

France Hails Ivory Coast Peace Accords

FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER Michel Barnier commended the peace agreement signed in Pretoria on April 6 by the warring factions in the Ivory Coast. The agreement declared an end to the two and a half year civil war that has left the West African country divided and turned what was once a prosperous nation into a zone of unrest and conflict. "I hail the success of the mediation led with determination in the name of the African Union," declared Barnier, adding that the agreement, brokered by South Africa, sets the conditions for a definite end to the crisis in the Ivory Coast.

The Pretoria agreement puts the Ivory Coast, a former French colony and the world's top cocoa producer, on the path toward peace through disarmament, election reform, and unified government. It resulted from four days of talks in South Africa's capital between government and rebel leaders and was signed by Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo, rebel opposition leader Guillaume Soro, Prime Minister Seydou Diarra along with former president Henri Konan Bedie, former prime minister Alassane Ouattara and South African President Thabo Mbeki.

"France is ready, for its part, to give its full support to the application of the political decisions just made by the African leaders," declared Barnier. In particular, the agreement calls for the holding of general elections as soon as possible, a process which France says is essential to bringing about national reconciliation in the Ivory Coast.

An armed rebellion in 2002 divided the nation into two parts, the rebel, primarily Muslim North and the government-held and largely Christian South. A ceasefire was recently broken on November 4, resulting in the deaths of nine French peacekeepers and one American aid worker. There are over 10,000 French and U.N. peacekeepers currently stationed in the Ivory Coast. ■ ■

CHIRAC PRAISES POPE'S LEGACY

On April 3, President Jacques Chirac expressed his sadness at the passing of Pope John Paul II, saying, "I wish to express France's homage to a man who carried with incomparable fervor, conviction and courage a message of hope for all the peoples of the world." The Pope, whose life came to an end in Rome on April 2, was described by the president as an "untiring pilgrim for dialogue, reconciliation and peace." Chirac recalled the numerous visits John Paul II made to France over his 26-year tenure, "Every one of us can remember the World Youth Days in 1997 when he brought together hundreds and hundreds of young people here in Paris." "Humanity loses an inspired pastor," the president declared, "an unflagging defender of the dignity of man." Chirac and his wife were among the many dignitaries to attend John Paul II's funeral in Rome on April 8.

Darfur War Criminals to be Tried in International Criminal Court

ON MARCH 31, the United Nations Security Council voted 11 to 0 to approve French-initiated resolution 1593, which

try international suspects. The Court's

purpose is to bring to justice criminals who have committed crimes in a country that is itself incapable or unwilling to judge them fairly.

Last year the U.N. declared the situation in Darfur to be the world's worst ongoing humanitarian catastrophe (more than 300,000 African villagers have lost their lives in the conflict). In addition, the U.N. predicts that three to four million people will need food aid in the region by the middle of next year, as most farmers are afraid to return to their fields because of the continued fighting and instability. The Security Council suspects that pro-government Arab militias, known as the *janjaweed*, as well as Sudanese government and military officials are to blame for several grave transgressions, including rape, murder and arson. Sudan's government insists that arming the *janjaweed* was necessary to end the Darfur rebellion that began in 2003. ■ ■



Displaced Sudanese with belongings

paves the way for war crimes committed in Sudan's western Darfur region to be tried in the International Criminal Court. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan promptly provided the court, based in the Hague, Netherlands, with a list of 51 suspects who will face international prosecution when apprehended. These suspects, identified by an independent U.N. commission last year, are accused of mass killings, systematic rapes, and pillaging.

Citizens for Global Solutions called the U.N.'s collaboration to end the violence in Darfur an "historic first for international law." Indeed, it will mark the first time the court, established in 2002, exercises its authority to

FRENCHWOMAN COMPLETES PACIFIC CROSSING IN ROWBOAT



Twenty-six year old **Maud Fontenay** finished her 8,000-kilometer journey across the Pacific on March 27, becoming the first woman to row across the world's largest ocean by herself. Fontenoy, who also became the first woman to row solo across the North Atlantic Ocean in 2003, completed her 73-day journey by arriving at the island of Hiva Oa, in French Polynesia. Her vessel, the Oceor, is no ordinary rowboat: its 7.5-meter cedar-framed, kevlar and fiberglass hull was designed to withstand massive waves and to carry enough supplies for the entire trip. Setting sail from Callao, Peru, on January 12, Fontenoy followed the route of Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl, whose historic 1947 trans-Pacific trip on the Kon-Tiki raft lasted 101 days.

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AFRICAN WATER FORUM HELD IN PARIS

An international conference on water in rural Africa was organized by the African Development Bank (ADB) April 1 in Paris. The conference focused on how the international community can increase access to potable water for 300 million people in Africa between now and 2015. President Jacques Chirac called for the international community to contribute 14 billion euros to the ADB's initiative. For its part, France has promised to offer its expertise in water services, and it will soon double its aid program to Africa to \$468 million per year.

FRENCH NAVAL EXERCISE FOR NATO CERTIFICATION

France ran an extensive naval exercise involving eight other NATO countries from late March to mid-April in the Mediterranean. This exercise is expected to qualify France to lead NATO Rapid Reaction Force naval operations in the future. NATO's recently established Rapid Reaction Forces can intervene rapidly in a crisis anywhere in the world. The operation included 8,300 men and 40 ships, including the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, 15 frigates and destroyers, and three submarines, as well as 17 fighter planes and 25 helicopters.

FRANCE, ISRAEL TO JOINTLY DEVELOP SATELLITE

France and Israel plan to cooperatively develop a scientific observation satellite slated to be launched in 2008. Israel will contribute \$20 million to the project, with France adding another \$13 million. The so-called Venus satellite will be built under Israeli direction by Israel Aircraft Industries and Israel's Rafael Armament Development Authority and launched in 2008 by an Ariane rocket.

AILLAGON NEW HEAD OF TV5 MONDE

Jean-Jacques Aillagon, a former French minister of culture, was selected as the new head of television channel TV5 Monde after a unanimous vote of support from its board of directors. Aillagon will be directing the world's premier French-language network, which spans five continents and has over 73 million viewers per week. France's Foreign Ministry welcomed his accession and announced it will fully support the station's continued efforts to turn itself into one of the world's leading networks.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / April 13, 2005

France Backs Annan's U.N. Reform Project

U.N. Secretary General proposes increasing the number of permanent Security Council members

DURING HIS MEETING on March 28 with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, President Jacques Chirac strongly endorsed U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's March 21 proposals regarding possible U.N. reforms. Annan's recommendations include an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent Security Council members. But specific countries would not immediately be identified in the possible draft resolution, which may be put to the U.N. General Assembly in September.

France and Japan agree that the Security Council should be expanded in terms of both permanent and non-permanent memberships. In a joint news conference after their meeting in Tokyo, Chirac said France has long supported a proposal for Japan and Germany to become permanent Security Council members, "in a manner in which the two countries would have all rights and obligations of permanent members, particularly a veto." Japan and France will continue to push for the Council's expansion and other reforms during the U.N.'s global summit in September.

Among the other major countries frequently mentioned as possible candidates for permanent seats are Argentina, Brazil and Mexico for Latin America, as well as Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa for Africa.



MATTEI NEW SPOKESMAN FOR FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTRY

Jean-Baptiste Mattei formally assumed his duties as the new spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry on March 22, taking over from Hervé Ladsous (who has become assistant secretary for Asian affairs). After joining the Foreign Ministry in

1983, Mattei first served in Cairo and then twice in Brussels, once with the European Union and once with NATO. He spent the past year as the cabinet director for the European Affairs minister. As part of his new position, Mattei also becomes a member of the administrative board of Agence France-Presse (AFP).

France Welcomes Stability Pact Reform

PRESIDENT JACQUES CHIRAC indicated his strong support for the reform of the European Union's Growth and Stability pact approved on March 22 during an E.U. council meeting. In particular, the French president congratulated Luxembourg's foreign minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, for his key role in crafting the reform. Chirac asserted that the pact is now "more realistic, more pertinent and more flexible." Indeed, the reforms are geared toward stimulating higher economic growth and toward helping countries overcome recessions

by increasing their budgetary flexibility. "A more intelligent pact is a pact that will be better accepted and more widely respected," Chirac said during the first meeting with his European Union counterparts on March 20.

The original pact aimed to keep E.U. nations' deficit spending under 3 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP). Although the 3 percent limit remains, E.U.-member governments can now exceed this ceiling for a limited amount of time, provided their additional spending is allocated toward investments, research or structural development.



DEATH OF PRINCE RAINIER OF MONACO

French President Jacques Chirac expressed "great sadness" after the death of Monaco's Prince Rainier on April 6 and promised to work closely with his son, Prince Albert, who will replace his father as the head of the principality.

Rainier, 81 at the time of his death, reigned over Monaco for 53 years, turning the city-state into a world-renowned financial center.

Prince Rainier III of Monaco in 1995

3,000 New R&D Jobs Created

Jobs creations and budget increases are part of France's renewed research effort

FRANCE'S MINISTER delegate for research, François d'Aubert, announced on April 6 the creation of 3,000 jobs in science, engineering, research, and technology in 2006 as part of France's renewed R&D effort. Aubert stressed that this historic level of recruitment, and the extra 6 billion euros that will be spent on research between 2005 and 2007, are only "a first step" as France seeks to maintain its high level of innovation and competition globally. Young scientists and researchers in particular will benefit from this reinvigoration: for every two retirements, three new jobs will be created, in effect resulting in a recruitment capacity 50 percent higher than before. According to Aubert, the central aim of these initiatives is "to amplify France's research efforts both qualitatively and quantitatively."




A New Approach to Educational Exchange

THE FRENCH-AMERICAN Academic Partnership Fund, launched and strongly backed by French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte, will soon become a reality. On April 25, a panel of six French and American judges from various areas of expertise will select five to seven educational exchange projects for conditional approval, out of 24 applications whose topics range from science to politics, economics to arts and music. These projects, jointly proposed by at least two institutions of higher learning (at least one French and one American), will allow selected students to learn at both institutions and receive a joint master's degree or two master's degrees of the same equivalence.

The purpose of such an exchange program, set up by the French-American Cultural Exchange (FACE) foundation in partnership with the French Embassy's Cultural Service, is to promote understanding and thus strengthen the transatlantic partnership between France and the United States. The

program is novel in that not all its students will go abroad during their exchange: instead, they may attend lectures via teleconferencing. Nevertheless, their degrees will be recognized by both countries, and graduates will be encouraged to pursue work in their exchange country.

Once the final selection is made by the panel of judges, in late May or early June, the FACE foundation will allocate funds to the institutions whose joint-master's degrees have been approved. The exchange program itself is set to be launched in the fall semester. Visit www.facecouncil.org for more information. 

Alliance Française's Stirring Spring Tours

AS PART OF ITS MISSION to promote Francophone cultures in the United States, the Délégation Générale of the Alliance Française has organized four artistic tours this spring.

Jazz pianist Mario Canonge from Martinique, as well




The cover of *Rhizome*, Mario Canonge's latest CD

as his compatriot Michel Alibo (bass), Jacques Szwarcbart from Guadeloupe (tenor sax), and Horacio Hernandez from Cuba (drums) performed in 16 cities in March, on the occasion of *le mois de la Francophonie*, wowing audiences of over 5,000 people all across America, from Canada to Venezuela, sowing joyful seeds of jazz and bewitching every critic in their path.

The Magic Malik Orchestra began its tour on April 9, and will stay in the U.S. until the 28th. Malik, this "luminary of the slippery art of jazz flute" (*The Guardian*) will spread a kaleidoscopic collection of global rhythms and folk melodies borrowed from his Franco-Ivorian origins in 10 cities around the U.S. and Canada.

Also appearing in April, Christian Merveille, a renowned Belgian singer and writer of songs, fables and stories will enliven creative workshops and perform interactive shows with children.

As a finale, Guadeloupian dancer Lena Blou, together with Marius Grandisson and four Caribbean musicians, will perform "*Grenn Sel*," her latest choreography. Their month-long tour will begin May 24 and will delight audiences in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Haiti, and Venezuela. The performance, inspired by the traditional Guadeloupian "Gwo Ka," reflects the contemporary dance techniques that Blou developed under Maurice Béjart and Jean-Claude Galotta.


For more information, please contact the Delegation at dgc@alliance-us.org. 

French-U.S. Team Decipher Background Seismic Noise

Technique could help locate oil deposits and areas at risk for earthquakes

CNRS GEOPHYSICISTS from Grenoble and their counterparts at the University of Colorado have combined resources in order to listen to seismic "background noise." Background noise is formed by the constant signals produced by atmospheric conditions and the oceans' movements. Seismologists already study seismic wave activity to learn more about the rock below, but they have not paid much attention to background noise, considering it a nuisance that interferes with their readings of earthquakes and other major seismic activities.

The French-American research team realized, however, that studying background research could be worthwhile,

as it occurs in most locations and is fairly constant. The team used a network of 62 recording stations located at regular 50-kilometer intervals across Southern California to track seismic noise made by the wind and waves for one month. Armed with the data and a series of mathematical formulas, researchers have learned to use the background noise data to predict the readings that an earthquake would generate. According to the researchers, this technique should prove useful in analyzing soils without setting off artificial explosions or waiting for an earthquake to occur, making it easier to locate quake-risky areas and prospect for oil. 

FRAME ADDS NEW MEMBERS

Several new museums have recently joined the French Regional and American Museum Exchange (FRAME), bringing the total number of French and American members from 18 to 24. The new members include such museums as the Denver Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours. Established in 1999, FRAME focuses on developing collaborative relationships for exhibitions and multimedia projects among member organizations. For more information, visit www.on-frame.com.

U.S. VETERAN AWARDED LEGION OF HONOR



French Consul General Denis Simonneau (left) awarded the Legion of Honor to U.S. veteran Joe Uriegas.

World War II veteran Joe M. Uriegas was awarded the Legion of Honor during a special ceremony in Austin, Texas, on March 9. Uriegas was one of a hundred American soldiers selected to receive France's highest award during the ceremonies commemorating the 60th anniversary of D-Day in June of last year. The Legion of Honor was awarded to these 100 veterans as a symbolic expression of thanks for their courageous service as young soldiers, risking their lives to liberate France from German occupation. Their courage and dedication will not be forgotten. Uriegas, part of the American 188th field artillery battalion that landed in Normandy on D-Day and later fought in the Battle of the Bulge, was unfortunately too ill to attend the ceremonies in France. Currently 89, Uriegas wryly noted that during the war, everyone told him he was not going to survive, yet he's still around!

QUICKSILVER BUYS ROSSIGNOL

The American sportswear and surf equipment company Quicksilver announced March 22 that it will acquire France's Rossignol, the world's largest producer of skis. The agreement was reached between Rossignol President Laurent Boix-Vives and Frenchman Bernard Mariette, president of Quicksilver, who describe themselves as "long-time friends." Boix-Vives is to become a member of the Quicksilver board of directors and president of the Cleveland Golf Company, a Rossignol subsidiary.

FRENCH TUESDAYS STILL GOING STRONG

French Tuesdays, an organization that seeks to build strong links between members of the Francophone community, just celebrated its second anniversary. Founded in 2003 by six young Frenchmen living in New York City, French Tuesdays has grown from 50 to more than 3,000 members there and almost 1,000 in its newly created chapter in Miami. It organizes an average of 200 events a year, including its trademark "French Tuesdays" every two weeks. According to Pierre Battu, one of the original founders, the goal of French Tuesdays is to portray an image of France that is contemporary, captivating, and engaging. For more information, visit www.frenchtuesdays.com.

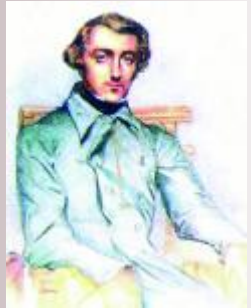


Alexis de Tocqueville

"News from France" has devoted its in-depth feature this April to Alexis de Tocqueville, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of his birth. The French author is often described as the most acute foreign observer, in the 19th century but also today, of American society and culture through his book, "La Démocratie en Amérique" ("Democracy in America").

A Nobleman Fascinated by Democracy

BORN ON JULY 29, 1805, in Paris to Hervé-Bonaventure Clérel de Tocqueville, a descendant of a noble Norman family, and Louise-Madeleine Le Peletier de Rosambo, granddaughter of Malesherbes and sister-in-law of Chateaubriand, Alexis de Tocqueville spent his childhood in Verneuil studying under the private tutelage of the Abbé Lesueur. After studying rhetoric and philosophy at the College Royal in Metz, he specialized in law in Paris. Appointed *juge auditeur* (mediator) at the court of law in Versailles and later promoted to *juge suppléant* (substitute judge), he soon met his future wife, an Englishwoman named Mary Motley (they wed on October 26, 1835), and Gustave de Beaumont, who was to become his best friend.



Opposed to the government of King Louis Philippe, and eager to travel outside of France, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont went to America in 1831 to assess the new country's prison system. Though the majority of their time was spent in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, they also ventured as far south as New Orleans and as far west as Michigan. As well as meeting with many ordinary Americans, Tocqueville gained additional insight by interviewing presidents Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams, as well as Charles Carroll (the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence).

Upon returning to France in March 1832, Beaumont began writing *The United States Penitentiary System and its Application in France*, with Tocqueville supplying facts and ideas. Their report inspired prison reform throughout Europe, but Tocqueville remains best known for his solo work, *Democracy in America*, which he finished on August 14, 1834. The success of the first edition of 500 copies led to a second printing in January of 1835, and later that year, Tocqueville received the Montyon prize from the French Academy for his book.

Tocqueville was elected deputy from Valognes in 1839. As a left-of-center member of the committee on slavery, Tocqueville filed a report advocating the immediate emancipation of all slaves in French territories. In November

of the same year, Tocqueville completed the manuscript of the second part of *Democracy in America*, which was published on April 20, 1840. On December 23, 1841, Tocqueville was elected to the French Academy.

During France's Second Republic (under the presidency of Louis-Napoleon) Tocqueville was elected to the new legislative Assembly and also appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. After suffering a pulmonary attack and falling ill with tuberculosis in 1850, he began writing his *Recollections*, reflections on the February Revolution and on his ministry, which he finished in July 1851 (it was published posthumously in 1893). In response to Louis-Napoleon's coup d'état and the start of the Second Empire in December, Tocqueville and about 50 other representatives opposed to the coup were briefly imprisoned. Undeterred, Tocqueville anonymously published an article in the *London Times* condemning the coup.

Leaving politics, he tried to regain his health and began research on his work *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. Completed in January 1856, it was met with great success. Tocqueville then relocated to Cannes in October 1858 and died six months later, on April 16, 1859, with his brother, Hippolyte, and his friend Beaumont by his side. He is buried in the village of Tocqueville. The husband of Tocqueville's great-great-grandniece, Marie-Henriette Tocqueville, and two of their sons (one of whom is named Alexis) still live in France while another son lives in London.

"I confess that in America I saw more than America; I sought the image of democracy itself, with its inclinations, its character, its prejudices, and its passions, in order to learn what we have to fear or hope from its progress."

-Alexis de Tocqueville

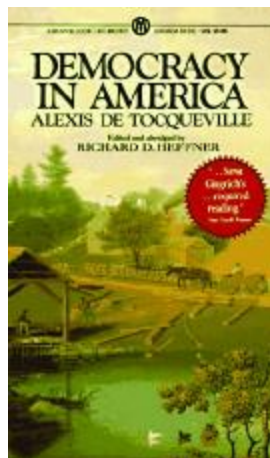


Linda Marrinon, *Portrait of Alexis de Tocqueville after Chasseriau* (2002).

"Democracy in America" A Seminal Work

TOCQUEVILLE'S BEST KNOWN work, *Democracy in America*, was first published in 1835 and followed by a second volume in 1840. It takes a critical approach to the analysis of the American psyche, and in so doing it identifies the necessary ingredients for a vibrant democracy. It also provides a glimpse into the everyday life of the 1830's, by for instance characterizing cultural attitudes towards women, race and religion.

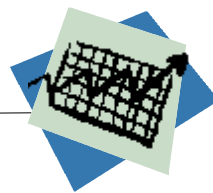
As he studies American society, one of the notions Tocqueville touches on includes "American Associationalism." This concept highlights the role played by institutions of civil society—such as families, voluntary associations, schools, businesses, churches and other religious organizations—and their connection to democracy. Tocqueville writes that "the strength of free



peoples resides in the local community. Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within the people's reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and accustom them to make use of it."

One of the most striking aspects of the book are its noticeably accurate predictions. Tocqueville projected that the controversy over the abolition of slavery would divide America and lead to a civil war. Additionally, he anticipated the rise of the United States and Russia as global superpowers.

Because Tocqueville analyzed America so penetratingly, and foresaw in part the future of U.S. society, his works are still highly regarded and studied today. Writers have referenced Tocqueville to illustrate their cause from both ends of the political spectrum. Politicians such as former President Bill Clinton and Speaker Newt Gingrich have quoted Tocqueville in their speeches, and Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy cited Tocqueville's reasoning in the case of *Powers v. Ohio*. Tocqueville's observations about American culture and religion continue to prove relevant today.



35-Hour Workweek Made More Flexible

Reforms are good for business and for employees, and make France more attractive to investors

THE FRENCH LEGISLATURE approved on March 22 a reform of the country's 35-hour workweek in order to give companies and employees more flexibility. The 35-hour workweek was first enacted in 2000, and was welcomed by workers who began spending more time with their families and benefited from more free time. However, it did not achieve its original ambition to decrease unemployment by compelling employers to hire more workers. According to France's new minister of finance, Thierry Breton, "the intention was to spread work around, but the effect was to spread salaries around." In fact, the 35-hour workweek was especially damaging to the lowest paid, who found it more

difficult to work overtime so as to make ends meet.

The new legislation seeks to rectify such unintended effects. It does not abolish the 35-hour workweek, but allows employers to offer their staff more hours at a higher rate of pay (all on a purely voluntary basis). It also encourages employees to sell a portion of their holiday entitlement back to their employers. Known as RTT (*Réduction du Temps de Travail*) days, these extra days off will be more easily converted into increased salary, training or pension rights. This will give workers more options as they seek to strike the perfect balance between their amount of earnings and free time.

Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin hopes that the new measures will improve France's international image and encourage employees to work longer hours by giving them the right to "earn more by working more." While the French do work less than their counterparts in most other industrialized countries (with an average of 1,431 hours per year compared with 1,792 for Americans, for instance), French workers remain among the most productive in the world, ahead of the British, Germans, Americans and Japanese. ■

FRENCH TV GOES DIGITAL

French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin participated March 31 in the launching of "la télévision numérique terrestre (TNT)" (Digital Terrestrial Television) in France. Digital television signals are transmitted using earthbound antennas rather than satellites, and are therefore much less expensive to broadcast. TNT now offers 14 free channels to French viewers, as well as interactive services including weather, traffic information, banking services, job listings, a TV guide... To receive the new channels, viewers will need to buy digital TVs, or digital set-top boxes. TNT was coordinated by both the French government and the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA), France's audiovisual regulatory body. Raffarin announced that the government plans on expanding TNT's coverage from the current 35 percent of French territory to 100 percent by 2007, while the CSA is currently working on upgrading TNT to a higher definition.

Ten Years of French-Japanese Nanotechnology Cooperation

Collaboration leads to exciting developments in a field that is likely to become the next Big Thing

SOMETIMES DUBBED the most successful international collaboration between France and Japan, LIMMS (Laboratory for Integrated Micro Mechatronic Systems) is celebrating its tenth year in existence. Created in 1995, this partnership between the French and Japanese scientific communities in the field of nanotechnology becomes stronger with each passing year.

LIMMS was jointly established by France's National Scientific Research Center (CNRS) and by the University of Tokyo's Institute for Industrial Sciences. Based in Tokyo, LIMMS focuses on micro/nano-electro-mechanical systems. Scientists in the laboratory design microtools for biological and molecular engineering, devices for fiber optic networks, integrated electronics at the nanometric scale, and much more. Their overarching goal is to develop millimetric intelligent machines, equipped with sensors and activators. Such machines could prove invaluable for medical applications.

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SPREADS FAST

In a study published on March 24, the Institut Médiamétrie, which measures the audiences of major media outlets, found that nearly 24 million French people over the age of 11 are frequent users of the Internet. This is equivalent to 46 percent of the country's population, compared with 31 percent just three years ago. Moreover, the percentage of Internet users who use high-speed connections has just passed the benchmark of 50 percent, highly symbolic as a kind of psychological hurdle. France now ranks third, behind only Germany and Spain, in the percentage of Internet users that have such high-speed connections. High-speed Internet users in France spend nearly 16 hours surfing the web or firing off emails, whereas, dial-up users spend 7 hours per month online. In both cases, the average time spent online has increased by 2 hours per month.

More than 50 French scientists have worked at LIMMS so far, almost all of France's nanotech specialists. These researchers are either post-doctoral students who have received a fellowship from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, or are permanent employees of the CNRS. All are partnered with Japanese researchers on their arrival in Tokyo. Indeed, LIMMS's success is in part attributed to cross-cultural synergies, with one Japanese official explaining, "We tend to try to take small systematic steps forward, the French go after lots of ideas all at once."

For more information, please visit the official LIMMS Web site, <http://toshi.fujita3.iis.u-tokyo.ac.jp/limms>. ■

SAGEM + SNECMA = SAFRAN

French jet engine and aerospace equipment company Snecma recently completed its merger with mobile phone and defense electronics company Sagem, giving rise to a new firm, Safran. Safran is the French word for a boat's rudder blade, hinting at the notions of direction, goal or heading, the new company explained in a press release. It is also the French word for saffron, the expensive spice made from the dried saffron flower which fueled international trade in the 19th century. The name was chosen from among 4,250 submissions and has been registered in more than 100 countries.

GHOSN TO HEAD RENAULT



In May, Carlos Ghosn, head of Nissan, will also assume the head of France's second largest automaker, Renault. Although Nissan and Renault have cross-shareholdings and a deep alliance, their relationship intentionally stops short of an outright merger. Ghosn

is credited with a spectacular revival of Nissan's business and has become somewhat of a hero in Japan. Now he is to become the first executive to try to run two big automakers at once.

KLM, AIR FRANCE MERGE FREQUENT-FLYER PROGRAMS

Starting in June, the 66.3 million customers of the Air France-KLM group will have a single frequent flyer program called "Flying Blue." This will mark the first time that two major airlines have fully merged their mileage programs. With 10 million members and over 30 partner airlines, Flying Blue will enable customers to earn miles and use them on over 18,000 daily flights to over 900 destinations.

ACCOR TO RUN MIDDLE EAST'S BIGGEST HOTEL

French hotel company Accor has won a bid to run the largest luxury hotel in the Middle East. The hotel, which will be located in the Muslim holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, will have 1,240 suites on 34 floors. Located only 100 meters from the holy Kaaba stone, it will be part of the Al Beit high-rise complex. The hotel will be able to accommodate as many as 6,000 guests and will employ nearly 5,000 people. Accor, which is active in 140 countries, currently has 17 hotels in the Middle East and is planning to boost its presence there over the next three years.

CYBER PATROLS AGAINST CHILD PORN

French Minister of the Interior Dominique de Villepin announced on March 24 the creation of cyber patrols against child pornography and racial discrimination, as well as the establishment of a new department for the protection of minors and vulnerable people by the end of 2005. These initiatives are designed to help police detect and filter sites with unacceptable content (in France, any material deemed as inciting racism is illegal). In related news, the Interior Ministry is implementing a zero-tolerance policy on violence, with particular attention being paid to schools, hospitals and public transportation during evening and weekend hours.

AGE EQUALITY FOR MARRIAGE

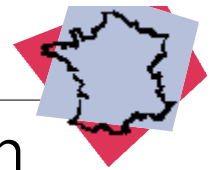
The French Senate unanimously voted on March 29 to raise the legal marriage age for women from 15 to 18 (bringing it in line with the age set for their male counterparts). The reform of this 200-year-old stipulation is expected to be passed soon by the National Assembly, and should help prevent the forced marriages of minors. In particular, legislators hope to protect the rights of Muslim women, believed most likely to be forced into early wedlock.

SANDWICHING LUNCH INTO A 35-HOUR WORKWEEK

The traditional three-course lunch is coming under increasing pressure, according to participants at the European Sandwich and Snack Fair, which was held in Paris in early March. Indeed, the 35-hour workweek has modified French working habits, leading to shorter lunch breaks and a higher consumption of sandwiches. Though still far behind their British neighbors, who invented the sandwich, the French already eat about 1.6 billion sandwiches a year! But have no fear, French bistros still offer traditional menus, and old-school diners can continue to savor three-course meals with a bottle or two of Bordeaux.

VERSAILLES'S VEGETABLES

April marks the peak of the over 300-year-old gardens at the Château de Versailles. Because of their reputation, consumers are willing to wait almost an hour to purchase some of the 50 tons of fruit and 30 tons of vegetables produced annually at the chateau. Jean-Baptiste La Quintinie (1624-1691) originally designed the gardens for Louis XIII, implementing the concept of individually protected micro-climates. The garden is now part of the national landscaping school, and continues to test innovative gardening techniques.



De Gaulle Voted Greatest Frenchman

WHO IS THE GREATEST French citizen of all time? French television station France 2 attempted to answer this question on April 4. And after a three-part polling process, Charles de Gaulle was selected by the TV audience. A lifetime military man, de Gaulle was minister for National Defense and War during World War II when France capitulated to Germany. He escaped to London, where he took charge of the French Resistance. After the war he served as France's first president under the new 5th Republic.



General de Gaulle calls for French resistance (B.B.C. Radio, June 1940).

The survey's results give a glimpse of the types of achievements the French public most value, and it would seem the worlds of science, literature and comedy came out on top. Personalities in the top ten included famous comedians Coluche and Bourvil, literary giants Molière and Victor Hugo, scientific

innovators Louis Pasteur and Marie Curie, undersea explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, and singer Edith Piaf. Father Pierre, who was chosen for his devotion to the fight against poverty and injustice, is the only nominee still living.

One Frenchman absent from the top ten was Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, who was ranked 16th out of the 100 listed in the poll. Napoleon, due to his ranking, was not a contender for the number one spot which was determined through a public selection within the top ten. The absence of the founder of France's civil code has raised questions concerning the poll's reliability and methodology.

Similar polls have been held throughout Europe. In Britain, Sir Winston Churchill was deemed history's greatest Briton, while Germans voted for their former chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who rebuilt Germany after the war.

French Life Expectancy Exceeds 80!

THE FRENCH NATIONAL Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) released an annual report on March 24 stating that for the first time, the average life expectancy in France has surpassed 80 years! The INED study found that French women can now expect to live for 83.3 years and men for 76.7 years. The upward trend in life expectancy has been steady and impressive (in 1950 the French only lived an average of 66 years), with a particularly significant jump in the past two years. This leap can be attributed to major advances in the fight against cancer and heart disease, lower rates of smoking and alcoholism and improved extensive screening against disease. France is now the number two country in the world for life expectancy, second only to Japan (which has a life expectancy rate of 82 years). In the U.S., the average life expectancy at birth is 77.3 years.



Still going strong at sixty

The steady aging of populations in many westernized nations, however, raises the possibility of long-term social and economic costs. The French government has already begun instituting reforms to address the issue of pension benefits, for instance, by raising the retirement age to 65 years. Fortunately, France has a fertility rate of 1.9, only slightly below the ideal replacement level of 2.1, meaning that its potential demographic imbalance will not place excessive strain on French society. And seniors have much to offer: the wisdom and experience that come with age can benefit all!

OLDEST WWI VETERAN HONORED

Maurice Floquet was promoted from *Chevalier* to *Officier* (Knight to Officer) in the Legion of Honor on March 24 during a moving ceremony. At the age of 110, Floquet is the oldest surviving World War I veteran, or *poilus* as they are fondly called, in France. In 1914, Floquet, having just turned 20, fought in the front lines at the Somme for one year before being injured twice and operated on three times. After a long recovery period, he spent the rest of the war working in an armaments factory. Floquet was inducted into the Legion of Honor in 1960 and is one of only 12 World War I Veterans still living. During the ceremony, Floquet said that he was deeply touched by his promotion.

Return to the Tap

ON WORLD Water Day, March 22, the publicly owned water company Eau de Paris distributed thousands of free, specially designed glass carafes, featuring the Eau de Paris logo and the Eiffel Tower, in a campaign to encourage Parisians to drink more tap water. The tap water campaign was a reaction to a recent poll indicating that over 51 percent of Parisians purchase their drinking water. Eau de Paris emphasizes that consumption of tap water is more cost effective and more ecologically sound than bottled water.



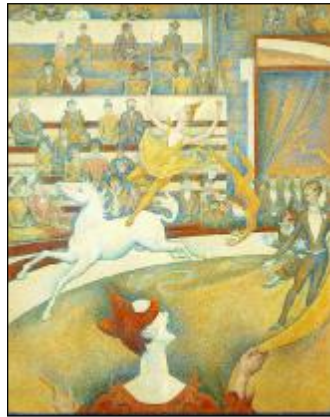
According to Eau de Paris, its water has a mineral and sanitary quality that is just as good as anything you can buy in a bottle but is over 200 times cheaper than bottled water and is delivered directly into homes without packaging. Eau de Paris hopes that its innovative marketing campaign and persuasive arguments will tip the scales so that a majority of Parisians return to the tap.



First Exhibit of Neo-Impressionism in France

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, France will host an exhibition of Neo-Impressionist paintings at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Like the Impressionists, the Neo-Impressionist painters strived to depict their day-to-day worlds: their paintings depicted modern life and pastimes set in urban landscapes, suburbs and seaside towns. The difference between the two movements lies in the more scientific style of the Neo-Impressionists.

Georges Seurat is credited with starting the movement in the 1880s. It began when he developed a technique of color division known as pointillism. Pointillism is a style of painting in which non-primary colors are generated not by the mixing of pigments in the palette, nor by using purchased pigments



Cirque (1890-91), Georges Seurat

directly, but by the visual mixing of points of primary colors, placed in close proximity to each other. Pointillism caught on quickly and was used by such famous artists as Paul Signac, Camille Pissarro, and Henri-Edmond Cross. Later, abstractionists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian also experimented with color division and its possibilities.

The exhibition, entitled "Neo Impressionism from Seurat to Paul Klee," demonstrates the diversity of approaches arising from Seurat and his friends' techniques by highlighting the fundamental role they played in the birth of 20th-century painting. The exhibition will run from now until July 10. For more information, please visit www.musee-orsay.fr.

New Alexandre Dumas Book Reveals Who Killed Nelson

AN ALEXANDRE DUMAS novel lost in the depths of the French National Library has been discovered more than 100 years after the death of the famed author of *The Three Musketeers*. Claude Schopp, the Dumas expert who discovered the text, was looking through copies of the newspaper *Le Moniteur Universel* when he came across a microfiche signed by Alexandre Dumas. Dumas often first published his works as serials in papers or magazines.



Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine (*The Knight of Saint-Hermine*) is an adventure story written in Dumas's classic style. It narrates the adventures and experiences of the chevalier de Sainte-Hermine, an aristocrat who is caught

between his royal past and his fascination with the Napoleonic empire. The novel depicts the start of the Napoleonic Empire and includes a brilliant description of the battle of Trafalgar.

The 900-page book also purports to reveal the identity of the one who killed Admiral Nelson, a British naval commander who led his fleet to victory over the French and Spanish off the coast of Gibraltar in 1805, but who was killed during the battle by an unknown French sniper. According to Dumas, this sniper was none other than his fictional hero.

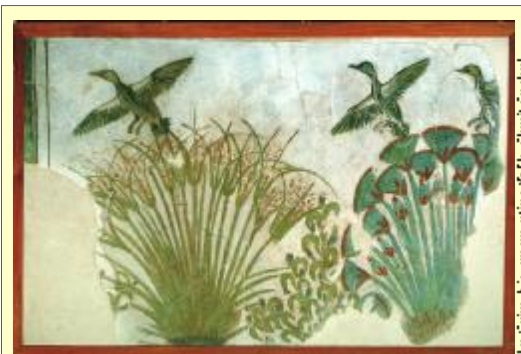
The novel was intended to be the last work in a trilogy, set in the years following the French revolution. The first two novels of the trilogy were written in 1857 and 1867. When Dumas died in 1870 *Le Chevalier* was still missing its final chapters.

Schopp kept the novel a secret for years while he edited its inconsistencies then completed it using clues that had been left behind by Dumas. It will be published June 3.

Business Patronage Takes Off

THE GROWTH OF CORPORATE patronage in France was the topic of discussion on April 7 and 8 at a conference of the Economic and Social Council in Paris. The round table included major business leaders who discussed the field's hot topics. In particular, participants assessed the effectiveness of the August 2003 law which doubled the tax incentives for companies that support cultural, environmental or social causes. The French government, inspired by the scale and influence of corporate sponsorship in the U.S., is seeking to foster its development in France.

Jacques Rigaud, president of Admical, an organization dedicated to promoting business patronage, noted that "in several areas, corporate patronage encourages and supports innovative experimental projects." He also noted that both businesses and sponsorship partners benefit from corporate patronage: by linking their names to good causes, companies benefit from good publicity. For more information, please visit www.admical.org.



Ducks, Tell el-Amarna, South Palace (Marou-Aton)

PHARAOH EXPOSITION WILL GO ON!

Due to the exceptional turnout for its "Pharaon" ("Pharaoh") exhibition, the Institute of the Arab World in Paris has decided to extend it for two months. Originally set to close on April 10, the last day to explore the lives of the most powerful figures in Ancient Egypt is now June 12. For more information, please visit www.imarabe.org.

ALL THE CINEMAS OF THE WORLD

The Cannes Film Festival announced on March 22 a new initiative for 2005 titled "Tous les Cinémas du Monde" ("All the Cinemas of the World"). This project, led by Serge Sobczynski, is dedicated to showcasing cinematographic works of artists from around the world and "intends to encourage the growth of cinema 'd'auteur' by illustrating the richness and diversity of world cinema and the strength of young creative talent." Each year several countries will be selected for the event and charged with presenting films that reflect their cultural identity. The festivities will be held in a new theater designed by Patrick Bouchain to be built in the center of the "Village International." Morocco, Sri Lanka and Austria are likely guests for the 2005 event. For more information, visit www.festival-cannes.fr.

MAJOR FRENCH EXHIBIT IN WARSAW

An exhibit highlighting 400 years of French art was unveiled at the Royal Palace in Warsaw on March 18. The exhibit, "Shadow and Light," represents the largest exposition of its kind in central and eastern Europe and features a total of 120 works by Cézanne, Delacroix, Monet, Gauguin and Renoir—among many others. The event, which continues until the exhibit's departure for Budapest in June, is funded by the French Culture Ministry. According to organizers, the pieces on display will introduce central and eastern Europeans to "four centuries of French art, in its diversity and continuity, its desires and utopia, its contrasts and originality."

CAPTAIN NEMO STATUE UNVEILED

A bronze statue of one of Jules Verne's most famous characters, Captain Nemo, will be erected in Nantes, the author's birthplace, in September. The statue, featuring a standing Captain Nemo and a young, reclined Verne, will be located just a few meters from the Jules Verne museum. The statue and the museum will be inaugurated simultaneously in September to mark the 100th anniversary of his death (see NFF 04.03).

SALON DU LIVRE HONORS RUSSIAN LITERATURE

On March 17, the 25th "Salon du Livre" book fair in Paris opened its doors. President Jacques Chirac invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the inauguration with him, as the fair paid tribute to Russian literature and to a delegation of 41 Russian authors.



REFERENDUM VOTE!

All registered French voters living in the U.S. will be able to cast a ballot for the referendum vote on the European Constitution which will be held on May 28. The voting will take place in French voting centers across the U.S., and all registered voters will receive detailed ballot information by mail. For more information, please visit the Washington D.C.'s consulate Web site, www.consulfrance-washington.org.

"MASTERPIECES OF EUROPEAN DRAWING" AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



Le Paillon, Paul Signac, Nice, 1921

"Masterpieces of European Drawing," a two-month exhibition at the University of Virginia Art Museum, made its debut on April 9. This special exhibit gathers 62 drawings from one of the oldest museums in France, the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie of Besançon (eastern France). The collection showcases a wide range of styles and techniques, with drawings from the 16th through the 20th centuries, including many by major artists such as Rembrandt, Delacroix, and Matisse. This exposition will be a way to celebrate the new relationship between Charlottesville and Besançon, the two having become sister cities last fall.

Thanks to this event, Charlottesville, already well known for its university's beautiful campus, will further make its mark as an up-and-coming cultural destination. For more information, please visit www.virginia.edu/artmuseum.

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC EXPO GREAT SUCCESS

A publicity specialist himself in a way, Toulouse-Lautrec drew a record-breaking 9,230 visitors to the March 20 opening of his exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, which will remain in Washington, D.C., until June 12. Don't miss your chance to get such a glimpse of the spectacular beauty of Montmartre! Visit www.nga.gov for more information.

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DC Area Premiere of Life x 3

THE ROUND HOUSE theatre in Bethesda will debut the thought-provoking and comical play entitled *Life x 3* by Yasmina Reza, the French playwright who gained international acclaim for the hit production *Art*. The plot of *Life x 3* centers around two high maintenance couples: Henri, the agitat-



Photograph by Star-Franc

David Fendig (Henri) and Chandler Vinton (Sonia) in *Life x 3*

ed astrophysicist and Sonia, his cheeky wife, as well as Hubert, the chauvinistic supervisor, and his significant other, Inès. Hubert and Inès arrive for dinner a day earlier than expected just as Henri and Sonia are completing the daily task of putting their son to bed. Reza then weaves an intricate story by portraying the same dinner party three times, but with a twist!

Indeed, Reza is inspired by the chaos theory of alternate universes, where one subtle change can alter an entire outcome. As the wine flows freely, three different scenarios of the same party are played out, ensuring a very enjoyable evening of laughs. Drawing also on the theory of quantum physics, in which the mere act of viewing determines what is seen, the audience feels like a catalyst in *Life x 3*. Thus, Reza investigates the nuances of human behavior when faced with certain stimuli, the whole set to a backdrop of cosmology. Her previous works also grappled with larger themes: *Art* revolved around what defines art, and *The Unexpected Man* was preoccupied with literature.

Reza, born in France in 1959 to a Hungarian mother and a Jewish Iranian-Russian father, has received the prestigious Molière Award for her new play. Her talent shines in this play by contrasting human interactions and the supernatural, producing a comical delight.

Life x 3, which benefits from the honorary patronage of French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte and his wife, will run until May 1. It has been translated by Christopher Hampton and will be performed in English. For more information, please visit the following Web site: www.round-house.org/current.htm. Readers of *News from France* will receive a \$10 discount with the mention of this article!

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