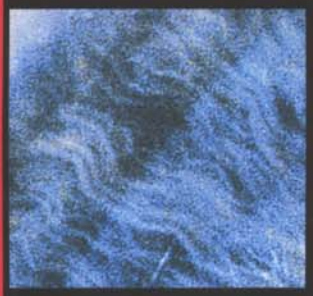
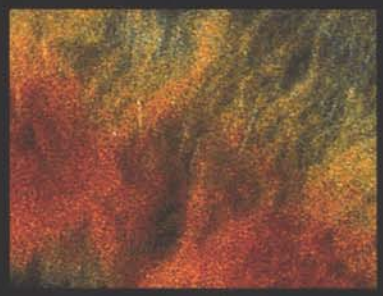
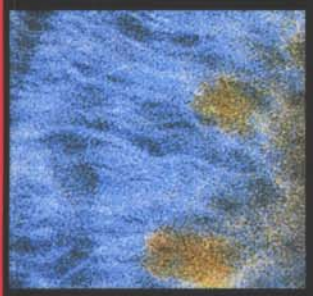
WINTER 1998-1999

TIME

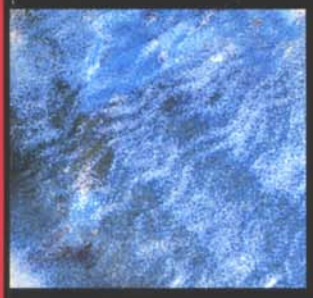
SPECIAL ISSUE

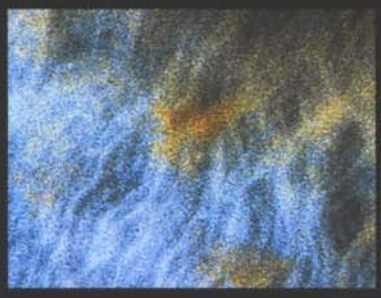


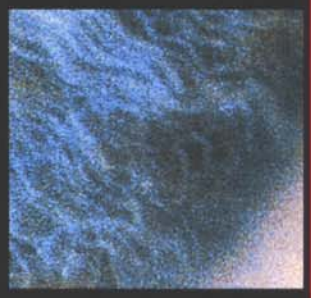




Visions of Europe







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visionaries TIME SPECIAL ISSUE

Nicole Notat

51, French labor union leader. "Revolution," announces Nicole Notat, "is the enemy of change." Can these words really have been spoken by the leader of a French labor union? In 1992 Notat became the first woman elected to the top job at France's second largest union, the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT). But Notat is less concerned about breaking down gender barriers than ideological ones. At the risk of alienating her constituency, she has made negotiating with business, and accepting the inevitable realities of globalization, a hallmark of her leadership. "Nicole Notat comes from a generation of labor leaders we've already seen in the U.K. and Italy, who have clearly championed the creation of a European economy and currency as good for employees," says René Mouriaux, a political science professor and French labor expert. That view, however, has brought Notat into direct conflict with her fellow labor leaders. In the winter of 1995, for instance, while France's two other major unions called for strikes that crippled parts of the nation for a month, Notat sided with Alain Juppé's Conservative government and its attempts to reform the over-extended social protection system in order to qualify for the euro. Such concessions have led her critics to accuse her of being on the wrong side of the barricade. Indeed efforts to unseat her have arisen within the union, but Notat has withstood them, and remains confident. "When I hear militants or intellectuals maintain that a strike is by its very nature an agent of progress, I answer no," says Notat. Instead, Notat argues for flexibility and compromise via negotiation within individual companies. "No alternative to the market economy exists," she explains, and labor and business must recognize that they are on the same side. Now all she has to do is convince the French that she is right.

Marta Nascimento—REA

Margaret Papandreou

75, Greek feminist and pacifist Like Lysistrata, the ancient Greek heroine in Aristophanes' play who persuaded the wives of warring city states Athens and Sparta to withhold sex until the men stopped fighting, Margaret Chant Papandreou is rallying the women of rival tribes to the cause of reconciliation, albeit in a less provocative fashion. "Women—by nature or culture—have always played the role of harmonizer," she says. "They can do so between Greece and Turkey." Famed for revolutionizing the Greek women's movement in the 1980s, and promoting what she calls a feminine approach to crisis management, the American-born former wife of the late Socialist leader Andreas Papandreou has called on the women of both countries to join together to work for peace. Her peace plan includes training in conflict resolution and a communications hotline for emergencies. She has also pushed for the representation of women in the Greek and Turkish defense ministries, a move snubbed by the male establishment. "Conflicts and differences of opinion will always exist," says Papandreou, who also leads the international Women for Mutual Security network. "But the objective is to do away with this lurking sense of insecurity and avoid waking up to a cataclysmic war."


Lefteris Pitarakis—AP

Adolf Ratzka

55, German activist for disability issues In 1961, German-born teenager Adolf Ratzka was paralyzed by polio. He seemed destined to spend his life in institutions, but at 22 won a scholarship to study in California. The U.S. was then the only country with facilities, such as a personal assistant and a car that could be driven by wheelchair-bound people, enabling severely disabled persons to pursue normal academic study. "I was catapulted from the vegetable existence of a German hospital to the hotbed of flower-power activism," says Ratzka. But in 1973 when he moved to Sweden, he found that attitudes were very different. It was, he says, "a highly regimented climate. The social authorities sent people to help. But the help was offered at their terms. There was no flexibility." So in 1984 he founded the STIL cooperative (the Stockholm branch of the American Independent Living movement), which employs 1,300 personal assistants for people with special needs, all recruited, trained and managed by the 200 members they help. Ratzka argues that being an employer rather than merely the recipient of care helps promote a much needed sense of empowerment. He has since co-founded the European Network for Independent Living and won E.U. funding for pilot projects in Slovakia. His ideas may have traveled well, but Ratzka notes that there are still obstacles to overcome. "I cannot go by ordinary bus," he says. "Is that because I had polio 37 years ago, or because the transport authority doesn't buy buses that will work for everybody?"


Jack Mikrut—Pressens Bild for TIME