
Interview: Ryszard Wywrót

We want Poland to be free of the IMF's economic dictatorship

Ryszard Wywrót is a national board member of the new Polish farm movement "Związek Zawodowy Rolnictwa—Samoobrona"—Union for the Self-Defense of Farmers. Mr. Wywrót was interviewed on July 12 in Germany where he was attending a meeting of the Schiller Institute's Agriculture Commission near Oppenheim.

EIR: Why and when was your movement founded, and what are you fighting for?

Wywrót: Actually we started to work in the spring of last year, and on Jan. 10, 1992 we officially registered our organization. Our main purpose is, that every man acquire proper conditions to live, to develop, and to work. Right now, this basic right is being neglected. And we also want the government to implement rules for agriculture which would make real development possible. We don't want to think just about immediate survival, we care about real development of agriculture.

We think that Poland is not free at the moment, because it is controlled by the interests of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Community. We want to change that. One of our main postulates is the fight against those institutions.

We also demand that our debts be renegotiated, and if credits are issued, that there be a fixed interest rate. Right now, according to the banking law, a bank can change the interest rate unilaterally, without even negotiating with the farmer, for example. Before the [Mieczyslaw] Rakowski government, in the early 1980s, there was a law in Poland against usury, which said that interest rates can't be higher than 12%. This law had existed since the 19th century. The communists somehow survived with this law, but Rakowski abolished it. This allowed banks to float interest rates.

According to official sources, 4% of Poland's farmers cannot pay their debt. We say, the real figure is 80%, because a lot of farmers took loans to pay off their loans.

We are also demanding that the Polish Parliament be dissolved and that there be new elections. We think that the people who are currently in Parliament are totally irresponsible. Because of the special election law in Poland, people without much popular support got seats in Parliament, and we want to change that.

We also want to stop the import of those food items to

Poland that we can produce ourselves. We don't want to close ourselves off like Albania—we don't want to become completely isolated—but we want to cooperate and trade with other countries on fair terms. Poland can produce a lot of food; we don't need so many imports.

EIR: Do you see the credit problem, the high interest rates, as the main problem strangling agriculture?

Wywrót: Yes, and there are a lot of tragedies connected to those credits. People lose their property; they ask us for advice. We talk to them, we talk to banks, we go to court with them, we give them information. And if their property is being auctioned off, we have special teams to negotiate with the bank or state officials. So, one problem is, that people are losing their property to the creditors. Another practical problem is that many people sold almost everything they had in order to pay back the debt, and now they can't get operating credit to start all over again.

For example, I took out a loan for 1.7 million zlotys. Last year I paid 1.17 million zlotys back, yet my debt increased to 7 million zlotys.

EIR: Would it be enough to reform the credit system just by lowering interest rates, or do we need a completely new banking system, including the establishment of a bank for the development of the agricultural sector?

Wywrót: We still have certain cooperative banks dealing with agriculture, but, because of the communist system, they were state banks, centrally controlled. And because of the present banking law, they don't want to give credits to farmers, because they have very low profitability. They prefer to make loans to trade firms or other commercial companies, because they pay higher interest rates. Or they give their money to a bank which pays them still higher interest rates.

We are thinking about creating a central bank for agriculture, but for now we find it better to create a fund that buys our debts and then operates through the cooperative banks that already exist. We could negotiate with those banks through the fund; we could present our programs for development of a farm; and we could negotiate credits.

EIR: Most people here in the West, including our readers, don't really know what's going on in Poland and still believe

that Solidarnosc is something very valuable. But many Poles say, the people of Solidarnosc are now as bad as the communists. Did this corruption of Solidarnosc start when Leszek Balcerowicz was finance minister or even earlier?

Wywrót: The Solidarity movement was, of course, a wonderful thing. It has still some support in factories, but I cannot say much about that part of the movement. What I can say is, that Rural Solidarnosc betrayed us. The part of it that has power right now, is corrupt. I fully support the ideas of Solidarnosc, and I am fully behind this early movement, but the situation is getting worse and worse, and the people in government who are identified with Solidarnosc are clearly losing popularity. This was shown in the last election, where Solidarnosc participated as a trade union, and got very few votes.

As far as Balcerowicz is concerned, in the beginning, people trusted him, because he said we had to come down from very high, in order to succeed. But later, they discovered that this was not the direction to go. The purpose of our movement is to make people realize that we have to change this direction as soon as possible.

EIR: What do you think about Lyndon LaRouche's "Productive Triangle" program for the reconstruction of eastern Europe, particularly the aspect of it dealing with the reorganization of national banking and credit policy?

Wywrót: I only recently received the full text of this program, last Wednesday; and then I had to travel 700 km in order to get my passport from home. Then, on Thursday, we had to deal with a police raid. On Friday, we had several demonstrations, and on Saturday we traveled here, so, I've had to no time to study it carefully. But from what I've heard here [at the Schiller Institute Agriculture Commission conference], I can certainly say that I like the general approach.

EIR: Your movement is growing: How many members does "Samoobrona" have now?

Wywrót: We have 100,000 members, and about 500,000 supporters who haven't formally joined. Right now, we have a situation where whole enterprises—that is, all the workers there—are joining our movement.

EIR: Would you say, that "Samoobrona" has already been successful? What was your biggest success so far?

Wywrót: I think, our biggest success so far has been that people who have lost faith, who have given up, now have hope again. A lot of people who come to us talk about suicide, because they are desperate. Right now, when we are together, we can give them a fighting spirit. And a fighting spirit is better than desperation.

Also, another thing is very important. The government and people in Parliament used to claim that there was no problem in agriculture. But now we have proved that there



Polish Prime Minister Jan Olszewski: The Union for the Self-Defense of Farmers demanded his resignation after he declared their protests illegal.

is a problem with debts and credits, and nobody can ignore it any longer. And there might be hope to solve it.

EIR: The newspapers here that write anything about you make a point of saying you are radical. Are these reports exaggerated? What is the truth about you?

Wywrót: We have demanded that the Polish Parliament should be dissolved, and that there should be new elections, not only for Parliament, but also for President. We are also demanding that Agriculture Minister Jankowski resign. When Prime Minister Jan Olszewski refused to fire him and declared our protests illegal, we demanded that he should resign as well. From that standpoint, you could say that we are radical. But we are not going to kneel before anybody while fighting for our rights.

EIR: You reported that there were plans to expand your fight beyond the agriculture sector as such to the general defense of the republic of Poland?

Wywrót: As a result of the effects of privatization in the course of the transformation from communism to capitalism, it happens very often that enterprises are sold off very cheaply, at half-price, most of the employees are laid off, and very often those enterprises are later on closed down in order to eliminate competition. So, right now, unemployment is at

2.5 million people and the standard of living is dropping. We want to bring people other than farmers into our movement: everybody who is threatened by the present government policy. We've had some successes. There is a food-processing company that was supposed to be sold very cheaply. The workers were afraid they would be laid off. They established "Samoobrona" in their enterprise; thanks to their action, it was then not sold off. They said that this type of privatization was just selling out. It has to be carried out in another way. And in this way, we protect national wealth. We don't want everything that was accumulated over generations now just to be sold off.

EIR: You also mentioned earlier that there is a party connected to the "Samoobrona" movement. What is the program of this party?

Wywrót: The party "Przymierze Samoobrona" (Self-Defense Alliance) was registered in June this year. It is the political arm of our movement, because we realized that traditional actions by trade unions don't work anymore; we can sign all kinds of agreements with the authorities, but they never respect these agreements. Therefore, we created a party in order to have the ability to run in elections and to have some direct impact on policies. The program is the same as the one for our movement.

EIR: Your movement is, as far as we know, the only one directly attacking the International Monetary Fund so far; it is also remarkable that, in your basic program, you attack the connection between the IMF policy and population reduction.

Wywrót: In fact, the standard of living in Poland is dropping; there is rampant poverty, a growing number of cases of tuberculosis and other diseases; infant mortality is rising. Moreover, the growing number of suicides shows that the psychological strength of the population is weakening. If present policies continue, this evidence of poverty will increase even more.

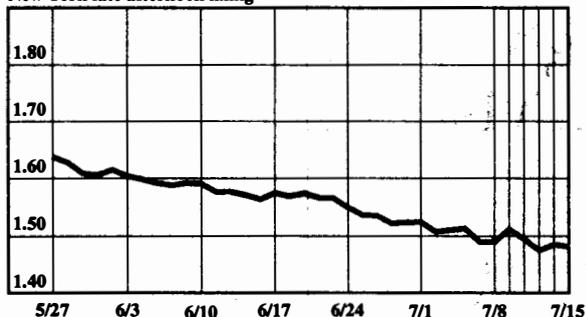
EIR: In Poland, there is a miners' strike going on in Katowice; in France, farmers are mobilizing against the Maastricht Treaty [on European Union] and the EEC reform of agricultural policy; and there is the private farmers' organization, the "Verband Deutscher Landwirte" in East Germany. What perspectives do you see for cooperation internationally, as well as cooperation among different layers of society within Poland?

Wywrót: Within Poland itself, "Samoobrona" has connections with the miners in Katowice, although I am not the one who is dealing with this aspect. With respect to other countries, we would like very much to establish cooperation. It would be great to have an official, European-wide, i.e., not underground, organization that would openly present its policy proposals. That would be very helpful for us.

Currency Rates

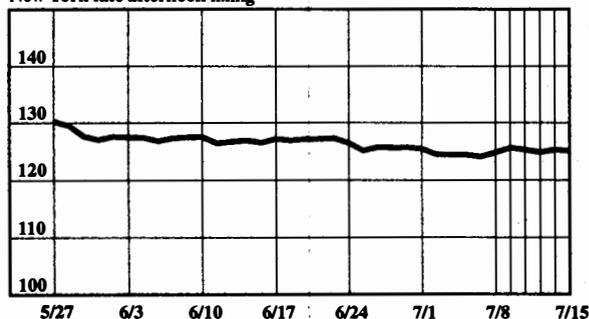
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



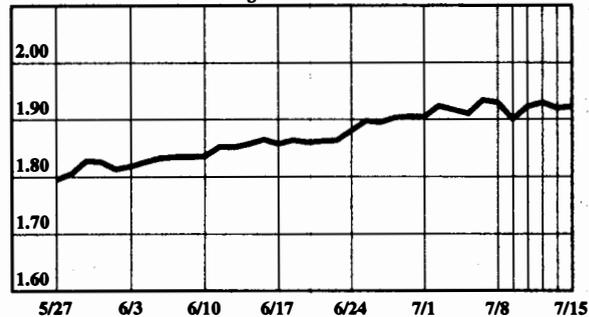
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

