

Presidential Election in Poland, a round up one week before the election

D-7
7 days before
the poll

30 million Poles are being called to vote on 20th June next for the first round of the presidential election – an election that has come four months earlier than planned due to the accidental death of outgoing Head of State, Lech Kaczynski on 10th April last. The latter died with his wife and 94 other people in a plane crash in Petchorsk, a town in Russia near Smolensk. The presidential delegation was on its way to Katyn to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the execution of 22,000 Polish officers by the Soviet secret services.

The interim of the Polish presidency has been ensured by Diet leader, Bronislaw Komorowski (PO), who is also standing for Civic Platform in this Presidential election.

Poles living abroad are allowed to vote in this presidential election. In the UK that has a Polish population of 750,000 (half of whom live in London) 45 polling stations will be open (the most outside of Poland), 8 of which are in London. During the parliamentary elections on 21st October 2007, 48,000 Poles in the UK registered on the electoral rolls so that they could fulfil their civic duty.

This year given the date chosen for the possible 2nd round (4th July) the authorities decided to open polling stations in the Poles' favourite holiday resorts (Egypt, Turkey and Spain). This measure involves PO voters above all, who are more likely to spend their holidays abroad. Low turnout in the 2nd round would be a factor that would favour Law and Justice (PiS) whose electorate are often less motivated.

Civic Platform candidate, Bronislaw Komorowski has travelled to the UK where he met the Polish community. On 23rd October 2005, during the second round of the presidential election Donald Tusk (PO) won 75% of the votes of Poles living in the UK, against 46% in Poland. *"If the Polish economy continues to grow at the present rate many Poles will come home,"* declared Bronislaw Komorowski on the Polish radio in London.

The leftwing candidate Grzegorz Napieralski (Democratic Left Alliance, SLD), also made the trip to the UK for the campaign and encouraged the Poles to return to live in their country.

Officially there are 10 candidates:

- Bronislaw Komorowski (PO), Marshall (chair) of the Diet, former Defence Minister (2000-2001) and Interim President of the Republic since the death of Lech Kaczynski;
- Jaroslaw Kaczynski (PiS), twin brother of the President of the deceased President of the Republic Lech Kaczynski and former Prime Minister (2006-2007);
- Waldemar Pawlak (Polish Farmers' Party, PSL), present Deputy Prime minister and Economy Minister in the government led by Donald Tusk;
- Grzegorz Napieralski (Democratic Left Alliance, SLD), leader of the main leftwing party and the youngest of all the candidates (36);
- Marek Jurek (Law of the Republic of Poland, PR), former leader of the Diet (2005-2007);
- Boguslaw Zietek (Labour Party, PPP), chair of the union confederation WZZ Sierpien 80, which lies to the left on the political scale;
- Kornel Morawiecki, historic leader of the union Fighting Solidarity;
- Janusz Korwin-Mikke (Freedom and Rule of Law, WiP), former leader of Political Union and supporter of the monarchy;
- Andrzej Olechowski, independent candidate supported by the Democratic Party (SD), former member of

Presidential Election in Poland 20th June 2010 (1st poll) and 4th July(2nd poll)

Civic Platform (PO) which he left in 2009 and of which he was the founder with Donald Tusk and Maciej Plazynski (who died in the plane crash on 10th April last) and former Finance and Foreign Minister;

- Andrzej Lepper (Self-Defence of Poland-Samoobrona, S), former Deputy Minister and Agriculture Minister (2006-2007).

Jaroslaw Kaczynski (PiS) held his first major campaign meeting in Zakopane at the heart of the Catholic territory in the south of Poland. Over the last weeks, the PiS leader's approach has changed. The former Prime Minister is less aggressive and is keen to position himself in the centre of the political scale. He is being more tolerant with regard to his German and Russian neighbours. *"Poland's economic success is strongly associated with that of Germany and Poland must maintain good relations with its neighbour in the West,"* he declared in Slubice, a town that lies on the Oder, on the Polish-German border. Just a few weeks ago Jaroslaw Kaczynski thanked the Russians for their attitude when his brother was killed. *"Poland suffered a major tragedy on 10th April last and the Poles are grateful for every tear spilled, each candle that has been lit, and each gesture of compassion"* he stressed. *"These words were appreciated by the Russians, the speech on Germany may have had a similar effect,"* analyses historian Bogdan Musial.

Jaroslaw Kaczynski, whose party has often played on the divisions within the Polish population, called for *"the end of the Polish-Polish war, the cause of discord and suffering which does the country no good."* However many analysts doubt the former Prime Minister's sincerity.

He insisted on declaring his support to Prime Minister Donald Tusk (PO) in his fight to overcome the major flooding that devastated and is still devastating Poland, notably in the south-east of the country; this has led to the death of around 20 people and has forced many people to leave their houses. But the former Prime Minister also criticised the government for the lack of organisation of the emergency services. Jaroslaw Kaczynski declared that if there were any more floods he would not be against the government declaring a state

of natural disaster, a measure that is expected by 58% of the Poles according to the polls. He also turned some of his pre-electoral meetings into charity concerts held for the benefit of the flood victims.

This electoral campaign that is taking place in a country in mourning is really specific: the accident on 10th April and the floods are weighing heavy on the two main candidates - Bronislaw Komorowski and Jaroslaw Kaczynski – likewise on all Poles. *"The chiefs of staff of both teams in the campaign are holding back. The party that attacks the first knows that it may also lose everything,"* indicated Eryk Mistewicz, a political marketing expert.

Running favourite in the presidential election Bronislaw Komorowski is not having an easy time. Enjoying a certain advantage since he has been ensuring the interim as head of State, he cannot however afford to make a mistake. *"The Presidency of the Republic is a major challenge and the goal for Poland is to catch up with the countries of the old European Union,"* indicated Bronislaw Komorowski who said he supported his country's accession to the euro area *"as quickly as possible"*, by 2014-2016. *"All of the State institutions, the future President of the Republic and the present Parliament must support the government's determination to adopt the euro within this time limit,"* Jaroslaw Kaczynski believes that Poland would be better advised to adopt the single currency once adopting the euro is to the *"advantage"* of the country's economy. In spite of the differences between the two brothers and the political circumstances the former Prime Minister should, if elected, follow the work that his deceased brother started and counter the privatisations that Donald Tusk's government has introduced and fight to increase State spending.

According to the latest poll by GfK Polonia, published on 12th June last Bronislaw Komorowski is due to win the 1st round of the presidential election with 42% of the vote against 29% for Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Grzegorz Napieralski is due to come 3rd with 7% of the vote and Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister Waldemar Pawlak, 2%. The six other candidates will be below the 1% threshold of votes.

In the 2nd round the interim President is due to beat the PiS candidate with 58% of the vote – the latter is due to win 34% of the vote.

The real question in this presidential election is the following: do the Poles want cohabitation again? The answer will start to emerge on 20th June.

THE FOUNDATION'S LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Fundamental Rights Protection in the EU post Lisbon Treaty

European Issue n°173 - 14/06/2010 - Xavier Groussot, Laurent Pech

European Elections monitor – General Elections in Slovakia – 12/06/2010

Voluntary Cooperation in Europe - how to provide new impetus to Europe...

Note n°47 - May 2010 - Pierre Fauchon, François Sicard

You can read all of our publications on our site:

www.robert-schuman.eu

Publishing Director: Pascale JOANNIN

THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France , Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.