

DIPLOMACY OF POPULISM

For two years now Polish diplomacy has been but a derivative of the internal politics. It mainly serves to please electorate and proclaims a doctrine of 'rising from the knees', which according to the archaic concept of diplomacy, is an extension of war. More specifically, a war of everything with everyone, a zero out game; we can gain as much as we can grab from others. This thinking is so alien in the present diplomatic conduct, particularly in the European Union, that it creates a picture of Poland as a completely irrational and untrustworthy country. The profound consequences on the future of Poland in this unfortunate situation are already visible.

Poland in the EU – the fall from the Olympus

The eight year term of the PO-PSL coalition was in part a long list of misconduct and negligence, yet in foreign politics, particularly on the forum of the European Union, the government of Donald Tusk was successful. Poland negotiated the highest portion of financial contributions in history of the Union and without the need to use blackmail politics of 'Polish victim status'. Poland was a reliable partner with growing position in the EU. The country was a leader of change and the hope for full integration of Western Europe at least as far as Central European continent. Poles were given the opportunity to hold the highest posts in the EU and the increasing role of Poland, was expressed by the strong alliance between Warsaw and Berlin. The new government rejected completely the achievements of their predecessors.

Angela Merkel was presented as an enemy of Poland and the question of refugees (we were supposed to accept a meagre 7 thousand, out of whom, most would have probably soon run away from Poland), sparked up a serious conflict. The subsequent area of conflict was in the internal political system: the violation of the Constitution did not escape the attention of foreign politicians, particularly when foreign

minister Waszczykowski turned out to be completely unable to establish partnership in negotiations. The invitation of the Venice Commission and then undermining its authority, his brash comments about politics for the vegetarians and cyclists... all of this tainted the image of Poland and pushed Poland to the far end of trustworthiness. Even these remnants of trustworthiness were buried in the sawdust by PiS's own doing when they destroyed the rule of law and the division of powers. There were other spectacular flops en route to this destruction. Firstly, the attempt to halt the re-election of Donald Tusk as the chief of the Council for Europe. The way in which this initiative was carried out was so unprofessional, that our government, from that point onward, was no longer taken seriously. Last minute nomination of the candidate Saryusz-Wolski (a Pole against a Pole!) and without any serious consultations was doomed for an utter failure. This was deepened by the accusations of the alleged illegitimacy of re-electing Donald Tusk, which in fact was an insult to the 27 states who supported Tusk. Subsequent blunder was to bring back on the agenda the issue of claiming war reparations from Germany. Not only unrealistic, but also expressed aggressively in the style of revanchism unheard in Europe since the end of the Cold War propaganda.

No wonder that in such short time, Poland slipped down from the position of a leader of Central and Eastern Europe to the role of a pariah, who has nothing to say on any meaningful matter. We have stopped being noticed and the engagement of article 7 of the European Treaty against Poland regarding controls of the rule of law, is hanging over our heads like the proverbial Damocles's sword.

Foreign policy of PiS can be summed up in the words: is there a pilot flying our plane?

It is also difficult to say, who in fact

leads the Polish foreign policies? True that the President keeps paying visits abroad, but these are predominantly courtesy meetings topped up by business introductions. The President lacked judgement when he invited to Poland Mr Erdogan, persona non grata in Europe who sealed his dictatorial rule by annihilating opposition and independent media.

Minister Waszczykowski, although a colourful person, did not have much to say, similarly Prime Minister Szydło. The quarrel over Saryusz-Wolski's unexpected nomination for the leadership of the Council of Europe, demonstrated that even if the Foreign Minister and the PM knew that the nomination would be a fiasco, they could not have said no to Kaczyński's demand, in this case, driven by the profound hatred of Donald Tusk. Nobody still owns up to inviting the Venice Commission to Poland to adjudicate on the legality of the PiS government's changes in the Constitutional Tribunal. This was a fatal blow to the trustworthiness of PiS.

Additionally, other departments caused much commotion. The leading role was held by the Defence Minister Mr Macierewicz, fortunately now dismissed. He was responsible for breaking the bid with France for the supply of helicopters Caracale to the Polish army. This wrecked our reputation as honest partners, failure in negotiations over 'Patriots' wrecked our strength, unclear liaisons with the people close to the Russian intelligence, destroyed our integrity and the revelations of the alleged sale of Mistral to Russia by France for one dollar, our rationality. To add to this all, the departure of the most talented and most experienced leaders in the Polish Armed Forces as a result of the conflict with the Defence, weakened our position in NATO.

A contribution to the diplomatic crisis was made by the Minister of the Environment, a remote office from Foreign Affairs and the Defence. Jan Szyszko, now also departed

as the Minister, had his own idea for 'saving the Białowieża Forest' from woodworm by using combined harvesters for mass felling of trees. This was not a welcome move in the European circles. The matter was brought to the Tribunal of Justice and Poland again, had an opportunity to be the first country which not honour the verdict of this Tribunal. To the despair of professional diplomats, Poland took this opportunity.

There is no light in the tunnel

The government of Beata Szydło boasted of the small, insignificant successes. The NATO summit in Warsaw and its agenda were arranged by the previous government, the visit by Donald Trump did not bring any real agreements or benefits, the election of Poland to the Security Council of the UN as a non permanent member, came from its geographical scope and by the way, resulted in the discovery of a new country, the famous San Escobar.

This is not much in the face of huge losses on the other fronts. Europe stopped believing in Warsaw's ability to negotiate. This very lack of room for manoeuvre for the former PiS government, was the reason for the so called 'reconstruction'. Prime Minister Morawiecki who speaks foreign languages and has been out in the world, comes across as specialist at least in the economics and after Beata Szydło, makes a different impression. Even far more reaching change was made in the office of the chief of the Foreign Affairs. Czaputowicz is a background person, but a true diplomat not resembling his arrogant predecessor, who thought that he did not have to be a diplomat himself, if he was the boss of the diplomats.

It soon turned out that internal politics again dominated the foreign politics and the new PM and the new Foreign Minister were given tasks well above their capabilities. The Ministry of Justice cooked up a long anticipated Act on the Institute of the

National Remembrance which included sanctions against anyone who wrongly accused Poland of participating in Holocaust or other crimes of the Nazi regime. It sounds good, from the perspective of 'Poland rising from her knees'. Not so good if put next to denial by some right wing politicians, of the crimes such as in Jedwabne. In addition, the Act was introduced in the least opportune moment. After the last Independence March, Poland was the talk of the world as the country of the re-birth of neo-fascism. Literally, just a few days before, TVN broadcasted shocking documentary on the Polish Adolf H worshippers. The introduction of this new law was accompanied by an outpour of anti-Semitic comments, not only in 'wSieci' but also in the national TV channels.

Crisis in relations with Israel, USA and Ukraine was at first played down and when stronger statements were uttered, PiS rolled out its usual narrative, good for internal use, but not the one which would improve in the least relations with Poland's indignant partners. For how can the argument of 'not fully understanding the meaning of the Act' work at the US Department of State? How could they relate to the explanation that Poland meant eradication the concept of the 'Polish death camps' from public discourse, if the speech of Mr Morawiecki was wrongly translated by YouTube auto translator and the PM himself a historian, was talking about German responsibility for the Katyn massacre? On top of this, Polish Foreign Office called for a dialogue team with Israel and this team gathered for discussions without the representatives of Israel, on the Sabbath day? And finally, how can our words of the intention to start a dialogue can be interpreted, if in Poland they say 'we will not make a single step back', the Act is written well and the Senat fast tracked at night, the legislation of this Act voting it in without a chance for any amendments?

This is a playground, not diplomacy

All of the above imposes a reflection that Poland ceased to exist in international relations as an state of concrete interests, objectives or allies. We are not working in any foreign policy framework. As it was seen in the last events, it makes no difference whom or why we insult at any time, as long as it is in line with the current policy of the ruling party in Poland. We break the contract for Caracale with the French, although we are not able to find a better offer. On top of this, we throw in remarks that Poland taught the French how to use fork or we lecture the new President of France on diplomacy. We want to instigate fear of refugees? Let's call Merkel a traitor to Europe who wants hegemony in the EU. Let's call on the Swedish right wing internet portal to conclude that the Swedes support Polish Government and let's set up allegiance with Hungary, who will still vote for Tusk and will secretly admit refugees. The UE is cautioning Poland for breaking the law and the Constitution? Let's undermine the authority of the European Commission, the Venice Commission, the Justice Tribunal and any leaders. They are all uninformed, manipulated, hostile to Poland and we are the last, true 'island of tolerance and the rule of law'. And if we want to prove that we are fighting against a 'Jewish lobby' which wants to 'rob Poland', we will sacrifice our good relations with the USA we were so proud of when we wanted to prove that we did not need Europe. The effect of such policy is the growing nationalism and xenophobia in Poland and Polish foreign policy is in tatters. Maybe this is what all of this is about? After all, every authoritarian government seeks external enemies, to consolidate the nation around 'defending the country' while getting away with breaking all principles of the rule of law. For who will stand on the side of the citizens, if we leave the European Union and all community based institutions?

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