

Poland votes against IMF austerity regime

by Frank Hahn

Whoever would wish to interpret the Polish election results of Oct. 27 as a sign of the failure of democracy is on the wrong track. It is not because of the election results that democracy is in danger, or that the country has fallen into "ungovernability"; what is to blame is the shock therapy ordered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which their "model student," Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz, has carried out to the bitter end. Under his "reforms," Poland now has 2.1 million unemployed, a standard of living that has been cut by 50%, a rapid and continuous decline in industrial production, and a completely unhinged budget.

No one should be surprised, therefore, that the voters expressed their outrage against the government. Likewise, no one should be surprised by the good showing of the communists, who have become, with 11.7%, the second strongest party in the country. Did not the dictates of the IMF and Harvard University's Jeffrey Sachs seemingly prove what the communists have always said about capitalism? We find here a full-dress example of what Fidel Castro's dictum, that the IMF's policies are useful, since they drive the hungry and the dislocated into the arms of the communists.

Let us look at the Polish election results in detail. With the data that we now have, the Democratic Union of former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki stands in first place with 12.1%, closely followed by the communists, who call themselves the Unified Democratic Left. In third place, surprisingly, was the Catholic Voters Action (WAK), with 9%. In fourth place we find the party closest to President Lech Walesa, the Center Alliance (8.5%), followed by the nationalistic Union for an Independent Poland (7.3%), then the Liberal Democratic Congress (7.1%) of former Prime Minister Jan Bielecki.

Also to be mentioned are the Farmers' Party (6.5%), and the two groupings that came out of Solidarnosc, Workers' Solidarity (5.5%) and National Solidarity (3.4%). Particularly these last two groupings, next to the Catholic Voters Action and the communists, are the strongest opponents of Balcerowicz's austerity program, although there is not the least programmatic basis shared by them.

What will Walesa do now?

As far as it goes, the commentary of a leading German newspaper was not wrong when it said that this was a plebi-

scite against the shock therapy of Balcerowicz. Beyond that, we can conclude the following: 1) It is arithmetically impossible to form a government from less than four or five parties, which should be quite impossible, given the differences among the parties; 2) one party theoretically could govern with an absolute majority: the "party" of that 60% of the electorate which did not vote at all; 3) the destabilized Walesa wishes to base himself on this "majority," when he opines that he can ignore the election, and form an emergency government of technicians, which he would then lead in the double role of head of state and prime minister.

Perhaps he already sees himself as a new Jozef Pilsudski, who in the 1920s governed Poland with an iron fist. Poles should be very careful before giving him another inch of power, for his shameless attack on the parliament shows that either he is a dumb lout, or that he wants to become an autocrat. To the press, the President let slip the following cynical remark: "The new parliament should now only do one thing: allow the government and the President to rule. They can wrangle and hold eternal conferences about everything else—all the better, then at least they won't be a bother." An autocratic emergency government, which no longer bases itself on the people, rather upon foreign financial interests, would lead, in the face of the worldwide economic crisis, and the difficult situation in the republics of the former Soviet Union, to political and social explosions in Poland.

Poland not lost yet

Still, Poland is not yet lost. Voices are definitely multiplying of those who demand a rejection of shock therapy. Take the statement by Witold Trzeciakowski, the former chairman of the Economic Council of the Council of Ministers, to the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: "Poland needs a strong government in order to overcome the results of the communist period, and the mistaken belief in the panacea of shock therapy."

In this connection, the third strongest party, the WAK, could play a leading role, for no government could govern by ignoring them. Their program contains, besides the protection of the family, opposition to abortion, and a clear demand that economic policy be brought into agreement with Christian morality. Upon the basis of Christian social doctrine, the WAK, with Justice Minister Chrzanowski of the Christian National Union as their leading spokesman, declares war on Balcerowicz and the free market crowd tied to him.

This party, if it will form an international alliance against the IMF, for a European-wide development program, and for a cultural renaissance, might become the party of hope for Poland. All political steps which fall below this level, which do not bring the future of Poland into line with the battle for a just world economic order, must of necessity lead to Poland's tumbling between anarchy and dictatorship, toward the abyss.