
Interview: Mathis Bortner

Poland must defend her national economic interests

Mathis Bortner, past president of Solidarnosc-Côte d'Azur, is today president of the cultural group, Association pour la promotion des techniques d'expression France-Pologne. Although he has lived in France since childhood, he regularly returns to his native Poland. Following his most recent visit, he was interviewed by Emmanuel Grenier in Paris in July.

EIR: How is the situation in Poland evolving, in your judgment, compared to your last visit in December?

Bortner: I was able to meet with an enormous number of Polish figures, but I am not going to cite them all, since I think that what will most interest your readers is the tenor of the discussion I was able to have with Lech Walesa, because it inverts the perspective that the Western press is giving on the Polish political situation.

I note that, for the first time in a long time, Walesa is really defending Poland's interests. I do not mean that he was not defending them before; to the contrary: I have always been a friend and a supporter of his action.

EIR: Walesa is much attacked in France: They call him power-thirsty, say he has "a big head," etc. What is your evaluation of this?

Bortner: First, let's remember that Walesa wanted to gain the trust of the least compromised Polish Communists; he wanted to count on their loyalty and their competence. But, competence exists from one time to another, but loyalty never exists, and that is moreover a general fact in communist countries. Today the situation is completely blocked: It must be recalled that the Polish Diet is still 65% Communist and that it expedites all the laws in its favor. People say that Poland is making great strides; that's true to some degree: The country has made advances in economic and political liberalization. But what people forget to say is that these laws have only profited the Nomenklatura, i.e., the only ones who have the means to invest. How can anyone imagine that ordinary Poles, non-party members, who used to earn an average salary of \$10-15 a month, could invest? Hence, all the laws created for the people are benefiting ex-CP members who had piled up the wealth that lets them invest today.

Remember that all the chief business officers, all the

prosecutors, are still or were members of the Communist Party. The Polish workers are stymied: unemployment is everyone's worst fear and they won't revolt.

EIR: It is true that there is a tendency to forget and to think that Poland is a country freed from communist dictatorship. From what you are saying, this is not the case. As in Romania and Bulgaria, will it still be the Communists who hold the reins of power?

Bortner: Exactly. And I think this has to be reiterated indefatigably, because the media are succeeding in making it completely forgotten.

EIR: In our last discussion, you were saying that Walesa was more interested in politics than economics. Today you say that he is taking a new interest in the Polish economy. What motivated this change?

Bortner: First, let's recall that Walesa has been the surety for all those who are today in power. All the members of the government draw their legitimacy from the struggle of Solidarnosc and from the direction that Walesa took it in. He had placed his trust in this government and in the so-called economic experts who were advising it. Today, he realizes that this government's policy is leading Poland to catastrophe. I personally had submitted to him in October 1989 a 17-page memorandum written by Jacques Cheminade [chairman of the French Schiller Institute—ed.]. Today, he regrets not having followed this orientation! "That was a mistake," he told me!

The ultra-liberal policy followed by the government favors the foreign investors and the ex-Communists, but not at all the people. The erstwhile Communist business managers have become today's chief executives; the conditions of these "privatizations" are moreover extremely curious, in the sense that the buyers would only take possession of the assets so long as the Polish state remained "owner" of the liabilities. The government is also reviewing all the acquisitions of Polish corporate partnerships, since there have been huge scandals.

EIR: So, what is Walesa's strategy in the face of this Com-

munist power? Is it on this politico-economic question that the break with Mazowiecki came about?

Bortner: It must be first said that, in Poland, Walesa is held responsible for everything that happens. The disastrous economic situation is attributed to him in general. He therefore wants to draw a line between himself and what the government does; he wants in some way to withdraw his surety. First of all, he has refused the label of Solidarnosc to the private magazine of Adam Michnik, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, because it does not express the opinion of the union but of a group of a few men. Then he refused the Solidarnosc label to the government. Solidarnosc is a union which has done extraordinary things in the past. Now the government is working, but it is following a non-nationalist policy, and hence, Walesa is drawing a line there. He thinks today, that only growth will be able to save this country. I think that he is now entirely favorable to a growth of the "physical economy" such as is described in your publication.

Walesa wants to become President of the Republic in order to dissolve the Polish Diet and bring about free elections in order to get the Communists out of power for good. All that the Western papers have retailed on Walesa's supposed thirst for power does not hold up for anyone who has been near this man, who dreams only about retiring.

EIR: What is your evaluation of Mazowiecki?

Bortner: I would say that he is an honest man and sincere with himself. I do not want to condemn him even if he is a former leader of Pax Christi, for several four-year terms. He used to run operations against the Catholic Church and would in that capacity decide the choice of priests. He was a Communist Party member and was one of the directors of the "service for religious activities" and the editor of a pro-government Christian review. Since then, he has completely changed and I have heard much good in various circles. The problem is that he is not an economist.

EIR: And what do you think of Michnik and of [Bronislaw] Geremek, who are very strongly going up against Walesa?

Bortner: I am firmly convinced that these are people who seek to apply the plan to loot Poland by the IMF. This policy leads to a typical Keynesian crisis: Production has tumbled by 40%, the business profits by 50-80% depending on the sector, and the standard of living has dropped by 50-60%.

EIR: Under these conditions, how does Walesa see the future?

Bortner: I asked him that question; I asked him above all if he saw it as peaceful. Like Father Jankowski, he fears civil war. Jankowski has not excluded "Romania-style violence." The fact that the government listens to nothing about the popular needs, that austerity was imposed without any absolute necessity, all this means that we could see a civil war in the country. The recent increases in electricity (100%) and

gasoline (110%) are creating the conditions for an explosion.

EIR: What other important meetings did you have?

Bortner: The most important seem to be those with Marian Rajski, Edmund Krasowski, and Andrzej Gwiazda. This last, at whose home I spent seven hours, was one of the founding members of Solidarnosc. He had been excluded by Walesa for "political radicalism," i.e., he opposed all compromise with the communist power. I tried to reconcile them, but it is hard because the press does everything to separate them. Still, Walesa stated to me about Gwiazda, that he was the smartest man in the whole opposition.

Since the works of Marian Rajski and the January 1990 publication of *Comecon, The Black Hole in the Polish Economy* by my friend Edmund Krasowski, a deputy from Elblag, it has been proven that this institution has as its major objective to keep Poland (and its other member-countries) in a state of financial and economic subjugation, permitting the systematic looting of these nations as the prey of the Soviet Union, "de facto owner" of these satellite-countries. Marian Rajski calculated the pillage of Poland to the *scarcely believable figure of \$12 billion annually*, of which \$9 billion is to the profit of the U.S.S.R. During the Five Year Plan of 1955, the volume of transactions between Poland and the U.S.S.R. and the other Comecon countries was already 68% of the total GNP of Poland. In 1987, only 11% of Polish production was consumed inside Poland. Nothing has come close to explaining where the 89% of the rest of Polish production went! In 1989, there was still 70% missing! One could believe that the looting will cease with the government born of Solidarnosc. . . . Not at all! For 1991-95, the U.S.S.R. has demanded that Poland turn over 6.8 billion rubles' worth of consumer products. The negotiators have signed for 6.8 billion "transferable" rubles, knowing perfectly well that this amount cannot be provided. Thus, Poland remains under the Soviet economic boot and under the reign of the ruble, for which no one up to now has been able to figure an exchange rate. Such economic mistakes are piling up: The Poland-U.S.S.R. trade accords provide that, to "improve trade between the two countries," the Polish government would finance trade—to a total of 1.6 billion rubles—at an exchange rate of 1 ruble to 1,000 zlotys rather than 2,100. In May 1989, trade between the two countries was already reaching 3 billion rubles. At this rate, by year-end an excess of 4 billion rubles over the projected figure can be foreseen. This would be more than Poland's cumulative fictitious debt toward the U.S.S.R.

To fight the mechanisms that misdirect national economic capacity is a simple act of defense against a real act of war against almost the whole Polish population. It took four years for the Communists to destroy Poland's pre-war productive system and to appropriate all the means of production and distribution. It will take much more to reverse this situation, but the potentials for Poland's regeneration are prodigious.