

MEDIAPART: SARKOZY AND WOERTH ACCUSED OF HAVING RECEIVED ILLEGAL DONATIONS

LE 6 JUILLET 2010 F. ARFI AND F. LHOMME (TRANS. M. UNTERSINGER)

Translation of the article of news site Mediapart, accusing Sarkozy and Woerth of having received illegal funding.



MEDIAPART

Because Mediapart wanted this story as much broadcasted as possible. Because they made this content free. Because it did not exist in English. Because it is important for it to be under CC. And because every single word has its importance and can not afford to be misunderstood by English readers...

Here is the exclusive story that shakes French Republic.

(May our servers handle the charge.)

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Claire T. is an accountant working for Liliane Bettencourt and Clymène, the company managing her assets. Her co-workers once praised her for her professionalism ; they now consider her as the one who knows too much, without her being able to do anything about it. The financial police of Paris, working in preparation of the preliminary hearing [*a procedure by which the judge decides whether or not to go forward to a full-blown trial*] launched by the Nanterre tribunal after recordings made in the house of L'Oréal's heiress were leaked to the press, spotted just that.

On Monday, July 5, they once again interrogated this tenacious, hardened woman (she had already been put on pre-charge detention in mid-June). After questioning her during most of the morning at the headquarters of the financial police, in the 13th arrondissement of Paris, they decided to interrogate her once more, this time at her place, upon instructions from Nanterre prosecutor Philippe Courroye, who had the feeling she still had things to say. His intuition was right.

In front of the criminal police, she told a scene involving Eric Woerth and, through him, the financing of president Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 campaign. To Mediapart, she said much more ...

At the beginning, police detectives wanted to know were the three "cashier notebooks", these notebooks in which Claire T. wrote meticulously, year after year, the cash withdrawals she carried out on demand from Liliane and André Bettencourt (who died in November, 2007). She kept them between May, 1995, when she was hired by the couple, and November, 2008, when she was fired, racking up a €400,000 severing package along the way.

Claire T. is, in fact, the keeper of many dark secrets she told Mediapart, just after her hearing on Monday. It is an accusatory testimony, which she knows she cannot back up by definitive, material proofs and which will need to be checked and verified by police detectives. Claire T. explains her decision of talking to the police and to a newspaper:



"I'm sick of hearing all these people not taking responsibility, talking

rubbish. It's time to say what happened. And, after all, I have nothing to be ashamed of."

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She's primarily angry because she is being accused of "theft" (the reason why she was heard by the criminal police) by Liliane Bettencourt's lawyer, Georges Kiejman, who says she failed to return several accounting documents when she left.



"Dédé greased many palms"

Among those, three cashier notebooks corresponding to the "financial years" 2006, 2007 and 2008. Claire T. protests: she states that she gave them back to the billionaire, through her tax advisor, Fabrice Goguel. We interviewed him last week and he confirmed Claire T.'s version:

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"Claire gave me a pile of documents, including three cashier notebooks. I did not even look at what was inside, I could not have cared less. I swiftly gave them to their recipient, Liliane Bettencourt, who must have stored them in her archives in her mansion in Neuilly-sur-Seine."

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Those famous notebooks nurture all the phantasies since Claire T.'s lawyer, Antoine Gillot, declared on the radio, on Friday, July 2, that the funds in cash withdrawn by the accountant and handed over to the couple Bettencourt may have benefited to politicians. *"This is part of the possibilities"*, he let out in a cryptic way. Precising however that his client never handed out directly any money to anyone. On that point, Claire T. confidences are explosive. Her testimony, that we exclusively gathered, confers to the Bettencourt case the status of a State affair.

She explains :

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"I had a special authorisation at the BNP, a Parisian bank. First at the Saint-James agency in Neuilly-sur-Seine, then at the one on Avenue de

la Grande-Armée, in the sixteenth arrondissement. This authorisation allowed me to withdraw 50,000 euros in cash per week. For long, I handed the money directly in to André Bettencourt. Then, from the beginning of 2007, because of the degradation of Dédé's health – this is how he was nicknamed -, I entrusted it to Patrice de Maistre.”



Administrator of the billionaire's fortune, Patrice de Maistre is at the core of the undercover recordings made at the domicile of Mrs Bettencourt by her butler. Who were those cash funds for ? *“A part was used to pay doctors, hairdressers, small staff... and so on. And another was for politicians”*, strikes Claire T. Who is becoming more precise. *“Dédé, and he made no secret of it, has always funded right-wing parties. It was a real parade of politicians at home, they almost always came at the time of elections. Dédé greased them all. Everyone came to get his or her envelope. Some even reached 100,000, not to say 200,000 euros”*.

150,000 euros for Sarkozy's presidential campaign, thanks to Woerth

According to the accountant, *“the more diligent visitors were executives of the [right-wing] Republican Party. He handed an envelope to them every two or three months. Sometimes 10,000, 20,000 or 30,000, first in francs, then in euros, because there too, everything increases ! I know Dédé contributed, right before my arrival, to the funding in cash to Edouard Balladur's campaign. This being said, as he was generous, it would not surprise me that he also funded political activities of Jacques Chirac”*.

Regarding political funding, we come to the sensitive point. Very sensitive. The one about Eric Woerth. The only one Claire T. brought up to the police, because it was the only one she was questioned about.



“It was at the end of March, 2007. Patrice de Maistre, who had become the one who “took care” of politicians because of Dédé's sickness, convened me to ask me to withdraw at the bank a sum three times higher than usual, that is to say 150,000 euros. I refused, explaining that my special authorisation would not allow me that. He got angry, telling me that the bank would not refuse this service to us. I asked him the reason why he absolutely needed such an amount, and then, he answered “come on, that is to fund the presidential campaign of Sarkozy! I need to give the money to the one in charge of the financing of the campaign, Eric Woerth. And 50,000 euros, that is not enough””



Claire T. continues her story :



“Despite Maistre's insistence, who almost became hysteric, I refused. I even remember calling Eva, my contact at the BNP Place Vendôme, the bank where Liliane Bettencourt has her main account, to have her advice. I did not tell her about financing Sarkozy, but she understood well... She told me that I had to refuse, that I could not go beyond my special authorisation, otherwise it may alert Tracfin (the anti-money laundering system from the Ministry of Finance). So, I went as usual avenue de la Grande-Armée, I withdrew 50,000 euros, that I handed out to Liliane Bettencourt, who then gave the envelope to Maistre, in front of me. And I filled the notebook, with, regarding to the sum, the

mention “Bettencourt”, that I wrote myself. I always did this way when it came to money for politicians, because there must not be any written trace. If Liliane Bettencourt gives them the notebooks, the police will be able to check my statements. I remember the date of this withdrawal for Sarkozy’s campaign : it was on March 26, 2007.”

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«Sarkozy also went to see the Bettencourts to get some money»

As if she was freed and finally able to relieve her conscience, Claire T. goes on with her story.

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“As 50,000 € were not enough, Maistre went to – or sent someone, I don’t know – Switzerland, to withdraw as a matter of urgency the supplement of 100,000 €. According to what I understood, he did not draw from the Vevey’s account, but rather from the one in Geneva. Anyway, he used to travel every single week to Switzerland. Then, Maistre told me he was about to have a dinner with Eric Woerth so that he could hand him discreetly – as he said – the 150,000 euros. And the dinner happened quickly indeed”.

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The funds, according to the accountant, were intended to finance the race to the presidency of the UMP [Sarkozy’s party] candidate, with whom she asserts Patrice De Maistre also had a dinner, in the last few months before his election. “Maistre was very proud to be around Sarkozy”, Claire remembers. Nicolas Sarkozy. A name often heard in the Bettencourts’ superb town house, long before Claire T. started to work for the wealthy couple.

Mayor of Neuilly-sur-Seine [a rich suburb, West of Paris] between 1983 and 2002, Sarkozy was often Bettencourts’ host. “He often had lunch or dinner with Cécilia”, Claire T. remembers. Did he also have the right to the “attentions” given to politicians visiting the Bettencourts? Somewhat hesitating at first, probably assessing the seriousness of her comments, Clair T. confirms:

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“Nicolas Sarkozy also received his envelope, it happened in one of the small salons located on the ground floor, next to the dining room. It generally happened after dinner, everyone around knew it. As Mr and Mrs Bettencourt both suffer from deafness, they used to speak very loud and, from the other side of the door we often heard things we should not have heard. Once again, everybody in the town house knew that Sarkozy also used to visit the Bettencourts to get some money. He was a regular. On the days he came, he and others for that matter, I was just asked to bring an half-size, brown envelope right before dinner, with which he left. I am not stupid, it did not need to be spelled out for me to understand what was going on...”

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13,000 euros per month for Florence Woerth

We come back to the Woerth case, which is of great interest for the police. And to his wife, Florence, who worked since the end of 2007 under the authority of Patrice de Maistre, within Clymène, the financial structure which managed the assets of L'Oréal's heiress. Did Florence Woerth know about the tax evasion issues highlighted by the undercover recordings? In a report mentioned by **Le Monde's July 6 edition**, this is a question that Nanterre's Attorney [West of Paris] Philippe Courroye now blatantly asks himself.

Claire T. is not certain to hold the answer.

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“Florence Woerth was aware of the investments, not necessarily of the tax fraud. And for good reasons: she was not often there. She used to take long week-ends, often travelled to Switzerland where she told us she had a property. Actually, it seems obvious that she obtained the position because of her husband's being the budget minister. Patrice de Maistre made no secret of it, but he soon regretted his choice, he was not glad about her.” Being a good bookkeeper, Claire T. remembers that the current labour minister's spouse “had a good salary : around 13,000 € per month, plus a bonus in the range of 50,000 €”.



Claire T. also confirms that Liliane Bettencourt benefited from a refund by the government on the occasion of the “Bouclier Fiscal” [tax shield] law, but also, **another disclosure from Mediapart**, that the billionaire :



“Never had to answer any tax control since at least 2005. I have never seen any tax inspector, I can assure that. Definitely, one can say that we never had any problem with tax inspections! I even remember, one day, back in 2008, having phoned the tax person in charge of Mrs Bettencourt. On sick leave, I forgot to send the income tax return, I only sent the ISF [tax for very high incomes]... That was a big blunder. I was afraid of us being sanctioned by a huge fine. Logically, we should have been asked to pay a 10% penalty, that is around 4 million euros. But the person I was talking to laughed and told me not to worry about it, that Liliane would never suffer from any penalty, which was the case”.



Having left her former employers in bad terms, who blamed her – as the butler, who thus decided to put a hidden microphone in the house – of having “badly” testified to the police for the complaint for maltreatment, registered by the billionaire’s daughter, Claire T. does not bear any grudge toward Liliane Bettencourt. At the contrary, she explains that she is “*shaken that she fell under the influence of people willing to rob her from her goods*”.

Thus, about the now famous Arros Island, Seychelles, of which she knows everything, the accountant states that “*François-Marie Banier, through a foundation, is the legal claimant*”. Sucked up into a media hurricane of which she does not seem to suspect the impact, Claire T., advised by her lawyer, will probably take some days off, the time for the storm to die down. Obviously, she will have to be patient.

Les deux premières images ont été réalisées par **Laurent Taudin**. La dernière image a été réalisée en exclusivité par **Laurent Taudin** pour Owni.

Traduction : Martin U. & NKB, sur une idée de Nicolas Voisin, avec l’autorisation de François Bonnet (directeur de la publication de Mediapart) via Vincent Truffly (journaliste à Mediapart et auteur chez Owni).

GEORGE WINDSTROM

le 9 juillet 2010 - 0:13 SIGNALER UN ABUS - PERMALINK



Your English is terrible. How can anybody take seriously an article written in such broken English? Get a native English speaker who knows how to translate to do this next time!

VOUS AIMEZ



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VOUS N'AIMEZ PAS



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LUI RÉPONDRE

3 pings

Les tweets qui mentionnent Mediapart: Sarkozy and Woerth accused of receiving illegal donations » Article » OWNi, Digital Journalism -- Topsy.com le 6 juillet 2010 - 23:59

[...] Ce billet était mentionné sur Twitter par Nicolas Voisin et des autres. Nicolas Voisin a dit: [#owni] Mediapart: Sarkozy and Woerth accused of receiving illegal donations <http://goo.gl/fb/XfEiL> PLZ RT [...]

Mediapart: Sarkozy and Woerth accused of receiving illegal ... Map university le 7 juillet 2010 - 2:34

[...] the original post: *Mediapart: Sarkozy and Woerth accused of receiving illegal ...* By admin | category: Nanterre | tags: financial-police, judge, judge-decides, Nanterre, [...]

[World Wide News Flash](#) le 7 juillet 2010 - 18:31

Mediapart: Sarkozy and Woerth accused of having received illegal

I found your entry interesting so I've added a Trackback to it on my weblog :)...

L'affaire Woerth-Bettencourt en une seule (belle) image » Article » OWNI, Digital Journalism le 8 juillet 2010 - 16:57

[...] *Mediapart: Sarkozy and Woerth accused of having received illegal donations* Quel pouvoir pour l'internaute engagé et bavard ? *Méto, boulot, PAS dodo* Une échelle pour le web *Duffygate: une belle démonstration de politesse à l'anglaise* *Echangeons nos planètes* *Mediapart sous le feu nourri de l'UMP* *Hadopi se dote d'un logo, et quel logo* *Copenhague : 2012* *Ta (non) gueule sur Twitter* [...]