

France's Dumas may be on his way out

by Claire Dupont

According to all available information, the judges investigating Roland Dumas, the president of France's Constitutional Council, will conclude their investigation and turn in their findings to the Prosecutor of the Republic before the year's end. The decision of Judges Laurence Vichniewsky and Eva Joly could provide an elegant way out of public life for this corrupt figure, who holds sensitive dossiers on enough other politicians, to blow up France's Fifth Republic. The Prosecutor of the Republic will then have three months to respond. The judges can counter his decision, however, and the Paris daily *Le Figaro* reports that Vichniewsky and Joly "seem to have the firm intention to send the former head of diplomacy to the criminal court," arguing that there is a "weighty array of evidence" to substantiate the charges against Dumas of "complicity and of covering up abuses" and corruption.

The investigation of Dumas goes back to the arrest on Nov. 7, 1997 of his former lover, Christine Deviers-Joncour, as a result of an investigation into dirty dealings by the national oil company, Elf Aquitaine. Deviers-Joncour had been employed by Elf as a "liaison" to the Foreign Ministry, at the time that Dumas was Foreign Minister. The remuneration she received went far beyond the worth of her services to the company: a monthly salary of 40,000 francs, and an Elf credit card on which she charged FF 1.5 million between 1990 and 1993, mainly for *haute couture* clothes. Deviers-Joncours obviously had even greater sources of income, since she paid for a FF 1.7 million apartment in a well-to-do area of Paris, complete with an Aubuisson antique tapestry worth an estimated FF 450,000.

The investigation of Dumas specifically concerned possible payoffs that he might have gotten from the sales by Thomson CSF, a French electronics and weapons company, of six frigates to Taiwan in 1991. During the investigations, Deviers-Joncour confessed to receiving FF 46 million from Elf Aquitaine for having served as the middleman in the deal. Both the late President François Mitterrand and Dumas are on record as having been against the deal in the beginning, fearing retaliation from the mainland Chinese authorities. So, Thomson CSF hired several networks of intermediaries, including from Elf, to break the deadlock, from both the Chinese

and French government sides: The deal went through. The suspicion is, that Dumas was corrupted by Deviers-Joncour, and that he was the real beneficiary of her Paris luxury apartment and of the FF 46 million commission.

Money-laundering and tax fraud

On April 9, 1998, the judges launched a search of Dumas's offices and home, and soon afterward, placed him under official investigation; he was forced him to to put up a FF 5 million bond and forbidden to travel to any financial or offshore haven. During investigations into Dumas's financial affairs, Vichniewsky and Joly discovered that he had laundered, during precisely that period, more than FF 9 million in cash into his bank accounts, illegal money which also constitutes tax fraud, because it was never declared. Among the most shocking revelations to French citizens, whose living standards dwindled throughout the entire 14-year Mitterrand regime, was that Deviers-Joncour had used her Elf credit card to buy Dumas a pair of hand-made boots at Berlutti's, which cost more than FF 10,000!

Under normal circumstances, Dumas would have resigned a long time ago as president of the Constitutional Council. Leaked by the judges, some national newspapers, including *Le Monde* and *Libération*, have been featuring these revelations on their front pages for months. Not only has Dumas's reputation been left in shambles, but he is not even able to carry out some of his functions on the Council—for example, he could not attend a Council meeting held in Switzerland, since he is forbidden to travel to any tax havens.

But, since the beginning of the scandal, Dumas has refused to resign. The only reason he has remained on the Constitutional Council, is the support he enjoys from French President Jacques Chirac, and from the other politicians under attack by the French counterparts of Italy's "Mani Pulite" ("Clean Hands") judges. Just a few days after the opening of the official investigation, Chirac received Dumas at the Elysée Presidential Palace, and insisted that Dumas be presumed innocent until proven guilty; Chirac has not wavered from this line, despite the fact that practically every political party, including Dumas's confrères in the Socialist Party, is asking for Dumas's resignation.

Most outrageous, was Dumas's participation in the recent festivities for the inauguration of a statue of Winston Churchill in Paris on Nov. 11. Mrs. Xavière Tiberi, whose husband, Jean Tiberi, replaced Chirac as Mayor of Paris, proudly led Dumas to the official reviewing stand for the celebrations. Only one day before, the Constitutional Council, presided over by Dumas, had ruled against a vote fraud complaint by the Socialists' mayoral candidate, Line Cohen-Solal, against the neo-Gaullist Tiberi. Cohen-Solal presented evidence that Tiberi had fraudulently registered on the election rolls many of his friends who do not live in his district, in



Roland Dumas, then Foreign Minister of France, addressing the United Nations in 1991.

President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (UDF) appealed to Chirac to intervene and clear up the mess. Among the most vocal were the younger Socialist deputies, who came into the National Assembly with Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's moralizing majority: Arnaud de Montebourg addressed Dumas in *Le Monde* on Nov. 12, "Leave If You Are Still a Socialist." Christophe Caresche told *Libération* on Nov. 13, that for Dumas to stay on "is no good." Vincent Peillon added that, thinking back to all the errors of the Mitterrand era, "politically, our interest is to strongly state our point." Finally, Jean Christophe Cambadellis, a close friend of Jospin, publicly suggested that Dumas take a leave of absence as president of the Council until his case is cleared up. Following these calls, massive pressure has been brought to bear on the Constitutional Council, which, is known to be divided on the issue.

order to increase his votes.

Chirac and the neo-Gaullist RPR party are supporting Dumas because the judges have let it be known that Mitterrand's former Interior Minister, Charles Pasqua (RPR), and Chirac are next on their target list. Indeed, during the first coalition government in 1986, between Mitterrand's and Chirac's parties, both decided to share in the booty of Elf's dirty money. Were the judges to lay their hands on documents proving that liaison, particularly the strong tie between then-Interior Minister Pasqua and Foreign Minister Dumas, the entire French state could be brought down.

Calls for resignation begin

So far, Chirac's defense of the presumption of innocence for Dumas had been accepted by all; but now, the appearance of a book by Deviers-Joncour, *Whore for the Republic*, in which she attempts to whitewash Dumas, has had the exact opposite effect. Deviers-Joncour tries to take full responsibility for the case, blaming herself for playing Mata-Hari for Elf Aquitaine and claiming that Dumas never fell for her game and remained uncorrupted.

The book so disgusted the entire political spectrum, that a chorus of senior political leaders began to demand Dumas's resignation. Alain Peyrefitte, former Justice Minister, called upon other members of the Constitutional Council to go on strike and refuse to work under Dumas's Presidency. He was echoed by Socialist Party chairman François Hollande, who also called on the Constitutional Council members to take leave of their responsibilities vis-à-vis Dumas. And, former

It is in this context that Judges Joly and Vichniewsky will turn in their findings to the Prosecutor. Even though the stench of the case is stronger than if all of Rabelais's Gargantuan elephants had defecated all over Paris, the judges have not been able to establish a formal connection between the money received by Deviers-Joncour and Dumas, with the exception of restaurant receipts and the infamous Berlutti boots. Nevertheless, the judges are letting it be known that they will be sending Dumas before a criminal court, based on a broad array of coherent evidence indicating corruption. Dumas's lawyers have, for their part, let it be known that, were Dumas to be sent before such a court, he would still not resign, but would "take leave from the Institution of the Montpensier St. [the Council], for several months."

Currently, the chances are that Dumas will be shoved out of the picture, with his reputation destroyed, but without having to face severe criminal charges. Even though his case has been forwarded to the tax authorities, the statute of limitations has expired on the money-laundering charges. In the tax case, in all likelihood, he will get a slap on the wrist for crimes which, for anybody else, would lead to prison.

Such is the French *nomenklatura*, a small club where the happy few protect each other against anything deemed foreign to the system. We should not forget that it is this *nomenklatura* running the Constitutional Court, which bankrupted Presidential candidate Jacques Cheminade, a friend of Lyndon LaRouche, by refusing, under false pretenses, to reimburse his Presidential campaign expenses as required by law.