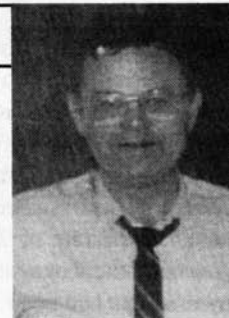


Interview: Mathis Bortner



Poland being looted as a U.S.-Soviet joint venture

Mathis Bortner is a leader of the French wing of the Solidarnosc movement. After returning from his latest trip to Poland, he gave the following interview to Jacques Cheminade in late July. EIR has published two other interviews with Mr. Bortner in its April 13, 1990 and Aug. 3, 1990 issues. This latest interview, given to the president of France's Schiller Institute, Jacques Cheminade, appeared in the Oct. 11 issue of the French weekly Nouvelle Solidarité.

One startling feature of the evidence that Mr. Bortner and Polish Deputy Edmund Krasowski made available is the light it throws on the Art-B scandal, which broke on Aug. 7. As EIR's Aug. 30 issue exposed, Art-B was a private holding company which exploited the two-week "float" clearing inter-bank transfers in Poland to draw up to 60% interest twice on foreign exchange deposits of the same money in two different banks. When the financial interests behind Art-B, located in London, Tel Aviv, and Warsaw, moved in to loot the desperate Ursus tractor factory in late July, the Walesa government broke up the game, arresting seven leading bankers, including the vice presidents of the National Bank and the State Bank. But the three frontmen for the operation were tipped off by intelligence services which had their hands in the game, and were able to flee to Israel.

EIR: You have just returned from Poland. How did you find the situation?

Bortner: A year and a half after the accession of the new government that came from Solidarnosc, the situation is unfortunately exactly as we had foreseen, given the economic policies that were in force. It is a very difficult situation, a situation where practically 1.7 million workers are already unemployed, which represents about 8% of the economically active Polish population. Municipalities are confronted with absolutely insurmountable difficulties, the situation in the workplaces is explosive, and especially so in working class towns like Wroclaw, Lodz, Radom or Ursus—this birthplace of Solidarnosc that was deeply affected by the failure of the tractor plant.

EIR: It sounds like Victorian England. . . .

Bortner: Exactly. Today, people are thrown out into the streets without a second thought; it is a savage social policy without any rules, and whose first targets are the former leadership of Solidarnosc, and even the directors who have been able to remain at their jobs and who have been accused of embezzlement. Inflation is rising, and they are expecting a 90% increase between now and the end of the year. This figure was cited by Mr. Eysymont, who is the president of the Central Statistics Office. So, that's the opinion of an authoritative person.

EIR: It is said that the Polish model was: lower production, lower the standard of living, but control inflation, and "prepare for the marketplace." Now, this is not what we have. . . .

Bortner: Absolutely. Production has fallen 16.1% in June compared to the same period last year. Over two years, between June 1989 and June 1991, the collapse of industrial production reached 43%! Wages have undergone a real drop, with respect to last year, of 6-8%, according to the same source. The state budget deficit is only 10%—supposedly—but I really think it is quite certainly a great deal more than that.

EIR: What do people think about the Balcerowicz Plan of Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz?

Bortner: There is a great malaise in the country, but the propaganda is such that Balcerowicz is always the untouchable god, and people don't think it possible to live without him. I was shocked to hear even workers, people who have been wronged and who are having financial difficulties, highly praise Balcerowicz, while saying "there is no other solution."

EIR: European aid, a new Marshall Plan—is all this an illusion then?

Bortner: No, because in those circles where there is a political culture, in the circles close to the center of power, there are voices being raised, which speak about this spirit of partnership that was characteristic of the Marshall Plan. Today,

everything is going wrong because everything has been gerrymandered. I would like to explain why. First, I saw Col. Marian Rajski again, today, counsel the Polish Diet, which confirmed to me that everything was done in order to disorganize Poland. For example, the KGB sent out, under various auspices, of false invoices in order to destabilize the country. These invoices cover nothing, and are paid by Polish banks at the rate of 2,100 zlotys to the ruble, whereas the "normal" exchange rate is 320-340, and the preferential commercial rate had been set at 1,000 zlotys in September of last year. And this is not all. The zlotys obtained by these false suppliers were then transformed into rubles at the 320-340 rate, which were repatriated to the U.S.S.R. with the complicity of customs officers who were owned by the old nomenklatura. What's the profit in this operation? On the one hand, for a ruble, one got 2,100 zlotys, but on the other, for 2,100 zlotys, one got about 6 rubles—that is, one ruble gets you six! The NIK, that is, the High Chamber of Control, is holding the proof and will not hesitate to publish it.

EIR: Is the Russian mafia still there in Poland?

Bortner: I wouldn't have dared say it, but that's exactly it. There are two aspects to this policy. First, since the meeting between Bush and Gorbachov at Malta [Dec. 2-3, 1989], Bush had refused \$20 billion in aid to the U.S.S.R., since Congress had prevented it. Evidently a country that devotes 35.7% of its budget to military expenses is unworthy of such manna. But why make any effort, anyway, since Germany has already offered \$8 billion for the price of having Soviet troops withdrawn from the former East Germany, and when Poland is picking up the rest? And I am going to tell you how.

Poland is continuing to be looted. The year 1990 saw an illegal Russo-Polish trade surplus—which was not accounted for in the statistics—of \$14 billion, which can be taken as a pure loss, because it was regulated in transfer rubles and presently there is nothing that can be bought from the Soviet Union with this currency. . . . It would have been possible to negotiate an compensatory exchange system, or by barter, but nothing was done. Thus, Poland exports plenty of products, which translates into a functioning economy, but it is doing it "for nothing," as if it were a gift on behalf of the U.S.S.R. And, of course, all this takes place without statistics, leaving the official figures without any credibility.

This type of statement is completely taboo in Poland, and when Deputy Edmund Krasowski wanted to talk about it in Parliament, before the commission on cooperation with foreign countries, presided over by the current Prime Minister [Jan] Bielecki, the hearing was adjourned and everyone left for lunch, without any parliamentary procedures. . . . Krasowski had also demonstrated that the natural gas and petroleum bought from the U.S.S.R. was coming out to be twice as expensive, causing the myth that "Soviet energy is seven times cheaper" to explode.

EIR: They say that mismanagement is also continuing?

Bortner: Yes. Col. Marian Rajski confirms that most high functionaries, members of Solidarnosc, had been stipended by the American fund for the development of democracy [a fund of the American AFL-CIO, as part of "Project Democracy"—JC]. He himself had been solicited, but had not accepted. Today, all these men occupy posts of great responsibility in the government, in the administrative functions, and in the media.

EIR: In other words, they themselves are on the take from the Americans?

Bortner: If you like, and the most officially in the world. These people, with the help of the state of emergency under General Jaruzelski, under the form of no-interest loans, today ought to reimburse this aid, for which most of them signed receipts. At which point, those who had not signed but got money anyway, since it was also a social fund, today are being asked by the director of the Polish TVX, Mr. Terlecki, to please bring their situation into compliance by signing. It is surprising that all these people, today, can find no reason whatever to oppose trade with the Soviet Union, since this "commerce" is in fact aid provided to the U.S.S.R. to the detriment of Poland, and desired by their American corrupters! This is quite a Soviet-American "set-up"!

Since November 1989, the courageous deputy from Elblag, Edmund Krasowski, continued to show arithmetically how trade with the Soviet Union was nothing more than legalized theft, allowing for the diversion of \$10-12 billion per year, with an all-time record of \$14 billion for 1990. On May 11, 1991, I myself tried to raise the question of the profitability of trade with the Soviet Union at the founding congress of a new Polish party, the Democratic Union for Poland. [Former Prime Minister Tadeusz] Mazowiecki almost became angry: This is a taboo subject which must not be approached.

EIR: Hence, the United States really wants to help the Soviet Union, but only if Poland is paying for it, i.e., to the detriment of Poland?

Bortner: Exactly!

EIR: Is it Solidarnosc people who are doing this dirty work?

Bortner: I am sorry to think that it is, but at the same time it's necessary to recognize that there has been an internal explosion within Solidarnosc, which even so has several factions and sub-factions. There remain Solidarnosc members who are clean, who have not gotten mixed up with these trouble-makers, but unfortunately there are many people who adhered at one point in their lives to Solidarnosc, who are advocating a radical policy at the antipodes of Polish national interests.

EIR: What are people in Poland thinking now about the trip

of Mr. Walesa to the United States, and, it has to be said, his kow-towing to Mr. Bush?

Bortner: Personally, this has greatly upset me, but I think he is also a prisoner of a difficult situation. On one side, I feel quite certain that he would have preferred to leave this track; I believe that he felt enthusiastic about the Schiller Institute's alternative to the Balcerowicz Plan, their Paris-Berlin-Vienna Triangle. I have not understood why he adopted the position of the Mazowiecki government, since he had been so pleased with our conceptions that he marveled at them.

EIR: What happened to the "old guard"? It's said that they kept their positions and money and have constituted a new mafia, and are positioning themselves to become the principal beneficiaries of the stock market and the privatizations. Is this true?

Bortner: It's absolutely true. A former Polish spy with the [Soviet military intelligence] GRU, Marian Zacharski, sentenced to 20 years in prison in the U.S. and exchanged in 1985, is, today, at the head of the Pewex store chain, the largest Polish foreign trade company, with outlets in practically every town. Is this to thank him for his services rendered in the past? And today, large fortunes are being assembled and being made between ex-comrades at the top of the scale. Ireneusz Sekula, former communist deputy prime minister, boasts that he earns 80 million zlotys a month—average wages are in the neighborhood of 1 million zlotys! During a televised interview, with the greatest seriousness in the world, he claimed he was able to finance his affairs and purchase his first plane with the proceeds of the sale of his automobile, a "Polonez". . . . This man has since been able to obtain credit at a straight 2%, whereas the good people can only obtain credit at 90%, indexed to inflation (1,100% in 1990)! There is no lack of examples of this type. . . .

I regret that I have to turn over to you a list of 47 offenses committed by corporations, the majority of which are led by this "old guard." These corporations have stolen from Poland, between Dec. 10, 1990 and mid-January 1991, in the proportion of over 10 million transfer rubles. This list had been proffered by Deputy Krasowski with various members of Solidarnosc in various towns in Poland, for investigation. It has to do with corporations which have illegally traded in significant amounts with Polish government guarantees, that is, from the Finance Ministry, allowing them to receive 2,100 zlotys for each ruble, which in any case cannot be used for purchases and can only be resold on the basis of a loss of roughly 1,700 zlotys per ruble. The winners are the middlemen and all members of this "Russian" network which I told you about. . . .

EIR: It's said that the French companies which were in Poland are getting back into the game.

Bortner: Oh, yes. I am not going to give names, but there

is the example of this "first offense" by a French company working with the Polish television company, and which, given the evidence, knew before everyone else what measures had been negotiated by the high-level directors on the importation of television sets. I was informed that, on the eve of that, a law was going into effect that would have massively raised the tariffs on television sets. Seventy trucks from Thomson and other brands came across the border. . . .

EIR: The trucks arrived on the eve of the imposition of a much higher import tariff?

Bortner: Exactly.

EIR: So then, this was a first offense.

Bortner: Offenses like this can be found in every domain today, even in trade. I ask myself how honest people are going to be able to live. Goods are relatively plentiful, but the Polish people are broke; where has it been possible to find the money to buy these stocks, if not at the state bank?

EIR: In summary, what do you want to tell Poles?

Bortner: Be vigilant, but I must explain. In 1989, it was in full awareness of the risk he was running that Walesa agreed to the historic compromise of governmental cohabitation with the communists. But today . . . this strategy of compromise has become its opposite. It has allowed the maximum communist infiltration throughout the machinery of the political and economic life of the country. The old actors of a system theoretically abolished continue to drain Poland, both in Parliament and in the ministries—and this includes in the heart of the Secret Service and the Army. With the sacrosanct principle of being the President of all Poles, Lech Walesa tolerates having in his entourage "Poles" made in Moscow, among them certain leading members of the repression and political and military espionage who were serving in the KGB until just recently.

EIR: Will Walesa ever succeed in short-circuiting these mafia forces, whose power he acknowledges having underestimated?

Bortner: I remain partisan toward Walesa, because I know him as a man of integrity and near to the people, but he is paralyzed. He is a fly caught in a communist web, from which he hasn't extracted himself.

EIR: And not only a communist one.

Bortner: Yes, because there are still all these former allies from the Mazowiecki wing. I went to the founding congress for a new party, the Democratic Union for Poland: I paid close attention, I wanted to see what program they had for this country. Okay, this program comes down to one word—Mazowiecki. Nothing more. Not the shadow of a social or economic plan. And yet, it's Walesa who is one accused of "populism"!