Our Take

Local Elections in Poland

O n 20 November 2010, elections to local self-governments took place in Poland. Mayors, members of the local parliaments (Sejmiki), and councilmen were elected and often reelected. Good news: PO and PiS are still the largest parties, and this means that Poland is moving toward a two-party system. The postcommunist SLD and the curiously colorless PSL still get a two-digit support, but PSL is increasingly becoming a no-commitment party that one joins as the first step in one’s career without committing oneself to any program or views.

With less than half the eligible voters participating, there were no surprises. Overall, the Civic Platform (PO) won with 32 percent of the vote; Law and Justice (PiS) got 23 percent. For reasons that remain unclear, a large percentage of the ballots (3 million) were invalidated.

The elections were preceded by a political murder. On 19 October 2010 Marek Rosiak, aide to EU MP Janusz Wojciechowski (member of PiS), was murdered in the PiS office in Łódź. The assailant, Ryszard C., had a history of expressing his hatred of PiS and shouted anti-PiS invectives. He shot and killed Rosiak, then wounded Paweł Kowalski, an aide to PiS MP Jaroslaw Jagiello, with a knife. The choice of victims seems to be accidental—what is not accidental is that the assailant chose the office of PiS and not that of any other party. Ryszad C. was arrested and is presently under psychiatric observation. Nothing like attributing a political murder to mental derangement—see a pertinent commentary in Polish at <http://knappestoper.salon24.pl/242071,racjonalnosc-zbrodniaryzarda-cp>. As the commentator noted, this incident doubtless persuaded some people to not vote for PiS—it might be dangerous to their health!

Bottom line: the elections did not bring change. PiS predictably lost; PO gained, but not significantly. The real fight will come in 2011 when elections to the Sejm will take place.