

The interview below was given in French by Mr. Claude Cheysson, Development Commissioner of the European Community, to Jacques Docquier of the Paris newspaper "La Croix", and was published in that newspaper on January 14, 1978. The translation into English is unofficial.

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Mr. Claude Cheysson is without doubt one of the best known French leaders in the world today. This celebrity is due to the responsibilities he holds in the Common Market institutions. He is in charge of development aid and relations with Third-World countries at the Commission of the European Communities, and, in this capacity, he is one of the creators of the famous Lome Convention, which links Europe to about 50 African, Caribbean and Pacific developing countries. His competence and responsibilities put him in a strong position to evaluate the often difficult relations between industrialized and developing countries.

Q. We are witnessing a return to protectionism in Europe as much as in the United States. What do you think about this trend?

A. This trend was unavoidable. When one goes from sustained growth to stagnation, there are repercussions in the whole economic structure that prompt people to look for quick solutions. The short-term view says: "Let's close our borders to sell more on our market." This is certainly not necessary. Protectionism is a complicated form of suicide for European countries. We receive 75% of our raw materials from the outside, we export a very large part of our production. If we close the doors, the windows, if we shut ourselves up, we end up dying. Therefore, protectionism would be for us a disaster. It would be the end of development in Europe.

Q. Developing countries are little by little undergoing industrialization. Do you think that this development could mean the end for certain areas of activity in Europe, for example the textile industry, at a future date?

A. The Third-World countries want to develop themselves. That is a fact. Some of them have this possibility. This development means an increase in agricultural production. It also means increasing the market value of what is produced for export and cutting back on imports - therefore industrialization. All this is obvious. This industrial development alters relationships: if one country develops a clothing industry, it will have to be curtailed elsewhere. With industrialization, there is a capacity for exports that compete with us directly and this will have an effect on our development. Consequently, there is

no doubt that industrialization of the Third-World will affect our economic structures and will mean recession for some sectors. But we should see the other side. Development of the Third-World is done with machines, experts, patents, engineering, which are provided by us. Industrial development of the Third-World therefore increases our exports of services and goods by opening additional markets for them.

Q. Do European manufacturers who install their plants in developing countries with low salaries make the right calculation? Are they helping these countries or do they take advantage of them? Which type of development is necessary to the Third-World?

A. There are industries that start in the Third World because of particular features of the country involved: a handicraft tradition or the existence of raw materials. These industries are developing, there will be growth and progress.

But industries are also "parachuted" into a country to take advantage of abnormal conditions of work: a poor population, no job security. This means a low manufacturing cost. The industry that prospers under these conditions is not healthy: if the poor conditions change, its fundamental reasons for being there disappear. Besides, such an industry is a foreign body because it is there to export to our markets. This industry makes no contribution to development. In such cases, the reactions of our trade unions and political pressure groups would be very strong. We cannot accept the idea that it is possible to ignore human dignity and international agreements on conditions of work by putting down roots ten thousand miles away.

And then, I cannot suppose that an independent country of the Third World, with a responsible government, will put up for long with this unhealthy type of development. These industries must be fought against determinedly.

The multinationals, for example, cannot understand this argument. It's about having legal tools properly adapted to the world situation. The political establishment should lay down the rules of the game and the means of enforcement will emerge. In the United States, the multinationals have accepted the rules established in Washington, it is no longer a jungle. But in the world as a whole the rules of the jungle still apply and the multinationals take advantage. It is essential to establish ground rules; then, if the sanctions are strong enough, the multinationals will understand very quickly that they must comply.

The European Community adopted recently a "Code of Good Conduct" for its companies operating in South Africa. It requires that the companies treat their black workers the same as their white workers. I believe that this code will be respected: in fact, once a year, a report will be published on the way these rules are kept. The lies will be exposed, and the company that ignores this code is asking for trouble. Just think about the reaction of the trade unions in Europe. Think of the real cost to the companies that cheat.

Q. One of the big successes of the Community in helping the Third World is the Lome Convention. Can this type of convention be "exported" for worldwide application?

A. I answer categorically yes. Several aspects are "exportable". First, the methods: we have found an insurance system against bad years. Then the principle of the Lome Convention: Lome is the result of a negotiation. We went from aid handed out by rich countries to a system of negotiated cooperation. This system cannot be questioned. It is guaranteed.

Then we dealt with groups of countries of different political inclinations and different levels of development. We cannot therefore interfere in their internal conflicts. We therefore systematically encourage nonalignment, and I am convinced that, if there is no world conflict, this nonalignment, i.e. the right to cultural identity, will represent one of the fundamental motivating forces in the Third World.

At last, the third exportable idea - we had a bipolar world after the war, this world is now divided into fragments. Is it possible to group countries so that discussions take place between states of the same region? I think so. The Lome Convention is also this: an understanding between Europe, Africa and part of the Arab world. A concept that may be applicable in other ways. We should try to have other agreements, with Southeast Asia for example, and it would be particularly good if the United States or Japan could follow suit.

Q. The Third World is experiencing several serious conflicts. Could the struggles for influence that are developing there start a war on a much bigger scale?

A. If we leave these countries alone, these conflicts will not be serious. The Arabs have been very cautious, for example, in the conflict between Algeria and Morocco over the former Spanish Sahara. It needed non-Arab countries to establish their positions. The Arabs themselves knew that one should not interfere in a conflict between two class students for fear of seeing the whole class at war. Sometimes, I am

afraid that the two super powers may find it possible to confront each other during these conflicts, without compromising detente.

When I see the evolution in the Middle East, where the Rejection Front could be tomorrow the victim, the de facto ally of the Soviet Union against the countries that, with Sadat and the Americans, have gambled on a better understanding on Israel's part! I am very worried. In fact, if the USSR and the United States should find themselves again face to face in the event of a conflict in the Third World, the thing might be contagious and would spread little by little through the Third World, each conflict becoming extremely serious.

Q. Without discussing serious conflict, isn't the trend toward a division of the Third World between the socialist bloc and the West?

A. I do not think so. There is no example in the history of the Soviet Union showing that it has been a partner for development. There is a total incapacity on the Russians' part to help any country to develop. The Russians are partners for military preparation and extraordinary allies in war, especially in wars of liberation - I give them their due - or perhaps in a war against a neighbor. But as soon as the war is over, they lose interest in the country. Their aid then decreases to the usual level, i.e. negligible, and their technical means are useless.

Could China be different? Maybe in a hundred years, but today it does not have the means to intervene directly. In other words, if there is no war, the developing countries must necessarily rely on the Western industrialized countries.

Q. What do you think of the French policy toward the developing countries and of its involvement in Zaire or Mauritania?

A. There has been - on the French Government's part - help to some countries fighting to defend their freedom. When one looks at the situation in context, one understands the French policy. A friendly country is threatened - France sees a duty to help it and this awakens an emotion that proves France has understood an important aspect of the problem. Troops invaded Shaba, and France helped Zaire to reestablish its unity. I think, however, that it is necessary to avoid finding oneself in these situations. Our country, like each European state, must insist on the right of each country to develop itself its way.

If one country is in conflict with its neighbor, we must adopt a posture of systematic neutrality. We should endeavor to limit the intervention of other countries, but we should not get involved in the conflict. This seems to me particularly wise with respect to former French colonial countries. You cannot - in a country that had been under a colonial regime for years - forget this period, and suspicion is aroused when an intervention occurs. Therefore, I think that the policy of military support is a bad one. I understand that we may be forced to intervene when we get into this type of situation, but my basic rule is that one should avoid that kind of involvement.

Q. Should a leftist government in France have a different policy toward developing countries?

A. A leftist government should have a policy toward the Third World, and I am not sure that the French government has one now. Such a policy should prevail over all the other interests, including the commercial interests of our armament industry and nuclear policy. I believe that all too often certain concerns - objectively valid - have obscured our policy and that also our actions have not been consistent. When a country like ours is the object of so much criticism - from the United Nations and elsewhere - there must be some truth in it. For me, the truth must lie in the consistent nature of our actions. A leftist government should define a policy and make sure that everything it does is within that policy.