

CLOTILDE REISS, 'PIERRE SIRAMY' AND NATIONAL DEFENCE SECRETS

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After being held for ten months by the Tehran regime, Miss Clotilde Reiss was freed and arrived back in France on Sunday, 16 May. We can only rejoice. To be sure, there was the usual flurry of rumours over the possible 'deals' surrounding her release. But we have become accustomed to that.

What is (much) more unusual is that **a former official of the DGSE,¹ a certain Mr. Pierre Siramy, claimed when speaking this past Sunday to the TV channel LCI that Clotilde Reiss had 'worked on behalf of France collecting information of a domestic political nature as well as information on nuclear proliferation. She is on the payroll of the DGSE.'**²

And with that, we throw up our hands in despair. By stating that Miss Reiss could have been an '*agent*' or an '*honourable correspondent*' of the DGSE, the man identifying himself as **Pierre Siramy not only seriously compromises her future professional career but also puts at risk some operational techniques of French foreign intelligence** and in one blow renders potentially suspect any French researcher working abroad in a country with a 'difficult' regime. **Furthermore, he puts at serious risk any Iranian citizen who may have been in contact with Clotilde Reiss** and against whom these statements could be used in any possible future trial by the prosecutors (who are not very discriminating in Tehran). **If one or another Iranian who knew Miss Reiss is hanged for espionage or sentenced to a long term in prison in Iran in the coming months, the man who calls himself Pierre Siramy will have this person's death or detention on his conscience.**

¹ General Directorate for External Security [Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure] France's 'offensive' intelligence services.

² Cited in *Le Figaro*, 17 May 2010.

Under his real name, **Maurice Dufresse**³, ‘Pierre Siramy’ spent most of his career within the DGSE, which he quit for reasons of ill health at the end of 2009 having reached the rank of director of administration after having served in a number of different positions. While he was still working in the DSGE during the summer of 2008, he published in online media several rather venomous articles on the intelligence services. He was already back then signing his articles *Pierre Siramy*, one of his pseudonyms for operational purposes which was perfectly well known to the DGSE though it decided at the time not to react.

In March 2010, he published a book which I believe you will pardon my not mentioning by name since it has had more than its share of publicity. There he spewed out a whole lot of secrets of the service. **He revealed inter alia, the numbers by which Operatives signed their telegrams, thereby striking a serious blow at secrecy since this could enable hostile intelligence services to identify personnel. Worse still, he identified certain agents in a more or less transparent manner and, committing the supreme offence, their presumed sources and those whom the service may have targeted.** I use the conditional tense because, as any reader of the book will easily understand, I am especially well placed to say that there is very little truth in the malicious gossip spread by Mr. Dufresse, who reveals more mythomania and confusion than the reality of genuine operations. However that may be, these ‘revelations’ cost him a legal complaint filed against him by the Ministry of Defence for ‘violation of national defence secrets’ and other law suits brought for defamation by a person whom he accused of murder.

And today the amiable Mr Dufresse is back at it again, jumping into the Reiss affair. We may be allowed to wonder where he is headed and where it will all end....

All of this would basically be just pitiful if behind all the hazy statements of an officer who made his whole career in comfortable offices in Paris, who never held a post abroad and never, a fortiori, experienced the dangers inherent in certain assignments on hostile territory, if it were not for his violation of a major and sacred principle for any member of the intelligence community: that of protecting secrecy. Secrecy was not invented for the sake of some shameful objective, to cover up manic activities of crazy spies, to deceive society or to prevent the media from doing their job. It is fully justified by the need to protect people – agents, sources and anyone who places his confidence in the intelligence services of his country and its methods.

As someone who collaborated with him for several years, I knew Maurice Dufresse very well during the 1980s (although everything he attributes to me in his writings comes only from his imagination). At the time I thought well of him and respected him. I remember with some emotion the discussions we had about the grandeur of our profession.

³His true identity was already revealed in March by ‘Défense ouverte’ (Open Defence), the excellent blog of Jean Guisnel, by the magazine *Le Point* (The Point) and by the very good blog aboudjaffar.blog.lemonde.fr. So we are not disclosing any secrets here.

It is this greatness, the entirety of his career and the trust of his former comrades which he is now trampling under his feet. One will only remember him for his betrayal.

Having become a 'man of letters' late in life, Maurice Dufresse will surely evaluate correctly these few lines:

'The punishment of seven years in prison and a fine of 100,000 Euros is applied to the act by any person having received, either by reason of status or profession or due to a post or a temporary or permanent assignment a piece of informationwhich has the characteristic of national defence secret, and destroys it, misappropriates it, conceals it or reproduces it so as to bring it to the attention of the public or of an unauthorised person.'

That is what is written in our good old French penal code, article 413-10, to be precise. But I'm not really teaching you anything new, am I, Maurice?

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