

A Stronger France at Home, Then Beyond Its Borders

This year's political *rentrée* (see page 6) in France took off at full speed, defining the direction of French foreign and domestic policy in the months to come through a series of back-to-back forums. Among those was the Fifteenth French Ambassador's Conference, from August 27-29, during which French President Nicolas Sarkozy laid out the roadmap of France's new foreign policy.

Emphasizing a stronger France at home and abroad, Sarkozy asserted, "The domestic reforms that I intend to carry out in order to restore to the French their faith in the future, to modernize the economy and to adapt our institutions are part of my vision of France in the world."

President Sarkozy specifically made Europe one of France's highest priorities, explaining that "there can be no strong France without Europe, just as there can be no powerful Europe without France." Sarkozy stated his wish that a new, simplified treaty could enter into effect before the European elections in the spring of 2009. "I believe that the emergence of a strong Europe as a major player on the international scene can make a decisive contribution to the just, more efficient world order that our people are calling for," the president affirmed.

With France's Presidency of the European Union only ten months away, President Sarkozy announced that "either I or the prime minister will be visiting each of the EU capitals before July 1." Three of France's priorities, he explained, are immigration, energy and environmental policies.

Addressing, without taboo, the relationship between NATO and a European defense, President Sarkozy referenced the Union's achievements over recent years, includ-

ing some 15 operations conducted in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, noting that "these operations demonstrate, if proof were needed, that there is no competition between NATO and the Union and that the two indeed complement each other. As we have to cope with an increasing number of crises, there is not an excess but rather a shortage of capabilities in Europe."

"More than that: I am convinced that it is in the vested interest of the United States for the European Union to assemble its forces, streamline its capabilities, and independently organize its own defense," Sarkozy continued. He underlined his hope that "in the coming months we will move toward a strengthening of European defense and the renovation of NATO, and thus its relationship with France."

Highlighting the importance of transatlantic relations, Sarkozy asserted, "I believe that the friendship between the United States and France is just as important today as it has been over the last two centuries."

Explaining the need to address three main challenges facing the world — preventing a confrontation between Islam and the West, integrating emerging giants, and coping with global challenges such as climate change— President Sarkozy also focused on several current crises, including Afghanistan (see page 2), Iraq, Lebanon, and the Balkans.

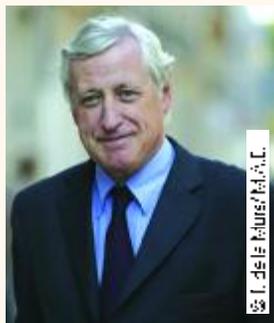
In addition, the French president emphasized his support for the security of Israel, and the rebuilding of the Palestinian Authority. Recalling an informal dialogue already initiated with the countries bordering the Mediterranean, Sarkozy addressed his endeavor for a Mediterranean Union. Mr. Sarkozy also cited Africa as a crucial foreign policy focus.

On the subject of Iran, the French president stated that "France will spare no effort to convince Iran that it has much to gain by engaging in serious negotiations with the Europeans, the Chinese, the Russians, and, of course, the Americans." Referring to the parameters of the current on-going process, Sarkozy reiterated that "an Iran with nuclear weapons is unacceptable to me." He stressed "France's full determination in the current process, which combines increasing sanctions but also openness if Iran chooses to honor its obligations. This approach is the only one that can keep us from facing a disastrous alternative: an Iranian bomb or the bombing of Iran."

Finally, President Sarkozy, in words similar to those that epitomized his approach since coming into office, stressed that "the government will show the same kind of determination in the international arena that it is demonstrating domestically."



French President Nicolas Sarkozy lays out the roadmap of France's new foreign policy at the 15th Annual Ambassador's Conference



Pierre Vimont Appointed French Ambassador to the United States

Mr. Pierre Vimont was appointed Ambassador of France to the United States by President Nicolas Sarkozy on August 1, 2007.

Prior to his present appointment, Vimont was chief of staff to the minister of foreign affairs, a position he had held since 2002. He was previously ambassador and permanent representative of France to the European Union from 1999 to 2002.

Vimont joined the Foreign Service in 1977. He was first posted to London from 1978 to 1981 before spending the next four years with the Press and Information Office at the Quai d'Orsay. From 1985 to 1986 he was appointed to the Institute for East-West Security in New York.

Returning to Europe, he served in Brussels (1986-1990), and was subsequently chief of staff to the minister delegate for European affairs from 1990 to 1993.

He went on to serve as director for development and scientific, technical and educational cooperation and then for cultural, scientific and technical relations. He was deputy director general of the entire Cultural, Scientific and Technical Relations Department from 1996 to 1997 and then director of European Cooperation from 1997 to 1999. Born in 1949, Pierre Vimont is a former student of the National School of Administration (ENA).

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FRANCE PAYS RESPECTS TO U.S. ON ANNIVERSARY OF SEPTEMBER 11

French President Sarkozy sent the following message to President Bush on September 11, 2007:

Mr. President,

Today the whole world remembers the horrifying attacks that struck America on September 11, 2001, plunging the country into mourning. The enormous emotion and indignation of the American people in the face of these barbarous acts was felt throughout the entire world. They remain intense, and I personally bore witness to them last year at the site of the World Trade Center.

On this day of remembrance, I would like once again, through you, to convey to the American people the friendship and solidarity of the French people and to assure them of France's resolute support in the fight against the scourge of terrorism.

Please accept, Mr. President, this assurance of my highest regards.

Nicolas Sarkozy

SOARING FROM PARIS TO LONDON



The new Eurostar service is approximately 20 minutes faster

Beginning November 14, Paris and London will become closer than ever before. Eurostar commuters and leisure travelers will be able to make the trip from London's newly refurbished St. Pancras International Station to Paris's Gare du Nord in less than two hours and fifteen minutes—about 20 minutes faster than before. The completion of High Speed 1, Britain's newest stretch of high velocity rail networks running from the English Coast to London, has made the faster trip possible. The French SNCF debuted the train service on September 4, leaving the Gare du Nord and arriving in London just two hours, three minutes and 39 seconds later, a new record. Previously, trains running through the Channel Tunnel had to slow down upon exiting rails into England, where conventional lines.

France Steps Up Operations in Afghanistan

Following an announcement made on August 27 by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, France will be intensifying its training of the Afghan army by sending additional troops and deploying its Mirage fighter aircrafts to the south of Afghanistan.

"I have decided to reinforce the presence of our instructors within the Afghan army since it is the Afghan army itself who must, first and foremost, wage and win the battle against the Taliban," said Sarkozy at the 15th Annual Ambassador's Conference (see page 1).

French military personnel are currently training Afghan officers (platoon leaders, unit commanders, staff officers) in conduct of operations, intelligence and administration. Moreover, they are responsible for training Afghan Special Forces.

In all, more than 250 French soldiers (out of the 1,200



Courtesy: Mission Militaire/ Washington, D.C.

France will soon deploy 6 additional aircraft to support operations in Afghanistan

deployed) will be assigned to this duty in Afghanistan.

France has also taken an active part in air operations from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as from its aircraft carrier when deployed in that zone. However, to further enhance its efficiency, three Mirage 2000 and three Mirage F1 are going to be deployed from now on in Southern Afghanistan, at Kandahar Air Force Base. This

change will allow French aircraft to limit their transit time by rapidly getting to the zones of operations, alongside American Forces. Their integration at Kandahar AFB will facilitate some logistics functions and strengthen the comradeship-in-arms between American and French military personnel who are operating side by side in the field.

France Hosts an Environmentally-Conscious Rugby World Cup

Rugby fans across the world are focusing on France this fall as the country hosts the 2007 Rugby World Cup (RWC), the first Francophone country to ever do so. The event, which runs from September 7 to October 20, is drawing attention not only as a major international sporting event, but also as a landmark in environmental protection. Event planners and the French gov-



As the 2007 RWC kicks off, the event is gaining both sports fans and environmentalists' attention

ernment are striving to make the RWC the first-ever eco-responsible international event.

The French Ministry of Ecology and its collaborators have designed a number of measures to offset the event's impact on the environment. In terms of the competition's CO2 emissions, personal transportation is the biggest culprit, weighing in at 84 percent of the RWC's total emissions. Therefore, event organizers are working hard to promote train and public transportation, and some cities are even providing bicycle parking lots.

Additional measures include the installation of solar panels on the roofs of several stadiums, as well as the use of environmentally certified paper and vegetable-based ink for communication. As for public relations, organizers are taking advantage of the international spotlight to transmit educational messages about environmental responsibility. Following this event, the French government plans to extend this environmentally conscious model to future sporting, cultural, and professional events throughout the country.

New Technology Allows Passengers to "Fly" Through Airports

The French Ministry of the Interior has taken on a new challenge: creating a program that would enable travelers to breeze through airport security. Similar to the American CLEAR program, this new program, dubbed *Pégase*, aims to strengthen the French police's customs controls just as much as it does to reduce the burden of waiting in long lines for frequent travelers.

Pégase will make use of the database *Parafes*, the result of an experiment that has taken place in terminal 2F of Paris's Charles-de-Gaulle airport since 2005. The ministry-created *Parafes* contains the biometric information of more than 10,000 frequent flyers. In order to participate in this program, travelers must be at least 18 years of age and reside in the European Union. They must also supply

their civil status, place of birth, nationality, and address, as well as submit to a fingerprint scan.

For the privacy of passengers using this new program, only the National Police and Border Police will have access to the database. In addition, the personnel working with *Parafes* will be connected to the Schengen system of information (SIS), a system which stores and gives police and consular agents access to the data on specific individuals such as wanted criminals, missing persons, and aliens who have been refused entry. Information on all who sign up for *Pégase* will be stored in the database for five years, or until their membership is cancelled—at which point the information will immediately be deleted. Thanks to the inception of *Pégase*, "five minutes to takeoff" may be more of a reality than ever before.

250th Anniversary of the Marquis de Lafayette's Birthday

Music from the Fife and Drum corps resonated throughout the neighborhood of newly appointed French Ambassador to the U.S. Pierre Vimont on September 6, trumpeting the celebration of French-American friendship as U.S. and French government officials and other honored guests commemorated the 250th anniversary of the birth of Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette.

"Our Marquis," as the 18th-century Americans liked to call him, is the incarnation of the historical French-American friendship and the alliance between the peoples of the two nations. The anniversary presented an opportunity to celebrate the Franco-American friendship that has lasted for more than two centuries and that remains resilient today.

"Lafayette's commitment to America's liberty and his true love for this country and its people established and shaped the unique relationship between the United States and France," said Ambassador Vimont. "This became his life ambition," continued the French Ambassador. "He believed so much in the noble cause that he decided to dedicate his fortune and use his personal connections at the French Court of Versailles to help the patriots succeed in the Revolution."

A testament to the spirit of that bond, not only between the two country's peoples, but also between their governments, was the presence of several distinguished members, including the House co-chairs of the Congressional French Caucus, Congressmen John Boozman and Jim Oberstar, as well as two French Senators, Jean-Guy Branger and François Marc, who are members of the American Caucus in the French Senate [a group in the French Parliament that has an interest in American affairs]. Other honored guests in attendance included: Frances Townsend, who serves as President George W. Bush's counterterrorism advisor; and Lieutenant General Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Characterizing the symbolic alliance that Lafayette represents between France and America, Congressman Oberstar noted, "There are only two portraits in the chamber of the House of Representatives: one of Washington, and one of Lafayette. That is the place that France holds in the heart of the United States House of Representatives."

Senator Branger emphasized the importance of French-American relations from a French Parliamentary perspective, explaining that one-third of the French Senate belongs to the American Caucus. "Our duty," he noted, "is to maintain this relationship that we've had for the past centuries; between the United States, to whom we are very grateful, and France."

Guests at Ambassador Vimont's residence, however,

were not the only ones to pay tribute to the young French aristocrat who financed his own way to the U.S. at the age of 19 to participate in the American Revolution. On the other side of the Atlantic, Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner and U.S. Ambassador to France Craig Stapleton gathered at Chavaniac-Lafayette, the birthplace of Lafayette. Minister Kouchner characterized the historical significance of Lafayette, proclaiming, "he embodied the patriotism of freedom, recognizing brothers beyond borders, spilling his blood in a war without the motivations of territorial defense, national expansion or financial interests. He embodied a France that grows great by helping others become great, a France capable of efforts and sacrifices beyond what's reasonable provided they are just. [...] He embodied a France that speaks to the world, that it is unafraid of the future or of the unknown, whose accomplishments come from taking risks."

With numerous celebrations having taken place throughout the year, 2007 has aptly become known as "the year of Lafayette." The many parks, cities, counties and institutions bearing the Marquis's name throughout the United States are likewise marking the occasion.

One of the most notable of these landmarks is Lafayette College, which concurrently celebrated the emblematic 250th anniversary in Easton, Pennsylvania, on September 6. Chartered in 1826, Lafayette College

chose its name in honor of the revolutionary figure shortly after he revisited the U.S. from 1824 -1825. "I am glad this year will give us the opportunity to reconnect with the ideals of the Marquis," states Daniel Weiss, president of Lafayette College on the College's Web site.

Also that day, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed a resolution introduced by Senators Mary Landrieu and David Vitter, both from Louisiana, honoring the Marquis de Lafayette on the 250th anniversary of his birth and commending the city of Lafayette, Louisiana, for its year-long celebration of this anniversary.

On May 22, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution, drafted by Congressman Ike Skelton, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and a member of the French Caucus, which honors the life of Lafayette and encourages American military personnel to continue to study the critical role he played in the formation of the United States and its military. A public ceremony was held on the court house lawn in Lexington (Lafayette County), Missouri, on July 7 (see NFF 07.09).

For more information on Lafayette and events being held throughout the country in his honor, please visit: www.ambafrance-us.org and click on the "Lafayette 250eme Anniversaire" rubric on the left.



(From left to right): French senators François Marc and Jean-Guy Branger, Rep. Jim Oberstar, Ambassador Vimont, and Rep. Ted Poe

FRENCH RADIO PROGRAM HITS LOUISIANA AIR WAVES

The French radio and news program *Rendez-vous!* returned to the airwaves on Friday, September 8, the first time since its hiatus after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The program is broadcast in Louisiana and produced by the local radio station WWNO FM and the Consulate General of France in New Orleans. Dr. Jean N. Cranmer, Undergraduate Coordinator for French at the University of New Orleans, is the new radio host of the returning program, accompanied by Etienne Dages-Desgranges of the French Consulate. *Rendez-Vous!* will be rebroadcast throughout Louisiana by WWNO2 and WRBH (New Orleans), KRVS (Lafayette), WRKF (Baton Rouge) and KCSL (Shreveport). The one-hour program will be available via podcast at www.espacefrancophone.org and www.wwno.org. The program's content will include a press review of French news (society, culture, national, international), French songs, an RFI (Radio France Internationale) report, and a cultural calendar of events. Louisiana residents can tune in to *Rendez-Vous!* each Saturday at 5:00 AM on WWNO (89.9 FM) and at 3:30 PM on WRBH (88.3 FM)

BOSTON TO HOST FRENCH AMERICAN INNOVATION DAY

French American Innovation Day is an annual event hosted by the Consulate of France in Boston to promote Franco-American relations in the field of science. During this year's convention, held on October 1 and 2, a world class faculty from Harvard and Inserm will address the subject of biomarkers in cardiovascular disease, and is open to all members of the scientific field from researchers to medical journalists. This year's program has applied for continuing medical education accreditation. It is supported by educational grants from multiple companies (Roche Siemens and Dade Behring) and sponsored by Postgraduate Institute for Medicine (PIM). The program will feature discussions on the clinical and medical implications of the biomarker and on innovative strategies for improving its efficiency in treating patients with cardiovascular disease. The conference's lectures and discussions will address how to appropriately make decisions regarding the diagnosis and subsequent treatment of patients with heart failure and or heart disease. The conference will be held at Harvard Medical Center. The newly appointed French Ambassador to the U.S., Pierre Vimont, will give the welcoming address. Registration is free, but seating is limited. For more information, please visit: www.france-science.org/faid.

Paris Rolls Out New Bike Rental Program

La petite reine — the bicycle — has expanded its kingdom in the French capital. Paris inaugurated Vélib', a self-service bicycle rental system, on July 15 as an initiative to increase bike use in the city. The endeavor is part of an overall effort to decrease pollution and traffic congestion in the capital. This service offers not only a healthy transportation alternative but also provides convenient, non-stop, low-cost access to bicycles citywide, all while reducing Paris's ecological footprint.

Vélib' (a word derived from *vélo*, bicycle, and *liberté*, freedom) is modeled after Vélo'V, a bicycle rental service that debuted in Lyon in 2005. This predecessor experienced undeniable success, with 25,000 miles traveled each day and 70,000 subscribers. Both programs are sponsored by JCDecaux, an outdoor advertising company. JCDecaux provides the bikes, docking stations, and maintenance support for Vélib' in exchange for rights to 1,628 billboards around the city.

With an initial count of 10,648 bicycles and 750 stations, Vélib' outsized Lyon's program from its debut. Vélib' will continue to expand over the coming months in order to reach City Hall's goal at the year's end of 20,600 bicycles and 1,451 stations. The Vélib' bicycle itself is a grey, three-speed, 50-pound *tour-de-force* that comes equipped with a basket, automatic lights, and adjustable seats.

Above all, the program offers convenient access: the service is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and the stations will be just 1,000 feet (300



Vélib' allows for economical and environmentally-friendly means of transportation

meters) apart once the installation is completed at the end of the year. "This is about revolutionizing urban culture," explains Pierre Aidenbaum, mayor of Paris' 3rd district. "What this does is to take away some of the inconveniences of owning a bike in Paris, the lack of storage space in Paris's buildings, the issue of theft and the hassle of maintenance."

Another advantage is the program's moderate price. Riders choose from one of three subscription options — one day, one week, or one year, at a cost of 1 euro, 5 euros, or 29 euros, respectively (approximately \$1.35, \$6.85, and \$39.70). For any given ride, the first half-hour is free, the second costs one euro, the third is two euros, and every subsequent half-hour four euros. In the event that a cyclist does not return his or her Vélib' to one of its stations, a fee of 150 euros will be charged to the customer's account. Since the rental information at the station is available in eight languages, Vélib' is just as accessible to tourists as to Parisians.

Visitors and natives alike are urged to respect traffic laws, including stopping at red lights and staying off sidewalks. Due to the immense popularity of the Vélib' program, biking traffic violations have increased, and police officers have been urged to take a stronger stance against reckless cycling. Cyclist behavior has led to concerns about safely sharing the road. Although Vélib' does not loan helmets, every Vélib' subscriber receives a pamphlet encouraging bike safety. To decrease the likelihood of accidents, the city has been advocating safe practices for sharing the road between cyclists and drivers. Fortunately, road safety studies reveal that bicycling in a city becomes less dangerous as the number of cyclists increases because drivers become accustomed to sharing the road. Indeed, the number of bicycle accidents has only risen by six percent in Lyon since Vélo'V



The Vélib' averages between 50,000-70,000 rentals a day

emerged two years ago, even though bike traffic has increased by 80 percent in that time. Similarly, the Paris City Hall reports that the frequency of cycling accidents has not increased over the past six years, although the number of bikes on the roads has grown by 50 percent in that time.

Following the successful path of Lyon's local mass transit bike system, the Vélib' has pedaled its way into the hearts of both Parisians and tourists. The Vélib' averages 50,000-70,000 rentals each day in the City of Light. The one-day rental record was set on Saturday, August 4, when the bikes made 97,000 trips in a single day. It took a mere 18 days to arrive at one million rentals and just another 21 to reach the two million mark. Since the inception of the program, the Vélib' fleet has traveled the equivalent of 100 trips around the world at a pace of approximately 100,000 kilometers per day (62,000 miles). City Hall expects to draw enormous financial benefits from the program's popularity, anticipating that the Vélib' program could bring in an as much as 30 million euros in public funds, as reported by the International Herald Tribune on July 15.

The program's success has captured interest beyond Paris's city limits. Other French cities — Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, Mulhouse, Besançon, and Toulouse — plan to implement similar systems by the end of the year. Across the pond, mass transit bike programs are also being proposed in Chicago, Washington, D.C. and New York City.

Bertrand Delanoë, the mayor of Paris, hopes the success of the program will augment general bike use in the city. At the start of the program, only 40,000 Parisians (roughly 1.6 percent of the total population) used bikes regularly, but the mayor has his sights set on increasing that number to 250,000, or 10 percent of the population, by the end of 2007. The mayor aims to double the current number of bicycle lanes by 2008 (currently, there are 230 miles of bicycle lanes in Paris) and, by 2020, to reduce car traffic by 40 percent. Indeed, a recently released study by BIPE (*Bureau d'Information et de Prévisions Economiques*) revealed that the entire country is moving in that direction: car use in France has decreased by 2 percent since 2003 and is expected to continue shrinking for each of the next 10 years.

For more information on the Vélib' service, please visit: www.velib.paris.fr.

Vélib's Popularity Races to the Web

No sooner did the first Vélib' take to the streets of Paris than its fans took to the World Wide Web to express their love for the French celebrity on wheels. Facebook, the popular U.S.-based social networking site, is a particular hotspot for enamored cyclists to proclaim their passion for the new mass transit biking program. Scores of the site's common interest groups are dedicated to Vélib'. One such group, "*J'ai la Vélib' attitude*" ("I've got the Vélib' attitude"), boasts several hundred adherents who proudly declare "Vélib' power!" The service also seems to have unintentionally stepped on Cupid's toes, with more than 100 people searching for love in the group "*Célib' en Vélib'*" ("Single on Vélib'"). Vélib's popularity on the Web as well as the road seems to suggest that Paris's "*petite reine*" is more than just a transportation alternative.

New Research Could Shed Light on Wine from Burgundy to Napa

A collaborative effort between French and Italian researchers has decoded the complete genome of a variety of *Vitis vinifera*, grapevine, which includes such grapes as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Syrah and Pinot Noir; a finding that promises to affect vineyards from Burgundy to Napa. The joint effort carried out by scientists from Genoscope and the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) in France, as well as the Istituto di Genomica Applicata (IGA) and the Universities of Verona and Milano in Italy has produced a high-quality draft of the genome sequence of *V. vinifera*, the first such accomplishment for a fruit crop.

The French-Italian Public Consortium for Grapevine Genomics' findings provide new insights on the evolution of plant species, through comparison with other published plant genome sequences (*Arabidopsis thaliana*, poplar and rice). The findings also pave the way for identifying genes that boost flavor and improve resistance to disease and mold, two costly problems that Pinot Noir often faces, according to a study published in the journal *Nature*. While all grape varieties represent three percent of all agricultural land use in France, a full 20 percent of the fungicides used in

the industry go toward combating mildews and other diseases which afflict grapes, collectively causing tens of millions of dollars in damage each year. Families of genes responsible for the aromatic components of wine were discovered, particularly those relating to Tannins, elements of grape skin and seeds, which contribute to body



French and Italian researchers have decoded the complete genome sequence of grapes, which could provide new insight into boosting wine's flavor and resistance to disease

in addition to yielding health benefits, as well as Terpenes, a natural flavor which contains floral tones.

In the U.S., the Pinot Noir variety received a great deal of attention after the release of the Oscar-winning film "Sideways" in 2004. The film's focus on Pinot Noir and the Californian vineyards that cultivate it in the U.S., as well as an emphasis on the "complexity" of the taste, were attributed to an 18 percent increase in Pinot Noir consumption in the U.S. Some \$28 billion of the \$200 billion that the plant generates in annual revenue comes from the U.S. market, and, given the potential of the research, the international wine industry may greatly benefit from the findings of its French and Italian counterparts.

Using Satellites to Track Fires in Southern Europe



This satellite image reveals a haze of smoke over the Peloponnese region in Greece

The European Space Agency recently put to use some of its advanced satellite imaging technology to help fight the fires that have been plaguing parts of Greece and

Southern Europe. Instruments aboard, ESA's two satellites, ERS-2 and Envisat, measure the thermal infrared radiation on the surface of the earth, designating all areas exceeding 38.85 degrees Celsius (101.93 degrees Fahrenheit) as burning fires. Using this data, researchers create near-real time worldwide fire maps, which are made available to experts around the world. Images from Envisat's Medium Resolution Imaging Spectrometer (MERIS) revealed smoke plumes over Greece's southern Peloponnese peninsula, thus allowing the Greek government and those combating the flames to more precisely place and track the wildfires. The MERIS technology is supported through a cooperation between several European expert research laboratories, including the Université du Littoral in Wimereux, France. According to the European Commission's Forest Fire Information System, a total of 469,000 acres have burned to the ground in Greece over the course of the summer.

Weather conditions including heat waves and excessive dryness have been blamed for spurring on the conflagrations. The MERIS technology has proven to be effective in tracking fires and may help to prevent such disasters in the future through monitoring and early detection by laboratories.

AS NEW JUMBO JET SOARS INTO SKY, SO DO TICKETS

After years of cooperative design and development at EADS's Airbus subsidiary, the largest commercial plane in the world, the Airbus A380, is scheduled to embark on its inaugural commercial flight October 25. Singapore Airlines, which has ordered 19 A380s, will be the first airline to fly the plane commercially. Seats for the one-way trip from Singapore City to Sydney, Australia, were auctioned through eBay.com by the airline. The bidding began at a symbolic \$3.80 for coach seats, \$38.00 for business-class and \$380 for the airline's higher-than-first-class suites. Prices quickly soared into the thousands of dollars, with two-seat business class packages being offered at over \$10,000. An "Ultimate First Flight" package, offered at \$250,000, included two first class tickets as well as VIP tickets to the aircraft's inaugural ceremony in Toulouse, France, on October 15. All of the proceeds from the bidding go directly to various charities, including two children's hospitals in Sydney, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, and a charity in Singapore. The planes can accommodate up to 853 passengers on two levels in an all-coach configuration and will make their debut with many airlines in the coming years. Air France, for example, will take delivery of ten A380s in the spring of 2009. Most planes will be configured with 555 seats in three separate classes, as well as additional areas such as shops, spas, bars and other amenities to be customized by airlines. The Singapore Airlines inaugural flight will host 471 passengers for increased comfort on this historic voyage.

RENAULT RELEASES LATEST MODEL



Renault's new Laguna

French automobile manufacturer Renault unveiled its latest Laguna series, the Laguna 3. Renault's cross-shareholding alliance with Japanese automaker Nissan has brought growth and improved quality to both companies since reaching the agreement in 2000; this latest model seeks to merge Japanese reliability with a distinctly modern French automobile. Renault is offering a three-year, 100,000-mile warranty on the car, as opposed to its standard 60,000 mile warranty as a commitment to the quality of the vehicle's build. Though the design has been refreshed, it retains the contemporary and unique themes of the previous model.

FRANCE TO BE "MONOPOLIZED"



France will be the focus of a new version of Monopoly

France has been chosen as the new theme of a Monopoly game. Though Paris already has a spot on the list of cities represented by the board game, France as a country has yet to be given such a distinction until now. From September 10 to October 10 the polls will be open, allowing anyone above the age of seven to vote for the cities they think should appear on the board. Voters will have the choice of 40 towns; the 22 cities with the most votes will obtain a spot on the board. The city that receives the most votes will win the coveted *Rue de la Paix* space, the most expensive street in the French version and tantamount to the Boardwalk space on the standard American monopoly edition. Only the chosen cities and four of France's most famous train stations will be represented on the board game. Monopoly, created by Charles Darrow in 1935, sells 500,000 games each year in France alone. The new special edition will be distributed throughout the world and should provide more familiarity with French geography and culture.

PARIS TO HOST A NEW PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL: PHOTOQUAI

Paris, already home to many festivals, is welcoming yet another *nouveauté*: the Musée de Branly's "Photoquai" exhibition. Held from October 30 to November 25, the show will exhibit new talent from around the world. Like the Musée de Branly's permanent collections, the pieces of art will embody life in Oceania, Africa, Asia and the Americas. The artists will be chosen from a pool of contemporary talent. *Photoquai Mostra* will take place in museums, in embassies, and along the Seine, and will be divided into three themes: Fiction, Confrontation, and the Metamorphosis of Nature. *Photoquai Forum* will encompass a series of debates, meetings with artists and discussions. *Photoquai Studio* will consist of a virtual Web site made by photography students, while *Photoquai International* represents a network of information between many international institutions. For more information, please visit: www.quaibrany.fr.

6 NEWS FROM FRANCE

La Rentrée Marks the Start of a New Year in France

The end of August and the beginning of September is a period known as "*la rentrée*" in France. This all-encompassing term applies equally to education, politics, culture and other aspects of society. "*La rentrée*" is a noun derived from the French verb "*rentrer*," meaning "to return" or "to go back," and conjures a "going back to" mentality as citizens prepare to leave behind the summer months and shift into a new year. This time provides a fresh start to citizens young and old as they head back into a new routine or mindset.

For 12 million French children attending public schools, *la rentrée scolaire* took place on September 4, when they headed back to school after two months of summer vacation. This aspect of *la rentrée* encompasses everything from back-to-school shopping and preparation, to the day the child actually makes the transition from one grade or school to the next. For many parents, this is a day just as important to them as it is for their kids, and many choose to take a day off of work to share the experience with their children.

La rentrée also applies to politicians. Traditionally, a "kick-off" event launches the political year, signaling an



Moviegoers in 2006 make their selection, taking advantage of discounts during *La Rentrée du Cinéma*



CALIFORNIA DREAMING FOR FRENCH BLOGGER

What happens when one of France's best-known entrepreneurs decides to leave all behind and try his chances in San Francisco? That's what Loïc Le Meur, arguably the most widely read French blogger and organizer of Paris's annual *LeWeb* conference, has readers wondering. After successfully creating and selling four Internet startup companies, serving as the Executive VP of Six Apart in Europe and achieving notoriety as President Nicolas Sarkozy's Internet counselor, the leading French blogger has decided to realize a dream he has held on to since his days as a student at L'Ecole des Hautes

Etudes Commerciales (HEC). His blog is now a reflection of a new beginning. Gone are the updates on day-to-day errands, brief political reflections, and multitudes of entries by carefully selected guest-authors. Visitors to Le Meur's site on August 26 came across a clean slate, graced by a picture of the adventurous entrepreneur and his family newly arrived in San Francisco. The heart-felt entry that follows details his hopes and wishes for this new American journey. Readers of the site can expect regular updates on the life of Le Meur as he works on starting up new enterprises in America while comparing and contrasting French and American entrepreneurial secrets to success, thus promising to inspire the entrepreneurial spirit in readers



Schools in France welcomed students back September 4

official return to political activities. This usually entails a speech that outlines the politician, political party or government's (see page 1) roadmap for the coming months or year.

Politics is a popular theme in the publishing sector, which is releasing 700 novels and 200 essays for the 2007 *rentrée littéraire*. Notably, "*L'Aube le Soir ou la Nuit*" ("Dawn Evening or Night"), a much-anticipated political piece penned by *Molière*-winning (a French award similar to the Tony Awards) author Yasmina Reza, was released on August 24. The book chronicles President Nicolas Sarkozy and his experience during the year leading up to the May 2007 presidential elections.

The audiovisual arts are also making their own fresh start. One of the stars of this year's musical *rentrée* is French singer Vanessa Paradis, who recently released *Divinidylle*, her first album since *Au Zénith* in 2001.

The cinema industry has also made an event out of this back-from-vacation period. *La Rentrée du Cinéma*, from September 16-23, provided box office discounts all across France, encouraging moviegoers to experience the year's latest cinematic contributions.



Loïc Le Meur at 2007 *LeWeb3* conference

on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to his French blog, Le Meur also blogs daily in English. For more information, please visit: www.loiclemeur.com.

Stars by the Sea: Deauville Hosts 33rd Film Festival

Friday, August 31, marked the premiere of the 33rd annual Deauville Film Festival in Normandy, France, celebrating some of the best of American cinema in 2007. Since 1975, Deauville has welcomed American directors, producers and thespians alike to its sandy shores for an extended week-long celebration of culture, film and music. Deauville is the only major festival in Europe dedicated exclusively to U.S. films, with a large, eclectic selection of American blockbusters and independent films. Some of America's best-known actors, including Michael Douglas, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Ben Affleck, George Clooney and Matt Damon, attended this year's festival to present their latest movies. Other guests included Catherine Deneuve and U.S. ambassador to France Craig Stapleton.

As an homage to Academy Award winner Michael Douglas, the festival's opening ceremony featured a montage of clips from the actor's films followed by a screening of his latest movie, "King of California," directed by Mike Cahill.

Actresses Sigourney Weaver, Ida Lupino and award-winning director Sidney Lumet also received special tributes during the festival.



Michael Douglas in "King of California." This year's festival paid special tribute to Douglas's career

flag football created a signature American experience by the shore.

The Michel D'Ornano Prize for best film was awarded to "La Vie d'Artiste" ("The Life of an Artist"), directed by Marc Fitoussi, on the final day of the festival. The award was established in 1992 and named after the late deputy mayor of Deauville. Other prizes included *Le Prix du Jury* (The Jury's Prize) to "Never Forever" and *Le Prix de la Critique Internationale* (The International Critic's Prize) to "Grace is Gone," directed by James Strouse.

To wrap up the film festival, the Grand Prize was given to Karen Moncrieff's "The Dead Girl."

100th Anniversary of Peking to Paris Motor Rally

The Peking to Paris Motor Challenge held a timed re-enactment this summer to mark its 100th year anniversary when in 1907 five cars left Peking, China in a race to Paris, France. This year's race set off on May 27 with over 300 hundred competitors driving classic and vintage cars across thousands of miles of rugged Chinese, Tibetan, and Russian landscape. Competitors hailed from every corner of the globe, racing in cars from makers such as Bentley, Buick, Citroen, Ford, and Volkswagen, to name a few. Some of the cars were as old as the race itself, and the "newest" one was a 1969 Aston Martin DB6.

As a trans-continental "great race" originally meant to prove the limitless destinations of a man and his motorized vehicle, the Peking to Paris Motor Challenge indeed displayed the resilience of men and their creations. In 1907, the first 5,000 miles of the race were unmapped, with no roads and nowhere to repair the car should something go wrong. Yet four of the five original cars that had set off arrived to a cheering crowd at La Place de la Concorde in Paris. Due to various factors, including political instability over

the years, the motor rally was unable to take place again until the summer of 1997, and several times in the last decade. With each rally taking approximately four years of planning and preparations, even a re-enactment of the race is a significant undertaking. The race continues to be an incredible challenge today.

For more information regarding the Peking to Paris motor rally, please visit: www.pekingparis.com.



The Itala chugging up and over a mountain range in Mongolia

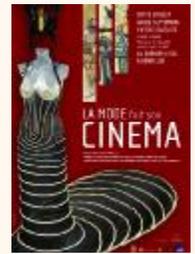
Festival in Paris Pays Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Festival D'Ile-de-France 2007 will be paying tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. and his profound legacy in the fight for peace. The music festival committee's choice to honor Dr. King demonstrates the far-reaching impact of his ideals as well as the importance the French in particular attribute to his objectives. Throughout the month of September, the 7 départements of Ile-de-France will echo the sounds of blues, gospel, chanting, dancing, and of course, the frequently quoted refrain "I have a dream."

Each concert and venue is chosen for its ability to complement the kind of music being played. For example, "Les Psaumes pour la Paix" ("Psalms for Peace") will be performed in Notre-Dame des Roses in Grisy-Suisnes church, a town southeast of Paris. This aspect of the festival sets it apart from others of its kind, in addition to the fact that so many of the venues are in places that are spread out across Ile-de-France. This difference allows the people of each region access to cultural events that they otherwise might not have been able to attend. The strong African-American character of the music makes the ties to the honored Martin Luther King Jr. more poignant and offers French audiences a sampling of the melodies and rhythms from North America and Africa.

CLASSIC COSTUMES TAKE CENTER STAGE IN HONFLEUR

September is known for bringing cutting-edge fashion down the catwalks of Paris. This year, however, Honfleur, a modest city in northern France, hosted *La Mode Fait Son Cinéma* (Fashion Puts on a Show), a retrospective collection of some of the most exceptional dresses and suits worn on screen. Each piece was an exquisite confection created by some of the most esteemed French designers, notably Coco Chanel and Christian Dior. On display were the dress worn by Audrey Hepburn in "Love in the Afternoon" designed by Hubert de Givenchy, the suit worn by Alain Delon in "Borsalino" created by Christian Dior, the dress worn by Catherine Deneuve in "Les Parapluies de Cherbourg" ("The Umbrellas of Cherbourg") designed by Réal, and many more. In addition to the costumes, there were also many sketches by artists such as Choubrac, Minon, Freddy Wittop and Yvonne Sassinot de Nesle that reflected not only the history of fashion in different time periods, but also the history of fashion in cinema. So while Paris was busy showcasing the upcoming styles for the fall, Honfleur was celebrating the fashion masterpieces and films of the past.



AMERICAN GRACES OPERA BASTILLE'S STAGE

Paris's Opéra Bastille presents *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, the only French opera by Paul Dukas with a script by poet Maurice Maeterlinck. Opening September 13 and running until October 6, the opera features American soprano Deborah Polanski as Ariane, a young rebellious heroine set upon liberating the prisoners of *Barbe-Bleue* (Bluebeard). The story goes that *Barbe-Bleue*, an old rich gentlemen, successfully cons young woman after young woman into marrying him, and mysteriously disposing of the previous one by the time he marries a new one until Ariane appears on the scene, poised to resist his charms and motivated to save her fellow women. Costumes and props are handled by Anna Viebrock, who is already known for her work in last season's *La Traviata*, and the music will be directed by Sylvain Cambreling. Musically, the opera is very reminiscent of the works of Wagner and Debussy, two of Dukas's biggest influences.

For information regarding the performance, please visit: www.operadeparis.fr.

**Production Cycle
Announcement**

News From France will be extending its publication cycle from three weeks to a monthly schedule.

**C'est Chic! New Films
From France**

The Embassy of France and French-American Cultural Foundation will present over 20 new French films from October 14 - November 1 at venues throughout Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit: www.cestchic.org.

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Daniel Buren "Flags" the Heart of Old Pasadena

Internationally renowned and honored French artist Daniel Buren has done it again. After gaining recognition for monumental pieces including exhibitions at the Palais Royal in Paris, Beijing's Forbidden City, and the Guggenheim in New York City, he has now moved on to the heart of Old Pasadena, California. His latest piece, titled "A Colored Square in the Sky," is made up of his signature striped flags—8,722 of them to be exact—aligned in 98 rows of flags, each 17 feet above the courtyard of



Daniel Buren's "A Colored Square in the Sky"

One Colorado, a popular cobblestone public square. On exhibit from August 11 to November 11, access will be free for all those who wish to see the large scale, temporary installation. This is

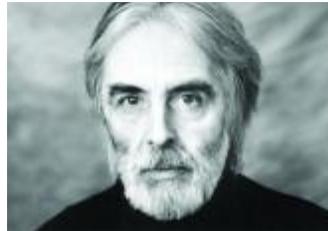
Buren's first of such pieces in California in 37 years, and the project is sponsored by the Armory Center for the Art, One Colorado, Alliance Française de Pasadena and the Consulate General of France in Los Angeles.

All of Buren's monumental works are site specific and are often described as minimalist. In 1986 Buren also represented France at the Venice Biennale, winning the Golden Lion Award for his efforts. On Saturday, November 10, Mr. Buren will discuss his work at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena.

Buren's artwork not only represents the fusion of the historic and contemporary but also a mixture of French and American culture. For more information, please visit: www.armoryarts.org.

"Michael Haneke: A Cinema of Provocation" in Boston

Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and Harvard's Film Archive will host "Michael Haneke: A Cinema of Provocation," from October 10 to November 3, 2007, a retrospective of the films of one of contemporary cinema's most incisive and uncompromising filmmakers. Jointly presented by the French Consulate in Boston, the Goethe-Institut Boston, and Boston University, this event is organized in the framework and with the support of the cultural cooperation funds for overseas actions, established on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Franco-German Elysée Treaty of 1963.



Austrian film director Michael Haneke will be in Boston this fall

The series features eight television films that have never been seen in the U.S., made between 1976 and 1997, and eight theatrical features made between 1989 and 2007. Among those which will be screened is his latest film, "Funny Games" (to be released on October 26, 2007), is the director's remake of one of his most disturbing works by the same title (1997), which will be shown during a special preview screening in Haneke's presence.

Haneke is best known for his films "The Piano Teacher" (2001) and "Cache" (2005), both triple award-winning films at the Cannes Film Festival. These films will be featured in the series in addition to Haneke's "galatian trilogy" — "The Seventh Continent" (1989), "Benny's Video" (1992), and "71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance" (1994). The series also includes the films "Lemmings" (1979), "The Castle," and "Funny Games" (1997).

By the mid-1990s, Haneke had directed some of the boldest, most unnerving films, setting himself up to become one of the most controversial filmmakers of our time. After first directing made-for-television films, he favored cinema as his artistic medium in the mid-1980s. Combining these two aspects of his work, this unique retrospective provides audiences with the opportunity to fully grasp the dimension and meaning of Haneke's work. For more information, please visit: www.mfa.org.

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