

# Focus on Poland

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*Monthly Newsletter – January*

## **Topic of the month**

### *Murder of Paweł Adamowicz*

Mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz was murdered during the charity event in his home town.

Paweł Adamowicz was 53 years old, and had been mayor for more than 20 years. He was recently re-elected in November 2018 municipal elections. He was seen as an anchor of the rapid transformation of Gdańsk into a modern and open city. He was himself a moderate conservative or centrist politician who was leading one of the most liberal metropolises in Poland. Paweł Adamowicz was often a progressive voice in Polish politics, supporting LGBT+ rights and tolerance for minorities. He marched in last year's gay pride parade, a rare action for a mayor in Poland. He also supported the Jewish community when the city's synagogue had its windows broken last year. He was one of the initiators of creating European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk, interactive museum of the "Solidarność" movement and living monument of Poland's modern history.

Paweł Adamowicz grabbed his stomach and collapsed in front of the audience at the 27th annual fundraiser organised by the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, Poland's biggest charity event (organized every January when around 200.000 volunteers collect money to buy hospital equipment). Television footage of the incident showed the mayor speaking to the crowd while holding a sparkler, before his attacker moved towards him. He was resuscitated at the scene and then transported to the Medical University.

After carrying out the attack, the man shouted from the stage "I was jailed but innocent. Civic Platform tortured me. That's why Adamowicz just died." The man was identified by Polish authorities as 27-year-old Stefan W. from Gdansk. He had mental problems. He left prison in December, where he served over five years for bank robberies. In the prison he was announcing to the guards his hatred towards the opposition and claimed that Jarosław Kaczyński should become a dictator. Last year his mother warned the police that her son is still dangerous and would be trying to commit more cruel crimes. Her words were ignored by the police and prison service.

The opposition parties blame the PiS regime for accepting hatred and silently supporting far-right groups and hate speech leaders. Emphasis was put on the TVP's role. Since 2015 the public broadcaster became a propaganda machine that attacks all opposition parties and non-PiS local politicians. TVP caused another controversy on Monday after the murder when it ran a report on its main evening news programme that selectively showed clips of opposition leaders using harsh language against their PiS opponents.

Adamowicz was targeted by many verbal attacks, including when PiS politicians suggested he was serving German, not Polish, interests. In 2017 a neo-fascist youth organisation Młodzież

Wszechpolska published a fake “public death certificate” of Adamowicz and other city mayors who had welcomed refugees. “As mayors we got threats and I am pretty sure the political tension and the climate of debate made it happen,” said Rafał Dutkiewicz, former mayor of Wrocław. The prosecutor’s office did not react, which was typical for hate speech cases. Jarosław Kaczyński, the party’s leader, has branded anti-government protestors as the “worst types of Poles” and opposition MPs as “murdering scum”. In 2017, a far-right group hung photographs of six Polish opposition lawmakers from a makeshift gallows.

After a few days of reflection over the hate and aggressive behavior in politics the assassination caused further polarization in a country already torn apart by years of reckless political bickering.

Saturday, one week after the terrible event, was a day of national mourning in Poland, with flags flying at half-mast across the country. Over 50.000 people attended the funeral in the streets of Gdańsk. 3.000 people joined a mass at St Mary’s Basilica, including president Andrzej Duda and all former Polish presidents, former German president Joachim Gauch, prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Donald Tusk.

Magdalena Adamowicz, mayor’s wife, accused PiS of building the fundamentals of hatred that led to this crime: “But I know that [the attack was] the behavior of a man who was in prison and indoctrinated by regime television, that what is happening, this hate, this hatred, he was the fruit of this hatred” - she said in an interview. TVP said it will sue anyone suggesting that its programme was in part to blame for the politician’s death.

Special hearing of ministers responsible for interior, justice and health was held in the Sejm. So far none of the first two, Joachim Brudziński and Zbigniew Ziobro, nor Patryk Jaki responsible for the prisons took any political responsibility.

### “Adamowicz last collection can”

Paweł Adamowicz was a firm supporter of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity. Every year he was collecting money to his collection can. Patrycja Krzywińska from a small village next to Gdańsk decided to honor Paweł Adamowicz by organizing a Facebook fundraiser among her friends. She set the target at PLN 1000 (EUR 220). Her husband worrying that she would not collect the money secretly paid PLN 400. But this small fundraiser became viral and in a couple of days she raised PLN 16 million (EUR 3,5 million), making it the biggest Facebook fundraiser in Europe. Over 250.000 Poles contributed to “the last collection can”. All the money will be spent for new ambulances and hospital equipment in Gdańsk.

### New mayor

It became clear for everybody in Poland that according to Paweł Adamowicz’s will his beloved city should be run now by his first deputy-mayor Aleksandra Dulciewicz. She was elected as acting mayor. “I worked with mayor Adamowicz for the last 13 years. Over that time he shared with me his

wisdom, his experience and how to deal with the difficulties of running a city, meeting with people and discussing with residents. He taught me how to look at Gdańsk, how to love its people and how to repay the love that they give to this city," she said. Later she was appointed by PM Morawiecki city's commissioner and will be ruling the city until the March 3<sup>rd</sup> elections. Ms Dulciewicz decided to run representing association founded by Paweł Adamowicz "Everything for Gdańsk". She was immediately supported by all democratic opposition parties. PiS will not run any candidate in these elections. So far 7 other candidates announced they will compete against her, all of them representing very small or radical parties.

## Future of ECS?

PiS government decided to cut the budget of the European Solidarity Center. Instead of PLN 7,5 million the ECS will get only 4 million. According to many PiS officials the ECS is too independent and presents only one version of the history. In other words, it does stress the role Lech Wałęsa and undermines the role of PiS-supporting opposition leaders, like Anna Walentynowicz and Andrzej Gwiazda.

The ECS and Aleksandra Dulciewicz are negotiating with the Ministry of culture. With such low budget it will be impossible to run all normal activities, not mentioning special celebration of this year 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the democratic transition. The municipality of Gdańsk and Pomeranian Voivodship donated additional PLN 700.000. A public fundraiser is planned.

## Politics

### *Two Towers*

The public image of political mastermind Jarosław Kaczyński and his successful and expansive Law and Justice party was shattered by series of articles published by the Gazeta Wyborcza daily starting on January 29<sup>th</sup>.

Jarosław Kaczyński, once famously said that "you don't go into politics for the money." The image of the leader was built around a story of modesty, honesty, lack of bank account and too big suits he wore. His official property declaration for 2017 showed he had only 19.000 zloty (EUR 4.000) in savings. The image of his party was correlated: PiS was supposed to be a party of new standards. PiS standards are definitely new on Polish political scene- there has been no such party built on nepotism and political corruption in Poland. But the image of Jarosław Kaczyński has been so far unshaken... For all PiS's anti-corruption rhetoric, Poland has fallen to 36th place in Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index from 29th in 2015.

On Tuesday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, however, Gazeta Wyborcza published recordings of the politician, dubbed the "Kaczynski tapes," apparently discussing a major construction project involving a company with close ties to the PiS.

The company in question, Srebrna, was founded in the mid-1990s by the Porozumienie Centrum (PC) party, a forerunner to the PiS. The company is majority-owned by the Lech Kaczyński Institute, which was founded to commemorate the Polish president who died in a 2010 Smoleńsk plane crash. Srebrna's board consists of Jarosław Kaczyński's closest relatives, friends and employees (including his drivers and secretary). Srebrna's assets consist mostly of land it got from a former communist-run companies, worth now hundreds of millions of zlotys.

Srebrna sponsors some of the hard-line right wing, pro-PiS media outlets, including "Gazeta Polska Codziennie" and niezalezna.pl.

In one of the lots Srebrna decided to build two skyscrapers (EUR 300 million). Jarosław Kaczyński signed off on the project. The Lech Kaczyński Institute was to move its headquarters to one of the towers and the remaining space was to be rented out. One-third of the annual revenue generated by the buildings would then go to the Lech Kaczyński Institute, bringing high income to be invested in right-wing projects.

The project was supposed to be developed by Kaczyński's cousin's family, Austrian businessman Gerd Birgfellner. In the tapes, PiS leader told the businessman that a construction permit will only be made available if his candidate Patryk Jaki wins the Warsaw mayoral election. He lost, and Birgfellner wasn't paid. The Austrian's lawyer, former deputy MP in the first PiS government who now has strong ties to PO, has complained to the prosecutor's office. "Our client was cheated," Jacek Dubois, another Birgfellner's lawyer, told reporters, adding, "Kaczyński misled our client. Family relations led to trust-based activities, and when it came to settlement, this trust was broken."

The recordings also reported that a state-run Bank Pekao SA was to provide a EUR 300 million loan for the project. The bank was *repolonized* by PiS and now it looks like its only reason was to create a private bank for the ruling party's benefit. Apparently, bank's CEO supports other right-wing businesses and happily visits PiS HQ whenever is requested.

The opposition parties criticized Kaczyński for ambidexterity. Liberal Nowoczesna party denounced Kaczyński to the State Electoral Committee for illegal fundraising and to tax authorities for tax frauds. According to the opposition Kaczyński is using private companies to raise funds and finance party activities and right-wing media activities, and we are talking about millions of zlotys.

PM Mateusz Morawiecki, also recorded not long time ago, denies the recordings of Kaczyński and Birgfellner reveal any wrongdoing. "The conversation contains no shred of evidence to suggest PiS politicians did anything inappropriate, instead it testifies to honesty, authenticity and fairness," he said.

In 2002, Gazeta Wyborcza taped a bribery proposal, allegedly made in the name of the then ruling SLD. The resulting scandal was crucial in that party's 2005 electoral defeat. In 2014, several Donald Tusk's officials were secretly recorded in restaurants. Their vulgar language and insider comments helped tarnish PO reputation and were a major factor in PiS's 2015 victory.

*European Coalition*

A group of former prime ministers and foreign ministers signed a declaration calling on Poland's divided opposition groups to close ranks ahead of European Parliament elections. "We call on responsible political forces and circles, local governments and civic communities to come up with a single election ticket the aim of which would be to restore a strong position for Poland in the European Union," the declaration says.

The initiative, called the European Coalition, was announced by Grzegorz Schetyna (Civic Platform). It is a first step of his plan to create a top leaders' list for these elections. The group supporting the declaration comprised former Prime Ministers Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, Leszek Miller, Ewa Kopacz, Jerzy Buzek, Marek Belka, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, alongside former Foreign Ministers Adam Daniel Rotfeld and Radosław Sikorski. These are all PO politicians and PO-connected politicians. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz is a former PiS prime minister, today allied with Schetyna. The presence of Leszek Miller and Marek Belka, former SLD PMs, in the group means that PO tricked current SLD leader and de facto forced his party to ally with PO. Without these high ranked officials on SLD lists the Social Democrats will not have high chances to succeed. Therefore Schetyna changed Civic Coalition with Nowoczesna for European Coalition with SLD.

Some commentators see in this coalition some hope for opposition unification and beating PiS, other called it "Jurassic Park", an unreliable coalition of very old politicians that will not attract young people and leave more space for the new-coming Biedroń movement.

## Society

### *Escape Room Tragedy*

Polish officials have shut down 13 escape room sites over safety issues after five teenage girls were killed in a fire in Koszalin. The 15-year-old girls had been celebrating a birthday when they died locked inside a room. Fire fighters chief stressed that the escape room was at a private house and had no emergency evacuation route. Prosecutors say a leaky gas container inside a heater is the most likely cause of the blaze.

The owner of the escape room was charged with intentionally creating a fire danger and with unintentionally causing the deaths of the girls.

More than 200 of Poland's some 1100 escape rooms have been checked, revealing a number of safety flaws that needed to be immediately fixed.

## Economy

### *Huawei Espionage Scandal*

Poland's counter-espionage (ABW; Internal Security Agency) agency arrested a Chinese director at tech giant Huawei in Poland and one of its own former officers and informed them both that they face charges of spying on Poland for China. Huawei, the world's biggest producer of telecommunications equipment, is facing intense scrutiny in Europe and America over its relationship with China's government.

Chinese citizen Weijing W., also known as Stanislaw W. under his Polish name, was a former envoy in Poland before moving over to a senior position at Huawei. Media reported the Polish man was a former ABW officer Piotr D. and that security services had searched the offices of his current employer, French telecom company Orange Polska, biggest telecommunication provider in Poland.

Poland's internal affairs minister called for the EU and NATO to take a "joint stance". Joachim Brudziński said Poland wanted to continue cooperating with China but that a discussion was needed on whether to exclude Huawei from some markets.

### *Poland in Davos*

This year Poland was very active at the World Economic Forum. Insurer PZU and Bank Pekao SA have set up Polish House, a venue for holding business meetings and promoting the country as a "can-do nation" in Davos.

President Andrzej Duda and PM Mateusz Morawiecki were among 3.000 leaders who attended the Forum. "At a time when some countries are still struggling with the vestiges of the 2008 crisis, GDP growth in the region of 5% is bound to make a huge impression," said Duda. Andrzej Duda held several political meetings, including with the new and controversial Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro.

Finance minister Teresa Czerwińska reported that the country's budget deficit in 2018 was between PLN 10 billion and PLN 11 billion, according to preliminary figures, far below the PLN 41,5 billion target for the year.

Mateusz Morawiecki called for an overhaul of Europe's tax system. "There are tax havens in Europe which abuse their taxation systems to the detriment of other countries. And we should stop this because it is not helping the European Union to build trust towards each other. I would be in favour of eliminating all tax havens from Europe because this would bring a level playing field," said Morawiecki. These words were closely followed especially in Dublin. Morawiecki is a firm believer in the so-called digital tax that Irish government opposes. This is the second time that Polish government puts Ireland in a difficult situation, following comments by Polish MFA Jacek Czaputowicz that placing a five-year limit on the Irish backstop could resolve the Brexit crisis.

## **Foreign Affairs**

### *Conference on Iran in Warsaw*

Poland and the USA will jointly organize a global conference in Warsaw on February 13-14 that will focus on Iran's influence in the region, announced the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The conference, known as the Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East, will address "terrorism and extremism, missile development and proliferation, maritime trade and security, and threats posed by proxy groups across the region," according to a statement from the US State Department.

Iran's ministry of foreign affairs described the Warsaw event as "a hostile move by the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Poland is expected to refrain from co-sponsoring the conference with the US." Javad Zarif, MFA of the Islamic Republic, criticized Poland writing in social media: "Those who attended last US anti-Iran show are either dead, disgraced, or marginalized. And Iran is stronger than ever. Polish govt. can't wash the shame: while Iran saved Poles in WWII, it now hosts desperate anti-Iran circus." Iran stopped issuing visas for Polish citizens.

Later, Polish minister Jacek Czaputowicz said Teheran's presence would hamper talks on the Middle East and excluded the country from the conference.

Two of Donald Trump's senior advisers on the Middle East, Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, will attend the Warsaw summit alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and senior representatives from Arab countries.

Recently there has been rumours that the conference may be cancelled by the USA.

## Culture

### *Janda Awarded at Sundance*

Krystyna Janda, the grand dame of Polish cinema, was awarded the World Cinema Dramatic Special Jury Award for Acting at the Sundance festival in United States for acting for her role in Jacek Boruch's "Dolce Fine Giornata"(Sweet End of the Day).

Written by Jacek Boruch and Szczepan Twardoch – the best-selling author of "Morphine" (Morfina) and "King" (Król), "Dolce Fine Giornata" the story, which is set in Tuscany depicts the quiet life of poet and Polish Nobel winner Maria (played by Janda), her husband and daughter. Their semi-retirement gets disturbed by the development of Maria's relationship with Egyptian immigrant Nazeer and an unfortunate political speech, which seems to endorse terrorist acts as a new form of art, bringing forward questions of tolerance, inclusivity and security.

Janda is best known internationally for playing leading roles in several films by Polish director Andrzej Wajda, including "Man of Marble" (Człowiek z marmuru, 1976) and "Man of Iron" (Człowiek z żelaza, 1981). In 1981, Janda played in the Academy Award-winning movie "Mephisto". She won Best Actress Award at the Cannes Film Festival and Polish Film Festival in 1990 for her role in Ryszard Bugajski's "Interrogation (Przesłuchanie). In 1993, she was a member of the jury at the 43rd Berlin International Film Festival.

Krystyna Janda runs two private theatres in Warsaw, Och! and Polonia Theater.

## Germany and Poland

### *KL Auschwitz Liberation Day*

On International Holocaust Remembrance Day, dozens of former prisoners, their families, political leaders and staff of the Auschwitz Memorial laid wreaths at the former German Nazi concentration

and extermination camp to commemorate the 74th anniversary of the camp's liberation, on January 27th, 1945.

The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, clergy of various religions, diplomats, including the ambassadors of Israel and Russia as well as President Andrzej Duda's representative Wojciech Kolarski.

"Hitler's Germany was responsible for the Holocaust, not the Nazis", Polish Mateusz Morawiecki said in Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. "Hitler's Germany fed on fascist ideology... But all the evil came from this (German) state and we cannot forget that, because otherwise we relativize evil", he added.

Before the official ceremony started, some two hundred Polish far right nationalists gathered at the site of the former concentration camp to hold a protest against the government remembering only Jews and forgetting Polish citizens that were not Jewish and were also murdered there. Piotr Rybak of the Polish Independence Movement, who led Sunday's protest, said that "Polish patriots cannot allow this". Piotr Rybak was in 2018 sentenced by court for public burning a mannequin of an Orthodox Jew.

Ultra-nationalists wrapped in Polish flags laid flowers and sang the Polish national anthem. They held banners with slogans like "It's high time to save Poland from Jews". Deputy Culture Minister Jarosław Sellin said that "if the reports are confirmed that such views were being voiced, then of course there will be a reaction, because it is breaking the law in Poland." *Nowoczesna* reported the scandalous happening to the public prosecutor for promoting hate speech.

### *Berlinale Director Invites AfD*

Dieter Kosslick, director of Berlinale Film Festival, invited AfD members to watch the documentary "Who Will Write Our Story" by Roberta Grossman.

"Who Will Write Our History" was a last-minute addition to the Berlin festival lineup. In response to growing right-wing extremism in Germany, and the rise of the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) Dieter Kosslick announced that the Berlinale would be doing a special screening of the film. "Everyone who hasn't seen this film should go", said Kosslick, "and for every member of the AfD, for every AfD member of parliament: I'll pay for your tickets out of my own pocket."

The film is a US-Polish coproduction starring Jowita Budnik, Piotr Głowacki and Karolina Gruszka next to a Hollywood star Adrian Brody. It is based on a 2007 book with the same title by US historian Samuel Kassow, about Emanuel Ringelblum and a secret archive kept in the Warsaw Ghetto. The film, which combines documents, quotes and reenacted scenes, tells the story of Polish historian Emanuel Ringelblum, who was imprisoned in a closely defined Warsaw district by the German occupiers in the fall of 1940 in the end, up to half a million Jews were confined to an area of 3,4 square kilometers.

The documentary was shown simultaneously in 45 countries on January 27 on the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, including at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish

Historical Institute in Warsaw as well as in 300 movie theaters, museums, and UN information centers.

### *Wear Polish in Berlin*

Polish fashion designers who focus on creating ethically-responsible clothing presented their wares at Berlin's most important ethical fashion event, Neonyt.

During Berlin Fashion Week in January, Poland presented fashion brands which focus on sustainability, social and ethical responsibility. The Polish booth at Neonyt presented fashion and accessories from Orska, Pat Guzik, Nago, Surplus, Szymańska and Wearso.organic.

The presentation of Polish sustainable fashion design was organised by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute. The booth was designed by chmara.rosinke and the visual identity of the project was designed by Punkt Widzenia design studio. The Wear Polish project is an initiative of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, whose aim is to promote Polish culture abroad, but also to shape the global awareness of Polish fashion and design.

Read more: <https://culture.pl/en/event/wear-polish-ethical-fashion-from-poland>

## **Polls & trends**

### *Party Support*

Pollster for SuperExpress, 30.01.2019

PiS	37%	(-2)
PO	24%	(-3)
Robert Biedroń party	10%	(+3)
Kukiz'15	7%	(-1))
PSL	5%	(-2)
SLD	5%	(+1)
Nowoczesna	4%	(=)
Wolność	2%	(-1)
Razem	2%	(=)

## About the author

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