



French Minister Admits Paying for Sex With Young Boys, Refuses to Resign

After coming out with strong support for admitted child rapist Roman Polanski, French Culture Minister Frederic Mitterrand is once again in the spotlight — over stunning revelations in his autobiography that he admitted to paying for sex with young boys. And now he is refusing to step down.



Outrage has erupted across France and the political spectrum, with the right-leaning National Front, the leftist Socialist Party, and other organizations offering sharp criticism, gathering petitions and calling for his immediate resignation or termination. "Resign Mr. Mitterrand, and perhaps afterwards we'll be able to give lessons to other people," said National Front Vice-President Marine Le Pen, referring to France's public opposition to sex tourism. She also read damning quotes from his 2005 book *The Bad Life* in the televised interview.

But Mitterrand responded to opponents in a television appearance of his own late last week, insisting that he would not step down and that President Nicolas Sarkozy supported him. Sarkozy has not spoken publicly about the controversy yet.

The openly gay Minister attacked his critics and claimed that the paid sex with "garçons" (boys or young boys) in Thailand he referred to was consensual, and that the boys were all of age. He admitted to paying for the experiences, but added that "the book is in no way an apology for sex tourism, even if one chapter is a journey through that hell, with all the fascination that hell can inspire." Prostitution is illegal in Thailand.

Even though he is a public figure and is the nephew of former French President Francois Mitterrand, his written admissions of being in the "habit of paying for boys" resurfaced just last week after going relatively unnoticed for four years. Sarkozy said in July that he had read the book and that it was "courageous and talented." The autobiography originally garnered little attention when it was first published, while Mitterrand was still a television personality.

But the revelations were pushed into the public debate when political opponents looked into his past because of his criticism of the arrest of filmmaker Roman Polanski, which he called "horrifying." He distanced himself slightly in the interview from his earlier defense of Polanski, still openly offering support but admitting that his reaction may have been "too emotional." Polanski is currently in a Swiss jail awaiting extradition to the United States after he pled guilty to drugging and raping a 13-year-old girl and then fled the country.

In the interview, Mitterrand condemned sexual tourism and said his action were an error. He also called the sexual relations he described in his book "normal," claiming he had not engaged in pedophilia.

But his memoirs tell a different story. "The profusion of boys, very attractive and immediately available, put me in a state of desire that I no longer needed to hold back or hide," Mitterrand wrote in his book. "My boy didn't say a word, he stood before me, immobile, his eyes still straight ahead and a half-smile on his lips. I wanted him so badly I was trembling."



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on October 12, 2009

He also wrote about the older boys, saying: "Their presence made the youthful charm of the others stand out." He knew "the sordid details" from documentaries he had seen about "the commerce in boys," that "les gosses," which means the kids in French, got only crumbs for the horror they endured. But, he added, "all of these rituals of the fair of the youths, the slave market, excited me enormously."

According to a Reuters article entitled "[French minister clings to post in sex tourism furor](#)," the controversy has created an apparent split in the government, "with Labor Minister Xavier Darcos saying Mitterrand needed to explain his behavior, and Sarkozy adviser Henri Guaino defending the minister." The story described Mitterrand as "evasive about the precise nature of his experiences in Thailand" during the television interview.

"As a minister of culture he has drawn attention to himself by defending a film maker accused of raping a child and he has written a book where he said he took advantage of sexual tourism," a Socialist Party spokesman told Reuters. "To say the least, I find it shocking."

The controversy has attracted a media spectacle, with news outlets across Europe and the world picking up the story. A story by the BBC entitled "[French minister in 'boy sex' row](#)" noted that "the BBC's Emma Jane Kirby, in Paris, says that the revelation that a senior cabinet minister was involved in sex tourism, just as the country holds negotiations with Thailand to discuss ways of fighting it, will inevitably embarrass Mr. Sarkozy's government."

An [Associated Press](#) article pointed out that Sarkozy's popularity was down because of the scandal, while even the French media pounded Mitterrand relentlessly. The supposed guardian of culture joined the current government over the summer.

Mitterrand has deeply shamed the French government and should obviously start by resigning. If he refuses, he should be fired. The Justice Minister has called his explanation "moving" and justified the Culture Minister's actions by saying that "in each person's life, there are doubtlessly difficult periods, and shadows."

But that is no excuse. An investigation is long overdue, and if Mitterrand committed a crime — which he essentially admitted in his book and in his TV interview defending it — he should be brought to justice like anybody else.



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