

## LETTER FROM LONDON

by Stephen Challis

A significant restructuring of the broadcasting and telecommunications industries is underway in France, brought on by the election in March '86 of Jacques Chirac as Prime Minister and the transfer of power in the National Assembly to a Gaullist/Giscardian coalition. Shortly after the election, the French government announced a series of proposals which will see the privatization of TF1, currently the largest publicly-owned network, and the transfer of ownership of La Cinq and TV6, two smaller privately owned networks.

The most recent development in the series of steps that will lead to the restructuring has been the government's issuance of a new *cahier des charges*: these are a set of regulations that govern program content and affect matters such as language, country of production and mode of filming. According to reports appearing in the United Kingdom press, 60 per cent of TF1's total programming will have to be of French or European Economic Council origin and of this programming, a minimum of 250 hours per annum will have to be new French documentary or fiction. This quota for new production is roughly one-half the number of hours devoted by TF1 to new French work during '85.

For La Cinq and TV6 the *cahier des charges* are less restrictive than those for TF1, evidently because their owners are seen as being less able to bear the costs of higher rates of domestic production. However, within two years the smaller networks have to bring their programming into line with standards set for TF1.

According to reports appearing in the UK, the announcement of the *cahier des charges* is timed to assist the decisions of the financiers who have made bids, or who are considering making bids, to the French government. A number of business groups from France, Italy and the UK are reported to be vying for the right to buy one of the networks.

A number of Canadian directors have stopped in London in recent months to promote their new films.

In November, Leon Marr attended a preview screening of his film, *Dancing in the Dark*, at the Canada House Cultural Centre. The event was hosted by the Ontario Ministry

of Citizenship and Culture, the Canadian High Commission and the film's UK distributors, New World Pictures, Ltd.

Before its screening in London, *Dancing in the Dark* was shown at film festivals in Europe, at Mannheim (West Germany), Paris (France), Valladolid (Spain) and, after London, went to a festival in Portugal.

Michael Jones, co-director of *The Adventure of Faustus Bidgood*, screened his film for invited members of the press and various prospective distributors for the film in late November '86, at Canada House. Earlier in the month the film was screened at the second annual Dublin Film Festival.

David Cronenberg attended a question and answer session open to the public, also held at Canada House, after the London Film Festival screening of his most recent feature film *The Fly*. It was one of three films by Canadian directors shown in the festival; Léa Pool's *Ann Trister*, and Harry Rasky's *Karsh - The Searching eye* were the other two.

David Cronenberg has received a lot of attention lately in the British press, concomitant with *The Fly*'s London opening on February 13. Both *Time Out* and *City Limits*, the largest entertainment listings magazines in London ran two-page interviews with him. Also, on February 9, the English TV network, Channel 4, aired *The Eleventh Hour: Long Live The New Flesh*, a 90-minute documentary which examined Cronenberg's career to date.

In the month since *The Fly*'s commercial release, it has grossed over two million Canadian dollars and remains the city's most popular film.

Donald Sutherland travelled to London's National Film Theatre (NFT) on January 13 to give a *Guardian* lecture, sponsored by the British national newspaper of the same name. His lecture coincided with a film series at the NFT which reviewed his work in cinema. The NFT film series also coincided with Canada House screenings of a group of films by Canadian directors in which Sutherland played leading roles.

On January 27 the Ontario government hosted a preview screening of *A Judgement in Stone*, directed by Ousama Rawi. The film then went into general release in London and closed a week later.

Europe's newest English language cable TV channel began broadcasting from London on

January 30 to more than five million homes across the continent. Super Channel, owned by the UK ITV companies and the Virgin Group, joins the growing list of English-language channels sent to viewers via satellite and cable link. At least seven other English-lan-

guage channels, six of them thematic and one of them general programming, are received in varying parts of Europe. Reception of the Channels vary throughout Europe depending on the satellite coverage area and the availability of cable links. The

most extensive cable networks exist in the northern European countries, also the countries with the highest viewership of English-language satellite TV. By the end of 1987 close to 12 million homes in Europe will be receiving the English-language channels.

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