

Outgoing Prime Minister Donald Tusk's Civic Platform en route for a second term in office?

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ANALYSIS
1 month before
the pool

More than 30 million Poles are being called to ballot on 9th October next to renew the entire parliament, i.e. 460 members of the Diet (Sejm) and the 100 members of the Senate. A special fact in this election: they will be taking place whilst Warsaw is ensuring the presidency of the Council of the Ministers of the European Union. It was decided that whatever the election result, the present government led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk (Civic Platform, PO) will chair the Ministers Council of the EU until 31st December 2011. It will only be possible to form the next government late on, for example at the beginning or in mid-December, since the parliament that emerges after the election will meet before mid-November.

The Civic Platform, the party in office since the last elections on 21st October 2007, seems to be set to win the election on 9th October. One question remains however: what lead will it have over its competitors? How comfortable will this be?

Law and Justice (PiS), the main opposition party led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, has said it wanted the elections to take place over two days in order to boost turnout that is traditionally low in Poland. The Constitutional Court opposed this, recalling that the Constitution stipulated that the election absolutely had to take place on a holiday or weekend. The electoral campaign is due to be short.

The Polish Political System

The Parliament is bicameral and comprises the Diet (Sejm), the lower chamber that has 460 MPs and the Senate, the upper chamber, with 100 members. The two chambers meet in the National Assembly (Zgromadzenie Narodowe) on three occasions only: when the President of the Republic takes oath, when the latter is being prosecuted by the State Court and when the Head of State is unable to exercise power due to health problems.

The general elections usually take place every 4 years by proportional representation according to the Hondt system. All political parties, except the lists representing national minorities, have to win at least 5% of the votes cast to be represented in the Diet (8% for a coalition). Poland is divided into 41 constituencies in the general elections, which each elect between 7 and 19 MPs. Senators are also elected every 4 years, on the same day as the general election. For the Senatorial elections Poland is divided into 40 constituencies, which each elect between 2 and 4 Senators by simple majority. Every candidate standing for a Senatorial seat has to have the support of at least 3000 voters in his constituency

(5,000 for candidates running for a seat in the Diet).

Candidates have to be aged at least 21 in order to accede to the position of MP and 30 to become a Senator. The parties and groups comprising at least 15 citizens are allowed to put lists forward in the general elections. Finally candidates are not allowed to compete both in the general and senatorial elections.

4 political parties are represented in the Diet at present:

- Civic Platform (PO), of which Prime Minister Donald Tusk has been the chair since 2003. Created in March 2001 it has 209 seats;

- Law and Justice (PiS), an opposition party led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Founded on 13th June 2001, the party supports State control, is liberal, conservative and greatly attached to Poland's Catholic identity – it is eurosceptic and has 166 MPs;

- Left and Democrats (LiD), created on 3rd September 2006, it rallies the former members of the Democratic Party (PD), the Social Democratic Party (SDPL), the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Labour Union (UP); it has 53 seats;

- the People's Party (PSL), a centrist, agrarian party, a member of the government coalition. It is the oldest politi-

cal party in Poland (created in 1895), it also has the most members (around 120,000). Chaired by former Prime Minister (1992 and 1993-1995) and outgoing Economy Minister, Waldemar Pawlak, it has 31 seats.

The German minority also has one MP (Ryszard Galla, MP in the district of Opole).

Only two parties, the PO and the PiS are represented in the Senate. They respectively have 60 and 39 seats. One Senator is registered as an independent.

7 political parties are running in the parliamentary elections on 9th October: Civic Platform, Law and Justice, Democratic Left Alliance, the People's Party, Poland First (Polska jest Najważniejsza, PJN), a party founded in November 2010 by former members of the liberal branch of the PiS, led by Pawel Kowal (the party takes its name from the slogan that Jaroslaw Kaczynski used in the last presidential election), the Palikot Movement (RPP), an anti-clerical party, founded in June 2011 by Janusz Palikot, former Member of the PO, and the Labour Party (PPP), a far left party led by Boguslaw Zietek. Janusz Korwin-Mikke's New Right (NP) and the Right of the Republic of Poland (Prawica RP) led by Marek Jurek did not succeed in collating enough signatures. According to political analysts, the absence of these two parties will be to the benefit of the PiS.

The Civic Platform after Four Years in Office

The Civic Platform is the main political party in Poland. Holding the majority across every region, its candidate Bronislaw Komorowski won the presidential election last year: the former marshall (leader) of the Diet came out ahead of Jaroslaw Kaczynski (PiS) on 4th July, taking 53.01% of the vote, 46.99% going to his rival. The presidential election came early after the accidental death of the previous head of State, Lech Kaczynski (PiS) and 95 other people in a plane crash, as they were travelling to Petchorsk in the region of Smolensk (Russia) on 10th April 2010. The presidential delegation was travelling to Katyn to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the execution of 22, 000 Polish officers by the Soviet secret services.

On 5th December 2010 the Civic Platform (PO) won the regional, provincial and local elections. The party won 10 of the 16 voivodies (regions), taking 222 seats, against 141 for the PiS, 93 for the People's Party and 85 for the Democratic Left Alliance within the regional councils. The PO also won 1,315 seats in the provincial councils and 600 local councillors' seats. The PiS won 1,085 provincial councillors' seats and 365 community councillors' seats, the People's party won 999 and 8, the Democratic Left Alliance, 493 and 214. In the local elections the PO won 39.6% of the vote ahead of

the PiS with 25.1%, the People's Party 16.6% and the Democratic Left Alliance 15.1%. The PO was victorious in eight of the ten major towns and in 23 in all across Poland as a whole; the Democratic Left Alliance won in 8 towns and the PiS in five. The PO retained Warsaw where the outgoing Mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Wlacz won in the first round with 53.67% of the vote. The party in office also won the towns of Lodz, Gdansk and Lublin.

On 9th October the Civic Platform may become the first party to win the parliamentary elections twice running since the collapse of the communist system in 1989. Outgoing Prime Minister Donald Tusk is the second head of government (with the present President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, Prime Minister between 1997 and 2001) to have completed his 4 year term in office. The past few years have comprised a break in a rushed decade in which there were several political scandals and a great amount of tension between parties and also between politicians. Donald Tusk has also managed to give Poland the image of a moderate, conciliatory nation. He has clearly improved his country's relations with its German and Russian neighbours. "There have been some mistakes but the Poles are mainly satisfied. The

electorate wants, more or less, for things to continue this way: they are asking for stability and improvements in their living standards," declared Pavel Swieboda, director of the think tank Demos Europa.

At present the Civic Platform is trying to show that the main split in the Polish political landscape is between it and the PiS. The PO is suffering from not having any real opposition and is attempting to demonise Jaroslaw Kaczynski's party, playing on the fear that its possible return to power might cause. The PO will probably need a partner to form the next government

coalition after the election on 9th October. According to some political analysts the party hopes to put an end to its alliance with the People's Party. Moreover it is giving increasing signs of opening to positions on the left, notably with regard to the Democratic Left Alliance led by Grzegorz Napieralski -, with whom it is trying not to quibble with.

Bartosz Arlukowicz, a member of the Democratic Left Alliance and MP joined the government in which he was appointed Secretary of State for Social Exclusion. Economist Dariusz Rosati, former Foreign Minister (1995-1997) in the governments led by Jozef Oleksy (SLD) (1995-1996) and Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz (SLD) (1996-1997) and former MEP (2004-2009), have also drawn closer to the PO. The leader of the Senate Bogdan Borusewicz has also formalised his relations with the ruling party. Director of the think tank, Unia & Polska, Krzysztof Bobinski, is convinced that the po-

popularity of Bartosz Arlukowicz will be to the benefit of Donald Tusk. Some PO members, including the leader of the Diet (leader of the lower chamber) Grzegorz Schetyna, would like the latter to be more open to the other end of the political scale, such as "It is Poland that is important" (PjN).

According to political observers, six of the 18 outgoing government ministers are due to retain their positions in the event of victory by PO. These are Jacek Rostowski, Finance Minister, Radosław Sikorski, Foreign Minister, Michał Boni, Chief economic advisor, Krzysztof Kwiatkowski, Justice Minister, Ewa Kudrycka, Science Minister and Cezary Grabarczyk, Infrastructure Minister.

The PO regularly points to the fact that Poland is the only EU country not to have experienced recession after the international economic crisis that started in the autumn of 2008. In 2009, Warsaw witnessed growth of 1.7% in its GDP. According to the latest statistics, growth is due to reach 4% in 2012. During Donald Tusk's term in office salaries have increased, unemployment has plummeted, which has led to a rise in fiscal revenues. The PO also increased taxes, modified the retirement system and partly nationalised the social insurance sector.

However the PO knows that it will not just be able to rely on its economic results to retain power. The modernisation of infrastructures has been delayed and many reforms (notably those concerning the healthcare system, public finance and the simplification of the administrative system for businesses and private parties) are not moving forward. State spending is too high, which has led to a rise in the public deficit totalling 7.9% in 2010. Prime Minister Tusk does like to recall that Poland enjoys an enviable economic position and that the state of public finance is fine in comparison with that of other European States.

In the elections on 9th October the PO is promoting the following themes: a flexible State, (service providers), solidarity in society, competitive scientific research and the development of intelligence. The government hopes to bring in a reform designed to balance public finances and improve the country's management. This would mean new security levers banning the programming of major budgetary spending when the public debt is over 52% of the national GDP (it lies at 47.4% at present).

The Polish government needs 60 billion zlotys (nearly 15 billion €) and has to make cuts in social spending, the most radical since Poland's return to democracy in 1989. The 2012 budget will not be voted on in parliament until after the election.

Opposition on the Left, but especially on the Right

Law and Justice (PiS), which rejoiced when it saw the gap separating it from the PO decrease in the local elections on 21st November and 5th December 2010, is trying to rally

the Poles on sensitive issues. Jarosław Kaczyński has already broken with the moderate, conciliatory tone he had adopted during his campaign for the presidential election on 20th June and 4th July 2010, taking up his former aggressiveness, accusing Donald Tusk's government, which was responsible for the Head of State's security, of being responsible for the tragic accident involving his twin brother, Lech. The PiS leader even said that the Head of State and the government leader should leave the Polish political arena.

According to the conclusions of a government report published at the end of July the causes of the deadly plane crash that led to the death of the Polish President in 2010, were the inexperience of the pilot and lax security measures. Prime Minister Donald Tusk reacted rapidly in response to this report by dismissing three generals and 10 air force officers. Defence Minister Bogdan Klich (PO) resigned from office and was replaced by Tomasz Siemoniak (PO).

Jarosław Kaczyński says he is ready to modernise the State whilst respecting the Polish culture, traditions and values. He accuses Donald Tusk of wanting to transform Poland into a "Russian-German condominium". He says he supports greater firmness in relations between Warsaw and Moscow, Berlin and also Paris. These declarations do not find much echo within the population however. Jarosław Kaczyński plans to increase taxes on banks and supermarkets and also on the wealthiest Poles to improve the public finance situation. Tomasz Poreba will be the PiS's campaign director.

The results achieved by the Farmers' Party in the last local elections on 21st November and 5th December 2010 surprised political analysts and even left its leader, Waldemar Pawlak, "speechless" - as he said himself. "This proves that we are a major partner for the government, much more important than anyone thought before these local elections," he said. According to sociologist, Filip Jarosław, the Farmers' Party's result on 9th October next will greatly depend on the commitment of its local representatives.

On 26th August last outgoing Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Waldemar Pawlak were the only two politicians to take part in the first TV debate in the electoral campaign. The absence of the PiS leader and of Grzegorz Napieralski, leader of the Democratic Left Alliance intimates that both the left and rightwing opposition do not believe in their victory.

As the elections approach the political scene seems to be polarising. According to latest poll by GfK Polonia, published by the daily Rzeczpospolita, the PO is due to win 47% of the vote, the PiS 29% ; the Democratic Left Alliance, 13% and the People's Party 4%. According to a poll by Homo homini, published in the newspaper, Super Express, the PO is due to win one third of the vote (32%), the PiS, one quarter (24%), the Democratic Left Alliance, 12%, and the People's Party 7%.

Turnout will be a key factor in the elections on 9th October next.

A reminder of the parliamentary election results of 21st October 2007 in Poland

Turnout : 53,88%

Political Parties	No. of votes won	% of votes won	No of votes won in the Diet	No of votes won in the Senate
Civic Platform (PO)	6 701 010	41,51	209	60
Law and Justice (PiS)	5 183 477	32,11	166	39
Left and Democrats (LiD)	2 122 981	13,15	53	0
People's Party (PSL)	1 437 638	8,91	31	0
Self Defence-Samoobrona (SO)	247 335	1,53	0	0
Families' League (LPR)	209 171	1,30	0	0
Others	240 590	1,47	0	0
German Minority	32 462	0,20	1	0
Independents			0	1

Source : Internet Site of the National Electoral Committee
<http://www.wybory2007.pkw.gov.pl>

In office at present, Civic Platform (PO) maintains its lead in the polls even though the gap between Law and Justice (PiS) is narrowing.

D-7
7 days before
the poll

On 9th October more than 30 million Poles will be renewing the two chambers of the Parliament: the Diet (Sejm), and the Senate (Senat). The polls are anticipating victory for the Civic Platform, outgoing Prime Minister, Donald Tusk's party. The gap between it and its main rival, Jaroslaw Kaczynski's, Law and Justice Party, has been narrowing over the last few weeks. The party in office is not due to win an absolute majority alone and will therefore have to form a government coalition. It may choose to continue working with the People's Party or possibly turn to the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), and even if it seems difficult to imagine, it may form a partnership with Law and Justice (PiS).

The electoral campaign has extended beyond Poland's borders. Hence on 7th September the Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski (PO) travelled to London and Dublin, where many Poles live. Likewise Prime Minister Donald Tusk visited Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, a neighbouring country that also has a large Polish minority. Law and Justice (PiS) has not been left behind in this and is also campaigning in the UK.

Civic Platform is trying to frighten voters by highlighting the dangers that a return to power by the PiS would represent for Poland. "Eurosceptic, inward-looking opposition, which prefers drama and tragedy to success, may bring the present public investment policy and to a halt and undermine Poland's European base by challenging Warsaw's position with regard to the EU" declared the Prime Minister adding, "Without even realising it our opponents can ruin all of the work we have done." Moreover Donald Tusk has challenged his rival, Jaroslaw Kaczynski on several occasions, accusing him of cowardice because he refuses to take part in pre-electoral debates offered by the television channels.

Civic Platform, which has chosen the slogan, "We shall do better" (in response to Law and Justice's declaration "The Poles deserve better"), knows that it promised a great deal four years ago and that it has less to offer than in 2007. It is relying on the middle classes, which understand that the country has succeeded in resisting the international economic crisis, better than any other state in Europe. Since 1990 Warsaw has more than tripled its GDP/capita which lies at €13,808. "Contrary to the other parties the Civic Platform has used the economic crisis to increase its electorate. It has also been helped by the PiS which is a good opponent, since many people support the PO because they fear that the PiS will get back into government," indicates Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski, a political expert at the Collegium Civitas, University of Warsaw.

"There have been a few mistakes but most Poles are satisfied," says Pawel Swieboda, director of the think-tank, Demos Europe, adding "voters want things to continue, they want stability and an improvement in their living standards." However the desire for consensus and to receive partners within its midst, who often have very different opinions, sometimes weakens the PO's position. Moreover the party absolutely has to motivate the undecided; low turnout would indeed be to its disadvantage, since the PiS's electorate is traditionally highly motivated.

From an economic point of view the outgoing Prime Minister's party is promising a reduction in VAT as of 2014; a rise in civil servants' salaries and a reduction of the public debt down to 48% of the GDP in 2015 and 40% three years later. The PO hopes to continue its privatisation programme,

introduce competition into the healthcare system and improve the country's education system. It is suggesting that Poland adopts the single currency once the present crisis in the euro zone is over. However the outgoing head of government is not planning on tax reductions within the next two years. "Whoever says that a reduction in taxes is possible in the near future and that this is important for Poland is either a liar or a fool. To stay afloat in times of turbulence Poland must not take radical measures. If we want to guarantee the regular payment of retirement pensions and social aid we cannot run the risk of reducing our budget. Today we need a great amount of discipline and a little bit of patience," declared the outgoing Prime Minister adding, "Poland cannot start to waver as Greece has been doing".

"I am standing to win and I hope to undertake a second term in office. I want to be re-elected because I want to be Prime Minister in these difficult times;" declared Donald Tusk on 25th September, adding "victory in 2011 will probably be more important than the one in 2007 because Poland has a further opportunity to benefit from European funds to complete its modernisation and because the world situation is more complex. The challenge is major; as a result we hope to win with an even greater margin."

"For the first time since the end of communism in 1989 a government has a chance of being re-elected," stresses Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski.

Law and Justice (PiS) hopes to limit the privatisations and bring large companies – such as PKN Orlin, Grupa Lotos, PZU, KGHM Polska Miedz and PGNiG – under State control. The party is only contemplating the adoption of the euro once the markets are over the financial crisis, after a referendum and when Poland has reached the socio-economic levels of the most developed countries, i.e. in 15 to 20 years. The PiS hopes to tax the banks and is not excluding an increase in taxes on the wealthiest Poles. Finally, Jaroslaw Kaczynski supports an increase in the minimum salary by half of the present average salary, i.e. 3,612 zlotys/month (819 €).

The PiS is finding it hard to justify the absence of its leader in the pre-electoral TV debates. The latter has declared that he did not want to debate with political leaders and accuses the journalists, who question the candidates, of not being competent

enough. Jaroslaw Kaczynski certainly remembers his "defeat" in the TV debate against Donald Tusk during the electoral campaign of 21st October 2007. He also finds it hard to find people in his entourage who are able to take part in a debate on economic issues. Zyta Gilowska, former Finance Minister in the government led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski in 2006-2007 and member of the Monetary Policy Council since February 2010, cannot join in the electoral campaign. Finally the PiS is struggling to appoint people who might occupy the various ministries in a government it would lead, if it won. The party lost several of its most eminent members in the plane crash on 10th April 2010 in Petchorsk in the region of Smolensk (Russia) which cost the life of the President of the Republic Lech Kaczynski (PiS), Jaroslaw's twin brother, and 95 other people in the presidential delegation, who were travelling to Katyn to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the execution of 22,000 Polish officers by the Soviet secret police.

Others, who left the PiS for a time, such as former Culture Minister (2005-2007) Kazimierz Michal Ujazdowski, and former leader of the Diet (April-November 2007), Ludwik Dorn, joined it again but Jaroslaw Kaczynski no longer trusts them. Zbigniew Ziobro, often seen as the successor to Jaroslaw Kaczynski as head of the party, has been quoted as being the next Justice Minister (he already occupied this office between 2005 and 2007) but he is possibly more interested in the position of MEP and seems distant from the Polish political scene. Anna Fotyga and Witold Waszykowski are also names that have often been mentioned to take the post of Foreign Minister.

"We need a strong government," says Jaroslaw Kaczynski who says he is ready to take courageous decisions. He has indicated that the "creative tension" that would exist between himself and the President of the Republic Bronislaw Komorowski (PO), if he became Prime Minister after the parliamentary elections on 9th October next would be more constructive than "the soporific harmony" that reigns between Donald Tusk and the head of State. In the event of victory, Law and Justice (PiS) would however find the situation difficult: indeed

the party refuses any type of alliance with the PO; a coalition with the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) is almost impossible and a union with the People's Party (PSL) would probably not be enough to win the absolute majority in Parliament.

Former representative of the popular classes, the left has now adopted a more social-liberal approach, by drawing closer to heads of companies with whom it now has good relations. This development has not been without consequences, many voters in the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) have left the party to join the PO (a "strategic" vote may also explain this change in support). Internally the SLD leader Grzegorz Napieralski, has changed the party's structures, promoted young people and concentrated powers, whilst the former Democratic Left Alliance comprised numerous trends. The left's reputation in Poland is nevertheless extremely mediocre because of its links with the former Polish Unified Workers' Party (PZPR) which led the country for 41 years (1948-1989). The SLD does still have a loyal, stable, electorate however.

The party supports a reduction in VAT on medicines, foodstuffs and cultural and sports activities. It is asking for the introduction of a minimal salary for farmers and increases in healthcare and education spending, as well as on investments in infrastructures.

Its leader Grzegorz Napieralski has set the goal of winning 18% of the vote on October 9th next. The party would consider a result lower than 15% a failure.

The most recent poll by Homo Homini, published on 25th September, the Civic Platform (PO) retains its lead with 33% of the vote, followed by Law and Justice (PiS) 28%; the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) 12%; the People's Party (PSL) 9%, and the Palikot Movement (RPP), an anticlerical party founded in June 2011 by former PO member Janusz Palikot, 3.5%, which is probably going to play the role of kingmaker. On 1st September, another poll by Homo Homini for the Polish public radio shows that the Civic Platform will obtain 30.1%, the PiS 29.1%, the People's Party (PSL) 10.4%, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) 9.9%; and the Palikot Movement (RPP) 9%.

The Civic Platform (PO) won the polish general elections

The Civic Platform (PO) of the outgoing Prime Minister Donald Tusk came top in the parliamentary elections held on 9th October. It won 38.96% of the vote and 207 seats (-2 compared to the previous elections held on 21st October 2007), well ahead of its main conservative opponent, the Law and Justice Party (PiS), the main opposition party led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, which obtained 30.03% and 157 seats (- 9). There was a surprise from a new party, the Palikot Movement (RPP), an anti-clerical party founded in June 2011 by the businessman Janusz Palikot former member of the Civic Platform, which he left last year, came third with 9.94% and 40 seats in a country where over 90% of the population declare themselves to be Catholic. Waldemar Pawlak's People's Party (PSL), member of the outgoing government's coalition, collected 8.55% and 28 seats (- 3). The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) led by Grzegorz Napieralski saw a sharp decline, obtaining 8.19% and 27 seats (- 26). Remember that 4 years ago the party entered the elections with the democratic party (PD), the Social Democracy of Poland party (SLD) and the Labour Union (PD), within the Democratic Left Alliance (LiD). Finally, Poland Comes First (Polska jest Najwazniejsza, PJN), founded in November 2010 by former members of the liberal wing of the PiS and led by Pawel Kowal, failed to pass the obligatory limit of 5% of the vote required in order to enter parliament (2.18%). The PO won 63 seats in the Senate, the PiS 31 and the PSL 2. 4 seats are for independents. Less than half the electorate (48.63%) went out to vote, with turnout down by 5.25 points compared to the last parliamentary elections on 21st October 2007.



RESULTS

«This is the victory of optimistic Poland. I would like to thank all those who voted for us and all those who did not because together we will have the responsibility of leading Poland for four more years», declared the outgoing Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, adding «These 4 years will be an even more important challenge because we will have to work twice as hard and act twice as quickly. The Polish people have the right to live better». «The most important thing is to preserve Poland from political, economic and financial catastrophe and to finish what we started four years ago» warned the outgoing head of government during his electoral campaign, during which he multiplied warnings against the threat that a victory of the PiS would cause to weigh on the country.

With no absolute majority, the Prime Minister will have to find partners with whom to form a government coalition. «I do not think that Donald Tusk will approach Janusz Palikot to form a coalition. If the PO-PSL coalition is too small, the head of government will probably attempt to poach a few SLD MPs» says Jacek Raciborski, political sciences researcher

at Warsaw University. The PSL has stated that it is willing to continue its collaboration with the PO in government.

Donald Tusk has a hard task ahead of him over these next 4 years. Modernisation of infrastructures is running late and many reforms (notably those concerning the health system, public finances or simplification of the administrative system for both businesses and individuals) are marking time. «The golden age is behind us and we are already seeing the first symptoms of an economic slowdown with a fall in exports and consumer spending» indicated Pawel Swieboda, political commentator, «We're like a beach hut facing the ocean. We could be submerged by the waves of crisis. Almost 60% of our exports go to the euro area, 80% to Europe», says economist Ryszard Petru.

«We respect the results of the legislative elections, but our task over the next 4 years will be to convince the millions of Poles that our country needs major changes and that another form of Republic is essential. Sooner or later we will win because we are right», underlined PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski. «Things

will have to change in the PiS because Jaroslaw Kaczynski will not be able to mobilise his electorate over the course of the next 4 years without giving them anything in return» declared Stanislaw Mocek, political commentator at the Polish Academy of Sciences. «You could say it's a miracle - but we are not believers. You are the ones who have created the miracle. It's a great hope to know that in Poland there are millions of people who want a secular, civic and open State, where faith is kept a private matter», declared Janusz Palikot. «I want to be the new messiah of the left, the one who will change Polish politics», he said to Newsweek Polska magazine during the election campaign. A businessman, Janusz Palikot was elected as a Member of Parliament in 2005 on the PO lists and was re-elected in the parliamentary elections held on 21st October 2007. The Palikot Movement (RPP) has about 30,000 members. It speaks for taxation of the clergy, liberalisation of laws on abortion and cannabis, euthanasia and adoption for homosexual couples. It also wants to put an end to religious education in state schools. A pro-European liberal he is also in favour of a rapprochement of Poland and Germany.

«In the nineties, all the parties were close to the Church. But the deal has changed and 20 years have gone by. Now 33% of Poles say they no longer have any confidence in the Church, and that figure is constantly on the increase. The Polish people have had enough of instrumentalisation and recuperation» states Lena Kolarska-Bobinska, MEP and director of the Polish Public Affairs Institute, adding, «The Church is still very powerful in Poland, particularly amongst the institutions. But its influence is waning amongst young people. The movement will go the same way here as it has in all other European countries. The secularisation process began later, it is certainly slower, but Poland will little by little begin to look like its neighbours».

«I will not be an easy coalition partner. I will not participate in any government that is not willing to undertake radical measures such as a complete reworking of the education system and modernisation of the local government system» declared Janusz Palikot. Aged 54 and originally from Eastern Pomerania (he is a member of the Kashubian community, a Slavonic

minority from the Gdansk region, disputed for years between Poland and Germany), Donald Tusk is a history graduate from Gdansk University where in his youth he was an active militant in the Solidarnosc Union. A member of the Liberal-Democratic Congress (KLD) and then of the Liberty Union (UW), he founded the Civic Platform in March 2001 with Andrzej Olechowski and Maciej Plazynski.

Elected a member of parliament in 1991, he became vice-president of the Diet, the lower house of parliament, from 2001 to 2005. A candidate in the presidential election of 23rd October 2005, he collected 45.53% of the vote and was beaten by Lech Kaczynski (PiS) (54.47%). Two years later Donald Tusk became Prime Minister after the parliamentary elections held on 21st October 2007, which he won with 41.51% of the vote.

His first mandate at the head of the government acted as a pause in a decade rocked by several political scandals and many tensions between political parties and between politicians. The Prime Minister succeeded in giving Poland the image of a moderate, conciliatory nation, considerably improving his country's relations with its two neighbours, Germany and Russia. Donald Tusk can also be proud of the fact that Poland is the only country in the European Union not to have suffered recession after the international economic crisis which began in autumn 2008. In 2009 Warsaw saw its GDP increase by 1.7%. Growth should again reach 4% next year. An increase in salaries and the reduction in unemployment have led to an increase in tax revenue. Finally, the state of public finances is very satisfactory compared to that of other European States, even though State spending is still too high (the public deficit reached 7.9% in 2010).

The Civic Platform is therefore the first party to be returned to office since the break-up of the Communist system in Poland in 1989. Donald Tusk is the 2nd head of government (with the current president of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, Prime Minister from 1997 to 2001) to have reached the end of his 4-year mandate at the head of government. «This result bears witness to the fact that democracy is being consolidated in Poland», declared Jacek Racziborski.

Results of the parliamentary elections held in Poland on 9th October 2011

Turnout : 48.63%

Political Parties	No. of votes won	% of votes won	No of votes won in the Diet	No of votes won in the Senate
Civic Platform (PO)	5 119 833	38.96	207	63
Law and Justice (PiS)	3 946 533	30.03	157	31
Palikot Movement (RPP)	1 305 095	9.94	40	0
People's Party (PSL)	1 123 516	8.55	28	2
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	1 076 675	8.19	27	0
Poland Comes First (PjN)	285 970	2.18	0	0
Others	281 060	2.14	1	4

Source: National Electoral Commission website
<http://www.wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl>

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