

Impressions In Warsaw: Poles Uneasy About 'New Empire' Drive

by Mark Burdman

As *EIR* has reported, advisers of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and a cabal of U.S. officials centered around Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, have been at the forefront of efforts to exploit the atrocities of Sept. 11 and the ensuing war in Afghanistan, to establish what they call the "New Empire," or the "Next Empire." This policy drive has brought about a fundamental, existential paradox for the nation of Poland.

As this author witnessed during a visit to Warsaw in mid-November, there are, in essence, two opposing tendencies in the Polish approach to the events of Sept. 11 and since. On the one hand, Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, Prime Minister Leszek Miller, and other leading officials have been bending over backward in public, to stress that Poland is the most stalwart Anglo-American ally in Central Europe. Kwasniewski went so far as to declare, that the two best allies the United States has now, are Great Britain and Poland. On Nov. 7, he was the sponsor of a gathering of Central European leaders and policymakers, which was addressed via telephone by U.S. President George W. Bush, to mobilize support for the "war on terrorism." Poland has offered to send troops to Afghanistan.

On the other hand, there is considerable nervousness among many Poles, in reaction to the very word "empire." Poland spent more than four decades under Soviet occupation, following years of bitter resistance against Nazi brutality. Why would the country now want to be a junior partner, or satrap, for a "new empire," run by the Anglo-Americans?

The hesitation is all the more acute, because the results of what is known as "American influence" since the fall of the Soviet empire in 1989-91 have been, at best, questionable: "American"-style privatization policies have ravaged crucial areas, including health care, and have introduced, particularly among many younger Poles, an anti-social egoism, anomic individualism, and crude utilitarianism, in a rush for wealth and personal well-being, without concern for the broader society.

The unease about getting sucked into the "new imperialism," was manifest during a Nov. 12 Schiller Institute meeting at the University of Warsaw. The theme of the meeting was the "new empire" policy being put forward by Blair foreign

policy guru Robert Cooper of the British Foreign Office, and his "clash of civilizations" counterparts in the United States, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski (who is very well-known in Poland), Samuel Huntington, Richard Perle, and Wolfowitz. More than 20 individuals, including a former senior Polish government official, leading academics, and Central Asia specialists, attended a seminar by this correspondent and *EIR*'s Rainer Apel, the which was followed by a very animated discussion.

Many in the audience voiced considerable skepticism about the official "Osama bin Laden did it" cover story for what happened on Sept. 11, wanting to know "who benefitted" and what was the motivation behind it, expressing reservations about what is in store for Poland, strategically and otherwise, if it blindly follows policy dictates from the London-Washington axis. Several recalled Poland's role as a pawn, or victim of imperial powers, throughout much of the last century.

Economic Shocks

This unease is greatly exacerbated, by the economic woes that Poland is suffering. Although there is, now, political freedom, freedom to associate with political parties, and rights of travel that didn't exist under the Soviet occupation, the fundamental *social-economic* security, provided by the social safety net of earlier years, has been shattered.

As one Polish academic put it to this writer, the population, under Soviet occupation, rallied together to preserve the basics of social welfare, and an effective social net in domains such as employment and guaranteed health care. But now, the health care in the country is often beyond the means of average Poles, and doctors are under intense pressure to deny health care to those who cannot afford it. Among most Poles, he said, Lyndon LaRouche's insistence on the importance of the nation-state in providing for the general welfare of the entire population, would readily gain support.

The fact is, in 1997, under intense prodding from the Anglo-Americans and from the international financial community led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government passed legislation that, overnight, ripped apart the health system, and imposed what were openly described as "American-style" reforms, à la the health maintenance organization for-profit model that has prevailed in the United States.

Unemployment, which was a rare phenomenon before the 1990s—before the "shock therapy" demanded by the IMF, the "free-market" Mont Pelerin Society, and the networks of mega-speculator George Soros—is now estimated to be between 16 and 20%.

Over the Summer, despite the Central Bank's high-interest-rate policy, the Polish currency, the zloty, was devalued by 16%. Industrial production has been plummeting throughout the year.

After Argentina and Turkey, Poland is often pointed to,



A Solidarnosc demonstration at the Polish Parliament in 1995. The party was effectively wiped off the political map in the recent elections, due to its harsh austerity policies.

as a potential trigger for a global debt-repayment crisis.

The social-economic problems are worsened, by the complete lack of any semblance of real political leadership.

In the Sept. 23 parliamentary elections, the then-ruling Solidarnosc Election Action-Right (AWS-P) of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek—a continuation of the Solidarity famous for its fight against the Soviets throughout the 1980s, but which attracted enormous popular hostility when it imposed harsh austerity measures while in power—was effectively wiped off the political map. The ruling party received only 5.5% of the vote, and thereby did not qualify for representation in the Polish Sejm (parliament). Poland's leading arch-monetarist grouping, the Freedom Union of Central Bank head Leszek "Shock Therapy" Balcerowicz and former Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek, received a miserable 3.3% (although another strongly monetarist party, the recently founded Civic Platform, came in second, with about 12.4% of the vote).

The leading party now, is the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) of President Kwasniewski, which received about 42% of the vote, and rules in a coalition arrangement. A jarring irony of Polish politics, is that Kwasniewski and fellow SLD man Miller, both "leftists," have pledged to continue austerity measures and a very strong pro-NATO policy—although this is being somewhat cushioned by maintaining high-level diplomatic exchanges with the Russians.

A sign of the discontent, is that in the Sept. 23 parliamentary elections, the farmer-protest group Samoobrona received a surprising 10% of the vote. As Polish sources emphasize, Samoobrona leader Andrzej Lepper may justifiably be seen as a populist Jacobin demagogue, but the fact that his formation gained such a high vote, reflects not him as such, but the volatile mood in the country.

A Time For New Heroes

Thanks to years of work done in Poland by the LaRouche movement, highlighted by the visit of Lyndon LaRouche to Warsaw on May 22-25, there is widespread recognition of the importance, and potential positive benefit for Poland, of the LaRouche Eurasian Land-Bridge program. Being in Poland, gave this author a stark sense of the nation's geographic and geo-economic importance, with Germany to the West, and Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine to the East. Especially given the rundown and inadequate road and rail infrastructure, there is nothing that would benefit Poland more, than a program for the reinvigoration of infrastructure development, through building such projects as the Berlin-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow high-speed rail line (described by Jonathan Tennenbaum, "The New Eurasian Land-Bridge Infrastructure Takes Shape," *EIR*, Nov. 2, 2001), and through the cultivation of cooperative relationships with China, India, and other Asian nations.

What is absent, is the political vision and courage to fight for a "Eurasian"-centered policy for a country that is geographically ideal for such a policy. This is, indeed, an existential matter for the future of economically devastated and socially demoralized Poland. But it would require breaking with the London-New York financial-banking-intelligence matrix, and standing up to the blackmail that the latter would direct at the country, should it move in this "Eurasian" direction.

As LaRouche emphasized while in Warsaw, Polish history has been, in significant part, the history of resistance against tyranny, occupation, and despotism (see *EIR*, June 8). Now, the mood of opportunism and cynicism that one finds too often prevailing in the country, must be replaced by that commitment, to bring the country successfully into an important, positive role in the 21st Century.