

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF SOVIET
AND COMMUNIST BLOC DEFECTORS**

HEARINGS
BEFORE THE
PERMANENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
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EXHIBIT NO. 18

STATEMENT OF
DR. ZDZISLAW M. RURARZ
BEFORE THE
U.S. SENATE PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS
HEARINGS ON
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF
SOVIET AND COMMUNIST BLOC DEFECTORS

The term "defection," or "defectors," is not an adequate one and to a large extent confusing and harmful to people who decided to break with the system in which they live.

In my contribution to the hearings, I would like to confine my remarks to a few issues only.

The first issue is the very decision to defect, if the commonly used term for the event is to be used as a matter of convenience.

Defection, unlike emigration, whether a voluntary or a forced one is, at least this was so in my case, a political and patriotic act.

Moreover, a defector, especially from a communist and Soviet-dominated country, and the one who belonged to the party, the ruling elite and the secret services first of all, is a very distinct individual from all others who leave their countries.

Such defectors, as a rule, have no material motives. On the contrary, they are even sure that in a material sense their future lives can be less affluent and certain than the previous ones.

Even still more importantly, defectors are usually sure that they may never again see their native countries, relatives and friends. Not only that they are barred by law from doing this, because as a rule they are deprived of their former citizenship, but also because of the fact that their return could mean death to them, or life imprisonment at best.

To illustrate the above, I should like to add that I was both deprived of my Polish citizenship and death sentenced in absentia.

Last but not least, defectors cannot be sure whether the sentences passed on them are a mere formality only. After all, many of them died a violent death, or a mysterious one.

Because of the above, defectors are exposed to many life inconveniences much more than other emigrants, or even certain categories of political asylees. Their moral and spiritual

hardships, and all other sorts of life trials, are by far more complex than of anybody else leaving his country.

In fact, they cannot live normal lives. They can hardly stay in the open, travel freely, or have friends to their own liking, especially from among their own ethnic group. Neither can they maintain any contacts with their relatives and friends left behind, something the ordinary emigrants can do.

This very situation is a highly complicating factor at least for one reason.

Namely, a defector like myself, still able in body and mind, also highly motivated to do something for the cause which prompted him to defect, has not many options in his life. A total disappearance from public view, possibly with assuming a new identity, may unnecessarily lead to various fantastic speculations and rumors.

On the other hand, activities, whether for the cause of his native country, or of the adopted country, are not easy either.

In the first instance, his own past may not always be an asset, no matter how justified someone's judgements of his intentions can be. Besides, the host countries have good reasons to be somewhat vigilant, as the fake defectors are also the case.

In the second instance, a defector, normally not a citizen of his newly adopted country, or at least not soon, and sometimes not even its permanent resident has, obviously enough, no chance to join the mainstream of the country's life.

This very issue, or rather a nuisance, is even quite hard to reconcile with the very motives which lay behind the defector's dramatic decision to break with the system in which he lived.

More specifically, the decision to defect is not primarily an act of disillusionment and protest only, a sort of an one-shot affair chiefly. On the contrary, it is, or at least in my case it was, an act of war against the evils left behind.

True, in the new capacity, as in my particular case, I have had especially many opportunities to wage the mentioned war and on the terms I deemed proper.

But it is equally true that I could have done even still more and perhaps more effectively, too.

Thus the decision to defect does not mean, at least in my case, that one breaks with his past and withdraws from active life.

On the contrary, the defection may mean, and in my case this was the strong determination, the beginning of a new life, perhaps even more challenging and active than was the one in the past.

I must say that this great country does a lot to make the above work. But I am equally convinced that even still more could be done to this effect.

The second issue, which I deliberately do not place at the beginning of my paper, is the very process of defection.

What makes people defect?

I am fully aware of course that each individual deciding to defect is distinct from others like him. Moreover, defections take place in differing circumstances, both of general and personal nature. Finally, defectors are treated not in a uniform way by a host country, something only very understandable, as the issue is truly a complex one.

However, without trying to be pretentious, I should like once again to repeat the words already spelled out before.

Namely, that the defections are largely, in my case exclusively so, dictated by higher motives. The defections from the communist countries, especially from the Soviet bloc, are not

the defections from a sinking ship. This was even still truer in the near past.

Thus it is the higher motives which play the decisive role in deciding for defection. My reasoning is as follows.

People like myself, born in a country particularly tested by the vicissitudes of history, have a special sense of duty to the motherland and the moral code which tolerates certain evils to some limits only. I, of course, realize that people with a different historical and personal experience may consider my philosophizing as a sort of typical Polish haughtiness, but I really mean what I say.

More specifically, when in 1945, at the age of only fifteen, I joined the communist movement. I did this not only because of the naive characteristics of my age, but I simply believed that Soviet-imposed yoke in Poland was going to stay for an unforeseeable period of time.

Hence it was logical, I believed, to try to change the state of affairs rather by joining it rather than fighting it. And throughout the period of over thirty six years I tried precisely to do this and, in a way, I thought my reasoning was a correct one. No matter how unconvincingly my words may sound, I always knew what I could do and what I could not. As long as the pluses prevailed over the minuses, I thought I had to stay in the game.

Moreover, communism in Poland has always been very much different than elsewhere. Having seen almost all communist countries in the world, I had the scale of comparison.

Besides, communism in Poland, more than in the other Soviet-dominated countries, has always been not totally divorced from truly national interests.

Furthermore, it seemed even to me that my dream of a free and democratic Poland was not totally baseless. Various events in postwar Poland rather supported the view that the country was far from having abandoned the idea of becoming free and democratic. Paradoxical as it may sound, many communist party members, like myself, tried to act in a way which could be conducive to the mentioned goals.

This very fact kept me from defecting earlier, although very long ago I lost all the illusions, if I really ever had any, as to the workability of communism.

Besides, or rather first of all, I truly could not imagine how I could live outside Poland, no matter that I knew, much better than many others, what this Poland really was.

Having no illusions thus what communism and the USSR were, as both I knew first hand, I decided to wait for better times. I was sure that neither communism, nor the USSR, could be defeated by

any confrontation from without. But they can be defeated from within, or rather the combination of the two.

Communism, and especially its Soviet brand, is the most perfect among the totalitarian systems. If it is ever to be abolished, or substantially changed, it will be primarily through the disintegration of the ruling elites.

It does not matter that the ruling elites are the minority in the ruled countries. History knows many examples where only two percent of a nation could effectively rule over the remaining ninety eight percent. Communism is even more privileged in this respect, as the rulers count more than two percent of a nation.

Consequently, it does not matter that such a minority rule is detrimental to the nation as a whole. What really matters is the unchallenged power of the rulers. And as the experience shows, the rulers cannot be unseated from power as long as they stay united and defend their privileges. In Soviet-dominated countries this is even supplemented by the Brezhnev Doctrine, that is the Warsaw Pact.

Yet it is true that communism is in crisis. This does not mean that its days are counted. It still may expand and conquer new countries.

Thus, in other words, communism, almost in crisis, in not going to collapse as long as its ruling elite does not disintegrate.

Having known this for years, I tried, as much as I could, to civilize communism, what in consequence could lead with time to its fading away.

But at the same time I had another option, should the first one fail, that is to hit communism in its most vulnerable place, namely contribute to the said disintegration of the ruling elite.

More specifically, when Solidarity and other organizations sprang out in Poland in the summer of 1980, I, as many other progressists in the PZPR, or the Polish communist party, supported openly the so-called renewal. I had a faint hope that the ruling elite and its Soviet sponsors could be reconciled with the event and enter the path of long delayed and necessary changes.

Should this be not the case, I was ready for the step I eventually took on December 23, 1981. At that time, so much crucial for Poland and beyond, the choices to be made had to be clearly determined.

By trying to contribute to the process of disintegration of the mentioned ruling elites, one has to ask the question on how to make those elites to disintegrate?

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There are many ways of doing this but the most effective way is to have the members of the elite desert its ranks.

Yet the practical implementation of such a step is by no means simple.

More specifically, one cannot really do this on one's own terms. This is especially true of those who are in sensitive positions and who are subjected to military discipline, something very much true of those connected in various ways to the "military-police complex," as was the case with me. Any resignation from the assigned post and the party membership, could be as much punishable as a more dramatic step which is the defection. Perhaps not at once and not openly done, but nevertheless.

Besides, a break with the elite cannot easily be done in a way which would attract most of publicity. The quiet resignation, for example, can miss the point altogether. The elite may silence such a break thoroughly, or present it in the way totally at variance with reality. Hence the impact of the step in question on the ruling elite can be completely the opposite from the one intended by the perpetrator.

Moreover, for those in foreign service and on assignment in a foreign country, especially in a Western one, the break is even still more complicated. This is particularly true of all those, as was the case with myself, who had connections with

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intelligence. Finally, with the declaration of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981, any disobedience, especially in the post of an ambassador in a country like Japan, could not be tolerated even in the slightest way.

Having lost all the hope for change, and having been convinced that martial law was ordered by the USSR, and may I recall that martial law was formally a "state of war" declared by the Polish communist regime on the Polish nation, I had to take clearly the side of either of the two. I took the side of the nation and, moreover, I decided to contribute as much as possible to the earlier mentioned disintegration of the ruling elite.

The rest is known.

If I spoke at some length on the process of defection, as experienced by me, it is only for the purpose to explain how complex the motives of such a step can be and what a defector like myself wishes to do afterwards.

The latter part of the phrase should be somewhat elaborated.

For the ruling elites in the communist countries, especially for their members like myself, who have an extensive knowledge of the state of affairs in the contemporary world, it is not a secret that the United States is the only meaningful opponent to the spread of communism and Soviet imperialism in particular.

Therefore, if anybody finally decides for the step as was the case with mine, he invariably looks toward the United States. Not only that the resources and laws of the United States are as they are and the country is willing to shelter the defectors in question, but primarily that this country offers more changes than any other country in the world to continue the fight against communism.

I have to state in this place, that before I defected I already then knew quite well this country and Switzerland ~~and~~ even still better. And I must frankly say that I would prefer to live in Switzerland than in the United States. But in Switzerland, assuming that political asylum could be obtained by me, I would be unable to pursue my fight against communism, or not on the scale I do this in the United States. Hence my choice was for the United States and primarily because of the mentioned reasons.

Defectors, at least I believe I am such a defector, are fighters first of all and this country should view them accordingly.

It is not up to me to judge what other values they may represent for the country like the United States. Whether they are an asset or a liability, it is not up to me to say.

Yet it seems to me that as the former insiders, they may have a unique knowledge on how "real communism" functions. They, quite obviously, have no monopoly for wisdom on this particular issue and may even err in their viewing of the system they left behind. But their knowledge of certain vitally important details and their specific qualities of perception, can be a useful addition to what this country knows about its global adversary.

Returning once again to the issue of defectors, especially top-ranking ones, I should like simply to repeat that, in my view, they are just not the ordinary emigrants.

I must congratulate this Senate Subcommittee for the initiative of organizing these hearings. This country, continuing to receive many defectors over the decades, should decide how certain experiences accumulated in the past could be best used for this country and for the cause which united the defectors with it and vice versa.

In conclusion, I should like to say a few more words.

My country, Poland, already several centuries ago opened its frontiers to all sorts of persecuted people. Before the Sejm, or the Polish parliament, many top-ranking defectors, primarily from Russia, testified as I did before the U.S. Congress upon my defection.

Unfortunately, my country is no more free and instead of listening to defectors, it produces defectors. Hopefully, this will change one day. But before this happens, it is good to have a country like the United States. Without having the chance to defect to a country like this one, many from the ruling elites might perhaps stay in their ranks and in this way contribute to the triumph of the system which by no means deserves any triumph at all.

But by being able to break with such elites, the defector contributes to their disintegration, if not at once, something not to be overlooked by this citadel of freedom and democracy. I thank you for your attention.