

Justyna Ball from 2

PiS style. It just came out that one of the ministers had a cell phone bill for 80,000 zloty, and when made public, his bosses asked him to pay only 14,000 zloty of it. The taxpayers will pick up the rest.

Of course in the United States, amongst Polonia, the decision of who to vote for was easy, the campaign was presented as if it was the battle between communist and anti-communist parties.

Lech Kaczyński, the president, was described by Polonia as "a true patriot who vigorously defends Poland's national interest and who is a faithful Catholic."

Nowhere was the PO (Civic Platform) even mentioned. Oh, but please send money to Radio Trwam run by Tadeusz Rydzyk, the appeal that was never forgotten.

To clear up any doubts, both parties PiS and PO are conservative parties with both having come from the Solidarity movement. But this black and white picture played well with uninformed readers. The Immigrants from the Islands are fairly new at being Polonia and may be more in touch with the reality of what is going on in Poland.

They may have a different opinion on what the definition of "patriotic" is or what "national interest" actually means to them. I guess, the results of the elections are the effect of mobilization of the young generation of Poles, fed up with the rule of Kaczyński twins that steered the country into the dark ages.

In London, serpentine-like mile-long lines intrigued the English. When in the United States, CNN was occupied with showing Marie Osmond collapsing during "Dancing with the Stars", TV stations all over Europe showed pictures of young Polish immigrants in line for democracy. The organization of the elections in England, Scotland and Ireland was phenomenal. Brits offered rides to Poles who did not own cars, and the atmosphere was comparable to 1989.

All registered immigrants, from all continents, were only able to vote for candidates from the Warsaw district so they voted for either Jarosław Kaczyński (the prime minister) or Donald Tusk. So Tusk received 47% and Kaczyński 21% (This is the second loss for the Kaczyńskis in the capitol. Last year, Hanna Gronkiewicz – Waltz dethroned Lech as a president.) Judging from the response on Internet forums, the American Polonia believes that the media is to blame. However in Poland these days, there are more than two TV stations. Actually, the government, besides Television Trwam (run by media mogul Rydzyk, sympathizer of PiS) also controls the public broadcasting, and PiS's minister Andrzej Urbański played a great role in it as well.

There is always the Internet, and a lot of new immigrants have access to it.

What's interesting is that, the Civic Platform was popular amongst every group of immigrants in the world except for... Chicago, Greenpoint and Rome. Yes, Rome... possibly because of the large number of immigrant priests. However, the PO took over Milan.

The next morning, PO created a coalition with PSL, the Peasants Party, and now has its majority in the parliament. The Party's front man, as predicted, became prime minister. Donald Franciszek Tusk, a historian, in the 1980s, known as a writer for the underground press, and the father of two.

Tusk grew up in blue-collar Gdańsk unlike the Kaczyńskis whose father was a professor at Warsaw Polytechnic, and their childhood was far from blue. Being child movie stars even in the Communism era gave them certain prestige. The day when Tusk's wife Małgosia learned that she became pregnant, the landlord kicked them out. The next day, Martial Law was announced, and the young couple lost their jobs. Forced to find a way to support his family, Tusk worked on heights washing windows and painting chimneys. His own experience as an immigrant was in 1989 when along with another activist friend, he got a job constructing a new school in a small Norwegian town, over the Polar circle.

But, as fans of P&S correctly, pointed out, he is also a ...redhead (meaning he can't be trusted!), has trouble pronouncing the letter

"r", has a slightly lisp ...and worst of all, he is a "Kaszubi!" According to Wikipedia, Kashubians are the early descendents of the Slavic tribe Pomeranians. 300,000 Poles consider themselves Kashubians of Polish nationality and Kashubian ethnicity. Their religion; is Catholicism.

I am Polish, and my "r", I admit, does sound French, but so does many many other Poles that I know. I color my hair red (to be precise, its medium auburn.). And if you check out my background, you will find out that I also have Swedish, Serb and Hungarian roots. My Polish husband's family name is "Ball," but he comes from Warsaw's Praga district, and not Scotland. Back in the old country, I also have Wilsons, Rotts and Engels in my family as well as (Latvian) Gulbises and Skangiels and then some Šlubickis and other "skis."

Often we in Polonia, what we see in the U.S. as a quality, back in the old country we may see it as a negative sign. And we all forget that Poland was very diverse before the war. Year after year, I see Warsaw becoming a diverse city again. I'll say Chicago is probably more "Polish," but what do we gain from it? We have no power in the American media. We only have a few politicians with Polish origins, out of 2 million Poles in Chicago? So, I would much rather have a political conversation over dinner with Nigel Kennedy, a controversial famous British musician, but Cracovian at heart, who with his electric violin heats up the atmosphere before local soccer games. Polish born, long-legged dark skinned, Omeena Mensah reports the weather. Another beauty, Klaudia Carlos, of Portuguese origin, is a sport correspondent. Vito Casetti is a Polish journalist. Ivan Komarenko and Stefano Terrazzino both Dance with the Stars on Polish TV. These are all Poles. And there is a line of many with a desire to become one. Sometimes they have Polish parents (Vito, Klaudia, Omeena), and sometimes not.

Poland always was, and definitely is now, far from homogeneous. On my trips, I found my cousins' children learning not one but sometimes two foreign languages and already practicing their knowledge by taking trips into the EU. And they're growing up without complexes or prejudices.

So no wonder that many young people see themselves not only as Poles but also as Europeans. They want to be a part of this larger group and at the same time wear their Polish heritage with honor. But how can they be proud, if at home, their government makes enemies each time it speaks up on the subject of foreign affairs.

Young Poles believed that the government did not represent them.

The majority felt they could relate more to Tusk, rather than Jarosław Kaczyński, a bachelor who in his 50s, still lives with his mom (claims to give all his money to her)... and a cat. He has no bank account and not even a driver's license.

The talks about Jarosław being engaged to Jolanta Szczypińska, a member of the parliament (PiS cannot find a more loyal woman in the whole Poland than her!) were silenced because the mother of the twins, Jadwiga Kaczyńska, a staunch Catholic, would not permit her son to marry a divorcee. Even if the son is 50 years old. It's surprising that she survived the scandal that her only granddaughter (Lech's daughter) caused when she became pregnant by another man, while still married to her husband. Don't know what's worse, her being pregnant or the fact the father of this baby is the son of a Left & Democrats activist. Grandma Kaczyńska did not attend the wedding nor did the famous uncle Jarosław.

Aside from family affairs, the president caused some negative comments when he chose not to congratulate the new prime minister. How uncivil! The experts scratch their heads and wonder how will the Kaczyńskis coexist now with Jarosław in opposition to the government that his bro is part of? When Jarosław in his "morning after" the elections speech, included the murderer of father Jerzy Popiełuszko among his opponents on the same line with the PO, the winning party, the Italian Catholic daily news "Avvenire" strongly criticized him, by saying that "as a politician, Kaczyński, does not know how to exit with the minimum of

dignity." Ouch, this came from the Italian Episcopate.

And loyal Ms Szczypińska, ex-fiancée, no matter what, still thinks that her party won and calls it a success. Someone please pinch that woman so she may wake up and come to her senses. Despise those little bumps, the good atmosphere continued throughout our stay. The Polish soccer team, for the first time in history, made it to the European Soccer Championships which is a huge accomplishment, considering the fact that England for the first time did not make it. The guy from Holland, Leo Beenhakker, who coaches the Polish team, gets a lot of credit.

And Tusk, an avid soccer player himself, got so excited that at the airport, he welcomed Leo and the team in English.

Two of the new ministers are Oxford educated, Radek Sikorski, who I'm not crazy about and Jacek Rostowski, a financial minister born and educated in London.

I need to see how Sikorski will solve the proposal of anti-missile bases. So far he is trying to undo damage done by stone-faced Anna Fotyga. He proposed a Museum of Totalitarian Regimes in Brussels so other Europeans can learn about Poland's history.

At the end of the cadency, Poles will judge their new government by how they will handle the most important challenge, Euro 2012. Poland and Ukraine won the bid and now they need to pull up their sleeves and show to the world that they can. This huge event can boost the economy by creating jobs and speeding up the process of modernization of infrastructure, roads and rail system. Several new stadiums will also be used long afterwards. So far, only the designer of the new national stadium in Warsaw was picked. It was a German group of designers, the time is fast approaching but they claim that they can make it. And we are watching...

The new prime minister took his first official trip to Vilnius, and then to Brussels. Sikorski, the present Foreign Minister, went to Berlin. One of the topics, the project of history schoolbooks accepted by both countries. On his trip to the Vatican, Tusk brought along Władysław Bartoszewski (ex minister of foreign affairs) who spoke to Benedict in German. The Pope supposedly said to Bartoszewski "Thank you for what you are doing for the Polish people," to which Bartoszewski replied, "I thank you." Benedict XVI "NO, I THANK YOU!"

For a change, Spain's El Pais wrote "Poland back into the heart of Europe."

Timothy Garton Ash, British historian, in fluent Polish, explained that in the last two years the politicians wasted the chance for Poland to be as prominent and play a larger role in the EU equal to Spain, Italy, Germany or France. All because the government did not understand the way things were. All of those countries did not lose their identity when they entered the EU, but they do understand that there is the balance between their own country's interest and common wealth of the EU.

The same opinion was stated by Dariusz Rosati, Polish diplomat. The way Kaczyński and Anna Fotyga see European politics comes from the false understanding of international relations in the XXI century. Their views are of XX or even a XIX century. It's a vision of constant

confrontation where gain of one country can only mean loss of another. It's a vision of force and aggression against neighbors. As a result, Poland's position on the international arena became weaker, not stronger.

Back in 2005, Lech Kaczyński, a freshly elected president took his first trip to Washington hoping to get Bush's support for Poland's protest against the German-Russian gas pipeline on the bottom of the Baltic Sea. It did not happen as the United States cares for its own interests and Poland should concentrate on its own, but those do not always go hand in hand. What the majority of Poles understood, PiS couldn't.

In his record long three-hour expose, Tusk declared pulling the Polish troops out of Iraq by the end of 2008.

Referring to that statement, Doug Bandow, Reagan's advisor, called Poland's presence in Iraq "a political gesture of minimalist military meaning." "Poland needs the U.S. more than the U.S. needs Poland. That is why there is no need for the U.S. to be too generous in exchange for installing its anti-missile bases there." Doesn't sound like a true friend, now does it?

Dick Morris, paid by PiS, had ten days to find a way to win the campaign for them. Even he, Clinton's campaign strategist, known for dirty tricks, could not help. And if you listened to Kaczyński's speech at his party Congress, it's clear, he still did not understand.

The funniest thing that happened, was when the day after the elections, Varsovians woke up to tens of new billboards saying "Poland on the right way." And of course everybody assumed that it was paid by, who else, if not PO?

It turned out that PiS ventured a little too far in its predictions and was so sure of its victory that it ordered billboards. What timing!

Later, in the shadow of the night, the sign was taped over the tens of billboards. It said "...as an effect of 2 years of PiS' ruling."

And that's precision, Polish style. □

Profiles - Praise the Lord from 2

Midnight Mass. I sat next to him, his youngest grandchild. Not only did Grandpa play the organ but also sang joyously at the top of his voice together with the parishioners. I will always remember the twinkle in his eyes as we left the church on his last Christmas and his words "Pośpiewałem sobie na Chwałę Boga," (Well, I sure sang my heart out to praise the Lord).

What I miss most at Christmas time here in my adopted country is that joyous singing. That singing, as Granpa said, "To Praise the Lord." □

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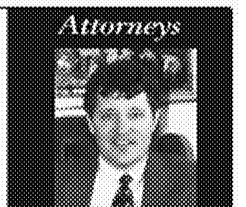
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