

Polish Election 2010

Possible Political and Economic Implications (an optimistic scenario)

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Bronisław Komorowski, the candidate of the Civic Platform Party (Platforma Obywatelska) was inaugurated as the president of Poland on August 6, 2010. His election on July 4, 2010 (he succeeded President Lech Kaczyński who perished in the Smolensk air catastrophe on April 10, 2010) will doubtless influence the political course Poland will take in the forthcoming years. Komorowski won in a run-off with former prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński. In the first election Komorowski received 41.54 percent of the votes to Kaczyński's 36.46 percent. Grzegorz Napieralski, representing the Democratic Left Alliance, garnered 13.68 percent in the first round. Other eliminated candidates included Waldemar Pawlak of the PSL (1.75 percent), former Minister of both Foreign Affairs and Finance Andrzej Olechowski (1.44 percent), and Andrzej Lepper of Samoobrona (1.28 percent). In the second round of voting, Komorowski received 53.01 percent of the vote, while Kaczyński got 46.99 percent.

Although a representative of a center-right party with ties to the Solidarity labor movement (he spent one month in jail in 1980), Komorowski is perceived as less conservative than his opponent who heads the Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość). Komorowski represents a party that bills itself as pro-business, opening him up to criticism that he has abandoned his proworker Solidarity roots. In contrast, Kaczyński was supported by the Solidarity Workers' Union and officially endorsed by its president, Janusz Śniadek. Kaczyński also received much support in the rural parts of Poland, especially in the south and southeast. The parties that these two candidates represented had formerly been partners in the coalition government with Jarosław Kaczyński as prime minister. The coalition fell apart when PiS lost the parliamentary election on November 5, 2007. As a result, Donald Tusk, who was defeated in his run for president by the late president Lech Kaczyński, became prime minister, a position he holds to this day.

Between 1977–80 Komorowski worked for *Słowo Powszechne*, a daily published by the communist-approved Catholic organization called PAX. He also cooperated with Antoni Macierewicz (now a strong right-winger and Komorowski's political opponent) on the underground monthly *Głos*. A historian by profession, between 1981–89 he taught at the Lower Seminary in Niepokalanów founded by St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Komorowski was elected to the Sejm in 1991 and has been in and out of government ever since. In his run for presidential candidacy of the PO he defeated foreign minister Radosław Sikorski. His victory over Jarosław Kaczyński, brother of the deceased president, has been interpreted as a victory for "Europe." Komorowski is generally regarded as a Euroenthusiast advocating stronger integration of Poland into the European Union on both economic and political levels.[1] Komorowski has exhibited strong international credentials, desiring Poland to be directly involved in the workings of various international organizations. Shortly after the presidential election, Komorowski announced his intention to visit Paris, Brussels, and Berlin and to seek further "reconciliation" with Russia. In December 2010 he visited the United States and met with President Barack Obama.

The continuance of Foreign Minister Sikorski in his position was expected to bring a further period of stability to Polish relations with its major neighbors on both its Eastern and Western borders and to its relations with the United States.[2] The visit of US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to Kraków in July 2010 to attend a series of events marking the ten-year anniversary of the Community of Democracies reaffirmed Poland's position as a major ally of the United States on the continent of Europe. However, Komorowski, whose limited constitutional powers include the right to veto laws and to serve as the lead in matters of foreign affairs and military matters, has made it clear that he foresees an end to the Polish military contingent of 2,500 personnel in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan at an early date. Unlike the defeated Jarosław Kaczyński, who was an eager ally of the United States while voicing skepticism of Poland's relations with Germany and Russia, Komorowski pledged a new era of cooperation on mutually agreed upon principles with both of these nations.[3] The election of Kaczyński would have been seen by some as a period of further destabilization of Polish political

relations with Russia and Germany, potentially impacting economic relation as well.[4]

On the economic front, Komorowski pledged to continue the budget policies and priorities adopted by Prime Minister Tusk, a close ally and partner of the new president—policies that have resulted in Poland being the only member of the European Union to have successfully weathered the recent worldwide downturn by achieving a positive growth rate in GDP in 2009.[5] Poland's GDP grew by +3% in 2009, and through the second quarter in 2010 Poland's GDP grew at a rate of +3.5 percent, with industrial production climbing by an impressive +10.4 percent.[6] Unlike the Kaczyński brothers who have not expressed strong confidence in the privatization process and who adopted a populist approach to solving economic problems, opposing privatization of vital sectors of the Polish economy, Komorowski has been a strong supporter of further privatization efforts.[7] The Privatization Plan for 2000–2011, prepared by the Ministry of Treasury and approved by the Council of Ministers in April 2008 provides for the privatization of 802 companies. The program has been underway for the last eighteen months and is based on the government's decision to increase the pace of privatization considerably. The Ministry of Treasury selected fifty-eight key companies to be privatized in the years 2009–2010; nineteen companies by the end of 2009; and the remaining thirty-nine companies in 2010. In 2009 Poland took in 14.3 billion zlotys from its privatization efforts. This figure was expected to rise to 25 billion in 2010. [8] Unlike PiS, Komorowski is not philosophically opposed to privatization in strategic sectors such as energy infrastructure, or companies and institutions that fulfill important public roles such as public television and radio, but is willing to evaluate privatization opportunities on a case-by-case basis.

One other recent event looms as important—the selection of former Minister of Finance (1997, 2001–2002) and Prime Minister (May 2004–October 2005) Marek Belka, as governor (president) of Poland's Central Bank in the wake of the death of Sławomir Skrzypek who died in the April 10 air disaster. As a professional economist, Belka had also served as head of the International Coordination Council in Iraq, which resulted in the formation of an interim government and the creation of a new banking system. Belka also served as executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and Director of the European Department of the International Fund. He is

a supporter of Poland's adoption of the euro[9] but has opposed setting a firm date for its adoption, although 2015 looks realistic at this point. However, Belka does favor National Bank interventions in order to counteract any excessive volatility of the zloty. The drop in the value of the zloty has contributed to a rise in Polish exports. Professor Witold Orłowski of PricewaterhouseCoopers stated that Belka is expected to administer Poland's monetary policy in a “consistent, reasonable, cautious and professional manner.”

With parliamentary elections scheduled for fall 2011, the patience of the Polish voting population will once again be tested. The Tusk government, now partnered with the presidency of Bronisław Komorowski, faces a major challenge in reducing debt from 6.9 percent to 3 percent of GDP by the end of 2012 or 2013 at the latest. The task is daunting since Poland has been forced to tap international capital markets in the past twelve months for more than 100 billion zlotys (nearly 33 billion dollars).[10] Forcing spending cuts on popular domestic programs such as health care or pensions may offer an opportunity for opposition parties to make a comeback on the Polish political scene. ◇

NOTES

[1] Dietmar Nietan, “Poland's Future: Thriving in the European Union,” 2 August 2010, at <http://www.cepa.org/ced/view>.

[2] Anna Wontorczyk, “Komorowski Gets Down to Business,” www.krakowpost.com/article/2215, 7 July 2010.

[3] “New Polish President might boost relations with Russia,” RIANovosti at en.rian.ru.

[4] On the other hand, it was on Komorowski's and Tusks's watch that a representative of the Polish government Waldemar Pawlak was ready to sign a gas delivery treaty with Russia that would make Poland dependent on Russian gas deliveries for thirty-seven years. A representative of the European Union intervened and further negotiations were ongoing as of October 2010. Vladimir Socor, “Warsaw Wavers Between Brussels and Gazprom,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 7, no. 178 (4 October 2010).

[5] Total growth in 2009 was 1.9 percent. The economy grew by 3.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and 3.0 percent in the first quarter of 2010. GDP per capita stood at \$18,072; unemployment was in the range of 9 percent (9.1% in March 2010). Unemployment grew to 11.4 percent in the second quarter of 2010, as consumer prices also grew at 2.0 percent. *Economist*, 11 September 2009, 109. GDP is generated by the following sectors: Agriculture—4.6 percent, industry—28.1 percent, and services—67.3 percent.

[6] *Economist*, 11 September 2010, 109.

[7] Warsaw stock market privatisation ‘a historic move,’” http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20101014/bs_afp/

polandmarketsstocksprivatisationcompanywise, 15 October 2010.

[8] For a discussion of issues surrounding privatization, see Richard J. Hunter, Jr. and Leo V. Ryan, “The Legacy and Prospects of Polish Privatization,” *International Research Journal of Finance and Economics*, no. 21 (2008), 142–48. An update on the topic was presented by the authors at the June 2010 meeting of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, “The Polish government, faced with a 2010 budget likely to include a ballooning deficit and heavy borrowing, has little choice but to proceed with its ambitious privatization plans while hoping for a quick recovery.” “Poland Tackles Its Deficit With Privatization Spree,” online.wsj.com/article/SB125417294156447369.html.

[9] Richard J. Hunter, Jr. and Leo V. Ryan, “Poland, the European Union, and the Euro: Poland’s Long Journey to Full European Integration,” *Global Economy Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2009), Article 6. Originally 2012 had been targeted as the year for Poland’s adoption of the euro as its currency.

[10] Paweł Jabłoński, “Polska tonie w morzu długów” [Poland is drowning in a sea of debt], <http://blog.rp.pl/2010/09/12>. Reuters reports that aggregate Polish debt will not exceed the GDP “safety level” of 55 percent. See www.reuters.com/article/idUSWAR01139920100208.

The Two Lives of Ludwik Gumplowicz

Dwa życia Ludwika Gumplowicza. Wybór tekstów. Selection and introduction by Jan Surman i Gerard Mozelič. Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 2010. 533 pages. Index and bibliography. ISBN 978-83-7459-090-7. Hardcover. In Polish.

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When the communist regime in Soviet-occupied Poland abolished sociology as an academic subject (it was restored in 1956), fired its professors, and banned books, Ludwik Gumplowicz (1838–1909) would have been among the first to correctly explain this particular anathema. One of the founders of sociology as a distinct branch of science, he was an incisive critic of Marxism on two grounds: that it was utopian to believe in disappearance of conflicts under any social system; and that not binary social classes of the exploiters and the exploited, but multiple groups—with their diverse interests, conflicts, and loyalties—determine the dynamics within every larger human collective such as nation or state. “Communism,”

Gumplowicz wrote in an article for the sociopolitical weekly *Prawda* in 1883, “proposes to take away from those who have and to give to those who don’t have,” a program that arises from “the same natural instinct that prompts one savage tribe to rob another.”

The article “Komunizm, socjalizm i antysemityzm” appears in a handsomely produced volume of Gumplowicz’s academic and journalistic works, selected, edited, and introduced in the extensive biographical and analytical essay “Ludwik Gumplowicz i jego socjologia” by Jan Surman and Gerald Mozelič with valuable contribution from a German scholar, Reinhard Müller. Their names alone would please Gumplowicz, as reminiscent of his multicultural Galician background that influenced his theoretical concepts and his controversial opinions. If as he claimed, individual personalities are indeed formed in the process of the interactions of their original social groups, his own complex personality and ideas may well reflect the fact that, as Jerzy Szacki noted in his *Historia myśli społecznej*, he lived in a uniquely diverse, multiethnic society—“the experience unknown to the French, English, even German sociologists.”

As Surman’s and Mozelič’s introduction reminds us, it was a steaming cauldron of diversity, a pot that was beginning to melt with a loud sizzle at the top, yet stayed stuck at its bulk in which every ethnic and class cluster, Polish, German and Yiddish-speaking, resisted reform. Gumplowicz was born a Kraków Jew to an upwardly mobile family in the year when his father, a devotee of the German Enlightenment and its Jewish offshoot Haskalah, obtained citizenship rights—still a rarity in Austrian-occupied Kraków. Gumplowicz attended the St. Ann’s Gymnasium where he made lasting friendships with boys from similar assimilating families (Michał Bałucki, among others), as well as with Polish Catholic students. He then studied law at the Jagiellonian University, but eventually graduated from the University of Vienna. He returned to Kraków to practice law, was elected to the city council, and contributed articles to progressive press in the Polish language. But he failed to receive a habilitation degree from Jagiellonian University: his dissertation about the legal history of Jews in Poland was rejected as—in the majority opinion of reviewers—too prejudicial toward the Catholic Church. Not for the first or the last time, Gumplowicz’s criticism of organized religions, including Judaism, would get him in trouble. Although disappointed and hurt, he looked into other opportunities in Kraków and found a truly stimulating one in editing and writing for the liberal *Kraj* founded