
Guest Commentary

A look at the expansion of NATO from a Polish perspective

by Jozef Pawelec

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According to the assumptions of Western politicians, expansion of NATO is meant to guarantee stability in Europe and the world. The Poles expect from this absolute security and independence from Russia, which was an aggressor and an oppressor for ages. In this country on the Vistula River, expansion of NATO is treated as an historic moment—a kind of salvation from the East by the West, which should be taken advantage of as soon as possible.

It would be rather tactless to dismiss *a priori* an opinion of otherwise distinguished politicians; however, one has to admit that, except for appeals for Polish membership in NATO, which are repeated in the mass media on a daily basis, Polish public opinion has not seen a deeper analysis of what joining NATO will bring: what we will lose, and how much we are going to pay for it. It is therefore necessary to point out at least some of the negative consequences of this process.

First, NATO expansion has not yet been decided. Not only because of Russia, but also because of what the parliaments of many countries (such as Norway, Turkey, Italy, Greece, France, and others) may say about this matter. Americans are not eager to strengthen foreign armies with American money, either. What will happen, if the plan does not go through? The feeling of betrayal by the West will linger forever, any relations with Russia will be interrupted *a priori*, including in the field of economics, and the situation in the West will not be easy to define. We will be left out in the cold, to say the least.

Let us assume, however, that the process will have “a happy ending.” What is awaiting us in such an event? First of all, an increase in arms spending. The RAND Corp. estimated that including the Vyshehrad group (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) in NATO will require over \$100 billion in additional costs. This is unquestionable. We have experience in this matter from the Warsaw Pact. We will have to standardize, that is, exchange, practically all the equipment in all the armies of the new members (calibers, codes, and other systems of the Warsaw Pact countries are totally different from those of NATO). The chairman of the U.S. Senate Armed Services

Committee announced on Polish television that our defense budget will be determined by NATO according to the needs of the NATO alliance. We know these needs; for example, France’s budget is 250 billion francs (about \$50 billion). Taking only one-tenth of this amount, we obtain 15 billion zloty, which means two times more than we spend now.

Some say that the money would have to be spent anyway, because after 20 years, one has to exchange equipment, with or without joining NATO. Agreed. But without NATO requirements, some of the equipment can be produced by Polish industry, the process of modernization can be stretched out over time, and the conditions of purchasing what is necessary to acquire from abroad can be negotiated with preferred partners. Moreover, it is not always the most expensive equipment that turns out to be operationally the best: The Vietnamese used difficult terrain to their advantage; simple hand-held anti-aircraft missiles were used effectively in Afghanistan; and the Chechens used mines.

Perturbations in science and elsewhere

If Poland joins NATO, those choices will not be available, and at the same time it will face certain unpleasant consequences, such as the wave of unemployment which would result from laying people off in military industry, as well as, for example, serious perturbations in Polish science. This is because projects developed for military purposes have been always of the highest quality. They become a locomotive for science, especially in physics, electronics, chemistry, and so on. The history of the last century clearly illustrates this point. All important innovations that humanity has come up with were a result of military competition, i.e., arms races: the automobile, the airplane, radio, the computer, satellites, the laser, and others. Nobody is taking this into account in Poland.

Journalists and President Aleksander Kwasniewski, as if in a race, hurry to repeat the same song: NATO, Western structures, only the future counts—there is no past. Those who can think straight will never say that the past does not count. On the contrary, those who lose their memory, lose guidance for their future. If Poland were a rich country, joining NATO would not be so costly for everyone. We are, however, very poor, which means that even buying one modern

fighter (which costs about \$50 million) constitutes a considerable expenditure. This is a serious problem which should be discussed before Poland joins NATO. Unfortunately, this is not being done.

What are other possible consequences of joining NATO? There are plenty. Poland will become one big battlefield. One can see it already now. We have not yet managed to clean up our military training grounds since the Red Army left, but we already have new “garbage.” The fact that Belarus complained about electronic surveillance is not completely without grounds. If nuclear weapons are stationed in Poland, the situation may become really hot (the Russia-NATO agreement doesn’t exclude that). It is quite possible that the Kaliningrad corridor will become a *casus belli*, and Russian missiles will target Polish cities. Then some people will wake up and ask, “Did we really need it?” but it will be too late.

Need for other alliances

It is interesting that our northern neighbors, i.e., Finland and Sweden, are not rushing to make such moves, and their attitude toward NATO should be taken into consideration because they are in a strategic situation similar to our own. (Their economic situation is, of course, much better.) The Swedes do not shy away from openly criticizing NATO as an outmoded creature of the Cold War period. They think that today we need other kinds of alliances, based on a local scale. The example of NATO’s helplessness in the face of the war in former Yugoslavia shows that their thinking is quite correct.

Everybody knows in what circumstances NATO was established and against whom. It is mainly an American creation (the United States and Canada bear almost two-thirds of its expenditures), whose goal is to protect American interests in the world (for example, the Persian Gulf War, local conflicts, Santo Domingo). Why should relatively small and poor Poland care about that? Some may say, “The United States is going to help us.” I doubt it. They have had a few occasions to do that, and, unfortunately, we know what happened. Global interests are always a priority. For example, an international campaign, staged from U.S. territory, to present Poland as a country which persecutes Jews, is very harmful to us. At times, it is really frightening to see that our naïveté, going back to habits from communist times, makes us believe that through establishing contacts with rich Uncle Sam and propitiating him, one can accomplish God knows what.

Economics and security

The Swedes have a rather different policy. They think, for example, that to secure peace in the contemporary world, one cannot push for a confrontation between a rich West and a poor East. In the interest of rich countries themselves, the direction should be completely opposite and aim at helping countries which are poor and find themselves in very unfortunate conditions, such as Russia. Russia has a very high mortality rate, and has fallen behind in all the other parameters

TABLE 1
Russia at the red line

Indices	Threshold value	Existing in Russia
I. Economic		
1. Decline of GNP from starting level	30-40%	>50%
2. Level of food dependency (% of food imported)	30-35%	50%
3. Funds for science (% of GNP)	2%	0.32%
II. Social		
1. Ratio of income of richest 10% to poorest 10%	10:1	15:1
2. Number of crimes (per 100,000 population)	5	6
3. Level of depopulation (ratio of births to deaths)	50:50	50:63
4. Number of mental pathologies (per 100,000 population)	284	280
III. Political		
1. Level of legitimacy (% of citizens not trusting central government)	40%	60-65%

We reprint this table, which was prepared for “The Path of Russian Reforms,” Working Paper WP/96/014, by the Central Economics and Mathematical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (see EIR Feb. 21, 1997).

defining a secure country (**Table 1**). If this situation is not stabilized from the inside (with the help of the West), all outside “threats” can lead to unpredictable consequences. The policy of NATO expansion is a sure way to bring about such consequences.

It is said sometimes that the process of NATO expansion is not directed against Russia. Perhaps, but then, what security is the alliance supposed to guarantee, and against whom? The answers to that are rather enigmatic — some talk about Muslims, some about unforeseeable conflict, and so on. For Poland, an imposed “friendship” with Russia was a nightmare, but it is a big neighbor and it played also some positive role: It guaranteed that the western regions of Poland would stay within its borders. If Poland joins NATO, we will not only lose those guarantees, but also wake up a proverbial sleeping dog. Already now, Opole Silesia is in turmoil, and all kinds of Euro-regions along Poland’s western border are popping up like mushrooms after a rain. Interestingly, those regions have quite long extensions to the east. The long-term consequences of this process are easy to foresee, considering the differences between the economic levels of both sides. We are supposedly only dealing with a symbolic obliteration of borders within a

united Europe. But much more is at stake—there is a danger that the stronger will dominate the weaker, and that national existence and culture will be destroyed.

Although politicians may voice honest intentions, filled with optimism, financial reality will take its course. One can observe it already now in Poland, where unemployment is approaching 15%, the Polish contribution to science and technology is practically zero, and the trade deficit has reached overwhelming volumes (in 1996, it was \$12 billion, and investment goods constituted only 13% of imports; in the first quarter of 1997, the trade deficit exceeded \$3 billion). It is also symptomatic that Germany runs exceptionally heated campaigns for NATO expansion. Others, at least, have some doubts, but not Germany.

For those who think, the process of NATO expansion is either an idea coming from the devil himself, or from an intelligent spy or a traitor. That is because it is difficult to find a rational explanation for it under present peacetime conditions in the region. This statement comes from a man who served 40 years in the Polish Army under communist rule, a man who, during his entire professional life, did not join the Communist Party. Interestingly, those who were then boasting about their utmost devotion to the Soviets, now scream the loudest: Let's join NATO, as soon as possible! In civilized society, this kind of behavior is called betrayal. And perhaps, that is the key to the whole matter.

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Tony Blair adopts Pilate as role model

by Mark Burdman

Amidst the millions of words, mostly of effusive praise, that have been written or spoken about British Prime Minister Tony Blair since his landslide election on May 1, very little, if any, attention has been drawn to a remarkable “profession of faith” that Blair authored last year. Entitled, “Why I Am a Christian,” it was written for the April 7, Easter Sunday issue of the London *Sunday Telegraph*. It appears as one among the Blair essays and speeches that have been compiled, in a recently released book, under the title *New Britain* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997. First published in London by Fourth Estate Ltd.).

While one cannot judge a newly elected leader solely on the basis of something he or she wrote before assuming the responsibility of office, still, this piece should receive close attention. It is, by Blair's avowal, meant to be a reflection of his most personal commitments and beliefs. Blair's views should be setting off alarm bells among persons of good faith, of whatever religion. It is a testament to moral jaundice and hypocrisy, as well as the kind of slavish devotion to “duty to the Empire” that suggests what policies Blair, the Queen's Privy Councillor, will be pursuing, as the loyal servant of Her Majesty's Commonwealth-centered imperium.

In the essay, Blair places himself in opposition to everything that Christianity, and the Western Judeo-Christian tradition more broadly, stands for. He gushes with sympathy for Pontius Pilate, the brutal Roman procurator of Judaea who orchestrated the “trial” of Jesus Christ and had Him crucified; Blair also bends over backwards to find something good in Judas Iscariot, the renegade who betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver.

‘Pilate was so nearly a good man’

The Crucifixion and Resurrection are among the most powerful episodes, and metaphors, that human civilization has ever known. Blair twists their significance, with a few strokes of the pen. “Easter,” he writes, “a time of rebirth and renewal, has a special significance for me, and, in a sense, my politics. My vision of society reflects a faith in the human spirit and its capacity to renew itself. But Easter is not only a celebration of the Resurrection; it is also a time to recall the events that led to Christ's crucifixion and what they mean.”

What is this “special significance for me”? Three of the next five paragraphs are devoted, not to Christ, but to Pontius