

Barnier Calls For a Lasting Solution in Darfur

CHARACTERIZING THE CRISIS in the western Darfur region of Sudan as a "humanitarian catastrophe," French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier called for the strengthening of international efforts to resolve it. In an August 13 editorial piece in the *Financial Times*,



Foreign Minister Michel Barnier in Darfur's Abou Shouk Camp (July 28-29).
(Courtesy: F. de La Mure - Foreign Ministry)

Barnier emphasized the need not only for immediate humanitarian aid for millions of Sudanese refugees, but also for a definitive political solution that will "guarantee regional stability and avoid a confrontation between Islam and the West."

The conflict in Sudan, which has deep historical roots, escalated in February 2003 when two rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), demanded an end to the chronic economic marginalization of black Africans and sought a power-sharing agreement with the Arab-ruled Sudanese state.

In response to this armed uprising, a pro-government militia of Arab nomads, known as the *Janjaweed*, embarked on a violent campaign of "ethnic cleansing" in Darfur. Approximately 50,000 people have been killed, one million displaced, and a further 200,000 have fled to Sudan's western neighbor, Chad.

In recent months, international pressure on Khartoum to put an end to the atrocities in Darfur has intensified. The U.N. Security Council passed a resolution on July 31 which could lead to sanctions if the Sudanese government does not, within 30 days, disarm the *Janjaweed*.

"The challenges facing us in Sudan are immense," Barnier said. "It is up to the international community to support the search for a solution leading to the stability of the whole continent."

Barnier emphasized that France's actions also aim at addressing the political problems in Sudan and at striving for a lasting solution. The French government resolutely supports a search for an "African solution," one in which closer ties between the A.U. and the Arab League would be created. Barnier said that it is essential to promote dialogue between all parties in the conflict, as "peace in Sudan cannot be achieved against Sudan's will." At the same time, France insists that all commitments, such as the July 15 cease-fire negotiated by the A.U., be strictly adhered to.

France welcomed the resumption on August 23 of the Abuja, Nigeria, peace talks—sponsored by the African Union and Chad—between the Sudanese government and the two Darfuri rebel movements. ■ ■

FRENCH AID TO DARFUR

Since July 31, French troops operating in Chad have been providing humanitarian assistance to the Sudanese refugees who have fled their country. The air bridge between the French air base in Chad's capital, N'djamena, and the border town of Abeche, has been assured by C160 aircraft and Puma helicopters since August 8. France has also contributed three million euros to the U.N. World Food Program for the deployment of additional air assets in Sudan itself. During the first three weeks of August, 500 tons of humanitarian relief were airlifted to refugees. French troops are also carrying out border patrols along the length of Chad's border with Sudan in order to reinforce, on Chad's side, the security force established by the African Union.

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Tribute to the Veterans of the Provence Landings

CELEBRATIONS HELD in the port of Toulon on the weekend of August 14-15 and hosted by French President Jacques Chirac honored the multinational forces who fought for the liberation of southern France 60 years ago.

PARIS HONORS LIBERATORS

Paris hosted a week-long program of festivities to celebrate the 60th anniversary of its liberation. From August 19 to 26, Parisians sought to pay tribute to the Allied soldiers and French resistance fighters who fought, and died, to free them. One of the highlights of the festivities was the procession reenacting the liberation of Paris by triumphant Allied troops on August 25. Two columns of armored divisions rumbled once more through the streets of Paris. One, French, paid tribute to French General Leclerc whose division was the first to enter Paris 60 years ago. The other, American, was cheered all the way to Place Bastille, where a musical ball was held in the evening. All along the procession, actors dressed in 40's style clothes and shouting "Paris libéré!" played the part of the Parisians who'd risen against their Nazi oppressors a week before the arrival of the first Allied troops.

Among the highlights of the commemoration was Chirac's welcoming address to 16 African heads of state and about one hundred veterans aboard the aircraft carrier *Charles De Gaulle*, where they observed a navy review. Chirac also awarded 23 medals. In all, 7,500 members of naval forces, 6,000 security offi-

cers and thousands of visitors attended the event.

Among the 450,000 soldiers who landed in southern France, 250,000 men were from Africa, with the rest hailing mostly from the U.S., Canada and Great Britain. In fact, 90 percent of General de Lattre de Tassigny's army was composed of troops from France's colonies. Three hundred thousand soldiers under the command of the French general landed in the Cavalaire and St Tropez bays on August 15, 1944. The operation, code-named "Anvil Dragoon," freed the ports of Toulon and Marseilles in two weeks.

Chirac honored "these admirable soldiers who came from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, to rescue France. Children from Africa and the Indian Ocean, sons of the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean." The French Foreign Affairs Ministry said these soldiers joined the Allied forces and gave their life to free France and Europe from the Nazis. This celebration was an opportunity to pay tribute to their courage and determination and to tell them that France will never forget their sacrifice. ■ ■



Military Honors on the Charles de Gaulle (August 15 in Toulon).

"Jeune Provence Spéciale"
 by President Chirac

A NEW COMMISSION FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

José Manuel Barroso, former Portuguese prime minister and now incoming president of the European Commission, recently announced the portfolios of his future 25-member team (each country of the Union designates one commissioner). Former French minister Jacques Barrot will be in charge of transportation issues, and was also named Vice-President of the Commission. The new Commission has the highest proportion of women ever and draws on experiences from across the political spectrum. It is due to take office on November 1 for a five-year term, but must win the approval of the European Parliament beforehand. The Commission is a collegial institution representing the interests of the European Union as opposed to those of its individual member states. President Barroso declared his team would work to boost prosperity, solidarity and security in the 25-nation bloc while making "Europe understood by its citizens."

REFERENDUM TO BE HELD ON E.U. CONSTITUTION

During his traditional Bastille Day address on July 14, French President Jacques Chirac announced that a referendum on the European constitution will be held in late 2005. "In the years to come, all the European countries will have to ratify it. French people are directly concerned, and will therefore be consulted directly," he explained. The constitutional treaty adopted by European Union leaders in June must be ratified by all 25 members. Referendums are also scheduled in the U.K., Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Luxembourg, Spain, the Czech Republic and Denmark.

FRENCH ATHLETES EXCEL IN ATHENS

France's athletes made a name for themselves at the 28th Olympic Games in Athens. France's final medal count stood at 33, including 11 gold, 9 silver and 13 bronze, making France the seventh most decorated nation in the world (the United States came in first, with 103 medals). Highlights included 16-year-old gymnast Emilie Lepennec's nearly flawless uneven bars routine. With her surprise win, she became the first French gold medalist in the sport. Swimmer Laure Manaudou also made a big splash at the games. While earning three medals—one gold, one silver and one bronze—she set a new European record in the 400m freestyle.



Emilie Lepennec
Courtesy: Iris van den Broek

NEWS FROM FRANCE / September 1, 2004

Eurocorps Takes Command in Afghanistan

CANADA'S GENERAL Rick Hillier transferred command of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to French Lieutenant General Py during a ceremony held in Kabul on August 9. Lieutenant General Py is the current head of Eurocorps, a multinational military force consisting of troops from its five European members—Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain. Created in 1992 and headquartered in Strasbourg, France, Eurocorps has been recognized as a NATO rapid reaction force. This marks Eurocorps's first deployment outside of Europe.



General Py takes command of ISAF.
(Courtesy: Eurocorps)

ISAF's goal is to work with the Afghan Transitional Authority to secure Kabul and nine northern provinces in time

for Afghanistan's presidential elections—a tough challenge in today's still unstable security situation. Afghanistan will hold its first elections on October 9 and ISAF will be in charge of protecting its 9 million registered voters from possible attacks by remnants of the Taliban forces. Parliamentary elections will take place in April.

General Py, who will command ISAF's 7,000 soldiers from 33 nations for the next six months, said that ISAF's mission is a great endeavor and a noble one. "We are all committed to helping the people of Afghanistan in their quest for a safe and stable future," he declared. "Afghanistan is now at a crossroads and ... it will be up to ISAF to see that things develop in the right direction," he added.

Interim Agreement Revives WTO's Doha Round

France welcomes agreement that should lead to greater trade and economic growth

HERVÉ GAYMARD, the French minister for agriculture, stated that he was satisfied with the interim trade agreement, which was reached between members of the World Trade Organization on August 1. The agreement deals with farm subsidies, a tool used by developed countries and considered particularly unfair toward developing countries seeking to compete on the global market. The French minister characterized the interim deal as "balanced." He emphasized that the European Union and the U.S. made the necessary concessions, including an agree-

ment to reduce their export subsidies to domestic agricultural products. Gaynard was quick to praise U.S. efforts in this matter. Negotiations were actually led by E.U. Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy, as the Union represents its member states in international trade negotiations. The compromise has yet to be officially adopted by the WTO, but it provides an excellent road map that bodes well for the successful completion of the Doha trade round.

POPE MAKES PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

The weekend of August 14 was an emotional time for the residents of Lourdes and the roughly 300,000 pilgrims who traveled from all over the world to catch a glimpse of the Pope as he visited the renowned French shrine. The site, located in southwestern France, is famous for its widely acclaimed healing properties, supposedly acquired after the appearance of the Virgin Mary to a young peasant girl in 1858. Millions of pilgrims make their way to Lourdes each year, some hoping to be cured of painful, even fatal afflictions, others simply paying their respects. Pope John Paul II was greeted personally by President Jacques Chirac and his wife Bernadette before briefly addressing the assembled crowd in French. The Pope spoke of his sympathy and grief for the suffering of those coming to Lourdes to seek a cure. President Chirac spoke in turn of the inspiration the Pope provides in his handling of his own crippling illness, and of his determination not to let it interfere with the duties of his office.



President Jacques Chirac speaks with the Pope on August 14.

(Courtesy: Photographic Service of the Presidency - C. Campagne)

Conference Bolsters Emphasis on Research in the Pacific

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, New Caledonia and French Polynesia—with Wallis and Futuna—held a major research conference in Noumea, New Caledonia, from August 24 to August 27. Researchers and government representatives discussed the current state of scientific cooperation in the Pacific region and sought ways in which to improve and strengthen future cooperation.

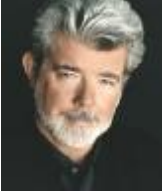
Through its overseas territories, France controls an exclusive economic zone of some 10 million square kilometers in

the Pacific. The area's dwellers share many concerns, including how to deal with climate change and how to best manage marine and land-based resources. Research agreements are clearly an essential tool to promote cooperation in the region, and France has therefore sought to create partnerships with Pacific nations (the French-Australian program for science and technology has recently been set up, and a French-New Zealand one will soon follow suit). For more information, please visit www.assises-recherche-pacifique.org.



Spielberg and Lucas Honored in Deauville

TWO OF THE MOST powerful men in Hollywood will soon be found under the famous beach umbrellas of a posh Normandy resort town. The 30th annual Deauville Festival of American Film (September 3 to 12) will honor the cinematographic accomplishments of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. All of Spielberg's films will be shown at the festival, including "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," "Saving Private Ryan," and his newest film, "The Terminal" which was released in the U.S. in June and is scheduled to hit French theaters on September 15. Lucas, who worked with Spielberg on the "Indiana Jones" trilogy, will be recognized with screenings of "American Graffiti," "Star Wars" and a re-mastered version of his first full-length film, "THX 1138." As a tribute to the 60th anniversary of D-day, Robert Harmon's "Ike: Countdown to D-day" will be screened (Dwight D. Eisenhower's granddaughter Susan will be in attendance) as well as the Spielberg-pro-



George Lucas



Steven Spielberg

duced mini-series "Band of Brothers." Tom Hanks, who directed the mini-series and has starred in a number of Spielberg films, is expected to make an appearance at the festival. Also to be shown at the festival are the recent releases "Catwoman," starring Halle Berry, and "The Bourne Supremacy" with Matt Damon. For a more complete list and further festival information, please visit the official Deauville Festival website, www.festival-deauville.com. ■

BOSTON FINDS ITS FRENCH ROOTS

"French Heritage in Boston? Hardly!" As a city typically associated with the American Revolution or Irish immigrants escaping the potato famine, Boston's extensive French cultural roots are often overlooked. Rhea Hollis Atwood attempts to make up for this oversight with her new book, *Boston's French Secrets: Guided Walks That Reveal Boston's French Heritage*. From the arrival of Frenchmen in Massachusetts Bay in 1605 (25 years before the English) to the recent influx of immigrants from such French-speaking islands as Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique, Atwood uses the expertise gained from years as a historian, lecturer, and walking tour guide to create a comprehensive look at the "hidden heritage" of this historical city. *Boston's French Secrets* will be available in stores as of September 1. For more information, please visit the publisher's website: www.imagesfromthepast.com.

lating him for his remarkable feat.

Also earning awards in the Tour were Australia's Robbie McEwen (who secured the green jersey, for best overall sprinter), and France's Richard Virenque (crowned, for a record seventh time, "King of the Mountains," the Tour's best climber). The second and third cyclists in the Tour's "Best Young Riders" rankings, Sandy Casar and Thomas Voeckler, also hail from France.

Does the Tour de France feature in Armstrong's future? It seems uncertain. Although Armstrong stated during this year's Tour that he may not want to race in the 2005 event, after winning his sixth title he noted that he would not mind winning a seventh. He admitted that "I can't see myself not being in the Tour." ■

Lance Looks to the Future

ON JULY 25, American Lance Armstrong became the first cyclist to win the grueling Tour de France six times—and in six straight years! Arguably the greatest test of endurance in the sporting world, the Tour de France is a daunting event, which took its participants across 3,390 km, and allowed them only 2 days of rest. Since the Tour's inception in 1903, only four riders have won the title five times, and only one, Spain's Miguel Indurain, managed to do so in succession.

Following the race, attended by record crowds cheering him on, a French military band played "The Star Spangled Banner" to honor Armstrong's victory. Lance also received a phone call from President Bush congratulating him for his remarkable feat.



Lance Armstrong

"Jean-Jacques Audubon: Painter, Naturalist, Adventurer"

JEAN-JACQUES AUDUBON has finally returned home. Nearly two centuries after emigrating from his native France to the United States, the life and work of Audubon is on display at the Nantes Natural History Museum in an exposition entitled, "Jean-Jacques Audubon: Painter, Naturalist, Adventurer." The famed artist and ornithologist is said to be the first to have successfully captured the movement of birds in their natural environment.

The exhibition, which runs until December 31, retraces Audubon's life, from the time he discovered his vocation along the

banks of the Loire river as a youth, to his last expedition on the Missouri River in 1843. Audubon grew up in Couëron, not far from Nantes, and observed, identified, and sketched his first birds in the marshes along the banks of the Loire. In 1806, he left France for the U.S. and, shortly thereafter, published one of his most important works, *Birds of America*. Perhaps best known as the namesake for the Audubon Society conservation organization, Audubon may be, after LaFayette, the most famous and admired Frenchman in the United States. Please visit www.museum.nantes.fr for more information. ■



American Flamingo, plate 431

(Artist: John James Audubon)

AU REVOIR, JULIA

Julia Child, who made French cuisine accessible to the average American, died August 13 in California. Child did not grow up experimenting with cooking, but French cuisine grew on her. In 1948, she accompanied her husband, a foreign service officer, to Paris. There she started her discovery of French cooking and her quest for culinary expertise. After taking French lessons, she enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu, a renowned culinary school. She also met Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle, who asked her to help them write a cookbook of French recipes for an American public. The result of their collaboration, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, was released in 1961 and soon became a classic.

Child's first TV appearance, on Boston public television, was to promote her cookbook. She won the public over, and the station asked her to host a cooking show. The rest, as they say, is history! She demystified French cuisine and made it fun and simple. Her kitchen (relocated from her home in Massachusetts) is currently on display at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

FAREWELL TO THE CHEF

Roland Mesnier, the executive pastry chef at the White House for the past 25 years, announced his retirement in early August. He was first hired by Rosalynne Carter, President Carter's wife, in 1979, and served five presidents during his distinguished career. Born near Besançon, close to the Swiss border, Mesnier would always taste his desserts before sending them out and never received any complaints. He is planning to publish a pastry book that will include easy-to-make White House recipes.

PRESERVING BRANDO'S POLYNESIAN ESTATE

If French Polynesian authorities have their way, the late Marlon Brando's private atoll, 26 miles north of Tahiti, will be preserved as a historical sanctuary and wildlife refuge. Brando, who passed away on July 1, bought the Tetiaroa atoll in the 1960s to serve as a private hideaway. Now valued at about 20 million euros, the 1,500-acre, 13-island estate is rich in history, with members of the Tahitian royal family having made it their home during the 19th century. This historical status will probably help protect Tetiaroa from covetous real estate developers, especially since Brando specified that French Polynesian authorities would have first rights should the atoll change ownership.

"LIBERTY CANNOT BE INTIMIDATED" — PEDESTAL OF STATUE REOPENED TO PUBLIC

Closed since the September 11 attacks, the pedestal of New York's Statue of Liberty was reopened to the public on August 3. After three years of security renovations funded by over \$30 million in donations, the National Park Service has deemed the monument ready once again for tourists and admirers. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, New York Governor George Pataki, and Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton were present for the reopening ceremonies on Liberty Island.

The move to re-open Lady Liberty has been called inspirational in a time of general insecurity; Assistant Secretary of the Interior Craig Manson stated that "it shows the world that liberty cannot be intimidated." Governor Pataki shared similar thoughts, celebrating that "freedom is alive in New York and shining brighter than ever before."

The campaign to renovate France's gift to the United States was launched in 2003 by Mayor Bloomberg and film director Martin Scorsese. Prior to the recent reopening, only Liberty Island was open to visitors—tourists were not permitted inside the statue itself.

Since the official acceptance of the Statue of Liberty from France in 1886, it has been closed only twice. The only other closure occurred in 1916, when the statue's arm was damaged in an explosion set off by German saboteurs in New Jersey.

Currently, only the statue's crown still remains closed to visitors. To compensate for this closure, the National Park Service has built an on-site observation deck approximately 150 feet high.

In order to avoid potential delays from newly instituted security checks, visitors should reserve tickets to see the statue ahead of time. Tours of the reopened museum detailing the statue's colorful history cost \$10 for adults and \$4 for children. For more information, please visit www.nps.gov/stli.



The Statue of Liberty

New York's French-American Lady

THE 117-YEAR-OLD Statue of Liberty, which reopened to the public on August 3 (it had been closed since the 9/11 terrorist attacks), is the result of sustained Franco-American cooperation.



Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi
(Courtesy: Colmar Tourist Office)

The initial concept for the Statue of Liberty emerged during a dinner in France in 1865 hosted by Edouard de Laboulaye (1811-1883). Laboulaye, a lawyer who became a French senator in 1879, wanted to send the American people a gift to celebrate the 100th anniversary of their independence, during which French troops helped General Washington defeat the English. The statue was

also a symbol for Laboulaye and his hosts to protest against Napoleon III's authoritarian policies. However, the project could not really start until 1870, when the Second Empire fell and was replaced by France's Third Republic.

Laboulaye's friend, French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi organized a trip to the United States and traveled across the country to convince people to support the project. In July 1871, Bartholdi discovered Bedloe's Island, in New Jersey, and decided that it was a perfect location for his statue. Back in France, Laboulaye created the Franco-American Union to raise funds for the project.

Bartholdi designed the statue in 1875. Its symbolism was inspired by the Freemasons. Thus the torch she holds up high represents the light that guides us on the path toward truth and freedom, and the book she cradles underlines the importance of knowledge.

Bartholdi began the statue's construction, hammering sheets of copper into the desired shape and joining them together. He asked Gustave Eiffel, designer of the Eiffel Tower, to engineer the steel framework for the 151-foot structure.

A lot of money was needed. The Franco-American Union worked with the press and organized fundraising events to rally people to the project. Despite these efforts, the statue was not ready for the 100th anniversary of the United States' indepen-

FAST FACTS ON LADY LIBERTY

- Winds of 50 mph cause the statue to sway three inches, and the torch to sway five inches.
- The statue's index finger is eight feet long.
- The seven rays of the statue's crown symbolize the seven seas and seven continents of the world.
- To reach the crown of the statue, one must climb 354 steps.
- The tablet in the statue's left hand reads, in Roman numerals, "July 4th, 1776."
- The 25 windows in the statue's crown represent different gemstones found on the earth, and also are crafted to symbolize heaven's rays shining over the world.
- The height from the statue's base to the tip of the torch is 151 feet and one inch.

dence. Nevertheless, in September 1876, Bartholdi visited New York City again to convince city officials that Bedloe's Island was the perfect haven for the statue.

Finally, after 14 years of fundraising and building, Bartholdi presented the completed Statue of Liberty to the American ambassador to France on July 4, 1884. In May 1885, the Statue of Liberty started her journey toward the New World. Packed into 200 wooden crates, it arrived at Bedloe's Island on June 1885.

However, there was no money left to reassemble the statue and build its pedestal when it had arrived. Pulitzer, a Hungarian immigrant and wealthy newspaper owner, asked his readers to donate money for the Franco-American project. In May 1886, the pedestal, designed by Richard Morris Hunt, was completed, and the reconstruction of the Statue of Liberty started.



A replica of the Statue in Colmar, France
(Courtesy: Pictural Photos)

Eiffel's steel framework was anchored into the pedestal and 300 individual copper plates were attached to it.

In the fall of 1886, New York City could at last look up to the Statue of Liberty, standing tall as a token of friendship and freedom. President Grover Cleveland inaugurated the monument, amidst much celebration, on October 28, 1886.

Over the past 100 years, the statue, which originally symbolized the Franco-American friendship and the universal value of freedom, became a symbol of America and its values. In 1924, the statue was declared a U.S. National Monument and in 1984, UNESCO recognized it as a World Heritage Site. 🇫🇷

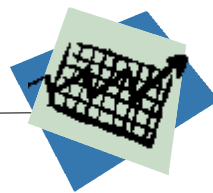
A BLACK STATUE OF LIBERTY?



A very motherly expression

(Courtesy: Ford & Associates)

The Statue of Liberty may originally have been intended to symbolize the liberation of slaves from the chains of bondage, as well as embodying, as is generally recognized, freedom from dynastic despotism. This speculation is based on the fact that the original model for the statue, a 21-inch sculpture fashioned by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, had both a shackle on its foot and a broken chain around its wrist, and was thought to be based on the likeness of an African woman. In addition, Edouard de Laboulaye, the statue's main advocate, was the president of France's anti-slavery society. According to this version of the statue's origins, the original model was rejected by the U.S. government as being too provocative, the memory of the Civil War being too fresh to risk sparking further discord with such a divisive national symbol. The symbolism of the final work was therefore toned down to a certain extent, and the Statue of Liberty that stands today in New York City bears a more discreet broken shackle on her foot and is, according to some experts, based on the likeness of Bartholdi's ... mother!



Crackdown on Piracy

French government and Internet Service Providers Partner to Fight Piracy

IN A MOVE TO address the ever-growing issue of Internet piracy, the French government announced on June 28 that it will take a series of steps to combat the problem. The government charter outlining these new policies, also signed by various ISPs (Internet Service Providers), music artists, and representatives of the music industry, has resulted in an unprecedented amount of cooperation in the matter.

According to the new policy, French ISPs will automatically send warnings to those illegally sharing copyrighted material. Those caught downloading these materials face the termination of their Internet subscriptions, as well as legal action in French courts. According to an official joint statement of the French Ministries of Finance, Culture, and Industry, the move is designed to

"promote high-speed Internet while ensuring that artistic content is shared legally." In instituting these measures, the French government hopes to avoid the legal quagmire that has erupted in other countries over illegal downloading.



The news, however, is not all bad for music lovers. To compensate for the crackdown, record labels and artists have promised to make more music available in online stores with "clear and competitive pricing." By the end of the year, 600,000 titles should be available for download on the Internet—double the current amount of files online. Eventually, the French government hopes to expand the charter to include movies as well. ■ ■

FRANCE'S ECONOMY TAKES SURPRISING TURN ... FOR THE BETTER

According to public statistics released on August 10 by the National Institute of Statistics and Economics (INSEE), the French economy has been growing steadily since early this spring. INSEE reports that production in the industrial sector has risen 0.2 percent from May to June while production in the manufacturing sector has risen 0.4 percent during the same time period. Altogether, the country is currently headed for a 2.5 percent growth rate for 2004, which is a far cry from the nearly non-existent growth of 0.5 percent experienced in 2003 (France's worst economic year in a decade). Several major French groups, such as Alcatel, Arcelor, Axa, Saint Gobain, Schneider Electric, Renault, and Total, have recently announced excellent returns (the insurance company Axa boasted a 590% increase in its first half profits!), which also points, so far, toward a strong recovery.

FRANCE STILL NUMBER 1 FOR TOURISTS

With around 77 million tourists per year, according to recently released statistics, France remains by far the most visited country in the world. In terms of income, however, France ranks third—with \$32.3 billion earned from tourism per year. Tourism is now the country's leading industry, just ahead of car-making, and the French government has launched a new campaign to further develop the country's undeniable appeal. Spain, in second place in terms of both visitors and dollars spent, receives 51.7 million tourists who spend \$33.6 billion. The United States ranks third in terms of visitors but first in earnings (at \$66.5 billion). Italy and China round out the top five.

FRENCH IRS GOES OPEN-SOURCE

On August 5 the French internal revenue service announced that it chose JBoss's open-source application server to run the next version of its tax applications. The switch to open-source (as opposed to proprietary) software comes as part of a ministry initiative to completely overhaul the entire information technology infrastructure of France's tax system. While there has been much talk of adopting open-source technology within European public-sector organizations, the ministry's announcement comes as one of the first formal commitments to this approach.

VIRGIN PICKS AIRBUS

On August 5 Virgin Atlantic Airlines announced firm orders for 13 new A340 passenger jets from European aircraft maker Airbus SAS and options on 13 more. Under the terms of the deal, which Virgin said was worth over \$5.5 billion, the airline will start taking deliveries of the 306-seater A340-600s in 2006. In a statement, Virgin chairman Richard Branson said the purchase, along with the six Airbus A380 "superjumbos" already on order, would enable the carrier to expand its network at a rate of two to three new destinations each year.

PARIS-LA DÉFENSE TO GO WIRELESS

La Défense announced July 27 that it had picked SFR (France's second largest cell-phone company) and Alcatel to turn the exterior public space from Paris-La Défense to the Grand Arch of the Pont de Neuilly into a comprehensive wireless "hotspot." La Défense, Paris's business district, is thereby embracing the wireless culture that has taken hold of the corporate world. Techno-savvy business people will be able to surf the Net, sync their handheld devices to their laptops, check their e-mail from their cell-phones, all while grabbing a bite to eat by the Seine.

Innovative Methane Tanker Design

France's Gaztransport and Technigaz (GTT) revolutionizes methane tanker technology

FROM THE ST. NAZAIRE shipyards that produced the largest cruise liner in the world, the Queen Mary 2, three new methane tankers of unrivaled grandeur will soon set sail. Two of the three tankers will be the largest ships of their kind anywhere in the world. More importantly, the gas storage tanks on board all three will make use of a new membrane technology for cryogenic insulation—developed by the French company Gaztransport and Technigaz (GTT)—that will significantly

increase their capacity. Despite such advanced insulation, however, methane gas will inevitably escape the tanks through evaporation. But in what is perhaps the design's crowning glory, this gas will be captured and re-liquefied, and then mixed with air and a small amount of light diesel fuel for combustion by a diesel engine. By burning their own wastes, the ships reduce toxic emissions and increase efficiency by as much as 35 percent. The tankers will set out for trials at sea this September. ■ ■

Deciphering Ice-Trapped Bubbles in the Antarctic

A European program helps demonstrate the greenhouse effect.

FRENCH GEOPHYSICIST Claude Lorius, the first to realize that bubbles trapped in polar ice contain climatic records of the past, launched the European Project for Ice Coring in Antarctica (EPICA) in 1995 in order to more accurately predict future weather patterns. Indeed, by studying the air trapped in bubbles, researchers can determine the composition of past atmospheres. Because the past temperature variations of Earth are already known, scientists can correlate both sets of data to determine how the global climate has responded to variations in greenhouse gas concentrations. This will in turn help them predict whether increased emissions of greenhouse gases provoked by human



Antarctica, climatic repository
(Courtesy: gallery.colofinder.net)

activities will indeed result in global warming.

After leading France's polar expeditions for many years, Lorius, now 72, is delighted to see his pet project begin to bear fruit. Valuable information covering several climatic cycles was obtained from deep ice cores drilled through the Antarctic ice cap. The 3,200-meter-long core has extended the dating back 740,000 years, and has proved that climate changes are closely related to changes in the atmosphere's composition. They also show that current concentrations of greenhouse gases are the highest ever recorded, suggesting more than ever that steps need to be taken to prevent excessive global warming. ■ ■

DELINQUENCY HAS DECREASED IN 2004

Interior Minister Dominique de Villepin announced at the beginning of August a significant reduction of delinquency in France. Indeed, violent acts against individuals have fallen by 7 percent compared to July 2003 figures, the first time a decline has been recorded in ten years. Non-violent delinquent acts have also declined, by 8.5 percent compared to last year. This development, made possible through a strong mobilization of the nation's police forces, is "more than encouraging" according to Villepin.

38 MILLION EUROS TO HELP PRESS

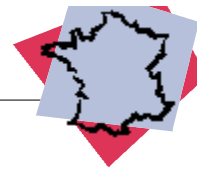
Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin announced plans to spend 38 million euros to help the nation's print media ease its transition as it enters, he stated, "an unprecedented stage of modernization." The French government also subsidizes the delivery costs of newspapers and magazines in order to ensure the largest possible spectrum of opinions. The minister for culture and communications will be authorized to spend up to 3 million additional euros on a campaign urging youths to read newspapers.

DRIVE-IN BAKERY

Why not combine the traditional French bakery with the American drive-in experience? That's what the Joly family did when it opened the first ever drive-in bakery in France. The bakery is located in a former service station on a busy road in Port-Marly, west of Paris. The concept is revolutionary: customers actually drive inside the bakery, where they can order their breads and croissants from the comfort of their car. Called the "Drive-in Joly," the bakery caters to about 200 customers a day. If the concept proves successful, the Joly family may export it to other places in France, and as Mr. Joly declared, "why not in the U.S. too?"

MONT BLANC IS SHRINKING

French scientists from Grenoble say that the highest mountain in Europe has shrunk: the Mont-Blanc has lost 50 cm during the last year, and is now 4,807.5 meters high (15,772 ft). In addition, the mountain's highest point has moved 40 m west of the former summit. According to experts, the mountain's height is constantly changing. Indeed, in 1894, it was deemed to be 4,807 m. By 1986 it had gained another meter, and by 2001 it had crept up to 4,810.4 m. According to scientists, the shrinking is caused by gusts of winds blowing snow off the summit and by global warming.




Health-Care System Reformed

THE TWO HOUSES of the French parliament gave their final approval to a government plan to overhaul the country's indebted health-insurance system. This plan will seek to maintain the high standards of France's system, which was classified "the best health system in the world" by the World Health Organization in 2000, while ensuring its financial sustainability.

The most remarkable features of the French system are its ability to provide universal access to health care and to the latest discoveries of medical research, all the while allowing complete freedom of choice. All legal residents are covered by public health insurance which makes it possible for a vast majority of medical treatments to be free of charge or entirely reimbursed, regardless of individual incomes. The system is financed by

wage contributions, sin taxes, and a tax levied on all income.

By introducing structural reforms, the new law is expected to curb the growing deficits that are weighing down on the system. The projected deficit for 2004 exceeds 10 billion euros and would have exceeded 30 billion euros in 2010 without action. Among the reforms are new health "ID cards" to stop abuses and crack down on fraudulent sick leave, and a new reimbursement system that rewards patients who use a general practitioner rather than go straight to a specialist. The law also establishes a non-reimbursable charge of one euro payable by patients for every medical consultation, incentives for patients who choose generic drugs and rises in welfare levies payable by both pensioners and companies. 

ZIDANE RETIRES FROM "LES BLEUS"

Zinédine Zidane, or Zizou as he is affectionately known in France, officially announced his retirement from the French national soccer team on August 12. After a ten-year stint with *Les Bleus*, Zidane, 32, has decided to devote his energies to his family, as well as to his club, Real Madrid. He was, and continues to be, arguably the greatest French player ever. In his very first game for France (against the Czech Republic in 1994), Zidane made a big impression by scoring 2 goals. He then guided *Les Bleus* to victory in the 1998 World Cup and the 2000 Euro. His former star teammates Marcel Desailly, Lilian Thuram and Bixente Lizarazu have also announced their retirements from international competition, marking a sad moment for fans, but also making way for a new beginning in French soccer.



The Fight Against Obesity


AS PART OF a larger battle against obesity, the French government is trying to instill good habits in children while they're still young, thereby stopping the growing tide of obesity that is affecting French youths in



particular (16 to 19 percent of them are now considered obese). A new bill was recently passed by the National Parliament banning the presence of junk food vending machines selling candy bars, soft drinks, chips, and so on, in schools. In addition, snack food and soft drink manufacturers will have the option to either include health warnings on their televised advertisements or pay the government a fee equivalent to 1.5 percent of their total advertising budgets. The proceeds would go toward public health education campaigns. Sweetened alcoholic drinks, popular among French youths, are also being targeted with a dissuasive tax.

IN PARIS, THE BUFF LOOK IS IN

Gyms in Paris are increasingly crowded as the French flock to treadmills, Stairmasters, and even weight machines, trying to achieve those six-pack abs—or, as the French would say, "tablettes de chocolat." The concept of exercise isn't foreign to France, of course, but the idea of "le workout"—of going that extra mile to build up endurance and muscle—is. The increasing levels of obesity spreading across the wealthier countries of the world may be partially spurring on this trend; however, the French have generally been able to maintain their slim physiques by walking more and eating less (and healthier) than their foreign counterparts. Thus, it would seem that exercise for its own sake is gaining greater appreciation in France.


Advertisements are increasingly seen as an important source of the problem, prompting calls among various legislators to remove this source of temptation altogether during children's TV shows. Indeed, one legislator pointed out that 70 percent of advertising aimed at children in France originates from the snack-food industry. Others protested the conclusion that such advertisements should be curtailed as impractical, pointing out that children don't exclusively watch children's shows; in fact, four- to fourteen-year-olds actually watch much more general programming. For the moment, the debate on the influence of ads is ongoing. 

France Honors Journalists Killed in Line of Duty

FRENCH MINISTER of Culture Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres dedicated a commemorative tablet on July 29 to journalists who died in the line of duty, often in war zones. The tablet, located in the Freedom and Human Rights Square on the Trocadéro plaza in Paris, reads: "In honor of journalists and news professionals, victims of their duty to inform, who disappeared or died on duty. Free speech is one of the most sacred rights of mankind."

This ceremony also marked the 123rd anniversary of the law enshrining freedom of the press in the French republic.

Vabres noted that this date is symbolic because freedom of speech and of the press are rights that transcend justice and cement our society. Consecrated by the United Nations, these rights are nevertheless fragile in many countries of the world. France feels it is crucial to recognize their importance and honor the sacrifices that were made in their name.

Vabres also unveiled an Agence France Presse (AFP) exhibition of 40 photographs that honors embedded journalists. The pictures will be on display along either side of the square until the end of September. 



Lights out for Master Photographer

Henri Cartier-Bresson died at the age of 95 in southeastern France.

BORN IN 1908 in the suburbs of Paris, Cartier-Bresson developed a strong interest in surrealist literature during high school. This artistic movement uses the artist's subconscious to describe the world. Though his first and last love was painting, he became a crafted photojournalist and, as a surrealist-inspired photographer, Cartier-Bresson used his instinct to create and envision an image and shoot at what he called the "Decisive Moment."

"Above all, I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph, of some situation that was unrolling before my eyes," explained Cartier-Bresson, who bought his first Leica in 1931. Four years later, his pictures had already earned a reputation in New York City. Back in France, Cartier-Bresson assisted French movie director Renoir and

eventually directed his own documentaries on the Spanish Civil War and on World War II refugees.



Alicante, Spain, 1933

(Courtesy: Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson)

Afterwards, Cartier-Bresson became one of the founders of the Magnum photo agency, which he ran from 1956 to 1966. His assignments took him to China, the Soviet Union, and India—where he covered Ghandi's assassination.

Cartier-Bresson was truly an artist—his work linked sensitivity, creativity and concentration. In an interview with *The Washington Post* in 1957, he said, "There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. That is the moment the photographer is creative. Oop! The Moment! Once you miss it, it is gone forever." ■

From Convent to International Cultural Center

FROM THE SHADOWS of a 17th-century Paris convent has arisen a new intellectual forum—a center for foreign artists and researchers in France. It opened in February 2004 and is designed to help academics and artists with foreign citizenship to "make a decisive contribution to France's international influence." For the Foreign Ministry, "the idea is to cut through some of the red tape to make it easier for these foreign artists and professionals to take up temporary residence in France (...) the formalities for visas, work permits, residence permits and social security registration have all been simplified."

The convent, initially founded by Marie de Médicis for the religious order Les Récollets, was opened in 1604. After recent renovations, the convent is now home to the 6,800-square-meter center, boasting 81 individually designed flats and studio lofts where international artists and researchers can take up residence.

It is little wonder that such an institution should be set up in France, as it is currently home to roughly 25,000 foreign artists, writers, filmmakers, and scientists.

For more information, please visit www.recollets.com/en. ■



The Blue Planet

(Courtesy: La Coupole)

PARIS-PLAGE AGAIN GREAT SUCCESS

In July and August, Paris flaunted its "Riviera" side during the third annual Paris-Plage. Parisians and tourists alike hit the scene in their favorite Speedos to enjoy two miles of manmade beach and summertime fun at no charge. A budget of 2 million euros brought sand, hammocks, and palm trees to three Seine-side "beaches." For the not-so-beach bum, Paris-Plage offered a chance to cool down in sprinklers and a new 650-sq.-foot swimming pool. Recently, Milan, Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Prague, and even Tokyo have caught the "city beach" fever from their friends in France.

VACHE-QUI-RIT 80 YEARS OLD

That famous happy heifer, La Vache-Qui-Rit, is celebrating its 80th birthday looking as joyful as ever. During the First World War, French artist Benjamin Rabier drew the laughing cow as a symbol for the fresh meat that was being shipped to the front. In the 1920s, cheesemaker Leon Bel commissioned Rabier to design a similar logo for his soft cheese, a logo that is now famous worldwide. A birthday exhibit was held at the Roche-sur-Yon Museum in Vendée.

THROUGH ANGEL EYES

Until April 2005, incredible and unusual aerial photographs and satellite images of Earth are on display at the "Through the Eyes of an Angel ... the Earth from the Sky and Space" exhibition in Lille, France. The show is a part of the Lille 2004 European City of Culture Festival at La Coupole History and Remembrance Center, and features shots ranging from a photo of the Arc de Triomphe area taken from a balloon in 1868 to the latest images taken by France's Spot 5 satellite, which hovers 800 km above Earth. For more information, visit www.lacoupole.com.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAINT-EXUPÉRY'S DISAPPEARANCE

On July 31, France commemorated the 60th anniversary of the disappearance of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of the enchanting children's tale, *Le Petit Prince (The Little Prince)*, whose hero left his beloved rose and his home on a small asteroid to seek adventure elsewhere in the galaxy. Saint-Exupéry, rather like the character of the stranded pilot in his famous story, had a passion for flying and was a skilled aviator. The writer/pilot went down with his plane 60 years ago while flying a reconnaissance mission over Nazi-occupied France for the French resistance. The downed plane was located and finally identified in June 2004. His efforts on behalf of his country and for the enrichment of children's lives all over the world were honored in a ceremony on the island of Corsica, where Saint-Exupéry was last seen before taking off on that fateful mission.

Squat Becomes Cultural Venue

PARISIAN AUTHORITIES decided on August 2 to turn an illegal artists' squat into a permanent cultural center, which will be designed as a counterpoint to more traditional galleries like the Louvre, at a cost of up to 7 million euros. Once inhabited by as many as 30 artists at a time, the establishment of the squat as an official site for alternative art reflects the notoriety it has gained since three artists known as the KGB (Kalex, Gaspard and Bruno) first seized the building in 1999. It is estimated that some 300,000 visitors have toured the impromptu studios and exhibition spaces since their inception, mak-

ing the site among the most popular contemporary art centers in Paris.

Recognizing its popularity, Paris officials decided not to condemn the six-story building and begin instead an emergency renovation program in order to safely accommodate its inhabitants and the number of people who visit. If work goes smoothly, the squat will reopen, newly legalized, in early 2007. While the decision to preserve the building comes as welcome news to many, there are those who are concerned that this transformation into an institutionalized arts center will ruin the very atmosphere of freedom which made the squat so popular. Only the future will tell! ■

AN UMBRELLA FOR STREET PERFORMERS

Le Parapluie (the Umbrella) has opened for street performers in Aurillac, in southern France. It is the first studio in France where street theater can be written and practiced out of the rain. The center cost 2.65 million euros and includes three rooms, a large rehearsal and production room, an even larger performance venue, and a dance room. *Le Parapluie* opened during the 19th annual International Street Theater Festival in Aurillac, which was held August 7 to 21. Please visit www.aurillac.net for more information.



The exhibition, "Seurat and the Making of *La Grande Jatte*," is being held until September 19 at the Art Institute of Chicago. The exhibit celebrates Georges Seurat's, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884), one of the most beloved paintings in the world. With 130 pieces on display, including 45 of the artist's sketches and paintings and several influential works by Monet, Renoir and Pissarro, this exhibition sheds new light on Seurat's masterpiece. For more information, please visit www.artic.edu/aic.

The Future of Furniture

The Museum of Contemporary Art in L.A. dedicates an exposition to France's Bouroullec brothers.

DESPITE THEIR HUMBLE beginnings in Brittany, France, the fresh ideas of brothers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec are the hottest in the French furniture world since the designs of Philippe Starck in the 1980s. Their pieces are funky and futuristic, yet simple and practical. The furniture's easy assembly makes living rooms and bathrooms virtually transportable. Uniquely, many of the Bouroullecs' designs are open-ended. They can be put together in more than one way, allowing people to personalize their furniture and accessories. Their "Combinatory Vases" have no function in isolation, but can be combined into containers that will fit the individual needs of the owner. "Being able to assemble pieces yourself often means being able to make decisions, to assess your real needs," say Ronan and Erwan in their book, *Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec*.



Cabane, 2001

(Courtesy: Morgane Le Gall - Museum of Contemporary Art)

Today the two frères work on a freelance basis, and their furniture is taking off all over the world. Ronan, now 33, started designing after graduating from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs. He was occasionally assisted by his brother Erwan, now 28, and the two became a full-fledged team in 1997. That was the year they were discovered by Giulio Capellini, president of Capellini, at the Salon du Meuble in Paris. They were exhibiting the "Disintegrating Kitchen," in which owners can add drawers, hooks, countertops, and shelves as necessary, and then disassemble the unit to take it on the road.

Capellini put some of their early designs into production and commissioned the Bouroullecs to design new pieces. Since then, the

brothers have also worked with manufacturers such as Vitra, Issey Miyake, Magis, Ligne Roset, Habitat, and the Kréo Gallery, occasionally dipping into architectural projects such as the "Floating House." Some of their more famous projects include the *Lit Clos*, which looks like a giant gerbil cage made of green and white metal. The bed is actually designed to create a private sleeping area, but in

a fun way, of course! A metal ladder that leads to the raised sleeping compartment is reminiscent of a tree house or bunk bed. Through projects such as these, the Bouroullecs were recognized as "Creators of the Year" at the Salon du Meuble in 2002 and "Designers of the Year" in 2003 by Elle Decoration, Japan.

The brothers make a good team and claim to have "a similar sensibility" even though they don't always agree. Their work is best, they feel, when they disagree, because they then push each other to go further. Whatever their secret, the beds, tables, chairs, and

accessories they design are making it big. They have a number of private and collective exhibits all over the world, including permanent museum collections in the New York Museum of Modern Art and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Transmutable and movable, this is furniture that breaks the old rules of space and function. Where will these brothers take their furniture next? The answer to that question is a lot like the furniture itself: open-ended.

Some of the Bouroullecs' most famous works can now be viewed in the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art until October 18. For more information, please visit their website at www.moca.org.



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