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## Interview: Mathis Bortner

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# Polish leader says Americans must win LaRouche's freedom

*Mathis Bortner, a member of Poland's Solidarnosc and the leader of Solidarnosc in France's Côte d'Azur, visited the United States for three weeks in March, to add his voice to the international campaign demanding freedom for Lyndon LaRouche. EIR's Katherine Notley interviewed him on March 28.*

**EIR:** Can you tell us a little about yourself? What brings you to the United States?

**Bortner:** I received an invitation from my friend Jacques Cheminade [president of the Schiller Institute in France]. I would have preferred not to go—I am really very busy, I have my family, I have to make a living. But I told him, “If you think it would be useful, I will do it,” because I cannot accept the fact that LaRouche is still in prison.

I believe in what he writes, that he is an honest man, and I think he is a victim of this system. In Poland, we had the same thing: All our heroes, all our economists, our professional cadres were sent to prison.

In 1979, I also had a run-in with the communists in a town in France, because I had a summer camp for children, and during the school year I was a vice principal. I had to go through a probationary period in order to get a license to operate the camp. The licensing board was run by the communists, and they wanted the camp curriculum to be Marxist indoctrination. . . . They held a tribunal. They called me in and said, “Mathis, tell us what your philosophy is.” I told them. They replied, “In our opinion, you are a representative of the bosses, and your motivation is to make money.” The report they sent about me to the departmental director was totally vague, all insinuations. The director, Gaston Perrier (he has Perrier water on the brain), refused to issue me a license. . . . But it was very serious, because I could not operate without this license, and I was about to lose my job, which I loved.

But this is a small thing, compared to what has happened to LaRouche, and I cannot tolerate that, because I've had the same thing, on a much smaller scale, happen to me. At every level, I met with obstacles. Finally, I told Mr. Perrier, “If I don't get my license, I will launch a campaign against you, and expose you as a propagandist for the Marxist system in France!” I received the license the next day.

If this had happened two years later, after the Socialists came to power, I would never have won. So you see, my case was very small, but it was a beginning of what can happen.

So, I realized that I had no choice but to come. I am not here for the pleasure of seeing America: I have too much to do. For me, it was a mission that I had to accomplish.

**EIR:** How did American voters respond to having a representative of Solidarnosc organizing to free LaRouche?

**Bortner:** Everywhere people received me very well. Some of them were disappointed when I told them that I am with LaRouche, and one of them said: “I came because of Walesa, not to hear about LaRouche.” This was a man who told us that he is a friend of [Harvard “shock therapy” economist] Jeffrey Sachs.

I met with more than 100-200 people, and many of them were in agreement with LaRouche and many knew quite a bit before I came. They knew what LaRouche's ideas are, and were in total agreement. And many of them, when the Schiller Institute would ask them, “How many pamphlets do you want?” would take 20, and even a few would take 100. But some of them would take only very few, saying, “I must give these out secretly.” These were the union representatives, and they are not free men. They are slaves! This was my biggest illusion about America: I thought that people [like this] were fighting for the ideas of LaRouche. It's their duty and they should do it. I talked with some Polish-American congressmen who told me: “I cannot do anything, because my boss said. . . .” The boss tells them! No! It's their base who should be telling them what to do, and not their boss. So it's the opposite of what I thought. I always thought of America as the pledge to the flag, swearing on the Bible, and so on . . . America in this tradition.

I told many people in response what Solzhenitsyn said, speaking about the Russian people, that we are *all* responsible, because we kept quiet about what was going on. I told people: When the KGB would make arrests, they would make a lot of noise in the streets, and then inside the apartment of the family being arrested. The people would call out to their neighbors, “Help, help, the KGB!” and nobody would help them. That is what is happening here, now. This

is the beginning. It was impossible for a man to say what he thinks [in the Soviet bloc], especially if he was in a leadership position. I explained to people that it is becoming the same here: In a few years, you will also be slaves to the system, if you don't do something now when you see people like LaRouche still in prison. It's your duty to act. "Yes, but I will lose my job," they said. It's not a job, but an elected position, and after someone has accomplished his mission, he should go back to his factory—that's my idea of an elected man. An elected man has some limits: He cannot engage in business arrangements, when he should be taking care of the interests of the people. That's his duty.

Some of them were very thoughtful after we talked, and didn't say much, because they know their faults quite well in this respect. Some would try to change things, but would run up against their bosses again, and stop. . . .

In France, almost 30% of the press is owned by one man, Robert Hersand, who owns *Le Figaro*, *Paris-Match* and some others. He bought most of the leading papers in Poland. A while back, someone let *Le Figaro* know that I was a friend of Walesa, and asked for an interview in France. I explained to the reporter my work with Walesa, what program I presented to him, and what I thought should be his position on the Polish economy, and this woman was very excited. Of course, I was obligated to tell her that the source for this economic perspective was the Schiller Institute in Paris. She thought these ideas were wonderful, and promised to put the interview on the front page of the national edition. The next day, we were to meet again, so I could give her some documents. We waited for one hour, two hours. Nothing. I called her at the office and she told me an outrageous thing: "You are an intelligent man, but you know, the KGB is behind LaRouche." This was in the early spring of 1990.

There were other incidents in Poland. In February 1990, I had an interview with the *Gazeta Gdanska*, the business paper in Gdansk, while I was there for the second Congress of Solidarnosc. I told them that if the International Monetary Fund policy continued in Poland, there would be millions of people without work—at least 3 million in a very short time, just a few years. I explained to them how production would be collapsed by these policies, because to me it was obvious, and you didn't have to be a graduate from the Sorbonne to figure this out. They laughed at me. I was angry, and I left them. . . .

Even in my town, Lodz, which is a major textile center, the local daily *Dziennik Lodzski* is foreign-owned. I met with the press officer for the mayor for a long time, and he took extensive notes on all aspects of LaRouche's Productive Triangle proposal and the fight with the IMF, how it is working to destroy Poland. He was extremely enthusiastic and told me he wanted to serialize a feature in the paper. I went back to France, quite happy with the situation. When I returned to Poland, I found out that nothing had appeared. I called him. He told me, "I'm

sorry, but my editor rejected the article." . . .

**EIR:** Did the Americans you spoke to understand what the IMF has done to Poland?

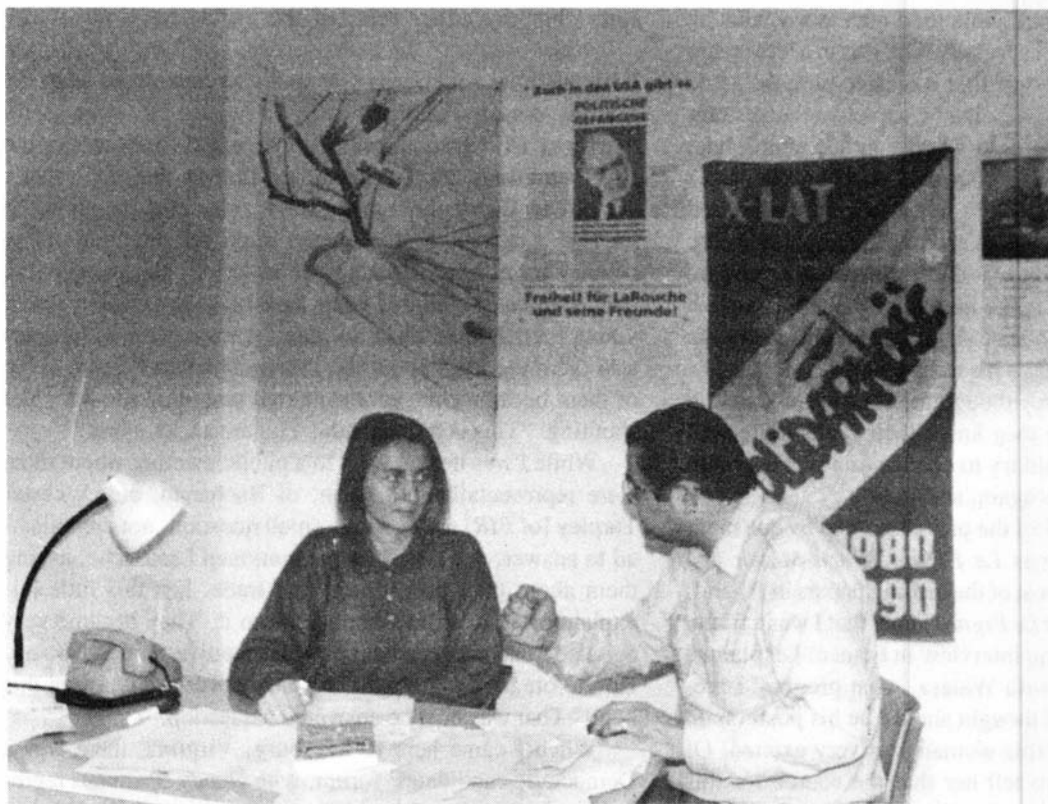
**Bortner:** My personal campaign here was to show how the IMF conditions are unacceptable. There's one thing that's very clear: Everywhere in the world, since the beginning of the IMF's existence, it has never improved anything in any country it has been in. It's unbelievable, but we can't find one example. About five years ago, I was at a conference of young French and Polish Solidarnosc members, and when I told them the truth about the IMF policies in Poland, some of them became enraged and started pounding the floor and shouting, "This is propaganda! You are a CIA agent!"

While I was here, I went to a public meeting where there were representatives of Bush, of Buchanan, etc. Webster Tarpley [of *EIR*] asked a very small question, not complicated to answer, and only barely mentioned LaRouche, asking them about their position on free trade, just this little bit, explaining LaRouche's opposition to it. They became very agitated, and the Buchanan representative said, "No, no. Don't vote for this man. Even vote for Bush, but not for this man!" That was how he answered a question.

When I came here to Leesburg, Virginia, there was a Democratic candidates' forum, with Nancy Spannaus representing LaRouche and with representatives of Clinton and Brown. I heard many, many stupid things from them, so I asked a question, which was exactly the opposite thrust of what they had been saying. I explained to them that I am from Solidarnosc, I am honored to be here, but I think that for America to accept free trade is a mistake, and I gave them some examples, very briefly, of what happened in Poland. I said, "This is the fault of the system you have here of free trade." And the Clinton and Brown people said, "Oh, yes, yes," and applauded what I said. This is a good example of the power of the media.

In May 1968, I was a student at the Sorbonne and I was "elected" as the secretary of the Revolutionary Committee. This was ironic, because I was for de Gaulle. I think he was a very great man. And this is what I think about LaRouche; I think LaRouche can be a second de Gaulle. They have the same outlook; they have the same enemies. De Gaulle never accepted the British mafia. He had respect for all nations and wanted to help every nation have its autonomy. He also had great plans for highways, and launched France's nuclear program. He had many of these kinds of great projects. . . . We have to return to this, and I think LaRouche is like a second de Gaulle. We need very urgently to have such a de Gaulle, because the world situation is growing worse.

In February, I was in Russia, and people there think we have a paradise in Poland, compared to Russia. We have a very harsh life, but not as harsh as they do. We have more and more places, right in the heart of Europe, with this situation. . . .



*Mathis Bortner at work at a Solidarnosc office in Poland, 1990.*

**EIR:** What were some of your impressions of America, and what will you tell the French and Polish people when you return?

**Bortner:** I found Americans to be very, very kindly. Of course, the people in the Schiller Institute are very traditional, they have classical culture, and so on. But even the others, in the restaurants, in the airports—they are very kind. We've lost this in France, almost entirely. But Americans have stopped thinking, and this is far more serious. They are not capable of ideas, and can't engage themselves in them. These people are no longer civilized; they are becoming like beasts, at the whim of their instincts and their immediate needs.

**EIR:** It's certainly ironic to find Project Democracy elements acting in Poland the way they did. After all, these are the same people who slander LaRouche as a thief, a tax swindler, and so on, and who worked to have him put in prison. They are the ones who are robbing whole nations!

**Bortner:** This is true. But, I must reassure people that LaRouche's analysis is not marginal in Poland. Many schools of thought have a similar analysis to LaRouche's, but the difference is that LaRouche uses his analysis to find a solution. And people should not be discouraged, because many people are beginning to converge on this idea, seeing the way this mafia, the free trade, and the cartels are functioning.

LaRouche is in prison not because he is the only one who sees this situation; the others are not dangerous, because

they don't have a solution. They will talk and talk about philosophy for their own intellectual pleasure, but without a conclusion. . . .

The Soviets took all Poland's cadres [much of the officer corps was drawn from Poland's elite layers during World War II—ed.] and killed them in Katyn. And we have to say that LaRouche's being in prison is the beginning of the American Katyn—it is an operation against people who think, who rock the boat. I don't want to use the word prophet to describe him, but he is right, and most of the people I meet know this.

In Michigan, I ran into [former Polish Finance Minister Leszek] Balcerowicz, and he was presented as the savior of Poland. But everybody knew that what I was saying about Poland was true. This must be our conclusion: What even the communists could not destroy in 44 years in Poland, the Jeffrey Sachs plan, Balcerowicz, and all those behind them, destroyed in two and a half years. That is the most important thing. I asked Balcerowicz, "How can you defend yourself against the accusation that you are responsible for the collapse of Poland?" He answered: "I don't agree with your statistics." But I was giving him statistics from the official press, from *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The people with him were presenting his successes, saying that in Poland there were no more lines at the stores, the shops were full. But, of course, only 8% of the people can afford to buy from the stores. Mostly, they line up outside and stare into the windows at the prices, and maybe buy one small thing.