
Interview: Charles Millon

Republican leader sees peril for France

Charles Millon is a Deputy General Secretary of the Republican Party of France, former President Giscard d'Estaing's party. Mr. Millon, who is also a Representative in the National Assembly, granted the following interview on Sept. 15 to Sophie Tanapura of EIR's Paris Bureau.

Tanapura: This summer you sent a letter to the government asking for an explanation of the reasons why the arms embargo against Libya was lifted. Libya is notorious for its support of subversive movements in the developing sector and Africa in particular. Do you think that by lifting the embargo the Socialist government is aiding Libya's designs?

Millon: It is true that the Libyan question is a problem in international relations. For, as you have stressed, Libya has financially supported subversive movements these past years. It is also true that the countries of Europe, including France, were concerned about a certain number of actions, in particular Libya's actions in Chad. And that is the reason why, as a member of Parliament, I was surprised by the decisions of the present government to lift the arms embargo and to deliver a certain number of weapons orders to Libya.

My question [to the government] was actually a lot more perfidious, in the proper sense of the term, because I was also alluding to persistent rumors on the Paris exchange according to which there was a relationship between support for the French franc by certain Libyan institutions in exchange for the delivery of certain weapons. I hope that these rumors were only ill-intentioned, and that's the reason why I asked my question of the government. Nevertheless, I think that there is cause for concern in the development of Libya's enterprises, and it appears to me that it is desirable, if not indispensable, for the French government to have a clear position in this respect.

I must admit that I am even surprised that a Socialist government, which for years demanded that arms sales be "moralized" and that weapons not be sold to governments that do not respect human rights, has been able in a few months to sell weapons to a Libya presided over by

Colonel Qaddafi and an Iran governed by Ayatollah Khomeini.

Tanapura: There have also been other rumors according to which Qaddafi gave important financial support to Mitterrand during the presidential elections.

Millon: I don't know a thing about it. I can't say if this information is true or false. Maybe . . . I think that political decisions must be made not with respect to financial transactions, but in relation to principles of foreign policy. This is why I would like the French government to outline with clarity the principles which govern its policy toward these countries. . . .

Tanapura: At the time of the London summit between Mitterrand and Thatcher, the press by and large agreed that the Paris-Bonn axis no longer exists.

Millon: Personally, I don't like the term "axis." I prefer very frank friendship between the two countries. It is true that since Robert Schumann, since General de Gaulle, there has been a very faithful friendship between the Federal Republic of Germany and France, and that it was not only a necessity but an obligation if we wanted to build Europe for this privileged alliance to have been continued by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Personally, I would be very worried if it were not continued during the months or years to come.

If some observers have said that a London-Paris alliance could succeed the Paris-Bonn alliance, I think this is somewhat hasty. But it reveals a certain hesitation on the part of French diplomacy, hesitation which is evident toward the U.S.S.R., toward the United States, or toward the Middle East problem. It is to be feared that too much hesitation in foreign policy options would lead to weakening the influence of our country.

I think that it is difficult to want to be a great diplomatic power, to participate in negotiations, to have specific influential weight, if at the same time one has extremely sharp positions dictated not by foreign policy, but more and more by internal policy. I would like to give a few examples. Even though I believe that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a blow against the right of the people to control their own destiny, I also think, at the same time, that it is necessary for the Western countries to continue to negotiate with the U.S.S.R. in order to avoid excessive tensions. A decision, such as the one Mitterrand took when he declared that "we will never go to Moscow as long as Soviet troops have not left Afghanistan," is a decision which can be understood from the standpoint of internal politics—whether toward a certain electorate which likes these kinds of decisions, or whether toward the Communist Party which understands that it has been checked by the Socialist Party—but on the level of international negotiations there is a risk of weakening France's role.

Similarly, when we perceive that the French government wants a rapprochement—the word *rapprochement* is perhaps a bit strong—a more intensive negotiation with the United States, one cannot at the same time have policies that are completely divergent from those of our allies in South America or in Africa. I believe that here, too, a certain logic is missing from the policy which has been defined.

Tanapura: Socialist policy in the Middle East is somewhat ambiguous. It seems that Mitterrand has a long-standing preference for the Israelis, but, at the same time, some of the government ministers are known for their friendship with the opposite camp, even the extreme of the extremists. What do you think?

Millon: The ambiguity that you bring up is real. It is real and you can see it over time, because during the presidential elections President Mitterrand displayed particular friendship and particular interest for the problems of Israel and the Jewish problem, whereas now we note that the more we move away from election time, the more the orientation of policy is in favor of the Palestinians, of Arafat, and that he [Mitterrand] has even, like his diplomats, used the term “Palestinian state” which had, until now, never been uttered by a French diplomat.

There is still a very strong ambiguity in this area which must be lifted, for it is impossible for France to have a double-faced diplomacy. Personally, I think that Israel must have safe borders, that its existence must be recognized, that this is a necessity, even a precondition for a negotiation, but that, in addition, there is a Palestinian problem which must be resolved in one manner or another. . . .

Tanapura: Let's look at the economic measures that the Socialists have just announced, such as nationalizations and decentralization.

Millon: I do not hope for an economic failure, because then it will be more difficult to reconstruct under these conditions. But as a French political leader, I am very worried about the measures that are now being taken. I am extremely worried because I don't think that economic activity can be relaunched through nationalization. I do not think that the competitiveness of business will be developed by directly or indirectly increasing their social taxes, or by having a 100-billion-franc budget deficit. I hope with all my heart that the failure will not be too great, but I do believe in the chances of success.

You asked me about the contradictions between nationalization and decentralization. They are obvious, because on the one hand, the government wants to give the impression that they are decentralizing, in other words that they are distributing power locally, while on the other hand they are implementing an economic plan which will impose a norm. He is, in effect, reinforcing the

political power of the state and of the government, thereby limiting local government initiatives. This is a patent contradiction, which will also appear in the months to come if these reforms are carried through. All you have to do is read the texts relative to decentralization to understand that all the economic interventions of the communes, the departments and the regions will have to conform to a national plan defined by the government.

Tanapura: And the energy, particularly the nuclear, policy of the government?

Millon: As far as energy policy is concerned, I think that the government is already almost “stuck” between its electoral promises and utopia on the one hand, and daily necessity and international constraints on the other. They made a certain number of electoral promises by committing themselves to go back on nuclear energy and to look toward what are called soft energies. Now they are realizing that in order to confront real economic requirements and the problem of energy consumption, which continues to increase, they will be forced to continue nuclear energy. And since they had made some commitments, by abandoning a certain number of sites, by freezing a certain number of reactors, they find themselves in a completely paradoxical situation because they realize that nuclear energy is the least expensive energy, the cleanest energy, and the energy that will enable us to have economic independence, thereby reinforcing our independence from the standpoint of balance of trade and balance of payments. In addition, they also made some commitments toward the population, toward certain movements and associations which they are in some cases obliged to keep.

So, who knows how the situation will evolve, but with this hesitation waltz, France is falling behind, and it's extremely damaging in terms of its situation in the international economic sphere.

Tanapura: And how is the new opposition doing? Can we expect President Giscard d'Estaing to return to the political scene?

Millon: No, I do not think so. I think that President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing is a statesman of great value, but now the Socialist government is in place. President Giscard is a man on whom France can call in well-defined situations, but I do not think it is his intention presently to return to daily political life.

Tanapura: It has been said that you might eventually replace Jacques Blanc as head of the Republican Party. Can you confirm this rumor?

Millon: This is purely imaginary information. But it is true, I am interested in the life of my party. And this is why I wrote up a report on its organization, at the request of Jacques Blanc.