En route
Namibia
into Africa
with Colas

Yann Dugain
"Autodrole"
2007

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Cover photo: Namibian woman in traditional costume.
In terms of the diversity of Colas’ activities, my vision is for roads to remain our core business, with continued development of complementary businesses. We will, of course, seize every development opportunity that comes our way. Upstream business investments will also continue, especially in the aggregate sector — which is key to the Group’s long-term success — and bitumen.

Pascal Trescos: In mainland France, what does the future hold for the three road trademarks (Colas, Sacer, Screg)? Will we all work under the same banner one day?

H. L. B.: Once again, I’m sticking to the strategy that has served us so well. Organizing our business with three French road trademarks has so far proved to be effective. The trademarks contribute to the Group’s wealth and diversity. As you know, the profit centers are at the heart of the Group’s strategy and the competitive spirit that exists between them is hugely beneficial. There’s no question of undermining their separate identities. The decision a few years ago to create joint regional offices, with shared departments, was taken to solve the following problem: how can we offer profit centers high-quality support systems in the best possible conditions?

Andy Renfrew: Two years ago, Colas North America set itself the “double 4” target (4% profitability, $4 billion in revenue) by the year 2010. Which of these “4s” is the most important in your opinion?

H. L. B.: 4% profitability is what matters the most since net profits generate development. We’ve already reached this target, well ahead of 2010. Congratulations to all! This leaves the second target: revenue of 4 billion dollars. To achieve this, we will have to see solid organic growth as well as some acquisitions in North America. Results are good and we should be able to invest significantly when the opportunities arise … so long as we keep a close eye on market trends, given the impact of the current financial crisis on the real economy.

Philippe Eponon: To what extent do we need to worry about competition from Asian companies, especially in Africa where they are gaining an increasing number of footholds?

H. L. B.: Colas has for many years now faced competition from Chinese companies in North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and in the Indian Ocean (mainly Madagascar, Mauritius and Djibouti). So far, we’ve managed to hold our ground but distortion of competition is our main concern. What’s more, we mustn’t forget that most Chinese companies are state-owned so balancing the books …
takes a back seat behind strategic and geopolitical objectives. So we actively canvas international financial backers to try and obtain fair market conditions and ensure compliance with the social and fiscal laws in force in each country. Outside this geographic zone, whether it be Europe or North America, which account for almost 95% of revenue, a very strong focus is on making sure companies comply with local employment regulations, quality and meeting deadlines.

**Guillaume Bastien:** The number of people retiring is posing a serious challenge for human resources. How can we deal with this and how do we make sure knowledge and expertise are passed on?

**H. L. B.:** The first problem you mention isn’t specific to either Colas or France. Recruitment is, of course, a major challenge for the Group. So how do we respond to this? By high-quality management, by anticipating, by reinforcing partnerships with schools and students, by encouraging a change in attitudes so that we can employ more women, disadvantaged young people and people from non-civil engineering backgrounds, by internal promotions, by using the Internet, by using temporary staff. The Group also has to step up its efforts in terms of recruiting disabled people. Not forgetting, of course, the gradual raising of the retirement age…

As far as passing on knowledge is concerned, this is one of the pillars of our success. The businesses must continue to develop apprenticeships, tutorships and the vocational qualification system. In terms of subsidiaries, some of them are setting up training schools, for example, Somaro, Colas Rail and the Moroccan subsidiaries. Training in the field is dispensed on-site by experienced professionals. Finally, at Group level, the objective is to continue to develop the “Colas University” in France and abroad. In all, the level of training investment is ambitious: it represents 4% of the payroll.

**Gérard Clop:** What do you expect of the Colas Skilled Workers Association?

**H. L. B.:** The Skilled Workers Association symbolizes the excellence of our professions. It’s a great way to enhance social advancement. I want members to lead by example, to encourage others to follow. I want them to contribute to the Group’s appeal, as well as to the vitality of the various businesses, particularly in the fields of accident prevention and knowledge transfer. I also think it is important to see the association develop abroad.

**Philippe Eponon:** What contribution can Colas make to the environmental challenge of sustainable development?

**H. L. B.:** This is a planet-wide issue but the solution is certainly not to quit maintaining and building roads, although Colas is increasingly involved in developing rail infrastructures, such as railways, tramways and underground systems. In concrete terms, we are focusing on two areas.

First of all, we’re constantly striving to improve the environmental and energy performance of the transport infrastructures we build. As you know, Colas has always made innovation a priority. For example, 3E warm asphalt mixes (Environmentally-friendly and Energy-Efficient) and the Vegeroute product line, including Vegecol binder, contribute to this objective. Likewise, we have to continue to develop our material recycling activities. Colas is committed to ensuring that 10% of its asphalt mix contains reclaimed asphalt pavement (RAP) by 2010. And, of course, we need to encourage
customers to choose alternatives designed to reduce energy content and greenhouse gas emissions, with the help of our EcologicieL software. Secondly, we have to look carefully at our equipment, our industrial facilities and our construction sites. Through the choices we make, our approach to management and appropriate behavior, we need to make sure we control our energy consumption and cohabit more harmoniously with ecosystems, paying particular attention to reducing the risks of accidental pollution. So everyone at Colas is actively committed to protecting the environment. As a market leader, we need to set the example.

Andy Renfrew: What do you see as the major threats to the Group’s success? And have you got any tips to help us manage these threats?

H. L. B.: The biggest threat is the breach of business ethics. The Group is made up of 1,400 profit centers scattered around the globe. In spite of our repeated efforts to ensure that everyone is aware of how important it is not to break basic ethical rules, the risk of having a “black sheep” in our midst can never be totally excluded. The consequences, both financially speaking and in terms of the potential damage to our image, would be considerable, not only for the profit center or subsidiary concerned, but for the Group as a whole. In fact, the Group’s very existence could be jeopardized. How can we make sure this doesn’t happen? By repeating again and again the absolute need to behave in ways that are beyond reproach and by being uncompromising should this not be the case. There is a second challenge facing the Group, in a quite different area: human resources. It’s becoming increasingly difficult to recruit the men and women we need to complete the contracts we win and this is seriously hampering Colas’ growth. So everyone within the Group needs to rally together to attract the most talented individuals, both young and not-so-young, from a variety of backgrounds … and to make sure that they stay on.

Sandra Laigneau: What projects do you feel most strongly about for the coming years?

H. L. B.: Over and above everything I’ve already told you in answer to your questions, the most important thing for me is to see Colas continue to grow and to see the men and women who work for Colas continue to derive great pleasure from working for the Group. In fact, isn’t ensuring Colas’ continued development the best way of offering employees the most interesting and fulfilling opportunities in terms of career advancement? More specifically, I want to work hand-in-hand with Colas’ employees to roll out outstanding projects in fields I feel most strongly about, such as the environment – and, in particular, the environmental integration of our production sites, the diversity of the men and women who work for Colas, safety on site and behind the wheel as well as social, economic and environmental aid for the developing countries in which we operate.

Guillaume Bastien: Where do you see the Group ten years from now?

H. L. B.: Colas will still operate as a decentralized network. It will have expanded even further and will be even more international than it is today, with, I’ve no doubt, a more international management structure too. Colas will still be a major player in the transport infrastructure building and maintenance business, with expansion of complementary activities and significant industrial capacities. Let’s get together in ten years’ time and you will see!
From July to October 2007, Selkirk Paving, a subsidiary of Terus Construction Ltd, worked flat-out on a major project in Rossland, British Columbia, Canada. A team of around fifteen people from the municipal crew was involved in the laying of the sub-grade courses, binder courses, curbs and gutters of roadways adjoining a golf course. The aggregates were supplied by the Ellis Pit and the asphalt mix was supplied by the stationary plant located in Genelle, BC. The project also included the construction of a new access road for the golf course. The team had to work to an extremely tight deadline for the project, one of many for Selkirk Paving in this fast expanding resort town where you can enjoy beautiful ski slopes and world-class golf courses – quite a few recreational assets!
Smac, a real star in Cannes

Teams from Girard Snaf, a subsidiary of Smac, carried out the resurfacing work on the famous promenade de la Croisette, in Cannes, France. The project involved the application of 20,000 m² of red mastic asphalt and 400 m² of granulated beige mastic asphalt. The port of Cannes has also been resurfaced. Work that is well worthy of a Palme d’Or!
Thanks to its folk festival, the little Slovakian village of Vychodna enjoys national, even European, acclaim. The renovation and modernization of the amphitheater that hosts the event is likely to further enhance its success. The work, which started in August 2005, was carried out by the subsidiary Inzienerske Stavby (IS). Since the work involved the use of traditional architectural rules to rebuild the wooden structure, an extremely high level of joinery and carpentry skills was required. In addition to the need to source quality wood, storing and assembling materials proved challenging and the weather conditions in the mountainous Tatras region made things even more difficult. The amphitheater was inaugurated last summer and has a capacity of 8,000. Work was finally completed at the beginning of 2008, with the construction of a wooden conference center and a 28 meter-high observation tower! Boosted by the success of this project, Inzienerske Stavby may now win contracts to restore other amphitheaters hosting folk events in the region...
Started in April 2006, the colossal project under way on Route 15 performed by HRI Inc., one of the US subsidiaries, is set to transform the highway landscape in Pennsylvania, in the northeast United States. The project came about as a result of PennDOT’s (Pennsylvania Department of Transportation) decision to convert the existing road into a highway running north-south, linking the State of New York to Maryland. In Lawrenceville, north of Williamsport, HRI Inc.’s teams have widened the original road over a distance of 1.2 km. Some 700,000 m$^3$ of rock has had to be blasted away in order to build this new four-lane highway.

Another spectacular feat is the construction of two composite concrete bridges, one six-span and one eight-span, supported by broad metal beams. The work is due to be completed by November 2008, when the contours of a new highway, Interstate 99, will take shape.
RN 2, the road that links Antananarivo, the Malagasy capital, with the city of Toamasina, on the east coast, is one of the biggest on the island. In the scope of its maintenance contract, Colas Madagascar is carrying out resurfacing work on the road along with drainage, marking and other improvements. The subsidiary, in accordance with the suggested and approved alternative, is applying micro-surfacing on cracked zones, as well as Ruflex, a thin rough asphalt mix, along the entire road. In total, it will take 350,000 m² of micro surfacing and 1.9 million m² of Ruflex to complete the project. In addition, areas of significant deflection are being reinforced with a 0/10 semi-coarse asphalt concrete. To manufacture the Colflex binder and the Polycol emulsion required to carry out the work, Colas Madagascar has taken advantage of synergies with Colas South Africa to invest in a plant that makes modified binders. Given the success of the “Micro surfacing + Ruflex” technique, Colas Madagascar has suggested using an identical alternative for maintenance work on RN7.
As is the case in numerous sectors, sustainable development is becoming an increasingly important consideration in civil engineering. One noteworthy project is currently being managed by Sacer Sud-Est in Lyon as part of the construction of the new Terra Nova business park in Ecully. Work involved main services, application of asphalt mix and deactivated concrete, construction of gabions, laying of paving stones, building of walls and steps in white concrete, etc., using Naturalith. Developed by the Sacer technical department, this eco-friendly asphalt mix is produced using a plant based binder. Heated to 130°C rather than 160°C, it requires less energy and so causes fewer greenhouse gas emissions. The product’s highly esthetic finish also makes it a popular choice. Ultimately, a qualitative and innovative project that met with the customer’s full approval.

Soldiers conquered

Colas Nord-Picardie’s agency based in Amiens built a holding zone for vehicles to be used in combat simulation exercises at the Sissonne military base. The infrastructure was given the thumbs up by tank drivers!

A project that is genuinely... Naturalith
A hundred or so employees from the Colas Centre-Ouest profit center based in Le Mans were involved in restructuring work on the A28 highway between Le Mans and Maresché. 17 km of slow lanes were planed down by 25 cm and 3 course of materials were applied. A 5 cm-thick maintenance surface was then laid over all lanes. What made this project stand out was the fact that 50% of the aggregates were recycled on-site. Overall energy savings amounted to around 50%.
“Active Joint is the solution you need!” That’s how the Sacer Paris-Nord-Est agency in Beauvais presented its alternative to the Oise County Council in response to a call for bids to repair and widen the Beauvais bypass. Economical to apply and maintain, the process offers a good energy balance and proves particularly effective when it comes to combating shrinkage cracking caused by temperature variations and HGV traffic. The council was suitably impressed and gave the green light for project. Work involved widening the section to 4 lanes, upgrading of an interchange on the RD 938, the creation of two roundabouts and the improvement of eight slip roads. It included earthworks, drainage, main services, landscaping, the creation of settling and absorption bassins and the construction of a bike path parallel to the road. Conducted in the presence of traffic, the work was subject to a tight schedule with only five and a half months allocated for the completion of the road. Thanks to the Active Joint unit, greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 360 metric tons, representing energy savings of 40% compared to the original solution.
Last September, teams from the Screg Nord-Picardie Lille profit center carried out work on the section of the A25 highway between Porte des Postes, in the southern outskirts of the city and the intersection with the A1 highway. The work consisted in reinforcing the roadway and applying noise-reducing surfacing over a 3-kilometer section. 8,600 metric tons of high modulus asphalt were applied in two layers of 9 and 7 centimeters respectively, together with 45,000 m² of Microville. This particularly effective noise-reducing product has led to a 10-decibel decrease in traffic-related noise pollution. Altogether, around sixty employees were involved in the work, which was carried out over three weekends. The tight deadline for completion represented one of the project’s biggest challenges but good organization, coupled with the motivation of the teams, meant the job was finished on-schedule. All in all, a great advertisement for the Group’s noise-reducing techniques, which are certainly making themselves heard!
For almost two years, Hungarian subsidiary teams (Colas Eger, Colas Debrecen, Alterra and Colas Eszakkő) have been busy working on the construction of the new M0 highway, which will bypass Budapest. IS Košice, a Slovak subsidiary, and Wegebo (Colas Belgium) have also been actively involved in the project. In addition to an 8.9-km section of road, the project includes the construction of an interchange giving motorists direct access to the M3 highway without having to go through the capital. Representing an investment of 60 million euros, the project was due to have been completed by the end of November 2007. However, compulsory purchase issues have led to the delivery date being pushed back to this coming summer. Mobilizing up to 50 employees as well as numerous subcontractors, the project is a major contract for Colas Hungária and is particularly significant since the link road has been given a concrete surface, rather than a traditional asphalt one. A successful first for Colas Hungária, as it seeks to win others bids to work on the M0 highway project, bolstered by fruitful synergies between the Hungarian, Slovak and Belgian subsidiaries working together for Colas Hungária.
FRANCE

Tours: listen to the silence

In November 2007, Colas Centre-Ouest carried out a Nanosoft project in the city of Tours: teams applied 8,600 m² of heavy-duty skid resistant, noise-reducing asphalt. The customer, the Tours conurbation committee, was highly satisfied with the result.
Work to restore and develop former industrial wasteland and the port area of the île de Nantes (Island of Nantes) – 13 ha in total – is already well advanced. The Parc des Chantiers project, conducted by the Nantes-based Screg Ouest agency, was launched at the beginning of 2006, and was scheduled to last 34 months. Around fifty people are working on the project, consisting of 65,000 m³ of excavation work, 38,000 m² of concrete roads, 20,000 m² of asphalt roads, 7,000 m² of paving, concrete and natural stone slabs, and 4,000 m of concrete and granite curbs. The former port slipways will be transformed into gardens, evocatively named le jardin de l’Estuaire and le jardin des Voyages. Initially the teams used specially-fitted mechanical diggers to meticulously clear a landing stage; the slipways are now being progressively terraced and the park, which will be an ideal place for a stroll and will host various events and leisure activities, is gradually taking shape. On the quai des Antilles, at the top of the island, the sculptor Daniel Buren and the architect Patrick Bouchain have erected giant rings which become luminous halos at nightfall.
When Route 19 reached its saturation point with 1,500 vehicles per hour, the Essonne county council decided to upgrade it to a four-lane roadway. This vast construction project, launched in January 2007 and due to be completed in September 2009, draws on synergies within the Group. It is being handled by Screg Ile-de-France Normandie’s Essonne profit center, working notably with Colas Ile-de-France Normandie. Somaro’s teams are installing guardrails and signs, as well as road marking. Teams from Screg IDFN’s Drainage and Environment Division are responsible for ditch clearance work and Cosson (Screg IDFN) is in charge of landscaping the embankments. The work, which was carried out under traffic, involves a 9-km stretch of roadway, 13 km of agricultural routes and 11 traffic circles. For this “green” project, the materials used in the structural layers come from the earthworks; the former road surfaces are recycled to make the new courses; a noise-reducing asphalt mix is laid; road paints are manufactured from an oyster-shell base and concrete noise barriers incorporate rubber from recycled tires.
Built after the First World War, the Betbèze cycle track, in Damazan (southwest France), played host to some of the greatest moments in French cycling, right up until the 1980s. In a poor state of repair, it looked like time might finally have run out for the track, but a group of neighboring towns, realizing the venue’s symbolic value in terms of French sporting heritage, rallied to have it renovated. The Colas Sud-Ouest Agen profit center was asked to lay a new asphalt mix surface, over an area of 2,300 m². A degree of ingenuity was required of the teams when they came to work on the sloping section of the circuit: the paver had to be secured to a digger to prevent it from slipping. Colas Sud-Ouest’s technical department also had to develop a self-compacting asphalt mix formula since it was impossible to operate a roller on this type of banking.

Gennevilliers: demolition of the Chausson factories

The specialist demolition company, Brunel Démolition, was responsible for clearing and knocking down the former Chausson factories in Gennevilliers, near Paris. Work started in August 2007 and a team of around ten took eight months to complete the job. 500 metric tons of wood (sent for reuse to the Eco-Tri sorting centers managed by Picheta), 7,000 metric tons of scrap metal and a similar amount of rubble were removed from the site.
Begun in September 2005, the construction of the Le Mans tramway took more than two years. It came into operation in November 2007, but a team is set to remain on-site until the end of March. Several of the Group’s subsidiaries have been involved in the work. A cell comprising Sacer Atlantique, Screg Ouest and Colas Centre-Ouest was specifically created for the project. The work, which was divided into three separate sections, involved 11 km of tram line and mobilized around one hundred employees. The investment was also significant in terms of equipment. A major constraint was the existing underground network, which had to be test bored and relocated. Colas Rail, which specializes in railway maintenance and equipment operations, was responsible for laying the overhead lines. It should also be noted that Somaro was involved in the installation of the street furniture. The excellent coordination between the various teams even made it possible to complete the project four months ahead of schedule and on budget. Quite a feat for a project on such a scale!
A new aqueduct in Fontainebleau

Sagep, the public company responsible for supplying drinking water to the City of Paris, asked Suburbaine Aulnay (Spac) to construct a new cast iron aqueduct in Fontainebleau to replace the old concrete one. The aqueduct is 475 meters long and has a diameter of 2,000 mm. The concrete from the pre-existing structure was crushed and then recovered for re-use.
Budapest: a mammoth construction site

The country’s biggest wastewater treatment plant is currently under construction. As a member of the consortium that won the bid, Alterra (Colas Hungaria) is making a daily contribution to a facility at the cutting edge of technology in terms of environmental protection.
A PROJECT FROM A TO Z
From earthworks to concreting and the construction of condensers and digestion towers, Alterra is involved in every stage of the project.
This is the first time that a sewage treatment plant on this scale has been built in Hungary - in Budapest to be precise - and it will probably be the last. Our involvement in this exceptional project offers us a unique opportunity to further raise the profile of both the Colas Group and Alterra in the region,” rejoices Szabolcs Sidó, general manager of Alterra, one of the Group’s five subsidiaries in Hungary. At the end of 2005, following a hotly contested bid organized in two phases, a consortium made up of Alterra (Colas Hungária), Hídépitő (Vinci Group), Degrémont (Suez Group) and OTV (Veolia Eau Solutions & Technologies Group) was awarded a contract by the city of Budapest to design, construct and operate for a four-year period a new system for wastewater collection and treatment and sewage sludge disposal.

The biggest treatment plant in the country

The project, worth 60 million euros for the Group, represents a total cost of 290 million euros, with 250 million euros being spent on the design and construction of the treatment plant, located on Csepel Island, in the 21st district, just south of the Hungarian capital. Once it is up and running in 2010, the plant will be the biggest in the country. “With a capacity of 350,000 m³/day in dry weather, the plant will be able to treat up to 900,000 m³/day in wet weather, serving the needs of the equivalent of 1.5 million people,” continues Szabolcs Sidó. “The plants in operation today are only able to treat 46% of all wastewater.” The rest flows straight into the Danube following a simple screening process!

Using enhanced biological treatment technology, the new plant will therefore make a significant contribution to reducing the level of pollution in the famous “blue” Danube, with 93% of all wastewater ultimately being treated. The icing on the cake is that the plant will be in perfect harmony with the landscape, as Szabolcs Sidó explains: “The plant’s tanks will be covered and the 25,000-m² building will be entirely concealed by vegetation. We’re also going to plant 3,000 trees and deliver a ‘greener’ environment covering 29 hectares! The entire island will be remodeled, with the construction of a residential area, offices and a recreational zone.”

Construction work all around

For Alterra, responsible with Hídépitő for the civil engineering aspects of the project, the serious work began more than two years ago, in 2006, with the project design. Actual construction work started in October of the same year, with a very dense set of specifications to comply with: “We’re responsible for the earthworks, half of all concreting, the

TECHNOLOGY
AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY PLANT

To make sure the local population is not bothered by any pollution associated with noise and smells, filtering and air treatment systems will be installed. Once wastewater has been through a pre-treatment process, filtering will separate the water from the sludge after settling. The water will then go through a complete purification process. The mechanical and biological filtering and water pasteurization systems represent the last word in modern technology. Finally, the ultra-efficient processes chosen will comply with European standards.
> condensers, the sedimentation tanks, digestion towers, sludge thickeners, sludge silos, chemical-biological air treatment building, gas engine building, the plant’s external pipe work to carry wastewater as well as drinking water, air and various gases,” lists Alterra’s general manager. “Not forgetting the removal of the treated water to the Danube, internal roads and the planting of trees, bushes and grass.”

A steady pace

Today, at the start of 2008, earthworks and concreting operations are ongoing. As many as 25 cranes have been present at any one time – fairly impressive for a site of this size – and around sixty Alterra employees are working alongside some 300 to 350 employees from several sub-contractors on-site. By the third quarter of 2008, a concrete structure of some 181,000 m$^3$ is due to have been completed. Each stage of the project is subject to very tight deadlines and the pace of the work is very intensive. Overall, while the project is running approximately according to schedule, it is nevertheless behind by about three months. There are two reasons for this slight delay: it took some time to obtain building permits and the archeological excavations overran the scheduled date. Szabolcs Sidó is nonetheless confident that with the current work rate and the dynamism of his teams the lost time will have been made up by the end of the year. As he indicates,

A SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT

This project represents a very major investment in terms of design, techniques, human resources and equipment.
“We’re going to be on-site non-stop right up until July 31, 2009. That’s when the one-year trial phase will be launched at the plant. We’ll keep on working during the test period, but not so intensively.” Before this date, Alterra’s workforce has numerous other important stages to work through.

**Unusual investments**

Once concreting operations have been completed, teams will need to carry out water tightness tests on the entire pipe system. Then, in August, work continues on microtunnelling! “The specifications stipulate that this process be used to take an ID 2,500-mm main sewer to the middle of the Danube so that treated wastewater can be discharged into the river. We will therefore build a diffuser at the location made from a combination of steel and reinforced concrete,” explains Szabolcs Sidó.

Hence, this project, which is very similar to the one implemented to construct the recently completed water treatment plant in Brussels, represents a considerable investment in terms of design, techniques, human resources, equipment and quantities. It also stands out in terms of its environmentally-friendly design, which also explains why it was given a loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB) worth 194 million euros and why it is being jointly financed by the European Union’s Cohesion Fund. “Alterra has been an active player...”
COLOSSAL CAPACITIES
The plant will be able to treat up to 900,000 m³/day in wet weather, serving the needs of the equivalent of 1.5 million people.
in the Hungarian construction market for more than fifty years. Our technical expertise and the experience of our employees, combined with the Group’s support and reputation, undoubtedly helped us win the bid so that we could take part in this great adventure," states Szabolcs Sidó. "We’d also worked in the past with the other consortium members on a project to extend one of the capital’s water treatment plants in the north of the city." But with the Csepel plant, a new step forward has been taken. The company has been awarded further contracts by the city of Budapest: the construction of dykes to protect against potential flooding of the water treatment plant, the upgrading of three large pumps and, finally, the jacking of underground wastewater pipes under the Danube.

LASZLO GORBEDI
GENUINE TEAMWORK

László Görbedi is an engineer at Alterra. He’s part of a young, dynamic and closely-knit team and is thrilled to see the Csepel plant finally take shape before his eyes! He’s been working on the project for more than six years! A project of this magnitude, conducted at such a sustained pace, demands genuine teamwork. “There’s real community spirit at Alterra so it’s quite natural that everyone helps each other as much as possible. We even get together after work very often,” he explains. Language and cultural problems made initial contacts with the consortium’s non-Hungarian partners a bit difficult: “We start work at 7 a.m. whereas the French arrive at around 9 a.m. and may stay on until 8 p.m. But now we know each other better, our partnership has become a very fulfilling one!”

DORA POSZRONYA
A WOMAN’S CHALLENGE

Dóra Poszronya joined the project at the end of the summer of 2006: “At the time, permit applications were ongoing, calls for tender for subcontractors had been launched and excavation and digging work had started.” The young engineer got stuck in straight away, taking advantage of a wonderful opportunity and particularly enjoying the many changes and lack of routine. She is afraid of nothing, be it managing the various constraints, anticipating as much as possible, organizing and conducting several projects at the same time or finding solutions to problems. While she recognizes that it isn’t always easy to manage the various constraints, anticipating as much as possible, organizing and conducting several projects at the same time or finding solutions to problems. While she recognizes that it isn’t always easy for a woman to assert herself on a building site, Dóra never admits defeat: “I take my work very seriously and my involvement sometimes has a knock-on effect in my private life. But I’m very proud to be part of a project like this and to prove that women fully deserve a place in the building industry.”

TAMAS SEBESTENY
CREATIVITY ABOVE ALL ELSE

An engineer at Alterra for nearly eleven years, Tamás Sebestény had already been involved in the construction of a sewage treatment plant in the past, in Győr, in Western Hungary. “I’ve been able to draw on my experience, especially during the design stage. But the Csepel project is truly a mammoth one,” he says. Well before work starts, organizing the logistics, determining the various construction stages and choosing the technologies required are all crucial factors when it comes to ensuring successful completion, albeit that these parameters are obviously fine-tuned as operations progress. “I really enjoy the preparation phase but I enjoy seeing something that has only been on paper take shape before my eyes even more,” Tamás explains. “Not forgetting that I have to be creative in order to solve the numerous technical problems that arise!”
Ribal TP, a Colas subsidiary, has just completed construction work on a road linking Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and Apatou in French Guiana. A four-year project conducted under extreme conditions. Journey to the heart of the Amazon rainforest.

A new road in the Amazon forest

Imagine… More than three hours in a four-wheel drive vehicle followed by an hour in a canoe to get to work. Impossible? Nevertheless, that is precisely the journey most of members of the Ribal TP team had to undertake every three weeks over a period of almost four years to reach the Apatou construction site. Their mission: to build a section of road to link Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni with Apatou, two towns in northwestern French Guiana. Quick geography lesson: “French Guiana represents 1/5 of the area of mainland France,” explains Patrick Rivaud, Director of Ribal TP. 90% of the population lives on the east coast around the cities of Saint-Laurent, Saint-Georges and Cayenne. As you travel inland, you enter the heart of the Amazon rainforest.” With a view to opening up the territory to encourage economic development and tourism in small remote villages, the Guiana Region decided to have a road built. An enormous challenge! Ribal TP responded to the call for bids and won a contract to build a 35-km section of the 55-km road. Representing around 20 million euros for Ribal TP, the work, begun in 2004, is now nearing completion. Excavations, drainage, hydraulic structures… Conventional work, certainly, except for the fact that it had to be done within the context of a very unique environment.

Weather constraints and difficult access
The first problem that had to be faced was the weather. Impossible to work in the rainy season, between December and June. The total average...
A GIANT, THE MARONI
Forming a natural border with Surinam, the Maroni is the biggest river in Guiana. The majority of the population lives on its banks.
> rainfall is between 4 and 5 m per year… Hence teams could only operate for six months of the year, which meant there was no room for any delays. The second – not insignificant – problem was access. “The site was located around 300 km from our main base, in Cayenne,” continues Patrick Rivaud. “To get there, we had to hit the tracks and then the river Maroni. The various pieces of equipment – some forty altogether – were transported by barge whilst workers travelled by canoe.” In total: 4½ hour long trip! Under these kinds of conditions there was no question of going home at night! A base camp was therefore built on the route, comprising around ten wooden carbets (large communal huts) designed to provide shelter for the 50 or so people permanently present on site. The teams worked on a rotation basis, three weeks on followed by a week off. The provisional camp was moved twice during the project. “The foremen came from Brazil, Guiana and Surinam,” adds Stéphane Morlet, civil engineer. But the men employed along the route came from the local villages. A godsend for these populations as work here is cruelly hard to come by. There was a good atmosphere in the camp. In the evening, the men went hunting and fishing and everyone ate the catch together.”

Making it alone

But let there be no mistake about it. The weeks spent miles from urban civilization were no holiday! “The extremely uneven terrain, with its many hills

AMAZING NUMBERS
Between 2004 and 2007, the project required 1,250,000 m³ of cut and 830,000 m³ of fill. Pharaonic quantities linked to the complexity of the terrain.
didn’t make our task any easier,” recalls Stéphane Morlet. “Once the forest had been cleared, we began the excavation work, moving some 5,000 m³ of earth a day.” The cut was used to create the embankments. Installing the hydraulic structures also proved quite a challenge. “The various sections were prefabricated by a company belonging to the Ribal TP Group and then transported on flat-bed trailers before being assembled on site,” explains Stéphane Morlet. “As for the concrete, we made it using drain-off water, sand found on site, gravel from Surinam and cement from Guiana. In short, very few operations have been subcontracted out which has enabled us to retain a firm grip on quality control.”

The environmental dimension

In addition to the optimization of materials on site, a significant environmental dimension has been factored into the project. There has been no question of damaging the “lungs of the planet!” Managed deforestation, creation of paths for animals and planting of trees along the edge of the road to prevent monkeys, pumas and paks (from the pig family) from crossing the roadway and getting hit by vehicles, recovery of waste – just some of the tangible steps taken to protect the environment. The project has also been an opportunity to discover and study the biodiversity of the Amazon rainforest. The French National Forestry Service (ONF) has been able to manage the land more easily. Finally, preliminary excavations carried out prior to the project unearthed remains that enrich French Guiana’s history. “We’ve also made the most of our...
VERY UNEVEN TERRAIN

The teams’ task wasn’t easy as the terrain is very hilly. Deforestation was necessary before excavation work could be carried out.
STEPHANE MORLET
HIS VOCATION: TO WORK ABROAD!

Born in Chad, Stéphane Morlet spent seventeen years in Africa before moving to France to finish his studies in IT and electronics. Like his father – a general foreman who “got around” a bit –, he wanted to work abroad so he changed direction and decided to become a civil engineer. A graduate of ESITC in Caen, he completed his end-of-course placement with Colas Benin in the field of hydraulic structures, before leaving for Mali and Burkina Faso to gain experience in excavation work, followed by Martinique where he polished his skills in asphalt projects and tried out the new Novacol technique. In June 2007, he set his bags down in Guiana working for Ribal TP. Happy? “Absolutely! Until now, I’d never worked on a construction project on the scale of the Apatou road. With this project, you think big, a global project, heavy equipment … It’s fascinating. And the country and its people are very endearing.” Stéphane doesn’t intend to leave it at that. He’s still young and the world’s a very big place…

RICHARD PALTON
A RICH CAREER FOR A SELF-TAUGHT MAN

“I’ve learned everything I know on the job,” begins Richard Palton, 40, from French Guiana. It was in the field, with his father, a foreman, that he learned the public works trade. After completing his military service in mainland France, he returned to his country to join an excavation company as an apprentice. He then became a bulldozer driver then a road grader driver. Slowly but surely, he climbed the ladder. Five years later, he was offered the position of labor foreman. In 1990 he joined BEC as a general foreman. “At the time, Guiana was developing at a startling pace. There were a lot of major construction projects, such as the Petit-Saut dam, the Kourou space base… and I was involved in them all,” recalls Richard. In 2003, he joined the Ribal TP group. “The Apatou road project was a great adventure,” concludes Richard. “It leaves me with an immense feeling of pride because everything happened exactly as it should have done; deadlines were met in spite of the considerable constraints facing us!”
The Group has been operating in Namibia since 2000, where it runs its own emulsion plant, with an average annual production of 8,000 metric tons. The Namibian subsidiary gets additional supplies from Colas South Africa to meet customer demand for emulsions. Special report.

Namibia: Colas in the land of emulsion

Breathtaking landscapes... Visitors are left speechless by the incredible beauty of Namibia, something that’s quite understandable given the wealth of natural wonders to be seen in this vast country in southern Africa, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. While the most well-known are undoubtedly the pink dunes of the Namib National Park (Sossusvlei), there are many others worthy of a special mention, including the fabulous Etosha National Park with its 350 species of birds, the Cape Cross seaside resort with its seal colonies, the Fish River Canyon, the world’s second biggest behind the Grand Canyon in the United States, Kaokoland and its desert elephants living side-by-side with ancestral tribes, and Namib Naukluft, the oldest desert on the planet.

An independent country since 1990

The Republic of Namibia has been opening up to the top-end cultural tourism market with a focus on sustainable development for a number of years now, but its troubled past means that this hasn’t always been the case. This country, which is home to some 2 million people, most of whom live in the North close to the border with Angola, only gained its independence in 1990, at the end of a dormant thirty-year civil war. Previously known as South West Africa, Namibia was a German colony between 1884 and 1915. It was then occupied by South Africa, a member of the Commonwealth. In 1920, the League of Nations mandated Namibia to South Africa in the form of a protectorate. South African occupation was to last until 1989. It’s easy to see why Namibia is so attractive: in addition to its excellent access to the Atlantic Ocean and its port at Walvis Bay, its soil is packed with highly-coveted...
minerals: an abundance of uranium, but also diamonds and copper.

Modest infrastructures

Eighteen years after winning its independence, Namibia is now politically stable and its economy is growing. Its GDP has risen by an average of 3% each year since 1990 and the World Bank now ranks it as a “middle-income” country. Thanks to its fishing industry and agriculture, both of which have grown significantly in the last few years, the country is now self-sufficient in terms of food. The government's economic policy is focused on developing the private sector and the country’s infrastructures, which are in dire need of upgrading. The Namibian road network extends for just 50,000 km and only 6,000 km of these roads are surfaced. What’s more, 200,000 vehicles use these roads every day.

The land of emulsion

Like the Kenyan and Zambian subsidiaries, Colas Namibia is involved in infrastructure renovation projects as a supplier of emulsions and bitumen. For the Kamanjab project, near the Etosha nature reserve in the northwest, for example, the subsidiary will have applied 6,000 metric tons of emulsion between the fall of 2006 and the end of 2008. 75% of these are anionic emulsions for slurry seals and 25% are cationic emulsions for surfacing. Every year, we supply the Namibian market with between 8,000 metric tons of emulsions and 5,000 tons of bitumen (imported from Durban in South Africa).

KEY FIGURES

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<tr>
<th>PRODUCTION</th>
<th>EQUIPMENT</th>
<th>HUMAN RESOURCES</th>
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<tr>
<td>8,000 metric tons of emulsions per year</td>
<td>2 spray tankers</td>
<td>48 employees, including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>5,000 tons of bitumen per year (imported from Durban in South Africa)</td>
<td>3 slurry machines</td>
<td>18 full-time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 low-loaders fitted with 30-ton tanks and storage tanks for construction sites</td>
<td>30 temporary</td>
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8,000 and 10,000 metric tons of emulsions, together with varying volumes of bitumen. On average, bitumen requirements fluctuate between 10,000 and 15,000 metric tons per year," explains Hugues de Champs, manager of Colas South Africa, who oversees Colas Namibia from Cape Town. "Namibia is the ultimate emulsion country. 90% of road maintenance work relies on emulsions," emphasizes François Kotze, manager of Colas Namibia. "However, the past two years have seen the emergence of hot surface dressing techniques, imported by consultants who work in South Africa and are responsible for monitoring numerous projects in Namibia. Asphalt mix techniques are uncommon and are only used for specific projects, such as the runway resurfacing project at Walvis Bay airport, for which we are currently supplying bitumen."

**Ultramodern production facilities**

Colas Namibia’s emulsion plant is located in Okahandja, 70 km from the capital Windhoek, and close to a road and rail hub. Entirely renovated in 2005, it’s the pride of the subsidiary’s employees. And they have every reason to be proud given that the plant is considered to be the most modern in southern Africa! Imported in its entirety from France, the plant has a capacity of 15 metric tons per hour and is fully automated, enabling us to gain in terms of quality.

**THE OKAHANDJA EMULSION PLANT**

The most modern plant in southern Africa, it has a capacity of 15 metric tons per hour and is fully automated.

**GROUP**

**COLAS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

The Group is present in four countries in southern Africa: South Africa, Namibia, Kenya and Zambia. Taking South Africa first of all: with its six modified bitumen plants and six emulsion plants, Colas South Africa manufactures 75,000 metric tons of products every year. In addition to three depots, it has four profit centers, based in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Johannesburg. "To some extent, Colas South Africa is the Group’s flagship in southern Africa and, as such, acts as a facilitator and supplier for smaller neighboring subsidiaries," explains Hugues de Champs, manager of Colas South Africa. Hence the subsidiary – and especially the Durban profit center – supplies bitumen, emulsifiers and polymers by boat or by truck to Namibia, Zambia and Kenya. In Kenya, Colas East Africa celebrated fifty years of business in 2007. With a dozen or so employees, this subsidiary manufactures 4,000 metric tons of products per year at its plant in Nairobi. Most of these are emulsions. Every year, a quarter of this total is exported to Tanzania and Uganda. The Group is also present in Zambia, where its Zambian Road Binders subsidiary operates its own emulsion plant that produces 3,000 metric tons per year in Ndola, in the north of the country. A small proportion of this has been exported to the Republic of the Congo since 2007.
URANIUM MINES: A NEW MARKET
Colas Namibia supplies the Rossing mine in the Namib desert with 100 tons of emulsions every month for surfacing its internal roadways.
and reliability,” comments Festus Kahuure, a supervisor on the site. Colas Namibia also has two spray tankers, three micro-surfacing machines, two low-loaders fitted with 30-ton tanks, as well as storage tanks for construction sites. If necessary, additional equipment can be obtained from the South African subsidiary.

The mining industry
The other specific feature of Colas Namibia is that it supplies bitumen emulsions to a private company involved in the biggest open-cast uranium mine in the world – the Rossing mine – in the Namib Desert. Every month, the subsidiary delivers 100 metric tons of emulsions for use on the mine’s unsurfaced internal roadways, thereby extending the life-span of the rolling stock and reducing dust. It also improves road safety on the site. This business, still in its infancy within the Group as a whole, is set to expand in the region in the next few years because, in the medium term, Colas Namibia is likely to supply two or three new uranium mines. “This regular business is an ideal way for us to compensate for fluctuations in the road market in Namibia,” underlines François Kotze.

A fluctuating road market
These fluctuations are one of the trademarks of the Namibian market. As Hugues de Champs explains, “The vitality of this market is heavily reliant on the scale of the construction projects launched by the State Road Department or town councils. What’s more, it isn’t unusual to see a project launch delayed by several years.” A call for bids launched by the City of Windhoek, for example, was cancelled and re-launched four times! In order to deal with these impossible-to-predict ups and downs, Colas Namibia has around thirty temporary employees on its books in addition to its 18 full-time staff.

Logistical synergies with South Africa
The subsidiary also has to deal with logistical problems relating to Namibia’s size, which is one and a half times that of France! “When construction sites are located more than a thousand or so kilometres from our plant in Okahandja, we’re sometimes less competitive since emulsions are transported by road,” explains Hugues de Champs. For some projects, especially those in the south of the country, Colas Namibia has been able to develop synergies with Colas South Africa. “This logistics chain means that Colas Namibia can take part in calls for bids that include significant bitumen deliveries. One example of this was a project in the north of the country, for which we delivered 5,000 metric tons of bitumen. And another example is the ongoing Walvis Bay airport renovation project,” rounds off Hugues de Champs.

FESTUSKAHUURE
NEARLY 35 YEARS WITH COLAS NAMIBIA
November 11, 2008, will mark thirty-five years of service at Colas’ Okahandja plant for Festus Kahuure. He joined the company in 1973 as a surface technician, a post he held for five years before being promoted to assistant in the product quality testing lab. Eight years later, Festus climbed another rung up the ladder to the post of lab supervisor before being appointed as mobile plant supervisor in the north of the country, in Ondongwa. Today, he holds the same position at the Okahandja plant. “The event that has most marked my career has been the modernization of our plant. Since 2005, the entire production process has been fully automated and computerized. Some of the Group’s employees came over from France to train us,” enthuses Festus. When he’s not working, Festus is kept busy looking after his seven children and is a keen gardener.

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They are administrative managers, site supervisors and skilled workers... They all do their jobs with enthusiasm and have decided to share their daily routine and their projects with us.

ANJA NYBAEK
OFFICE CLERK
COLAS DANMARK
DENMARK

Hired in 2001 as a temporary replacement, Anja Nybaek was given a permanent contract after one year, thereby following in the footsteps of her father, who was an engineer with Colas Danmark for fourteen years. “But my job is completely different,” she explains. “I’m responsible for preparing the pay slips of temporary employees. As someone who loves figures, this is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job because I have to be quick and accurate!” Anja also enters accounting data relating to the number of hours equipment has been used as well as sales of asphalt mixes and aggregates. Her only regret is that she feels too far away from the sites, but this doesn’t stop her being happy at work: “I’m developing my career in a friendly environment. I see myself in this job for years to come!” As a keen handball player, Anja doesn’t slow down once her working day is over.
KAREL LISKA  
MARKETING MANAGER  
COLAS CZ  
CZECH REPUBLIC

A graduate in civil engineering from Prague University of Technology, Karel Liska started out as a production manager before joining Colas Cz’s marketing division. In the twelve years he’s spent with the Group, Karel has always shown a keen interest in construction and project monitoring.

“It’s my job to put together bids for construction projects – roads, buildings and other infrastructures – and then monitor their progress,” explains Karel. “I work with a close-knit, highly motivated team of professionals and we have great mutual respect for one another. That’s what makes the job so enjoyable and exciting!” This dynamic, people-oriented manager thrives on his many day-to-day responsibilities, which include budget and schedule management, logistics, site supervision and team meetings. Karel particularly appreciates the entrepreneurial spirit within the Group. “The Group encourages initiative and fosters creativity,” he enthuses. “Each new assignment is an opportunity for personal development!” While he spends much of his free time with his two children, Karel also enjoys sports and traveling.

“The Group encourages initiative”
“I have to adapt… like a chameleon”

CHRISTOPHER GREENWOOD
VICE-PRESIDENT
AND GENERAL MANAGER
WORKS ALBERTA
CANADA

“I’m one of those people who started right at the bottom before working my way up to the top of the company ladder, rung by rung.” There was nothing to suggest, however, that Christopher Greenwood might follow the career path that has brought him to his current function of General Manager and Vice-President of Works Alberta. When he joined Standard General in May 1976 as a worker, the idea was to finance his university studies. “But I enjoyed being on worksites so I stayed,” he explains. “In 1979, I gave up site work to move into the office and I’ve never looked back since.” His major strengths? Hard work, a positive attitude in all circumstances and a constant determination to progress. “I never know what to expect when I arrive at the office each morning! I’m constantly having to adapt… a bit like a chameleon. For example, my day might very well start with an informal meeting with workers in the field and end with an official dinner with members of the Alberta government…” Now 52 years old, this sports fan plays golf and ice hockey, depending on the time of year. Even though his responsibilities are very time-consuming, he always takes time to let off steam. “One of the keys to working efficiently is making sure you have time to relax,” he concludes.
It’s important to pass things on to young people

DIDIER GERARD
ROAD GRADER DRIVER
COLAS EST
FRANCE

With thirty-two years’ experience as a road grader driver, Didier Gérard knows his job like the back of his hand and never tires of it. “Every project is different, although the technique is the same. There’s no routine. The number of machines I’ve seen come and go!” he exclaims. A native of the Lorraine region, Didier has never left Colas Est’s profit center in Sarrebourg since he was hired in 1975. He still remembers the first graders with cardan driveshafts. He learned his trade on these machines… Things have moved on a lot since then. “Since 2001, we’ve been working with highly sophisticated hydraulic machines, fitted with GPS, which supplies us with data accurate to the nearest centimeter,” he specifies. While he enjoys the technical aspects of his work, he also loves the human side. “We welcome lots of placement students throughout the year and I enjoy teaching them. It’s important to pass on skills to the younger generations.” Since 1999, he has also been vice-chairman of the Colas Skilled Workers guild. He has a pretty full schedule. When asked what motivates him to go to work in the morning, Didier is quick to answer: “it’s fun…”

Daniel Puiu’s career path reflects the history of his native country, Romania. Born in the Carpathians, he was given a grant just after the revolution to attend business school in Belgium. He then applied to join the Group and, following an internship, was offered a post in Romania. “It was exactly what I wanted: to go back to my country and work for a French-speaking company.” At the time, in 1996, the Romanian profit center was still small. Daniel was an accountant; he managed pay and customer relations and also oversaw sites. Then, as the business grew, so did Daniel’s responsibilities. As the years went by and acquisitions were made, he became administration manager. Often away on business, he has been able to measure his country’s development. Romania’s entry to the European Union in January 2007 was a real boost. “The Romanian people had been waiting for that moment for a decade. They are beginning to buy Western cars for the first time, to think about leisure…” In order to take advantage of the growth in the Romanian construction market (more than 30% in 2007), the Group has established a centralized structure in the country.
A project engineer needs to show initiative and be open-minded.

ULRICH GUIKABANGA
PROJECT ENGINEER
SCREG OUEST
FRANCE

Hired by Screg Ouest as a project engineer in October 2006, Ulrich Guikabanga has been learning on the job. Following stints in Saint-Brieuc and Saint-Nazaire, he’s now based in Blois. Ulrich enjoys this nomadic existence. “I’m learning all the time,” he says. “I love the variety of people I meet at the different sites. Today I’m working on a car park extension, tomorrow the Route 10 link. The day after that, I’ll be somewhere else.” And yet there was nothing to suggest that Ulrich would end up with a career in civil engineering. He spent three years at the Saint-Cyr military academy in France, graduating with an engineering degree. He then spent a year at ESAG, a graduate school for applied military engineering, in Angers, learning all about road construction. At that point he had only one goal: to return to his native Gabon. But he only stayed there for eight months. “I came back to France in 2006 and joined Screg Ouest shortly afterwards,” he explains. Marching is now no more than a distant memory. Ulrich has stepped up the pace and is enjoying his new job. “It’s really satisfying when you can see the concrete results of your hard work,” he confides. “A project engineer needs to be available and mobile, show initiative and be open-minded. My integration period will soon be up and then I’ll be posted to a profit center.” “Posted”... Ulrich’s choice of words still betrays his past!
Having an education is always an advantage

AZIZ FATINE
FOREMAN
SACER SUD-EST
FRANCE

Life is full of surprises!
Aziz Fatine left Morocco in 1986, armed with a high-school degree, to study cinema and television at the University of Montpellier in the south of France. The years passed, he met his wife on campus, got his degree… and had to earn a living. It was really by chance that he joined Cregut Languedoc (Sacer Sud-Est) as a temporary worker. That was fifteen years ago. Hired as an unskilled worker, he learned the job “slowly but surely from the others”. Now, at the age of 42, Aziz is a foreman. He is responsible for road maintenance in Montpellier. “Looking back, I don’t regret a thing, nothing at all,” he says. “Having an education is always an advantage. I’ve been able to develop, to continue training.” He is people-oriented and enjoys having responsibilities. “You learn a lot through meeting different people. I love organizing, scheduling work and managing teams. It’s my way of making movies. On a film set, the director is a sort of conductor. I do the same thing, just in my own way and in a different context!” But this film fanatic hardly has time to actually go to the cinema. The last time was when he took his three children to see the Harry Potter adventures. His passion, however, remains intact: Aziz could talk forever about Chaplin, Eisenstein and Jean-Jacques Annaud… ■
The love story between François Vachon and Colas goes back more than twenty years! In fact, it started well before that, since his father spent 34 years with the company himself... "I've always worked in the Group," he explains. "At the tender age of 13, I was already giving out the orders at Sintra, at the truck weigh-in center on the highways. I grew up in this world!"

Armed with a civil engineering degree, François joined Terus in 1996, as project leader. He then spent three years managing a project center, before being appointed general manager of the Wapiti Gravel Suppliers division of Works Alberta, at the end of 2004. At 35, he still loves his chosen profession: "I've always wanted a career in civil engineering because you build things and see the concrete results of your work. It's a rewarding job as well as a highly challenging one and that's what motivates me more than anything! What's more, the Group offers young people opportunities, giving them responsibilities." François can't imagine working anywhere else. He's quick to point out the benefits of Colas when interviewing job applicants: "I tell them the Colas logo is almost tattooed onto my skin! On a more serious note, I have great respect for this company as it has allowed me and my father to grow with it!"

His job keeps him busy and any free time he does have he devotes to his family and sports.
I was given some interesting tasks right from the start.

JOSE LUIS RIZO
CIVIL ENGINEER
SPAC
FRANCE

With a name that sings flamenco and a sun-kissed accent, José Luis Rizo has a hard time hiding his Spanish roots! Once he had finished school in his native country, José Luis decided to travel abroad to discover some different cultures. “As part of the European Erasmus program, I spent eight months at the Ecole nationale des arts et métiers in Paris,” he explains. At the end of the course, he went on placement with Spac, in Bordeaux. “It wasn’t long before I was given some interesting tasks,” he recalls. “First of all I worked in the research department, then on a gas compression and storage project. I ended up in the factory that produces parts for pipe work.” When the company offered him a position as a project engineer, he accepted without hesitation. “I’m currently working on a project to lay pipelines,” he explains. “Apart from the fact that my job is interesting, I’m only 100 km from Bordeaux, my new home town, and 550 km from my native roots in Spain. So I can go back to Bordeaux every weekend and home to Spain every month.” That’s a pretty important detail.
It’s on-site that you learn the most

YASMINA NEDJARI
SITE FOREMAN
COLAS IDF/PICHETA
FRANCE

Having just graduated in civil engineering from Toulouse University Institute of Technology in June 2006, Yasmina Nedjari was hired by Picheta (Colas Ile-de-France-Normandie) three months later. What she liked about the job straight away was “being able to see projects taking shape day-to-day.” Site foreman at the age of 24, she spends as much time in the field as she does in the office, where she works on site plans and prices. “But it’s on-site that you learn the most,” she insists. Responsible for organizing teams over the long term and day-to-day, she is perfectly ready to lend a hand when she has to, “when the guys need some help.” Since she was taken on, Yasmina has been supervising demolition projects. It’s very physical work anyway “especially for a woman,” she admits, before continuing: “I’m not at all athletic. When I first started I ached all over but you get used to it after a while.” There was nothing to suggest, however, that this was the career path she would follow. Of Algerian descent, she spent her entire childhood in a valley in the Ariège region. Her six brothers and sisters all chose to study more traditional subjects. But she fell in love with civil engineering. The concrete side of it won her over, courage and determination did the rest. What does the future hold? She aims to become project manager, of course, but, above all, she wants to gain site experience.
A NEW IDENTITY
Colas Rail has a new logo
and a new signature:
“Creating tomorrow’s railways”
olas began 2008 with the formation of an integrated rail division, Colas Rail, on January 31, resulting from the merger of two complementary companies. Seco-Rail, a Colas rail subsidiary since 2000, specializes in railway construction and maintenance work but has also been involved in the freight business since the start of 2007 (transport and aggregates). Spie Rail's expertise covers catenary systems, electrification, and railway signaling as well as major turnkey project management and engineering, especially for the export market.

Boasting a new logo and signature (“Creating tomorrow’s railways”), this rail division has a workforce of 3,000. Had Spie Rail’s revenue been consolidated over twelve months, it would have recorded total revenue of 500 million euros. A significant proportion of its business is conducted outside France, particularly in the United Kingdom, but also in other countries in Europe and around the globe.

Cross-disciplinary bids and major projects

Benoît de Bodman, president of Colas Rail explains: “Through the formation of this integrated rail division, the Group’s now better placed to meet the needs of today’s rail market, which is seeing more and more calls for bids relating to cross-disciplinary contracts (catenary systems, substations, tracks, supplies, etc.), with customers demanding turnkey solutions and genuine mastery of project management. Today, our size and expertise mean that we can firmly establish ourselves as a major player in the market!” Aside from major project management and engineering, Colas Rail’s know-how includes not only freight, but also track construction and renewal, catenary systems (electricity supply to lines and tracks), sub-stations (which serve to provide the current required by the catenary system on the basis of customers’ needs), signaling (traffic light management, signal boxes, traffic management, etc.) and the manufacture of sleepers (the cement blocks supporting the track).

“We work on standard tracks, high-speed tracks, tramways, underground systems as well as private sidings,” specifies Benoît de Bodman. Colas Rail’s customers therefore include national rail companies such as the SNCF (France), Network Rail (the United Kingdom) and SNCB (Belgium), local authorities responsible for the construction and ...
management of tramways and undergrounds and industries that use private sidings to transport raw materials by rail.

The freight business completes its first year

Lastly, Colas launched its freight business at the start of 2007. With the liberalization of the market, Seco-Rail became a rail operator to transport aggregates from quarries to the asphalt mix plants of other subsidiaries in the Group: twenty-six locomotives and three hundred wagons were acquired to ensure the efficient operation of this business. Driven and managed exclusively by the subsidiary’s employees, these trains now provide Colas Rail with a link between Roy Quarries (in western France) and CCM (in northern France) and asphalt mix plants in the Paris region. The target is to transport 2 million metric tons of aggregates in 2008 and 3 million per year by 2010.

Colas Rail is beefing up its teams

“One of the major challenges facing Colas Rail is recruitment,” explains Benoît de Bodman. “The company needs to be able to meet its growth targets for the coming years. In addition, some major training programs have been set up internally.” A lot of hard work is already being put into publicizing the company and its professions, with a view to
Colas Rail works on traditional rail tracks, high-speed lines, tramways, undergrounds, etc.

**COLAS RAIL GOES INTERNATIONAL**

“In 2008, the United Kingdom will account for one-third of Colas Rail’s total revenue,” explains Jean-Pierre Bertrand, Executive Vice-President of Colas Rail and manager of the International, Projects & Systems division. Also present in Belgium, Romania, Venezuela, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco, the company is involved in several projects with an international scope. “We’re currently busy working on a project to extend an underground line in London. This project covers track-laying in a tunnel that runs under the Thames River, electrification work, electricity sub-stations and fitting out the new stations under construction. Again in the United Kingdom, we’re also modernizing Edinburgh’s central railway station.

In Venezuela, we’re in charge of a project to bring into service two underground lines in Caracas, where we’ve been operating for almost thirty years: Colas Rail is responsible for overall project management, railway track construction as well as tunnel ventilation and the fire-fighting system. Finally, in Egypt we’re working on a project to construct the first section (4 km) of a new underground line in Cairo; along with Alstom and Thalès, we’re responsible for electrification and electro-mechanics.”
attracting the skills it needs. Communication – both internal and external – is focusing strongly on this. For example, a new website, designed for the general public, has been created, and a number of new communication tools have been launched. In this way, Colas Rail is equipping itself with the means it needs to reach its targets in terms of development and meet the high level of demand for railway infrastructures in France and elsewhere around the world.

Colas Rail is currently working on the project to modernize Edinburgh’s central railway station.

KEY FIGURES

> REVENUE
500 million euros in 2007 had Spie Rail’s revenue been consolidated over 12 months

> PRESENT IN:
8 countries: France, United Kingdom, Belgium, Romania, Venezuela, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco

> RAIL FREIGHT
26 locomotives
300 wagons
10 trains operating in France per day
2 million metric tons of aggregates transported (2008 target)

> HUMAN RESOURCES
3,000 employees around the globe.
Since 2007, Colas Rail has been transporting aggregates from quarries to asphalt mix plants through its freight operation. 2008 target: to transport 2 million metric tons.
Once again this year, Colas has made a number of acquisitions, both in France and abroad. These acquisitions include companies in the road works and materials sectors. In France, for example, Texrod (public works and quarries) in Burgundy, Rambaud (concrete and concrete blocks) in the Deux-Sèvres, Société Routière de l’Est (public works) in the Vosges, Monti (public works and quarries) in the Meuse, Mendribil (public works, asphalt concrete and concrete) in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Bernadets (quarries) in Haute-Garonne have all joined the Group. In the United States, Colas has acquired C. Lee Davis (public works and concrete) in Virginia. Present for the first time in Croatia and Slovenia With the acquisition of Cesta Varazdin, a road construction and aggregates production company that runs with its three quarries and three asphalt plants, Colas makes its entry into two new countries in central Europe: Croatia and Slovenia.

The year of the railway The year’s major acquisition will have been that of Spie Rail, whose activities are complementary to those of Seco-Rail. Colas thus reinforces its positions in the rail sector in Europe (principally France and Great Britain). The two companies merged at the
beginning of 2008. The resulting rail division is known as Colas Rail (cf. special report on page 52).
At the very end of 2007, Carillion’s assets were also acquired in Great Britain. Similarly, Seco-Rail has consolidated its territorial network in northern and south-eastern France with the acquisition of SD Rails, a company that specializes in the maintenance of rail tracks, transporter crane tracks and gantries.

Other activities
Colas’ other activities have been equally busy on the acquisition front: for example, Profil R (manufacture of metal rails) and Nordgalva (metal galvanization) have joined Somaro, whose offer has also expanded, in conjunction with Ero Industrie, to include vehicular and pedestrian access controls (toll-booth barriers, automatic payment booths for car parks, retractable bollards). The “Waterproofing” business saw Serin join forces with Smac, thereby reinforcing the metal framework activity. Finally, in Canada, the road marking activity continues to expand: the Quebec-based company, Dura-Lignes, has joined Sintra and Canadian Road Builders.
Almost 300 people gathered at the Carros site in southeastern France for the opening ceremony of the new Colas Midi-Méditerranée mixing plant, SCERM. Thierry Méline, the manager of the Côte d’Azur profit center, Marc Barbier, the site supervisor and head of Damiani, and Stéphane Carpentier, head of the Nice center, each outlined the benefits of the facility in turn. With a capacity of 240 metric tons/hour, the new plant will be able to produce asphalt mixes with a degree of flexibility, depending on the size of the construction project in question. “It’s a very efficient production tool that fits squarely with the Group’s environmental policy,” explains Marc Barbier. “In addition to the eight feeders designed to receive aggregates, we’ve added a ninth, dedicated solely to recycled materials. The short-term objective is for 20% of production to use recycled materials.” The plant also boasts 5 storage tanks: 4 for bitumen, each with a capacity of 60 m³, and a divided one for light-colored synthetic binders and Vegecol.
Work on the roadways was carried out by Sacer Sud-Est and cladding and roof work by Smac.

Sacer Sud-Est renews a profit center

Last September, Laurent Vallez, manager of Sacer Sud-Est in Clermont-Ferrand, unveiled the new face of the profit center to an audience of customers and local personalities. The premises, based in Lempdes for the last thirty-five years, had become pretty shabby and cramped. A serious paint job was required. An architect and a consultancy were taken on to handle the project design. Work on the surrounding roadways was carried out by Sacer Sud-Est teams and cladding and roof work were performed by Smac. After eight months of hard work, the old pre-fabs have been replaced by 700 m² of brand new, highly functional offices. The profit center now boasts an enormous meeting room, adorned with a fountain made from basalt taken from the Fau-de-Peyre quarry (Sacer Sud-Est). Particular care was paid to the area outside the center, especially the car parks with their pavements treated with Naturalith, a light-colored asphalt mix made using a plant-based binder. Finally, all the trees on the site have been left in place, yet another illustration of the environmentally-friendly approach adopted by the company. Employees and visitors alike can now enjoy a modern and pleasant environment, which stands as a true showcase for the center’s expertise.
To allow people from a broad range of professional backgrounds to retrain in public works, Colas Nord-Picardie has set up a dedicated training program. “We were getting lots of applications for general foreman positions from people with 2 years’ higher education after school, who didn’t really fit the profile required,” explains Hervé Spinelli, human resources manager at Colas Nord-Picardie. “We thought it was a pity to leave people seeking a new start on the roadside”. True to the Group’s philosophy of integration, the management at Colas Nord-Picardie decided to launch a program known as “Alternative route”. Paving new career paths...

Selection and training

Seven people were selected from the numerous applications received. There were three phases involved in the recruitment process. The first phase involved validation of technical aptitudes in the area of management using the simulation recruitment method developed by the French national employment office. “All the applicants had experience in team supervision, but not in site supervision, which is quite specific,” explains Hervé Spinelli. A two-week immersion course in the working environment then followed. This was an opportunity for applicants to find out whether or not they were really cut out for public works. Finally, applicants...
attended a standard individual job interview. Successful applicants were hired on permanent contracts. But there was no question of letting them loose without first showing them the ropes. They were sent to the Egletons training center for 700 hours of vocational training, validated by an exam last July.

**Very positive results**

“I was a bit worried at first,” recalls Eric Bevan, former maintenance manager who went through the program. “I had to start learning and doing homework in the evenings again. It was a significant personal investment. But you have to know what you want!” A winning investment since all the successful applicants got their qualification and are now operational. A former soldier, sales manager, maintenance supervisor…, today they are all general foremen and make no attempt to conceal their delight. “It’s a fantastic opportunity Colas offered us,” believes Dominique Bertin, 40, a former town hall sector officer. Given this success, the program is likely to be repeated.
This innovative company-school partnership is a great opportunity to introduce students to the Group and encourage them to join it.

Building a high school with help from the students

The Les Pannevelles high school in Provins is having a facelift and the Sacer Paris-Nord-Est Champigny-sur-Marne profit center is responsible for earthworks and main services. Nothing particularly original so far... The innovative aspect of this project is that the students themselves are doing some of the work. "It's a technical and professional school that provides training leading to vocational qualifications in the public works sector," explains Thibault Arnould, human resources manager at Sacer Paris-Nord-Est. "The school principal and the city council asked us to involve the students in the work as part of their training." Hence an entire class of construction machine operator students took part in the earthworks. They spent three months under the supervision of their teacher putting into practice what they had learned in the classroom and working as genuine "pros". Shortly, it will be the turn of the "pipe-laying" students to enter the scene. Georges Hainaux, sector supervisor, along with Peter Flot, site supervisor, and Noël Baillet, foreman (two former students of the school), have all been in the classroom to give updates on the building work. For Thibault Arnould, "this experiment is a great opportunity to introduce students to Sacer Paris-Nord-Est and encourage them to join the Group."
An add campaign that’s 100% sustainable development

From November 20 to mid-December 2007, Colas advertised its commitment to sustainable development throughout the press. Hinged around the theme “Colas is paving new ways”, this large-scale campaign (more than 200 publications) was illustrated by a visual depicting busy ants, all carrying green leaves in the same direction. The scene symbolized the continuous and daily efforts of Colas teams to ensure that our roadways are developed in a “sustainable” and “natural” manner. Colas wanted to highlight its contribution to the quest to find concrete solutions to environmental issues, presenting four flagship products: Nanosoft, which makes roads quieter, plant-based Vegecol, 3E asphalt mixes, which reduce energy consumption, and Vegeflux, which cuts greenhouse gas emissions. A particularly timely message at the end of 2007, coinciding as it did with the French Environment Roundtables, the mayors’ and local authorities’ convention and the Pollutec trade fair.
More than 120 documents and product films are available for download from the new Screg website.

**The Screg website gets a makeover**

The website dedicated to the Screg subsidiaries and products has been completely overhauled. Now easier to access and more user-friendly, the site has been re-designed based on a principle of simplicity: all information can be accessed in no more than three clicks of the mouse! At the top of the homepage, with its attractive visuals, is a menu, with several section options. The first – “Your requirements” – has been developed using a themed approach to the various needs of users and customers: being environmentally-friendly, improving our surroundings, adapting performance to needs, contributing to road safety. The second option – “Network” – provides a brief history of the Screg network and presents the subsidiaries, which can be accessed via links. The “Businesses” section is then split into two parts: roads and infrastructures, related businesses. “Resources” includes information concerning industrial potential, equipment and engineering/research. All issues related to quality and the environment are dealt with in a dedicated section. Finally, web users can read all about Screg products and processes. In short, a comprehensive, easy-to-use site, just a click away at www.screg.fr.
A global intranet for Colas

t’s called e-colas and it’s the Group’s new intranet site. Global, lively, federative and practical, it has been online since February and will gradually be made available to all employees. It’s designed to provide the men and women working for the Group with a platform for information and shared services, a vector for coherence and efficiency. It contains, for example, a common reference system for the rules that must be complied with throughout the Group, as well as best practices that have proved their worth in the field. The services are designed to make employees’ jobs easier. The Group directory, for example, can be used to contact anyone in just a few clicks. 6,000 names are already listed in the directory and more will be added over the coming months. A bilingual dictionary specific to Colas’ professions is also in the pipeline. It will be called Colaspedia. An entire team of e-colas contributors has been busily working on the new site. Information is regularly updated and overseen by managers in specific fields, to make sure the tool remains relevant and responsive. The site ultimately aims to be entirely bilingual French-English, and even multilingual for the Group’s management rules. A world of information at your fingertips!
VEGECOL MAKES AN ATLANTIC CROSSING
In 2007, Colas Centre-Ouest sponsored the young skipper Thibault Reinhart in the 6.50 mini-transatlantic race between La Rochelle in western France and Salvador de Bahia (Brazil).

COLAS FOUNDATION PRIVATE VIEWING
The 18 artists selected in 2007 attended the Foundation’s private viewing held on October 4 at the Group’s headquarters in Boulogne.
TOP-NOTCH HEALTH INSURANCE: A GROUP AGREEMENT SIGNED IN FRANCE

In October, Hervé Le Bouc signed a Group agreement with trade union representatives relating to the creation of a new top-notch health insurance scheme for all the Group’s employees in France.

WEGEBO WINS THE AQUAFIN MINDER HINDER AWARD

Wegbeo (Colas Belgium) won the first Aquafin Minder Hinder Award for its initiatives designed to reduce noise pollution associated with work sites. The prize was awarded to the director, Walter Van Impe, by the Flemish minister for Public Works and the Environment, Hilde Crevits.
COLAS SCIENCE MEETINGS
“How can we forecast road traffic?” was the theme of the meeting held on the Campus for Science and Techniques in September. From left to right: J.-P. Lebacque (Inrets), M. Chappat, H. Hai Salem (Inrets), F. Ghilain (Phoenix) and B. Demay (Phoenix).

ENPC FRESHMAN WEEKEND
Colas Centre-Ouest, Srec Ouest and Sacer Atlantique sponsored a freshman weekend for first-year students of the prestigious ENPC graduate engineering school, held in the Vendée region of western France. On the agenda: presentation of the Group and a tour of three construction sites in the La Roche-sur-Yon area.
SACER ATLANTIQUE
SOCCER TOURNAMENT

Sacer Atlantique hosted a soccer tournament at the Beaujoire stadium in Nantes last October. The event assembled a total of 24 teams, 289 players, 8 referees, 222 goals and one ultimate winner (the Rennes team)!

15TH YEAR OF COMPAGNONS DE LA ROUTE

In November, Hervé Le Bouc welcomed the 107 new members of the Compagnons de la Route skilled workers guild at the Group’s head office.
MAYORS’ CONVENTION:
PAVING THE WAY TO INNOVATIONS
At the French Mayors’ and Local Authorities’ convention held in November at the Porte de Versailles exhibition center, the Group presented its most innovative products and equipment.

MAYORS’ CONVENTION
(CONTINUED)
The Screg stand presented the Greenflex plant-based surfacing technique, designed to make grassy surfaces that can bear traffic.
Visitors to the Sacer stand got the chance to find out all about the subsidiaries’ expertise and products in the field of urban development.

Among its products, Somaro presented those of Ero Industrie, a company recently acquired that specializes in vehicular and pedestrian access control.
POLLUTEC: COLAS SHOWS OFF ITS EXPERTISE

The 2007 Pollutec exhibition was an ideal opportunity for Colas to showcase its technical solutions to the energy challenge: Vegecol, 3E asphalt mixes, Low-Temperature Neophalte, Vegeflux, Ostrea, Nanosoft, Tecflor, etc., as well as its material recycling and pollution clean-up processes.

PRIZES FOR COLAS FILMS

Colas won the special prize for quality at the 2007 Fimbacte festival for its film about the Fort-Dauphin construction site in Madagascar, and the first student prize for its film about Roissy airport, runway 2. From left to right: Christian du PINS, managing director France and Magdalena Dulac, Colas video librarian.
OSTREA® REWARDED
The thermoplastic road marking product Ostrea®, developed by Prosign (Somaro), has been officially recognized once again, winning the environment prize awarded by the Versailles-Val-d’Oise-Yvelines Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

ENVIRONMENT CONVENTION
Recycling, chemical hazards, environmental management and sustainable development were all on the agenda at the Group’s first international environment convention held in October. The event was attended by nearly one hundred environment delegates and ISO14001 auditors.
Alain Dupont: “I’d like to thank and congratulate everyone who has worked so hard over the last twenty-four years to make Colas into the strong, powerful, efficient, productive, ethical and safety-conscious Group that it is today. I’m certain that, under the guidance of Hervé Le Bouc, Colas will continue to develop in all its businesses throughout the world. Enjoy the road forward!”
On October 30, 2007, after twenty-four years at the helm of Colas, Alain Dupont stepped down as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, handing over the reins of the Group to Hervé Le Bouc.

At the end of January 2008, Hervé Le Bouc hosted an event in honor of Alain Dupont and in the presence of Martin Bouygues, attended by more than 700 company managers and employees. The Decorative Arts museum near the Louvre in Paris provided a prestigious setting for the event.

Paying tribute to “the man who embodied the Colas Road for almost a quarter of a century with so much talent and success”, Hervé Le Bouc spoke for all those “who had been lucky enough to be part of his world.”

Having recalled the “Group’s remarkable and continuous development and influence”, Hervé Le Bouc reminded the audience how Alain Dupont had “fashioned the Colas spirit by encouraging employees to join him in building a Road with a human face, anchored in the reality on the field, a social, ethical and environmentally-friendly road, a sustainable road, open to art and the world of ideas.”

A picture was thus painted of a “great leader, a visionary, an outstanding strategist with extraordinary charisma, a deeply humanistic man with a free spirit, a man of passion and conviction, a traveling poet when the whim took him.”

Martin Bouygues then said a few words.

“Colas has been our travelling companion since 1986 and you have been the main driver. (…) It was Francis Bouygues who first placed his trust in you. (…) You responded with a calm, cheerful and persuasive obsession: to take the Road as far as it can go and beyond, limited only by the horizon.”

Martin Bouygues paid tribute to a “faultless career”, the “patient and intelligent strategy of profitable development”, conducted “without arrogance” that has enabled Colas to become the world’s leading road builder and Bouygues to work its way up to the top of the global construction company ladder. He then reminded the audience that although Alain Dupont asserted his individuality within the Bouygues group, he shared an essential value with him: “a focus on people.”

He rounded off: “As the time has come for you to leave, I know that these men and women are as moved as you are. I am too.”

Finally, Alain Dupont expressed his thanks.

“Thank you, Martin, for coming here tonight. (…) I’m not sure how I can follow that, other than to say that the Colas success story is also yours. Just as your father before you, you’ve always allowed me to continue my journey and you’ve always supported me. I will be forever grateful for that.

To you, Hervé, thank you for going back over my career and good luck! It’s up to you now to make your mark. Colas is a great company as you have discovered for yourself over recent months, with men, women and leaders of quality. Colas is their success too and I mean that sincerely. (…) I’m very moved and I know that this will be the last time I speak to you all together, so thank you not only for being here but also for having been such great travelling companions in recent years. Good luck to you all!

Good luck, Hervé! And thank you so very much Martin!”

700 company managers and employees gathered in the Decorative Arts Museum in Paris to honor Alain Dupont.
Jean Beauverd: “Our mission is to facilitate the development of road infrastructures around the globe”

Jean Beauverd, Chairman of the IRF (International Road Federation) Geneva, discusses the organization’s role and major projects.

What is the role of the IRF and, more specifically, that of its various branches in Geneva, Washington and Brussels?

Jean Beauverd: The IRF was founded in Geneva in 1948, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, a period of major upheaval when just about everything had to be rebuilt, including, of course, road infrastructures. Our organization brings together public and private professional road-sector players (infrastructure manufacturers, consulting engineers, car manufacturers, tire manufacturers), governments, associations, universities, research centers and laboratories, all focusing on the same theme: roads. In total, we have more than 400 members from 86 different countries. So we are pretty well represented, especially in big countries, like India and China. Countries come to us seeking advice on how
to develop their road networks and we also offer training programs when requested. The IRF’s motto is “Better roads, better world”. Our goal is to highlight the benefits of a solid road network for society as a whole, throughout the world: opening-up of remote regions, access to health care, culture and education. Economic development has always come once a road infrastructure has been created rather than before. In other words, there can be no social or economic progress without roads and without infrastructures. To address the specific needs of the world’s various regions, the Federation has three offices: one in Washington, covering North and South America, Japan and South Korea, one in Brussels for European Union countries and the original central office in Geneva for the rest of the world.

You were elected Chairman of the IRF Geneva last May. What are your plans?

J. B.: My role as Chairman is to define our organization’s strategy and to stay in close contact with the director general and the staff. The IRF’s executive committee supports me with the first of these tasks, and we’ve decided to make a priority of increasing our visibility around the globe by creating an IRF ambassador post in each region. In each case, the person chosen will be a prominent personality, a recognized road professional in his/her country, capable of rallying together road-sector players and organizing conferences, training programs and initiatives promoting roads, or simple themed meetings between members and other road professionals. This person could be an engineering school professor, for example, who would work on a project along with road transport companies and road construction equipment specialists. People who, on the whole, don’t meet up because they don’t work in the same fields. In fact, our mission is exactly that: to develop networks between various players and then put these networks to good use, to foster the development of road infrastructures.

How are the Colas Group initiatives currently under way?

J. B.: We have four major areas of interest: road safety, public-private partnerships (PPP), the environment and training. I personally chaired the scientific committee that organized the first conference on the environment last February. There is a great deal at stake in this area. The IRF is in the process of developing a calculator to determine the amount of greenhouse gases emitted when roads are being constructed. The first version is likely to be available in the second quarter of 2008 and will provide us with an accurate estimate of total CO₂ emissions per kilometer of road constructed. It is our duty to promote the least polluting technical alternatives and use the most sustainable materials. Another important area we have been focusing on for a long time is training. We’re currently putting the finishing touches to a support agreement which will be signed with Gujarat, a large state in northwest India. We will provide specialists to train road administration managers in road construction and maintenance techniques there. We are investing heavily in the development of these teaching and training missions.

What IRF initiatives are currently under way?

J. B.: My role as Chairman is to define our organization’s strategy and to stay in close contact with the director general and the staff. The IRF’s executive committee supports me with the first of these tasks, and we’ve decided to make a priority of increasing our visibility around the globe by creating an IRF ambassador post in each region. In each case, the person chosen will be a prominent personality, a recognized road professional in his/her country, capable of rallying together road-sector players and organizing conferences, training programs and initiatives promoting roads, or simple themed meetings between members and other road professionals. This person could be an engineering school professor, for example, who would work on a project along with road transport companies and road construction equipment specialists. People who, on the whole, don’t meet up because they don’t work in the same fields. In fact, our mission is exactly that: to develop networks between various players and then put these networks to good use, to foster the development of road infrastructures.

The Colas Group has always been a very active member of the IRF...

J. B.: Yes, it has indeed. The Colas Group has long been a major contributor to the IRF’s work. It’s fascinating work that has allowed the Group to forge some strong links and come up with numerous solutions. In November, in New Delhi, for example, the IRF brought together 200 professional players to discuss the measures to be adopted to reduce the soaring number of road accidents in India.

What are the key events for the IRF in 2008?

J. B.: We have a pretty hectic schedule! Apart from the training initiatives mentioned earlier, we’re holding a conference in February in Bucharest on public-private partnership funding. And then the long-awaited 2nd environment conference will be held in the autumn. But the IRF’s major event, which we’re already in the process of organizing, will take place in Lisbon at the beginning of June 2009. It’s the IRF’s 16th World Road Meeting, which will be held over several days and bring together almost 3,000 people. All countries and continents will be represented at the event.
Efficiency and productivity are key words in the workplace. Can we improve the performance of a manager or a team? Dr. Patrick M. Georges, an organizational intelligence expert, offers an insight.

The aim of management sciences is to improve efficiency at work. Is it possible to increase “human intelligence”? Dr. Patrick M. Georges: When we use the term “human intelligence” in management sciences, we’re actually talking about intellectual productivity. We don’t know how to increase intelligence, but there are a number of “tricks” that can be used to boost intellectual performance, improve memory and written understanding, correct the misdeeds of “animal intelligence”, fight fatigue and stress, make a team more efficient and, more generally, create the ideal conditions for making good-quality decisions.

You’re a neurosurgeon. What do neurosciences bring to management sciences? Dr. P. M. G.: Management sciences draw on knowledge in the field of neurosurgery and this knowledge is
expanding all the time. Our understanding of the brain, its various parts and their functions is growing daily. There are around fifty zones in the brain that govern intelligence. Advances in neuroscientific research are helping us to understand an individual's decision-making processes. Human intelligence management laboratories conduct research and experiments, often sponsored by companies. The work of these labs leads to the production of ergonomics (in other words work satisfaction) programs or processes promoting work quality and efficiency.

What techniques do you recommend managers employ to increase their efficiency?
Dr. P. M. G.: Setting objectives is crucial: for example, making a chart containing the six key figures for each quarter and establishing business plans are proven techniques which facilitate decision-making. People should also apply the widely recommended guidelines with respect to nutrition, sleep, getting involved in an activity that enhances their own personal development … There are a number of techniques that people can employ to combat chronic fatigue and stress. It’s important not to let yourself be overwhelmed by daily tasks: e-mails, phone calls and meetings, for example, need to be effectively managed.

The working environment also has a role to play…
Dr. P. M. G.: Absolutely. As well as standard personnel organization techniques, the way an office is laid out has a direct impact on work efficiency. Closed or semi-open offices, for example, help concentration whereas open-plan offices are better suited to communication. It is also important to ensure computer screens have the correct lighting.

What practical advice can you offer to improve team efficiency?
Dr. P. M. G.: Most teams don’t function smoothly all by themselves. Coordination tools are needed. There are around thirty of these in existence and they are very easy to implement. They ensure that a project team works productively around the manager. A common management charter is one of the essential tools. Each team member should sign the six key factors for success. Intranets, meetings, project-specific websites and open agendas are just some of the tools that facilitate transparency and collaborative work.

Are there any golden rules when it comes to leadership?
Dr. P. M. G.: Of course! I’ll give you a few: never complain, never justify yourself, don’t show signs of stress, increase your visibility, reduce your accessibility… These are known as people-processing tactics. Not forgetting the way people dress and all those little subliminal signs that have a role to play. I must also mention, by the way, that today’s managers – and tomorrow’s ones even more so – should keep a close eye on the Google index: managers must be present on the internet and they need to manage what is written on sites where their names appear… It’s their new business card!

Aren’t most of these rules just common sense?
Dr. P. M. G.: It’s true that good old-fashioned common sense emerges from these human intelligence management studies. All professionals adopt the standard “tricks of the trade”. But the processes are refined, analyzed, rationalized and industrialized. Moreover, this in itself raises another question: as soon as a company imposes management charters, procedures and good practices because they have proved effective, isn’t there then a risk that thoughts and actions become standardized? Is this a good thing or a bad thing? I won’t answer that question.

Is there such a thing as a perfect manager?
Dr. P. M. G.: No managers and no teams could possibly follow the rules contained in this vast catalogue to the letter. The ideal manager doesn’t exist and nor does the ideal team. What goes on in the field counts for more than management manuals… We have to retain the ability to take these techniques with a grain of salt, even though many of them do lead to genuine gains in efficiency. ■
Yann Dugain was selected by the Colas Foundation to produce a painting; how does that make you feel?

Yann Dugain: I’m absolutely delighted that my painting is going to travel. I firmly believe that art should move beyond the national contexts in which it evolves. I’d been invited by an exhibiting painter friend to a vernissage of the Colas Foundation. I then decided I wanted to apply myself. Once selected by the jury, I spent six months working on the subject and painted around ten canvases, which I sent to the Foundation. They then asked me to choose one of them!

From one painting to another… Here, you’ve painted a white car…

Y. D.: One day, when I was cycling through the streets of Paris, I came across a big white limousine with flowers on the roof. That’s what journeys are all about really, I thought, and this limousine symbolized that. It also shows that a journey starts as soon as you leave home, at the corner of your own street.

What other themes inspire you?

Y. D.: My inspirations have varied, depending on the different periods of my life. When I was exhibiting in Reunion Island, I painted island women. At another stage, I was depicting French terms that had become obsolete and I incorporated these words into my paintings. Currently, I’m painting female forms again… forms that I’m dressing, that are becoming modest. I’m also working on black and white drawings… Basically, I let creativity guide me, without premeditation.
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En route
Namibia
into Africa
with Colas

Yann Dugain
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