

France, Germany and U.K. Achieve Breakthrough in Iran

Teheran reiterates its commitment to the Non-proliferation Treaty

THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF FRANCE, Germany and the United Kingdom paid a visit to Teheran on October 21 to urge Iran to meet the October 31 deadline set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to prove that the Iranian government does not have a nuclear weapons program. After several hours of bargaining with top Iranian officials, an agreement was reached and Dominique de Villepin, Joschka Fischer and Jack Straw obtained three commitments that "begin a process for resolving the nuclear proliferation crisis with Iran," according to a French Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

The Presidency of the European Union warmly welcomed the mission's positive outcome. Indeed, the Teheran agreement represents a major success for European diplomacy. The White House also welcomed Iran's announcement, describing it as a "positive step." Indeed, the intervention of Britain's Jack Straw, France's Dominique de Villepin and Germany's Joschka Fischer serves as an example of how European diplomacy can be used to build on - not compete with - Washington's efforts, and this diplomatic precedent can also serve as a blueprint for future European action.

The three foreign ministers agreed that the results of their trip were

very positive and that the agreement represents an important step in restoring confidence between Iran and the international community. "This is a very important day," French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin declared. "We were facing a major issue. Proliferation is a major challenge to the world, and today we found a solution to the pending issues," he added.

Iran pledged in the joint declaration to allow for "full transparency" vis-à-vis the IAEA, reiterated its commitment to the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and vowed that atomic weapons had "no place" in its defense doctrine. Iran also declared that it "has decided to engage in full cooperation with the IAEA," that it will sign and ratify the additional protocol to its safeguards agreement with the IAEA, and that it will voluntarily suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities.

These last three commitments fulfill the demands that were formulated in the IAEA Board of Governors' resolution on September 12, and Iran's compliance will be taken into account in the preparations for the next IAEA board meeting on November 20. Two days after the visit, Iran delivered a report to the United Nations nuclear watchdog to allay international concern over its nuclear program. ■■



From left to right: the foreign ministers of Britain (Jack Straw), France (Dominique de Villepin), Iran (Kamal Kharrazi) and Germany (Joschka Fischer)

(Courtesy: French Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

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French Caucus Created in U.S. Congress

THE NEWLY FORMED Congressional French Caucus, headed by Representative Amory Houghton of New York (R-N.Y.), aims to rebuild the ties between two old allies. According to Chairman Houghton, "it's no secret that relations between the United States and France have been less than ideal lately. It's time to get on with life and start rebuilding our ties." Representative Billy Tauzin (R-L.A.) agreed, noting that "hopefully this caucus will help to bridge some of the differences that have developed in recent years between our two countries." Indeed, recent differences in foreign policy have led to strains in what has otherwise always been a very close relationship.

Houghton announced the existence of the new bipartisan caucus, which includes 35 members of Congress (25 Representatives and 10 Senators), during a luncheon attended by French Ambassador Jean David Levitte and former

French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur. The informal group will work closely with members of its counterparts in the French National Assembly and Senate, the "Groupes d'Amitié Franco-Américain," on matters concerning the renewal and strengthening of ties between the two countries. The caucus will also provide a forum for discourse aimed at a better understanding and appreciation of differences between the two nations.

The dangers and challenges presented by international terrorism confirm the importance of fortified relations between France and the United States. Representative Houghton's belief that "both the United States and France have too much at stake to permit our relationship to deteriorate further" demonstrates a renewed determination to strengthen the relationship between the U.S. and its oldest ally. ■■

NIGER AND MALI WELCOME CHIRAC

On October 23, tens of thousands of people welcomed President Jacques Chirac, the first French leader to visit the poverty-stricken francophone African nation in over 20 years. "Reassuring the people of Niger of a renewed solidarity, encouraging the efforts of Niger, supporting the legitimate ambitions of progress: these are the messages I have in my heart to send to the people of Niger during this visit," stated Chirac. He pledged 10 million euros to aid the nine countries bordering the Niger River and promised to give Mali a four-year reprieve on its debt repayments. Chirac also hopes to increase E.U. aid to Africa.

FRENCH POLYNESIA GRANTED MORE AUTONOMY

The French cabinet approved, on October 22, the draft of a proposed law that would implement French Polynesia's new autonomous status, as made possible by the revision of Article 74 of the Constitution in March 2003. The amended French constitution provides overseas territories with the option of obtaining more power over certain domains, such as regional diplomacy, transport infrastructure, and education.

FRANCE HOSTS MAJOR MILITARY EXERCISE

France activated all its military airbases October 6-22 for a multilateral exercise involving troops and aircraft from 17 different countries, including 9 NATO members. "Opera 2003" brought together 850 servicemen and women and 140 aircraft and was carried out primarily in northwestern

France. The exercise helped improve coordination in the fields of logistics, communications, and intelligence while training units to operate multilaterally in a complex environment.

DALAI LAMA VISITS PARIS

The Dalai Lama was in Paris from October 11 to 17 to spread his message of peace and respect for diversity and to convey his Tibetan Buddhist teachings. Speaking at the Hôtel de Ville, he was warmly welcomed by Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, who declared that the Dalai Lama greatly contributes to the universal values of Paris. During his visit, the Dalai Lama called for the establishment of a group of "people of goodwill" to help promote peace in Iraq.

NEWS FROM FRANCE / November 5, 2003

France Votes for Iraq Resolution

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT voted for the revised version of the U.S.-sponsored resolution on Iraq on October 16, along with the 14 other members of the U.N. Security Council. This unanimity marked an important display of renewed international cohesion and cooperation. Indeed, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin explained France's decision to support the U.N. resolution, despite the fact that it "firmly believes that we should act faster and more boldly," by stating that it "was essential for the spirit of responsibility and unity of the international community to prevail" in a context of rising violence and terrorism in Iraq.

In France's view, the international community's message must emphasize that Iraq should rapidly become self-governing and should soon reclaim its full sovereignty as a democratic state. Such a declaration is necessary in order to quell nationalistic fervor among the Iraqi people and thereby helping to prevent strikes against the occupying forces.

By taking into account some of the amendments jointly submitted by France, Germany and Russia, the United States

was able to garner widespread support for the resolution's revised version.

The U.N. resolution gives the world community, through the U.N., an extended role in the reconstruction of Iraq. In what is a crucial measure, the resolution states that the American-appointed Iraqi Governing Council will embody the sovereignty of the state of Iraq until the election of a democratic government. A December 15 deadline has been set for the Iraqi Governing Council to lay out a timetable for writing a constitution and setting up elections. Finally, resolution 1511 authorizes an American-led multinational peace-keeping force in Iraq. This U.N. mandate will expire in a year, but an elected Iraqi government will be able to request its renewal.

Reacting to the U.N.'s decision on October 30 to reduce the number of its staff in Iraq, Villepin declared, "we believe that it is through a change in approach that it will be possible to reconcile both the necessary involvement of the international community and the full participation of Iraqis through a provisional government."



The U.N. Security Council
(Courtesy: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

UNESCO to Protect Cultural Diversity

THE 32ND CONFERENCE of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which took place in Paris, saw the unanimous adoption, on October 13, of a resolution launching negotiations on a cultural diversity convention. Such a convention would erect cultural diversity as a principle of international law, and declare it the common heritage of humanity. In doing so, it would establish a new framework that would support the dignity of all cultures and the ability of nations to introduce public policies on cultural issues.

This initiative was particularly welcomed by France, with President Jacques Chirac himself speaking out strongly in its favor during the conference. Minister for Culture

Jean-Jacques Aillagon declared that "this text, long sought by France, will make it possible to seal in international law rules designed to protect cultural goods and contents." France would also like to enlarge the debate and invite other international organizations, as well as artists and cultural professionals, to think about what can be done to protect cultural diversity.

The consensus around this resolution was seen as especially auspicious at a time when the United States has just returned to UNESCO after an absence of 19 years. According to Aillagon, the unanimous vote showed "the commitment by all of UNESCO's member states in favor of cultural diversity and of a dialogue between all cultures."

Raffarin Speaks on French Defense

PRIME MINISTER Jean-Pierre Raffarin opened, on October 16, the 56th annual session of the Institute of High Studies on National Defense (IHEDN) with a speech on France's defense priorities and policies.

Raffarin reaffirmed France's attachment to the concept of collective responsibility in international affairs, as embodied by the U.N. The French government believes the U.N. must be reformed to bolster its preeminent role: the Security Council must be enlarged to be more representative, its authority must be reinforced and the resources at its disposal increased.

He reminded his audience that "NATO is and will remain the foundation of our mutual security," as "our country considers (...) the strategic partnership between Europe and the U.S., our first ally, to be a fundamental element in the world's securi-

ty." But he also called for a renewed defense effort on Europe's part, "because a stronger Europe also means a stronger transatlantic alliance." France will lead the way by increasing its military budget by 4.1 percent in 2004, thereby continuing its exceptional budgetary effort in favor of the armed forces.

Raffarin praised the 15,000 French soldiers who are deployed throughout the world, in over 27 overseas operations. "From Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa, our participation in the fight against terrorism leads us to deploy our personnel every day at the sides of our American friends and allies and our other NATO partners."

The IHEDN conference includes officers, senior officials, leading businessmen and "opinion-makers" as well as representatives from Italy, Germany, the UK and Belgium.



Yorktown Battle Commemorated

The 1781 battle marked the end of the War of Independence against Great Britain

ON OCTOBER 19, FRENCH AMBASSADOR Jean-David Levitte addressed the citizens of the United States, and more specifically the residents of Yorktown, Virginia, in commemoration of the American victory in the crucial Battle of Yorktown.

The battle, which occurred from September 28, 1781, to October 19, 1781, was the last major clash of the American Revolutionary War. It was this battle that forged America's alliance with France: in addition to the many supplies sent to the Americans by King Louis XVI, French troops, led by Count Jean-Baptiste de Rochambeau and Admiral François de Grasse, were dispatched to augment General George Washington's weakened Continental Army. Indeed, French soldiers formed the bulk of General Washington's forces at Yorktown.

Together they secured victory for the Americans by defeating British General Charles Cornwallis and his army, thus securing American independence from Britain's colonial rule.



Ambassador Jean-David Levitte speaking in front of the Yorktown memorial

In his address, Ambassador Levitte recognized America's "unfailing support to France in the most tragic circumstances," referring to the two world wars in which the United States came to the aid of France. Levitte also addressed the recent diplomatic differences over Iraq, calling them a "diplomatic hurricane, a political Isabel," and declared that "the storm is abating ... our alliance has survived, and the tight bound of friendship which has united us for 222 years is truly indestructible."

Finally, Levitte called for America and France to "fight together, as they did at Yorktown ... to maintain their freedoms and their values."

Houston Consulate Celebrates 50th Anniversary

ON OCTOBER 25, the General Consulate of France in Houston, Texas, celebrated its 50th anniversary. For the occasion, the French and American communities of Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma were invited to participate in the festivities which took place in the gardens of the French Legation of Austin, the historical location of the first embassy of the Kingdom of France to the state of Texas (1836-1845).

Those present included the ambassador of France, Jean-David Levitte, Luis Saenz, the assistant secretary of state of Texas who was representing Governor Rick Perry, Charlie Daniels, the secretary of state of Arkansas, Jay Guerrero, the southeast Texas regional director and Ross Milloy, president of the Austin-San Antonio Corridor. All warmly spoke of the strong ties uniting the French and American nations, and Saenz announced Governor Perry's desire to open a French-American center in Normandy, perhaps in time to mark the

60th anniversary of the D-Day landings in 2004.

Over 600 people attended the gathering, which provided an opportunity to celebrate, in a relaxed and good-natured atmosphere, the long-standing French-American



From left to right, Consul General Denis Simonneau, Arkansas Secretary of State Charlie Daniels, Ambassador Jean-David Levitte (showing his Texas spirit), Texas Assistant Secretary of State Luis Saenz and Honorary Consul Arlette Douffiaques-Galland

friendship through contests, games and meals promoting each state's culinary culture (the Texan barbecue was very well-received). Ambassador Levitte was particularly pleased with his gift, a Stetson, which he promised to wear at the White House.

After five decades of presence in the south of the United States, the General Consulate of Houston has been able to create close ties of cooperation with many representatives from the various local communities. The constant growth of the French community, the development of the area's French-American schools and the increasing presence of French businesses in the region clearly illustrate the dynamism of this part of the United States.

"AMERICANS IN PARIS" IN OKLAHOMA

The Oklahoma City Museum of Art is running an exhibit entitled "Americans in Paris: 1850-1910," through November 30. The exhibition does not only feature American artists who studied, worked and exhibited in France, but also some outstanding paintings by 14 French artists, including Jean-Léon Gérôme, Camille Corot and Jean-François Millet, who were among the American artists' instructors. The exhibit is organized into three parts: artists who studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; those associated with the Barbizon School; and the artists linked with Impressionism and post-Impressionism.

"QUEEN CALIFIA'S MAGICAL CIRCLE"

A new sculpture garden, "Queen Califia's Magical Circle," created by renowned French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle, opened its gates to the public on October 26 in the City of Escondido, California. The garden promises to be a cultural landmark for the San Diego region, a place where visitors can walk, play, touch and dream. Susan Pollack, manager of Escondido's Public Art Program, said that people can "find inspiration in Saint Phalle's extraordinary homage to California's mythic and historic origins and its cultural diversity."

WHITTIER FRENCH WEEK 2003: CELEBRATION OF MOLIÈRE

During its National French Week 2003, Whittier College, located in Southern California, will present a show on November 11 that highlights some of the more popular works and texts of Molière. The play *Molière Amoureux* will be performed by the Paris-based theater company Continent II. Director André Nerman explains that Molière's characters represent a "universal panel of human emotions, at the same time showing us the wounds of the heart and the inner conflicts of the author."

FRENCH BATHTUBS BUBBLING HIGH

The latest item being sold to an upscale American clientele looking for the perfect finishing touch to their deluxe bathrooms are bathtubs from Lille, France. With a style reminiscent of tubs sold in the early twentieth century, their popularity has enabled Herbeau Creations of America, a subsidiary of *Maison Lilloise Herbeau* (est. 1857), to post a phenomenal growth rate of 514 percent between 1997 and 2001, placing it among the 500 fastest growing firms in the U.S. during that period.



Cafés in France: Then and Now



Café Terrace at Night
Vincent Van Gogh



Jean-Paul Sartre, an avid patron of cafés, in 1952

(Courtesy: www.odysseetheater.com)



Les Deux Magots in Paris

(Courtesy: David H. Park)



Man and Dog, Café Flore, Paris, 1953

(Courtesy: Edouard Boubat)



Where it all begins - a coffee plantation in Tanzania

(Courtesy: Scott Stensland)

WHEN MANY PEOPLE think of France, grand images such as the Eiffel Tower, the Arc of Triumph, and the Palace of Versailles often come to mind. But what about all the little monuments on every corner in every city and town? These "monuments" are none other than the many cafés that can be found all over France, and which have played a pivotal role throughout the

country's history. Many cafés have stood the test of time because of their fascinating historical guest lists. For instance, *le Procope* in Paris, the oldest café in France (est. 1686), welcomed Voltaire, Benjamin Franklin, and Napoleon Bonaparte! While the more prominent cafés continue to serve customers, we live in a different, fast-paced world, and the traditional café is, unfortunately for those prone to nostalgia, evolving as a result. ■ ■

A Distinguished Tradition

EVEN THOUGH they originated elsewhere, cafés have a long history in France, the first one having opened in Paris in 1672. It was not long before cafés, known originally for being less expensive places for locals to come and enjoy good food, drink, and company, spread to other cities. Each café had its own particular ambiance that reflected the neighborhood's qualities. Some were quite simple while others were more lavish, with high ceilings and fancy wall decorations. Because of their growing popularity and active social environment, cafés became meet-

ing places not only for local aristocrats and merchants but also for revolutionaries, philosophers, writers, painters, thinkers, and any others who wanted to have their ideas heard. One could even argue that Paris's cafés were a testing ground for the ideology that led to the French Revolution. Great ideas of the Enlightenment up through the Existentialist movement were also discussed in many Parisian cafés. *Les Deux Magots*, perhaps the most famous café in Paris, counts Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, and Jean-Paul Sartre among its esteemed guests. ■ ■

A Changing Role

ALTHOUGH POSSESSING a rich history, the café and its traditional role as an intellectual and social haven has begun to undergo a dramatic change. Indeed, the number of cafés has dropped significantly, from 300,000 at the beginning of the 20th century to fewer than 43,000 today. The café, typical of the French lifestyle, is slowly becoming molded into the more American "eating-on-the-run" culture. No longer a calm eye within the storm, cafés are now *part of the storm*. The age of cell phones and fast-food chains has ushered in efficiency, and put glamour and glitz ahead of gastronomic pleasure. Essentially, cafés haven't kept up with the times.

With the French themselves less willing to "slow down and re-educate their senses," and with tourists following stripped-down, guidebook suggestions, the smaller, less renowned cafés are suffering. *Les Deux Magots*, *Le Café Flore*, *La Coupole*, and *Le Café du Commerce*, all historically eminent Parisian cafés, continue to garner business, while more intimate settings fall victim

to "brand-name" monopolization. In effect, the rise of sandwich shops and street vendors has deeply cut into a formerly loyal café clientele. Lunch options are now numerous, ranging from Greek sandwich eateries and Chinese buffet counters to French *crêperie* stands, with convenience often being the deciding factor in choosing where to eat.

Certain French regulatory or structural obstacles also stand in the way of preserving and modernizing cafés. While licenses to sell food are free, permits to sell alcoholic beverages are not. As part of a decades-long campaign against alcoholism, the government will not issue new licenses to sell spirits, such as those found in traditional cafés. Thus, a prospective café owner must buy an old liquor license or raise extravagant sums to obtain one from the government. Ironically, it appears that the time-honored notion of "the café" is a casualty of the times, with speed replacing *la joie de vivre* formerly enjoyed in France's cafés. ■ ■

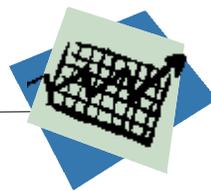
New Age of Coffee houses

WITH A RAPIDLY EXPANDING international coffee market, the conventional cozy French café is gradually being ousted by the more fast-paced, "grab-'n'-go" coffeehouse. Although initially reticent, even dismissive, of this trend, France's café-goers no longer deny its growing popularity. All-inclusive by nature, the ideal coffeehouse encompasses many retail genres, including the café, patisserie and sandwich shop. Multiple combinations of the three exist, varying from French-owned Pomme de Pain and Columbus Café to American coffee giant Starbucks. A uniquely American creation, coffee chains with chic countertop service, flashy paper cups, pastries, and a variety of coffee products are catching on. Starbucks already has a foothold in Britain, Austria, Germany, Greece, Spain and Switzerland, and has plans to inaugurate a Parisian branch at the Place de l'Opéra in early 2004.

France is not spared by the process of globalization and the

faster pace of life. But by adapting more to the American-style coffee concept, some French cafés are catching up with the times. Columbus Café opened its first shop in Paris in 1994 and after almost ten years of successful business, it now has a chain of over 30 coffee bars, with more planned in the near future. The creators of Columbus Café attribute their success to the appeal that their coffee shops have, with trendy products, friendly service, and optional smoke-free atmosphere, to the new younger generation. Their statistics show that about 60 percent of their customers are women under 30.

This is not to say, however, that cafés still don't hold a cherished niche within French society. According to Jean Biron, vice president of the trade union representing cafés, 20 million people, one-third of the country's population, go to cafés every day. The café remains a place to sit, discuss, enjoy a casual *apéritif* or a leisurely cup of coffee while watching life and its peculiarities go by. ■ ■



French Economy Near Recovery

THE LATEST BANK OF FRANCE estimations show an economic recovery should already be under way by the end of 2003, welcome news compared with earlier government forecasts that predicted economic growth would not return until early 2004.

Minister of Finance Francis Mer announced the optimistic figures on October 14, during a debate at the French National Assembly on France's 2004 budget. Mer reacted to the opposition's criticism of what it regards as a counterproductive economic policy by referring to the Bank of France's recently released forecasts, which predict GDP growth of 0.3 percent in the third quarter of 2003 and 0.5 percent in the fourth. Those statistics come as a relief



Minister of Finance Francis Mer
(Courtesy: Ministry of Finance)

for the French economy after it shrank 0.3 percent in the second quarter, and after the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies suggested growth rates would reach only 0.2 and 0.4 percent in the third and fourth quarters, respectively.

Mer declared that France is "in the process of getting back to reasonable economic growth" and he insisted that the "growth is the result of an economic policy, and this policy will be judged over the long run." Though France's budget deficit has broken the 3 percent limit set by the euro area, Mer said, and France's European partners have agreed, that deficit reduction shouldn't occur at the expense of economic growth.

Nevertheless, he pledged to reduce the deficit by 2005. ■ ■

Rising Luxury Market Helps French Firms

A TURNAROUND HAS BEGUN for the \$63 billion global market in luxury goods. Christian Oddone, an analyst at Actinvest Group in London, points out that sales of luxury items are closely linked to travel and tourism, and with the effects of the devastating September 11 attacks on tourism receding, demand is on the rise.

The French luxury group Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) said it expected the recovery in international tourism to provide it with a "tangible" operating profit this year. Using Jennifer Lopez and Tiger Woods to promote its products, its shares have climbed 48 percent this year. Brands like Gucci, Dior, and Boucheron - and the luxury emporiums that sell them such as Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf

Goodman - have also shown significant sales increases in the last two months. An analyst at Bloomingdale's estimates that designer clothing sales have risen more than 15 percent in the last six months. Gucci owner, the French conglomerate Pinault-Printemps-Redoute, has seen encouraging signs for the third quarter, with sales growth of 20 percent in the U.S., 14 percent in Japan, 16 percent in Hong Kong and China, and 10 percent in Europe.



A chic woman shows off her Louis Vuitton bag
(Courtesy: www.melting.lu)

The rebound is happening most spectacularly in the U.S., where a combination of improved customer sentiment and a series of tax breaks have encouraged wealthy Americans to purchase luxury goods once again. Say goodbye to sweat

suits and sneakers - luxury is back! ■ ■

Navigo Revolutionizes Commuting

THE ELECTRONIC TRANSPORT PASS NAVIGO, launched in 1999 in Paris and 23 other cities, celebrated its millionth customer in mid-October. The number is sure to soar as Navigo will soon be replacing the ubiquitous *cartes oranges* and other tickets that utilize a magnetic strip.

Navigo has revolutionized the commuter experience with its ease of use and durability. It cuts entry time in half because, unlike other cards, it does not use a magnetic strip that needs to be swiped through a machine. Instead, the card uses a microchip that is simply waved across a sensor at the entrance gates to the metro. When the card runs out of money, all one has to do is add more credit to it, and it becomes ready for use once again. The fact that Navigo does not rely on a magnetic

strip also gives the card its durability: it is designed to last for up to four years.

The millionth customer was celebrated by local elected officials and by the transportation committee of the Ile-de-France region in the *Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand* station, at the terminus of the newest line of the Paris metro (line 14). A 19-year old student from Val-d'Oise was the lucky customer who happened upon the ticket: he won a trip to Lisbon, Portugal.

Currently, Navigo represents one validation in every five for the Paris region metro. It has also expanded into the SNCF railway market, where it represents over 360,000 daily ticket validations. On October 27, Navigo expanded its service to include buses, and plans to be on all Parisian buses by late 2004. ■ ■

TRICHET NAMED HEAD OF ECB

European leaders unanimously supported on October 16 the appointment of the governor of the Bank of France, Jean-Claude Trichet, as the European Central Bank's next president. Trichet began his eight-year tenure on November 1, replacing the Netherlands's Wim Duisenberg. His arrival is not expected to bring any major changes to the ECB's monetary policy: he is expected to pursue an anti-inflationary policy and to maintain higher interest rates than in the U.S.

UNIVERSE MAY BE SHAPED LIKE A SOCCER BALL

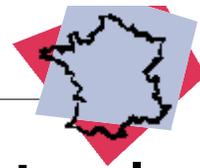
French researchers from the University of Paris and the Observatory of Paris, together with American scientists, say the universe could be finite, spherical and patched together like a soccer ball. They base their argument on astronomical data collected by NASA's Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe. What Jean-Pierre Luminet, of the Paris Observatory, and his colleagues are proposing is actually something called a dodecahedral space, first described by French mathematician Jules-Henri Poincaré in the 19th century.

NEW AIRPORT FOR NANTES

The French government has tentatively given the green light to the construction of a new airport in the western city of Nantes. According to Nantes's chamber of commerce, 3.2 million passengers are projected to pass through the city by 2010 - the year that the new airport would open. Nantes and its region have become popular among the British and other Europeans looking to buy holiday homes. Mayor Jean-Marc Ayrault said that the airport would be "an important step toward the grand plan to develop all of western France."

FRANCE SUGGESTS SPACE PARTNERSHIP WITH CHINA

On October 15, French Minister of Research Claudie Haigneré hailed China's successful launch of an astronaut into space aboard the Shenzhou-5 spacecraft. Haigneré, a former astronaut herself, explained that "the launch is an important element in recognizing the capacity of China to put itself at the level of major international partners." She thereby reiterated her desire to see the creation of a partnership between China and the world's other space powers, which include the United States, Russia and Europe.



HAPPY AS A FRENCH MANAGER!

According to a recent study by Hewitt Associates and the Association for the Employment of Executives (APEC) conducted in France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Great Britain, France ranks very highly in several categories. In terms of net salary (after deducting taxes) and in terms of living costs, France came in second, behind the U.K. And when it comes to raising a family, the study finds that France is the most attractive European country for managers.

A+ FOR THE EDUCATION BUDGET

According to the annual report "The State of Schools, 2003" published by the Department of Education, France devoted 103.6 billion euros to education in 2002, which represents 6.9 percent of the country's GDP. The Department of Education's budget, which remains the largest item in government spending, has increased steadily over the years. Indeed, it has been up 25 percent for ten years and will benefit from a 2.8 percent increase this year.

A VIDEO CONTEST FOR STUDENTS : ACTION!

The TV channel *Public Sénat* and the Department of Education, wishing to promote youth involvement in society, announced on October 15 the launching of a film contest aimed at high school students. Participants will be asked to produce a 3- to 6-minute video report on the theme of solidarity among students, between different generations, toward the disabled... In May 2004, three national prizes will be awarded to the best reports, which will be broadcast on *Public Sénat*.

BOOKIES BET ON LES BLEUS

France will win the 2004 Euro Soccer Championship, according to English and Italian bookmakers, who both also predict that Italy will be its opponent in the finals. The tournament will take place in Portugal from June 12 to July 4, and bookmakers are picking *les Bleus* to win the championship giving 4-to-1 odds. If they are correct, it will be the third time that France has won the European trophy, the last time being in 2000 in the Netherlands against Italy and the first time being in 1984 in France against Spain.

First Summit of "United Cities and Local Governments" Will be Hosted in Paris

PARIS HAS BEEN CHOSEN to host the first summit of the new world organization "United Cities and Local Governments," from May 2 to May 5, 2004. "United Cities and Local Governments," which will get going officially early next year, will be the main link between local governments and the United Nations. The organization, along with the World Federation of United Cities (WFUC) and the International Union of Cities and Local Powers (IUCLP), will advocate international cooperation between local governments and their associations, the participation of women in local decisions and the reinforcement of local governments and local democracies.

These objectives coincide with those of the French govern-

ment, which has launched an ambitious decentralization program to promote local liberties. Following a major reform on March 17, the French constitution now expressly states that the Republic shall have a decentralized organization. "United Cities and Local Governments" will help make this a reality.

To be headquartered in Barcelona, Spain, the organization itself will have a decentralized structure, working in seven areas of the world: Africa, the Asia-Pacific area, Europe, Russia and the New Independent States (NIS), the Middle East and Western Asia, Latin America and North America. More than 3,000 participants representing 80 countries are expected to attend the Paris summit, where they will elect their first president as well as a vice president and other representatives. 

Goblins and Ghouls Overrun France

WIDELY CELEBRATED AMERICAN holiday, Halloween has finally entered, albeit with some hesitation, into French mainstream culture.



Halloween à la française
(Courtesy: www.pipeline.com)

In the early nineties, Halloween was considered a purely American celebration, and was not well understood in France. Instead, the French observe *La Toussaint* (All Saints' Day) on November 1, to commemorate those saints who do not have their own holy day. Although still universally celebrated, All Saints' Day now has a newer, naughtier cousin from across the ocean, Halloween.

Of course, the French have adapted some elements of Halloween, adhering to traditional American customs but giving them a French twist. For instance, though trick-or-

treating takes place, French children customarily go from store to store rather than from house to house. Their costumes also tend to be traditionally "scary," with ghosts, goblins and witches taking precedence over princesses and superheroes. But, just like in the U.S., stores prominently display spooky masks and inflatable pumpkin costumes, and bakeries sell festive orange and black embroidered pastries. As for pumpkins, known as *citrouilles*, they have always played an important culinary role in France.

Despite resistance to commercialism, the popularity of Halloween in France continues to swell. After all, the origins of Halloween are distinctly European, stemming from the Pagan Celtic celebration of Samhain in the British Isles, which marked the eve of the New Year, when dead souls were said to roam through their previous homes. 



8,000 pumpkins were displayed in Paris's Trocadéro esplanade in 1997.

(Courtesy: Reuters)

Birth of the Harvard of "Haute Cuisine"

FRANCE, THE BIRTHPLACE of culinary excellence, is seeking to reestablish itself as the rightful proprietor of "la haute gastronomie." Renaud Dutreuil, secretary of state for small and medium-sized enterprises, announced on October 13 the establishment of a university dedicated solely to gastronomy. *L'Institut des Hautes Etudes du Goût et de la Gastronomie* is slated to open next fall in Reims, Marne, an area best known for its champagne. Mr. Dutreuil asserts that "France has to impose itself more visibly as the country of reference for taste."

This unique university, which will boast a national library on taste, will welcome about 100 students from all over the world, including, hopes Dutreuil, "French restaurateurs who

wish to improve themselves, Americans from the agribusiness industry, great chefs from Denmark or Japan..." They will benefit from the teachings of historians, sociologists, chefs, biologists, and many other professionals from the "trades of taste," and their courses will cover France's culinary heritage but also regional cooking and viticulture.

The Institute's goal is to reaffirm France and French culinary heritage as the epicenter of culinary excellence. Indeed, the traditions that once endeared French cuisine to numerous hearts throughout the world have been replaced by a quest for constant innovation, so that chic adventurous restaurants in Belgium, London, Los Angeles and New York are now more fashionable than their more conventional French rivals. 



Work Begins on Replica of Chauvet Cave

France's Chauvet Cave is believed to contain the world's most ancient prehistoric art.

THE CHAUVET CAVE, named after the spelunker who discovered it in 1994, has been closed to the public since then in an effort to preserve its prehistoric drawings, which are the world's most ancient, and to facilitate the work of the scientists studying them. In order to allow everyone to experience this exceptional find, however, the Ardèche region, in cooperation with many other sponsors, has begun work on a reproduction of the cave only 800 meters from the original find.

For practical reasons, the replica of the grotto will only cover 3,000 of the original 10,000 square meters, but in many respects it will be a perfect copy of the original. Utmost care will be put into the visitor center in order to allow guests to get the same impression they would have gotten if they had visit-



Man's oldest art?

(Courtesy: Ministry of Culture)

ed the real cave. This means that the drawings will be drawn to scale, with the light, temperature and level of humidity identical to those in the original cave.

Before the discovery of the Chauvet cave, prehistoric man was not believed to have reached such a level of artistic proficiency so early in his development. Now, the over 480 drawings represent the oldest of their kind in the world. With at least 14 animal species represented among the drawings, there is no sign of man, except for the shape of

hands, which are thought to represent the artists' signatures. The exceptional preservation of these drawings is probably due to the pile of stones that has blocked the entrance for what is believed to be more than 18,000 years.

The replica is scheduled to open in 2005. ■ ■

Air France Expo Marks 70 Years in the Air

TO CELEBRATE ITS 70TH ANNIVERSARY, Air France is running an exhibit at the Musée de la Publicité in Paris until January 25, 2004. The company, whose adventure started on October 7, 1933, is the result of a merger among five others: Air Union, Aéropostale, Les Lignes Farman, La Cidna and Air Orient.

"On Air 1933-2003, an Air France Story," which opened on October 16, demonstrates how the company has always linked its image to French *savoir-faire*, lifestyle and elegance. Numerous photos and objects, documents, posters and trailers from the archives of Air France relate, throughout the decades, the history of the great French company's publicity and advertising campaigns. These images were the work of the most popular and famous graphic designers and artists of their time.

The company's flight attendants are dressed by the best French fashion designers, such as Dior, and thus export French *haute couture* and charm to the world.

The aircraft industry was revolutionized by the arrival of the first jet engine planes in 1959 and 1960, which cut the travel time on the North Atlantic lines in half. Ten years later, the Boeing 747, with a capacity of 400 passengers, opened the era of charter flights. Consequently, tourism became an industry and air travel lost a bit of its luxurious image. What once were considered mythical destinations, such as Tahiti, Tokyo or Lima, are now accessible to a larger public.

With Air France and KLM having now joined forces to create the world's largest airline, the future looks bright for the venerable French carrier. ■ ■

Piaf, the Kid From Paris

THE PARIS TOWN HALL is presenting an exhibition to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the passing away of Edith Piaf. The exhibition, titled "*Piaf, la Môme de Paris*" ("Piaf, the Kid From Paris"), is an homage by the city to one of its most famous artists. The exhibition will run until January 31, 2004.

Edith Piaf spent most of her childhood wandering the streets of Paris, and even if her career led her to tour all over the world, her Parisian popular origins and her infatuation with her birthplace remained a strong and constant highlight in her life.

The exhibition aims at re-creating the Paris of the early Thirties in which Edith Piaf first emerged as a street singer. It



Edith Piaf in concert
(Embassy archives)

recalls the Parisian cabarets where she started making herself known to the public. Beginning with Gerny's, then moving on to more stylish clubs like the Night-Club or the A.B.C., the temple of the Parisian music hall, where she established herself as the leading singer of her time, the exhibition ends with Le Versailles in New York, where Edith Piaf experienced her American triumphs, and 67 Lannes Boulevard in Paris, where she spent the last years of her life.

The exhibition features songs, rare or new photographs, and a large variety of documents from the Thirties (posters, programs, newspapers, discs). It also presents personal items (letters, portraits, notes...) that belonged to Edith Piaf. ■ ■

GONCOURT PRIZE CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

This year marks the centennial of the Goncourt, France's most prestigious literary prize, which was created by Edmond de Goncourt in 1903 to help authors and to "promote literature." The momentous occasion was marked this year by a surprise early announcement by the Goncourt jury, which awarded the prize, two weeks before its scheduled date, to Jacques-Pierre Amette for his book *La Maîtresse de Brecht*. Amette, who is in his 60s, is a literary critic and an established writer. His novel deals with the last years of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht in East Berlin in 1948.

BOOK FESTIVAL IN BRIVE

"*La Foire du Livre de Brive*," a book festival that takes place once a year and during which more than 400 authors come to share their work with publishers and visitors, will take place in Brive, France, from November 7-9. Presiding will be the renowned French author Yves Berger, who was recently named vice president of the Superior Council of the French Language. This 22nd edition of the festival has as its theme "The French Language's Role in the World." This year French Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin will be awarded the prize of the French language for his achievements, helping to make this year's festival a unique event.

AFAA TALENT SEARCH

The French Association of Artistic Action (AFAA) launched a program called "*Génération Musiques*" ("Music Generation") to assist new music artists, with a focus on rising talents in Northern Africa and the Middle East. Receiving financial assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the mission of the AFAA is to promote international development through the arts. Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, the director of the AFAA, is confident that the program will be a resounding success.

CELINE DION RELEASES NEW FRENCH ALBUM

Celine Dion, who, according to Sony, has sold more albums than any other female singer, is back with a new album entirely in French, which hit the stores in mid-October. The French-Canadian produced the album "*Une Fille et Quatre Types*" ("A Girl and Four Guys") with French music star Jean-Jacques Goldman. The two artists worked together in 1995 on Dion's album "*Deux*" ("Two") and on other hits. On this album, a new four-man group including Goldman accompanies Dion.



Seven French directors - Catherine Breillat, Agnès Varda, Patrice Chéreau, Cédric Klapisch, Patrice Leconte, Régis Wargnier and Claude Miller - will attend screenings of their films and give lectures in New York (until November 15) and in Los Angeles (until November 21). For more information, please visit the cinema section of:

www.frenchculture.org

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The Good Life in 18th-Century France

Masterpieces of French genre painting are on display at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.

A UNIQUE EXHIBIT OF FRENCH PAINTINGS entitled "The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre Painting" is currently on display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The exhibition, which began on October 12, will run until January 11, 2004. It includes some of the great works of art of the 18th century, but these pieces do not portray the typical subjects of that time period. French Genre artists did not depict their era's major historical events, the most noted being the end of Louis XIV's reign in 1715 and the French Revolution in 1789. Instead, they chose to focus more on the social and cultural aspects of French life, painting elegant scenes from the daily activities of the wealthy class. Exhibit curator Philip Conisbee carefully chose 110 works by 27 French artists from 60 art collections, including 43 paintings that have never before been seen in the United States.

In order to understand this genre of painting, one must first have a picture of the aristocratic lifestyle of France's Golden Age in the 18th century. Image was everything to this rich social class because it was a representation of wealth and power. Homes were lavishly decorated with fine furniture, large mirrors, and silk wall hangings. Members of the aristocracy would attend expensive events at the theater and the opera and make appearances at fancy restaurants and casinos to demonstrate their economic status and refined tastes. Proper dress and

etiquette were essential to membership in this elite. In order to portray the noble image of the aristocracy, men typically wore waistcoats with fine embroidered buttons and women showed off elegant dresses. A common activity of the upper class was to promenade through gardens and parks, a major theme of the

paintings of the era. Family living was also very important to the nobles, but most of all, the amount of money at their disposal allowing them to live the most extravagant of lives.

Keeping all of this in mind, the exhibit begins with several paintings by Watteau depicting jovial men and women dressed in their finest clothes dancing and flirting outdoors. Works such as "Venetian Pleasures" display what Conisbee calls "the guilt-free enjoyment of wealth." As one strolls into the following rooms, paintings of scenes of elegant family life depicted by Nicholas Lancret and other artists line the gallery's walls. Following these touching images of idealized women and men are paintings of sensual lovers without a care in the world. Works by Chardin show solitary characters absorbed in acts of no importance, an example of the urbane leisure of the upper class. Other paintings in the exhibit are more energetic, portraying gentlemen taking pleasure in the hunt for wild game. Overall, the paintings are in fabulous condition, and critics claim that anyone who has the opportunity to see these masterpieces will marvel at the craftsmanship of these French artists. ▀



Blindman's Buff by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (c. 1750-1755)

(Courtesy: National Gallery of Art)