

"THE FIRST ASCENT of Mount Everest contributed nothing new to our knowledge of the world, let alone the universe. Yet almost at once, the moment the news of the ascent reached the world at large, it entered the realm of allegory."  
—"FINALLY, THE TOP OF THE WORLD," PAGE 54



**44** Future king Faisal (at Versailles in 1919 with T.E. Lawrence) had never set foot in Iraq.



**94** Erosion creates the dramatic steep-sided hills (*mogotes*) of western Cuba.



**54** In 1953, "there arose a last chance for the British to be the first on top" of Everest.

### 44 IRAQ'S UNRULY CENTURY

Since the British first established Iraq as a constitutional monarchy in 1921, antiquity's "cradle of civilization" has seen no end of unrest, from nationalist fervor and bloody coups to ethnic uprisings and deadly oppression

BY JONATHAN KANDELL

### 54 FINALLY, THE TOP OF THE WORLD

In 1953, a British expedition became the first to "conquer" Mount Everest; 50 years later, a member of the original team reflects on the grand endeavor

BY JAN MORRIS

### 64 WINTER OF DISCONTENT

As Gen. George Washington struggled to keep his Revolutionary army from collapse in 1777, he found himself challenged on another front: politicians questioning his very fitness to command

BY NORMAN GELB

### 74 RUSSIA'S TREASURE-HOUSE

Returning to St. Petersburg on the 300th anniversary of its founding, a former correspondent finds a city at once familiar and foreign

BY BOB CULLEN / PHOTOGRAPHS BY SCOTT S. WARREN

### 86 JAMES TURRELL'S LIGHT FANTASTIC

In an ancient volcanic crater in the Arizona desert, a visionary artist has created a monumental sculpture unlike anything on the face of the earth

BY PAUL TRACHTMAN / PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT POLIDORI

### 94 THE NATURE OF CUBA

Whether a beneficiary of ecological planning or of conservation-by-default, the nation today boasts the most unspoiled land—from swamps bursting with wildlife to pristine reefs and cloud forests—of any Caribbean island

BY EUGENE LINDEN / PHOTOGRAPHS BY LYNDA RICHARDSON

**ON THE COVER** The Cuban wildlands teem with animal life, such as these greater flamingos dueling in the brackish water of Zapata Swamp. PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNDA RICHARDSON.



**64** In 1779, George Washington sat for artist Charles Willson Peale. The resulting painting (detail) honors the general's heroism at the Battle of Princeton.

IRAQ: A CENTURY OF UPHEAVAL

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# Smithsonian

## Wild Cuba

*The Caribbean's Unlikely Nature Preserve*



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Gators' Mysterious Sense of Touch · Artist James Turrell's Earthly Delight