

Europe breathes sigh of relief at Polish poll result by Monika Scislowska

First published in the Independent on Tuesday, 6 July 2010 sourced from Associated Press, in Warsaw

Bronislaw Komorowski's election as President has offered Poland's pro-business ruling party an opportunity - but also a challenge - as it prepares to govern without the obstacle of a hostile head of state. With parliamentary elections scheduled for late 2011, the *Civic Platform* party of Mr Komorowski and Prime Minister Donald Tusk must now show the country whether it can tackle major economic problems, including high debt and unemployment. 'Civic Platform! You now have total power', the tabloid *Fakt* declared in large type on its front page yesterday. 'Show what you can do - you have a year!'



Mr Komorowski won 53% of the vote to 47% for his rival, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the state electoral commission announced yesterday. Mr Kaczynski had conceded defeat on Sunday night after exit polls predicted his rival had won. Mr Komorowski has pledged to work closely with the government to support its program of modernising Poland and trimming the welfare state. Any painful changes could hurt Mr Tusk in next year's elections. Among reforms the government wants is an increase in the retirement age. Currently women can retire at 60 and men at 65.

Bronislaw Komorowski has pledged to support a modernisation programme

The election was held months ahead of schedule following the death in a plane crash of President Lech Kaczynski in April. His identical twin brother, Jaroslaw - a relatively unpopular politician just months ago - made a run for the seat and won significant support after shedding his combative image and benefiting from a surge in sympathy over the loss of his brother. Memories of the chaotic government Jaroslaw Kaczynski led from 2006-2007 probably helped keep him from victory, but his strong showing has boosted his followers' hopes that he might strengthen his showing in future elections.

Mr Komorowski's victory will be welcome news for leaders in Berlin and Brussels. Jaroslaw Kaczynski is a noted nationalist and Eurosceptic; reluctant to adopt the euro or to cede much sovereignty to the *EU*. When he was prime minister, his government was often at loggerheads with officials in Brussels.

Election splits Poland in two

[Thenews.pl](http://www.thenews.pl) at <http://www.thenews.pl> on July 5 2010

Poland's presidential election results reveal not just a split between west and north and east and south in political allegiance but also between city and countryside.

The national election commission has confirmed that support for the winner Bronislaw Komorowski and his opponent Jaroslaw Kaczynski is divided, geographically by the river Vistula, which snakes its way through the middle of Poland. 60% of western, south-western and north-western provinces voted for Komorowski, the right-of-centre *Civic Platform* candidate. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, whose support mainly comes from the elderly, poor and religious, garnered most support in the eastern regions (60%) and central Poland with over 50% of the votes.

But the political divisions in Poland run deeper than that, with Komorowski being the clear winner in the larger cities of over 250,000 inhabitants. Results show that the city of Lublin in the east was the only regional capital which saw a win for Jaroslaw Kaczynski (50.25%) to Komorowski's 49.75%.

In Opole and Poznan in the south and west Komorowski received 70% support as compared to over 20% for Kaczynski. In Gdansk on the Baltic coast and Olsztyn in the north east Komorowski was supported by 67 and 66 % respectively. Even in regions where Jaroslaw Kaczynski was most popular, the capital cities voted for Komorowski.

In Lodz, central Poland and Bialystok in the east, for instance, Komorowski won 63% of votes. The central Mazovia region told the same story, with the province as a whole voting Kaczynski but in Warsaw voted 63% support for Komorowski and 36.48% for Kaczynski. The turnout was highest in Warsaw, at 66.7% followed by Gdansk on 64.71%. The lowest turnout, 53.77% was recorded in Gorzow Wielkopolski in the west.

Polish presidential election: a welcome end to a strange campaign by Anne Applebaum

In Warsaw reporting for the Daily Telegraph on 03 Jul 2010

This has been the strangest political campaign anyone can remember, and no one, from any political faction in Poland, will be sorry to see it end. The campaign has been strange because of its timing: under normal circumstances, no one would hold an election on what is, in effect, the first weekend of summer vacation. Nor would anyone hold an election just a few weeks after heavy rains caused major flooding throughout the country.

But July 4 is polling day because the Polish constitution said it had to be. Following the death of the former president, Lech Kaczynski, in a tragic and uncanny plane crash in Smolensk Russia, last April, the government was obliged to hold early elections, and Saturday is the day required.

The campaign has also been strange because of its participants - or rather because of one of its participants. Were it not for that plane crash, the late president would be running for re-election. Instead, his identical twin brother, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, is running in his place.

'Jarek' took the decision to carry on the family legacy at an extraordinary moment: after the crash, and after several weeks of national mourning, funerals and memorial services, not only for his brother but also for some 90 other politicians and public figures on board the president's plane, many of whom he knew as well.

As a result, this election has had a peculiarly sombre air. Instead of the normal back and forth one would expect in a national campaign, the candidates have kept insults to a minimum. Major conflicts have been avoided. Accusations of treason and corruption never materialised. Although it is almost *de rigeur* in Polish politics to claim that one knows of the existence of compromising material in one's opponents' old communist police files, that kind of negative campaigning has emerged only on the margins of this election.

This funereal public atmosphere has put Kaczynski's opponent, Bronislaw Komorowski, in a difficult position. Komorowski is the acting president and a member of the centre-right Civic Platform, the ruling party in Poland. He has also been leading in most polls, was the victor during the first round of this presidential election, and defeated my husband, the Polish foreign minister, in party primaries last winter. Nevertheless the tone of his campaign has been far from assertive or victorious. On the contrary, his language and his campaign slogan - 'I build agreement' - have been kept deliberately mild. Clearly he has been trying not to sound too much like a critic of the dead president, even while carefully criticising his identical twin.

But Kaczynski, the bereaved twin brother, has trodden even more softly. He is trying not to sound - well, trying not to sound too much like himself. For here is another oddity of this election campaign: though no one much said so during the aftermath, the late President was extremely unpopular at the time his plane crashed. His twin, who was prime minister of Poland for a brief but tumultuous term in 2006 and 2007, was even more widely disliked. Both were known for their divisive tactics, for their abrasive language, for their general suspicion of foreigners and for their downright aggressive attacks on both Germany and Russia.

Since the Smolensk crash Jaroslaw Kaczynski has, he says, reinvented himself. His official slogan is even more deliberately dull than that of his opponent ('Poland is the Most Important') and his unofficial argument requires a leap of faith: 'Vote for me, because I have changed'. His tactics have been restrained, his rhetoric limited. He has given few interviews, though he has made deliberate exceptions for a German newspaper, *Die Welt*, and for Russian television, as if to show he has no more hard feelings.

He hasn't made many public appearances and he hasn't said much about his opponent. In fact, he hasn't said much at all, not even about the Smolensk crash, although there have been symbolic allusions to that event. Marta Kaczynski, the daughter of the late president and the late first lady, has appeared at her uncle's side on a number of occasions, as if to remind voters of the tragedy. When he does talk, Kaczynski sounds less like the right-wing radical he is reputed to be, and more like the left-wing ideologues against whom, as a member of the anti-communist opposition, he theoretically fought for so many years.

Hard though this will be for British voters to understand, Kaczynski, though usually described as 'far right' and 'Eurosceptic' in fact represents a peculiar form of anti-liberal, statist populism. He favours state interference in the economy, treats the word 'privatisation' like a slur and threatens to veto liberal economic reforms. In the past few days, he lavished some kind words on one of Poland's former *Communist Party* secretaries, hinting at his admiration for the 'authoritarianism with a human face' which Polish communists tried to propagate in the 1970s. Like his late brother, who wanted to follow in the footsteps of Gordon Brown last year, Kaczynski seems quite keen on raising state expenditures too.

And not only Poland's state expenditures: during the second television debate on Wednesday night, he called for larger payments to Polish farmers from the *European Union's Common Agricultural Policy*, a position which probably doesn't sound very 'Eurosceptic' to British ears.

It will be even more difficult, however, for British voters to understand why Kaczynski's relationship with the British Conservative party has also been an issue in this election. For reasons best known to himself, David Cameron decided to receive Kaczynski in London last week, during the last week of the Polish campaign. For Kaczynski, this was a major coup: it allowed him to claim 'support' from the Tory party for his campaign, and helped underline his 'new' friendly attitude to foreigners.

I'm not sure what it did for Cameron, since - beyond the fact that he and Kaczynski are members of the same fraction in the European parliament - I don't see that they have too much in common. Never mind: perhaps it is best to treat that strange meeting as another odd twist in a campaign which has only grown odder as it has reached its conclusion.

Komorowski has the backing of the still-popular government. But Kaczynski has won much sympathy for his personal tragedy. Neither has really had the heart to attack the other, or even to sing his own praises, as politicians usually do. Because this is not a normal election, it may well not have a normal outcome, and I am not going to predict who will win. I will join the rest of country, however, in feeling a deep sense of relief when it is over at last.

The price of power in Poland by Jan Cienski

Warsaw on June 23, 2010

The big winner of the first round of Poland's presidential elections is neither of the two men now competing in the second round set for July 4 - instead it's the third place candidate, Grzegorz Napieralski of the ex-communist *Democratic Left Alliance*. That's because Napieralski and his 2m supporters hold the keys to the presidency for both Bronislaw Komorowski, the candidate of the ruling *Civic Platform* party, and his rival Jaroslaw Kaczynski of the right-wing Law and Justice party.

Komorowski won the first round on June 20, but with only 41.5% of the vote - something of a disappointment, as his more avid backers had been hoping he would get over 50% and win the presidency outright. Just behind was Kaczynski, with 36.5% - an unexpectedly strong result. The election was fought under the shadow of the April 10 crash of the Polish government airliner that killed President Lech Kaczynski, who had been expected to run for re-election, as well as 95 others including Jerzy Szmajdzinski, the nominee of the *Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)*, who had to be replaced by Napieralski.

With only 5% separating Komorowski and Kaczynski, the late president's twin brother, the outcome of the July 4 run-off is in doubt, and both men are scrambling to drum up new voters. The likeliest source of those votes is in the hands of Napieralski, who ran an unexpectedly strong campaign and won 13.7% of the vote. He is already suggesting his price: calling for Poland to withdraw its 3,000 troops from Afghanistan, for a hike in the minimum wage, parity for women on electoral lists and for the state to refund in vitro fertilisation procedures - anathema to Poland's powerful and conservative *Catholic Church*.

The bidding has already started, although both Komorowski and Kaczynski are being careful not to alienate their core supporters, who tend to be socially conservative and wary of the *Democratic Left Alliance* as the heir to the *Communist Party* that ruled Poland for 45 years. Kaczynski, a man who had called for the delegalisation of the *SLD* a few years ago, was all sweetness and light during a campaign rally in Napieralski's home city of Szczecin. 'Our opponents tell us we are left wing - maybe we are', Kaczynski said coyly. His party is socially very conservative, but economically populist, which gives him some hope of appealing to left-wing voters concerned with the government's pro-business approach to the economy. Kaczynski also said that he was striking 'post-communists' from his vocabulary, and will now refer to the *SLD* as 'the left'.

There were divisions over how to appeal to Napieralski in the *Civic Platform* party. Janusz Palikot, an influential MP who is also a bit of a political clown, suggested forming a new coalition government with the *SLD* and inviting Napieralski to become deputy prime minister. That idea was not particularly appealing to Napieralski, especially considering there will be parliamentary elections next year, and in the meantime the government may be courting unpopularity as it tries to drive the deficit below the current 7% of GDP.

Meanwhile Grzegorz Schetyna, the party's parliamentary leader, continued to call Napieralski a political wheeler dealer, and said he did not see much chance of him actually endorsing Komorowski. 'We are not going to talk with party leaders', he said in a radio interview. 'They are not the owners of the votes they received. In Poland no one owns the electorate. We have to talk to people'.

Komorowski, who was in Afghanistan visiting Polish troops, said he would make no more election promises. For *Civic Platform*, the situation is an uncomfortable reminder of elections five years ago, when Donald Tusk, the current prime minister, narrowly won the first round of the presidential election, only to fall to Lech Kaczynski in the second. However, in 2005, the voters in play tended to be rural supporters of populist Andrzej Lepper, while this time they are the left-wing backers of Napieralski.

Komorowski is still the favourite to win in the second round, largely because about two-thirds of Napieralski's voters are expected to break his way, but the final result will be a lot closer than *Civic Platform* hoped for, and a Kaczynski victory is not out of the question.