, most of them destined for the Western European market. ■■

MAYORS CELEBRATE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S VOTE

Approximately 1,800 female mayors of France gathered together on March 7 in the Palais du Luxembourg Senate building to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the first women's participation in a French election. The day's events included five commission discussions on the public's view of women in elected positions, management priorities of female mayors, visions for the future, information and communication, and how to encourage the participation of women in political life.

LOUIS SCHWEITZER TO HEAD HIGH AUTHORITY AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

President Jacques Chirac named Louis Schweitzer, who is slated to retire as Renault's CEO in May, as the president of the High Authority on the Fight Against Discrimination and for Equality (HALDE) on March 3. Created in December 2004, HALDE's role is to "defend the cohesion of the nation," according to Chirac. Speaking on the occasion of Schweitzer's nomination, the president went on to say that "discrimination is unacceptable, and it must be resisted because it strikes at the heart of the values of the Republic itself."

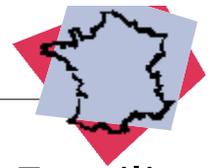
NATIONAL STROKE AWARENESS DAY

On April 5, nine cities across France will participate in the Second National Day for Informing, Screening, and Preventing Strokes. The awareness day, organized by a number of national French health organizations, aims at educating the public about the third-leading cause of death in France. Neurologists and cardiologists will be on hand to lead conferences and workshops on the causes and effects of strokes, as well as on how to protect against them by regularly checking blood-pressure levels and maintaining a healthy diet.

FIRST SIKH SCHOOL OPENS IN FRANCE

The Sikh leadership in France recently laid the foundation stone for the first school in France to be funded and managed exclusively by Sikhs. The "Guru Tegh Bahabur Public School," is located in the Parisian suburb of Bobigny, a 15-minute drive from Charles de Gaulle airport. The school will be open to all communities and will teach from the scriptures of all religions. This announcement follows that of the Union of Islamic Organizations of France on the opening of the first private Muslim elementary school in Marseille this coming fall.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / March 23, 2005



Affordable Housing for Low-Income Families

FRANCE'S MINISTER of social cohesion, Jean-Louis Borloo, recently proposed a program to build all-inclusive 100,000-euro (\$130,000) housing for low-income families. The program is the latest addition in the campaign of urban renovation that he launched a year ago. Such low-cost housing would provide access to home ownership to those who could not normally afford to buy a home because of the booming real estate market, especially in the Paris region.

Sixty percent of families with the lowest incomes could benefit from Borloo's proposed program. Families with two children and which earn less than 31,000 euros per year will have the highest priority. The houses would include three bedrooms, a kitchen, a living room, a yard and park-



Jean-Louis Borloo, Minister of Labor and Social Cohesion

ing, and the 100,000-euro price tag would also include all fees and insurance costs.

Currently, Borloo is working with the mayor of Montereau: The city has promised to have 200 100,000-euro houses on the market by the end of the year. They will be constructed with traditional materials and be 70 m by 90 m in dimension. All will have the latest amenities, such as low-cost heating and pre-installed Internet access. Additionally, after an initial deposit of 2,000 euros, home owners will pay no more than 500 euros per month for 20 years.

The concept of the 100,000-euro home is still in the brainstorming stages and Borloo has said that it is still too early to give specific details. "We'll talk again in two months," he promised.

Bo-Peeps Flock to Shepherd School

PEOPLE FROM ALL ACROSS the country are flocking to shepherding school in southeastern France. They wish to enroll in a professional agriculture training center in Merle. Ranging in age between 19 and 50 and coming from all walks of life, most have had their fill of urban life and are ready for a career change.

But Michelle Jallet, the school's shepherding program director, emphasizes that while there is no shortage of demand for shepherds, the job requires a high level of technical knowledge and skill. Students take courses in theory, such as sheep reproduction and disease, along with courses concentrating on the environment, the whole complementing the practical, hands-on

experience they receive working with the animals. Naturally, the curriculum has changed over the years, with the reintroduction

of the wolf, in particular, leading to new classes... Jallet, a shepherdess herself, also warns newcomers that the job is not as easy as it looks and prepares her students to face the real possibility of long hours for little pay.

After the May 1968 student protests in Paris, many disillusioned individuals tried to go "back to nature" by seeking to earn a living off the land, often resulting in abject failure. However, due to the education and training provided by agricultural programs such as Jallet's, those interested in living off the land can now receive the skills and qualifications needed to succeed.



Honoring the Huguenots

HUGUENOT HERITAGE, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the cultural history of the Huguenots, will be celebrating the contributions of these French immigrants to American society from April 8 to 10. The organization will be hosting a weekend of activities with speakers, dinners and receptions.

To begin there will be a visit to the National Museum of Women in the Arts to see the work of women silversmiths including Huguenots Louisa Courtauld and Ann Batement, as well as the paintings of 17th-century artist Louise Moillon and 19th-century artists Cecilia Beaux and Mary Cassatt. The following day, the group will visit the Hillwood Museum for a private viewing of the Fabergé jewels. Finally, at the National Air and Space Museum, guests will be shown collections of General Claire Lee Chennault's memorabilia (Chennault was the leader of the famous "Flying Tigers" in Nationalist China

during the beginning of America's involvement in World War II). They will also be shown a real "Flying Tiger" P-40 "Warhawk" plane at the museum's new Stephen F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia.

The Huguenots were French Protestants who followed the teachings of John Calvin. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Catholicism was France's state religion, and the government sometimes persecuted Huguenots, torturing and even killing them because of their different religious beliefs. Many Huguenots fled this persecution and found a religious sanctuary in the United States and elsewhere. By 1600, about 200,000 Huguenot immigrants had fled France and up to one million left after the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 (the edict had previously protected Huguenot followers).

For more information on the Huguenot weekend, call (212) 759-6222.



Small Movie Turns into Big Hit

"L'Esquive" wins the César for best picture

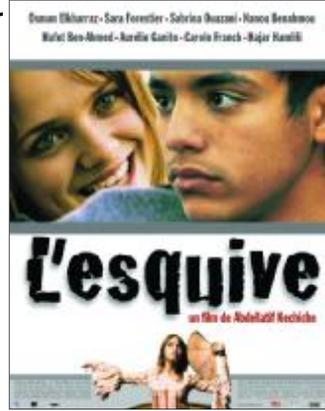
A RELATIVELY MINOR, low-budget film about discontented urban youth surprised many by winning two of the most prestigious awards at the Césars, the French equivalent of the Academy Awards. *L'Esquive*, ("evasion" or "sidestepping") won awards for best picture and best director (Abdellatif Kechiche), as well as for most promising female actress (18-year-old Sara Forestier). The award ceremony held its 30th celebration on Saturday, February 27, the day before the Oscars, at the Chatelêt Theater in Paris.

L'Esquive became a success of colossal proportions, considering it faced serious competition from 36, *Quai des Orfèvres*, a police film starring Gerard Depardieu, the national box-office hit *The Chorus*, and the big-budget blockbuster *A Very Long Engagement*, starring Audrey Tatou of *Amélie* fame. In the end, *The Chorus* took home only two of its eight nominations, for best music and best sound, and *A Very Long Engagement* won only five of its 12 nominations, including best supporting actress, most promising male

actor, best cinematography, best set design, and best costumes.

The best actor and best actress awards went to Mathieu Almaric for *Rois et Reine*, and Yolande Moreau for *Quand la Mer Monte*. The United States was also well-represented at the Césars, with *Lost in Translation*, directed by Sofia Coppola, chosen best foreign film. Other nominees for the award included *21 Grams*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. U.S. actor Will Smith was present to pick up an honorary César award, which he dedicated to "my family and to my hero, Nelson Mandela."

For more information, visit www.lescesarducinema.com.



Sartre in His Own Words

France's National Library honors the great 20th-century existentialist

AS FRANCE PREPARES TO CELEBRATE the centennial of Jean-Paul Sartre's birth, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) has organized an exhibit to honor the work of one of the most famous contemporary French philosophers. It seeks to underline how much Sartre loved to write, by showing the thousands of words he wrote, whether in manuscripts, articles, correspondence or notes. It follows the life of the man and the writer, confronting his work with historic events. Several audio and video documents are featured, including Sartre's interviews, and discussions with artists and personalities who were close to the philosopher during his lifetime.



Jean-Paul Sartre (circa 1960)
Courtesy: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Born on June 21, 1905, in Paris, Jean-Paul Sartre became an international figure for politically committed intellectuals, along with his lifetime companion Simone de Beauvoir. The founder of existentialism is also the author of the novels *Nausea* and *The Words*, among others, and many philosophical essays. Sartre made headlines as a particularly vocal and influential commentator on many political events of the 20th century.

The exhibition shows the work of the multifaceted Sartre as playwright, journalist, writer, philosopher and polemicist. It runs from March 9 to August 21 and will be followed by other events to commemorate the philosopher, who died in 1980. For more information, visit www.bnf.fr.

Paul Claudel, Poet, Playwright and Diplomat

FEBRUARY 23 MARKED the 50th anniversary of the death of Paul Claudel, former French Ambassador to the United States from 1926 to 1933. Claudel was much more

than a diplomat, though. Poet, playwright and devoted Catholic, he had a great impact on the French Catholic Renaissance of the early 20th century.

Over the course of the year, France and countries around the world will celebrate the life of Claudel. The events will vary from exhibits, to lectures and conferences, to the production of his plays. Most notably, an Athens theater company will perform his play "Le partage de Midi" in December.

Claudel's strong faith and religious beliefs are present in almost all of his works. "He is not a writer who happens to be Catholic, he is a writer because he is Catholic," said the Rev. Dominic Schubert to Agence France-Presse.

Claudel also served as French ambassador to Japan and Belgium. He described the years he spent as ambassador to Japan, from 1922 to 1926, as some of the greatest of his life. This November, Tokyo and other cities throughout Japan will be hosting commemorative events in honor of Claudel and his posting in Japan.

Between his years of diplomatic work, Claudel traveled extensively in the United States and East Asia. In 1893, he wrote "The Exchange," a play which is set in America. He is also author of the religiously themed works "*Cinq Grandes Odes*" (Five Great Odes) in 1910 and "*Le Soulier de Satin*," (The Satin Slipper) in 1929.



Photo: AFP/Agence France Presse

85 PERCENT OF PARISIANS SUPPORT OLYMPIC BID

According to a recently released survey, 85 percent of Parisians support their city's bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. Inhabitants of most of the other cities in contention are less enthusiastic, with 77 percent of Muscovites, 68 percent of Londoners and 59 percent of New Yorkers backing their cities' bids. In related news, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) arrived in Paris March 8 to assess the city's capacity to host the games. The IOC's representatives were welcomed by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin and President Jacques Chirac. The committee will make its decision on July 6.

FRENCH NATIONAL LIBRARY DIGITIZES NEWSPAPERS

The French national library has begun digitizing the archives of 22 different French newspapers so as to make them accessible online. This massive undertaking will cover the period from the late 19th century till 1944 (which encompasses over 3.2 million pages!). These online archives will only be available, however, within the French library system, in order to maintain the publishers' intellectual property rights.

DESCARTES FIRST EDITION SOLD

A first edition of French philosopher René Descartes's world-renowned book, "Discourse on Method," was sold at auction in Evreux on February 27 for 78,000 euros (\$103,000) to an undisclosed buyer. The book, initially valued at 50,000 euros, was uncovered in a private library in western France by Pierre Poulain, an expert in antiquarian books. Only 30 first editions of Descartes's work are thought to remain in France. Descartes was a revolutionary 17th-century thinker who did not accept the philosophical precepts of Aristotle and Plato. He wanted to start a philosophy from scratch, based entirely on reason and logic. He is most famous for the saying, "I think, therefore I am."

CITE DES SCIENCES HONORS EINSTEIN

One hundred years ago, Einstein published a number of his findings, among them his research on the theory of relativity, which went on to revolutionize the study of physics. To honor the famous researcher, the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie in Paris is dedicating an exposition to him from now through the end of September. Entitled "100 Years After Einstein," the exhibit uses texts, photos, computer graphics, and films to revisit the life of the German genius and examine the lasting importance of his work. For more information, visit www.cite-sciences.fr.



The French American Chamber of Commerce's Atlanta chapter will host its annual Gala Dinner on Friday, April 29, in celebration of its 20th anniversary. French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte will be attending the event, which is expected to attract over 400 members of the Atlanta area's business elite. The FACC network, which covers every major city in the U.S., promotes transatlantic business relationships. For more information, visit www.facc-atlanta.com.

TAVERNIER FILM SHOWCASE AT AFI IN MARYLAND

The American Film Institute, in cooperation with the Society of Authors, Directors and Producers of France (ARP), will be showcasing the works of French neo-classical director Bertrand Tavernier from April 1 through 15. Tavernier has frequently been called the best modern filmmaker in France and is one of the highest honored among post-New Wave directors. His films have been nominated for over 40 César awards, of which he took home two for best director and three for writing, in addition to winning an award for best director at the Cannes Film Festival and a Golden Bear in Berlin. The screenings will culminate in the live on-stage appearance of Tavernier himself, when he will introduce his most recent film, *Holy Lola*, which has just premiered in Los Angeles. Films will be shown at the American Film Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland. For more information about this event, please visit www.afi.com/silver.

Ouh la la! Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre

News from FRANCE

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FRENCH EMBASSY PRESS & INFORMATION SERVICE

4101 Reservoir Road, NW
Washington, DC 20007-2182
Tel: (202) 944-6060
Fax: (202) 944-6072
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“TOULOUSE-LAUTREC AND MONTMARTRE,” now on display at the National Gallery of Art, recreates the spirit of Bohemia with over 250 works that embody the famous French artist's fascination with Parisian neighborhood of Montmartre. The exhibit includes drawings, paintings and vibrant posters paired with prints, illustrated invitations, sculptures, zinc silhouettes, ads and even admission tickets. While the exhibit centers around items by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, its vision encompasses a social phenomenon through other artists, such as Lautrec's predecessors, Edgar Degas and Edouard Manet, as well as his contemporaries Pierre Bonnard, Vincent van Gogh, and Pablo Picasso.

Complementing the plethora of paintings, posters and lithographs by Lautrec, the National Gallery of Art will also entice the public through various other events. A half-hour film on the life and times of Toulouse-Lautrec will play from April 1 to 29. In honor of the exhibition, Rosa Lamoreaux and Betty Bullock will perform a French cabaret concert on April 3. On April 3, 9 and 10, a program revolving around the cabarets, cafés, dance halls, and theaters of Bohemian Paris will include screenings of several rare,

early French films such as *L'Attrait de Paris*, *Mirages de Paris* and two films based on the history of the famous fin-de-siècle nightclub, the Moulin Rouge.



Jane Avril (1893), Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

Photo: The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. © 2005, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Drawing attention to society's decadence in his paintings, Toulouse-Lautrec epitomized the Bohemian lifestyle that flourished in Paris's Montmartre in the late 19th century. Born in 1864 in southern France to an aristocratic family, Lautrec found the company of Bohemians much more captivating. After an early childhood injury left his body deformed, the artist dedicated himself almost exclusively to his art. Studying under Léon Bonnat and Ferdon Cormon, Lautrec embraced the artistic community by befriending the likes of Vincent Van Gogh, Loie Fuller, Aristide Bruant, Jane Avril and Yvette Guilbert. After his first poster featuring "La Goulue," the stage name of Louise Weber, hit the streets of Paris in 1891, Lautrec's career was unstoppable until his premature death in 1901. A social artist in a vibrant communi-

ty, Toulouse-Lautrec expanded the arts by appealing to a wide audience with subtleties that leave the viewer intrigued.

The exhibit, which captures a glimpse of history, will run at the National Gallery through June 12. For more information, please visit www.nga.gov/exhibitions.

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