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INTERVIEW / OBAJTEK

'Tusk wants to put me on trial for defending John Paul II'

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On 8 May 2020, two large trucks bearing the words 'Polish Operation Aid to the Vatican' and displaying the Orlen logo drove through the Perugino entrance. The trucks were carrying a large consignment of masks and disinfectants as a gift from the Polish oil company, Orlen. They were met by the Polish Ambassador, Janusz Kotański, and His Holiness' almoner, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski. According to an Orlen representative, the masks and disinfectant products were intended for the Pope's Elemosineria to assist those most vulnerable in the face of the spreading pandemic, including homeless people, migrants, nursing home residents, and the Vatican Gendarmerie and Swiss Guard.

Five years have passed since these events, and the former Orlen CEO, Daniel Obajtek, is now an MEP. Yesterday, October 7, the European Parliament voted to waive his immunity, as the Polish authorities want to prosecute him for that gift to the Vatican, together with other accusations.

Hon. Obajtek was CEO of the fuel and energy company Orlen for years, heading it during the Law and Justice government from 2015 to 2023 when Poland experienced its most dynamic economic growth in recent years. The *Daily Compass* interviewed him on the case, before the vote in the European Parliament.

What does Orlen produce?

Orlen is a fuel, energy and gas company. During my tenure, it became the largest company of its kind in Central Europe, ranking 44th in Europe and 135th worldwide. It also became the fifth fastest-growing company in the world. It had a strong influence on the energy transition in Poland and the wider region. Orlen accounted for 70 per cent of the state budget. We made significant profits: during the eight years of the PiS government, we earned around 25 billion euros.

You were the CEO of Orlen, but you lost your position after the government changed. What happened?

I was CEO for six years. However, Orlen is a state-owned company and is therefore closely linked to politics. The previous government left public debt at below 50 per cent of GDP, whereas the current government is increasing it. In fact, the previous government left a debt of 48% of GDP, and taking next year's budget into account, public debt will reach 67% of GDP today. In 2024, Orlen made a profit of only €300 million, whereas in 2023 (also under PiS) it made a profit of €5 billion.

Who is responsible for bringing Poland to this disastrous economic situation?

Poland is mainly governed by politicians from Tusk's Civic Coalition. These are people who have no vision for the country's development. They align themselves with the left and the mainstream of the EU — the very forces that govern it. However, these forces are mismanaging Europe, which is why all European countries are facing serious economic problems today. This government gained power through Brussels' intervention, particularly that of Ursula von der Leyen, who illegally blocked funds for Poland. The EU and the German government did everything they could to bring about a change of government in Poland because they did not support the country's dynamic development.

Trump called on EU countries to end the Green Deal madness that is leading to the economic collapse of Europe. Do you say about this?

As someone who used to run the largest company in Central Europe and is now a member of the European Parliament, I have said from the beginning that the Green Deal is fanaticism, not rationality. By implementing it, we are losing our economic competitiveness. Other countries are not implementing it and are therefore profiting

from Europe's green agenda. Today, the Green Deal is merely a matter of worldview, divorced from economic rationality.

In Italy, there is a debate about the immunity of Ilaria Salis, who, along with a group of others, has been accused of beating up alleged neo-fascists in Hungary. Her trial was interrupted because she was elected to the European Parliament. The Polish authorities asked Brussels to lift her immunity, as the Polish prosecution intends to sue her for restricting press rights, among other charges, ironically she her immunity was not removed. What do you think about this double standard?

I can speak about my situation. While PiS was in power, we established a large company and contributed to the country's significant development. This was possible because we curbed the activities of the fuel and VAT mafias. The Orlen Group sold newspapers at petrol stations, and on 7 October Parliament voted to lift my immunity on the grounds that I restricted press rights.

Why?

Because I ordered the withdrawal of an issue of the weekly magazine Nie (No) from our sales outlets, as it offended the religious sentiments of Poles — that is, more than 90% of the population.

It should be noted that the magazine was founded by Urban, a communist journalist who was Jaruzelski's spokesman during martial law — a sort of 'red' Goebbels. He founded an anti-clerical magazine full of blasphemous content whose aim was to fight the Church and religious and patriotic values, inciting hatred towards the clergy.

One issue of the magazine featured John Paul II with a cross, and on the cross was a naked doll. John Paul II, a symbol of our country and Christianity, was treated in this way! This was a clear violation of religious sentiment. This is why I ordered this issue to be withdrawn from sale. This was not an infringement of press freedoms, but rather a means of preventing the slander of John Paul II and the desecration of the Cross of Christ. Now, the current government has stripped me of my immunity for this, among other things.

You are also accused of donating aid to the Vatican during the pandemic

Orlen donated much-needed masks, disinfectants, and protective suits to the Vatican. The Polish prosecutor's office is now investigating this gift from our company and questioning those involved. It's as if a company with a turnover in the billions could not support the Vatican during the pandemic. This is one of the reasons they lifted my immunity.

These are shameful political actions because immunity is not waived in such cases. It is

purely political revenge and a form of persecution against Catholics and right-wing politicians. If the company feels aggrieved by this gift to the Vatican, it can file a civil suit.