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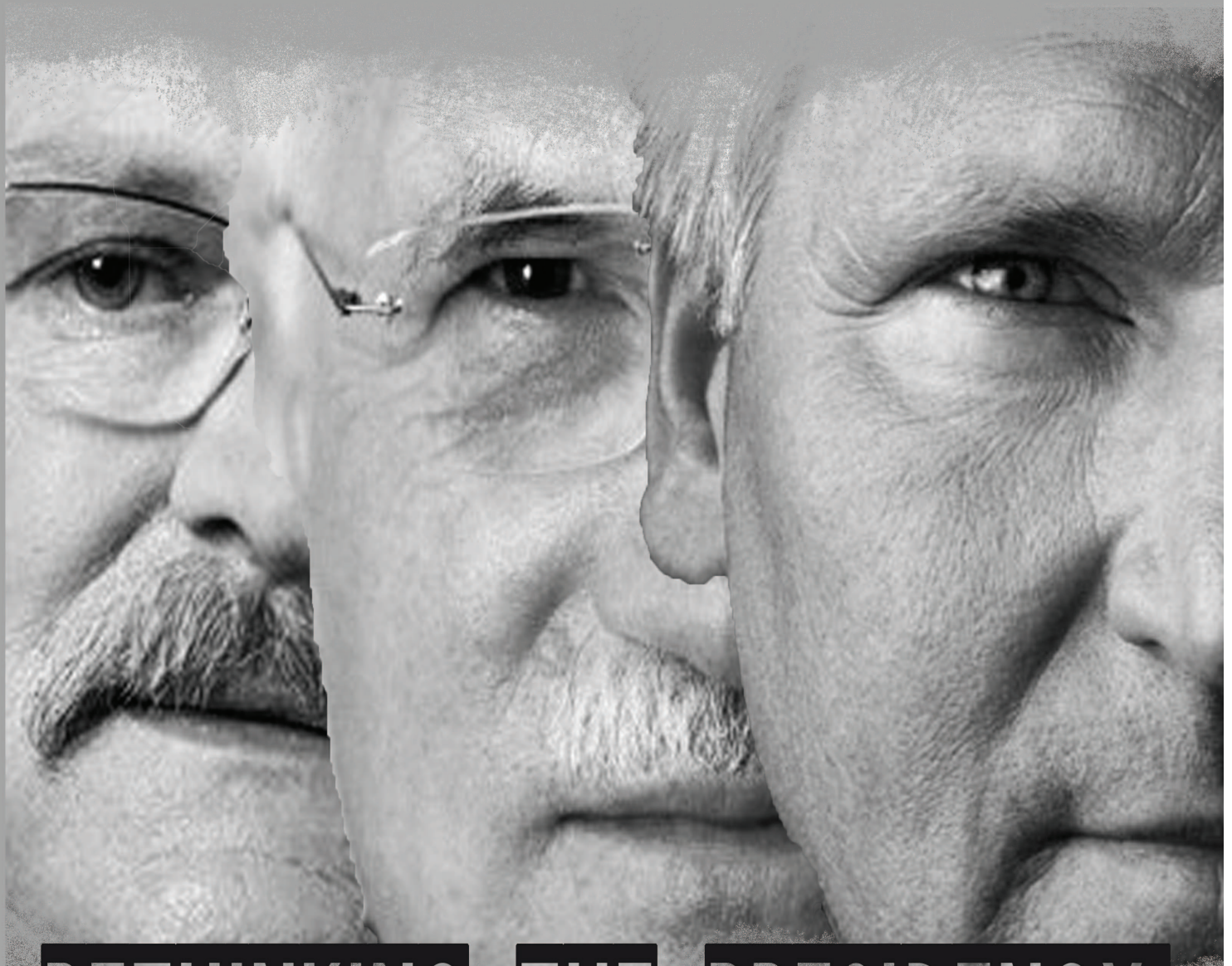


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**RETHINKING THE PRESIDENCY:
CHALLENGES AND FAILURES**

**Blanka Říchová, Radoslaw Kubicki,
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Faculty of Social Sciences
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RETHINKING THE PRESIDENCY: Challenges and Failures

Edited by

Blanka Říchová
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**PRESIDENCY OF ALEKSANDER KWAŚNIEWSKI
IN POLAND (1995-2005):
COMPETENCE, DECISION-MAKING,
AND POLITICAL THOUGHT**

Arkadiusz Modrzejewski

Abstract

The paper is dedicated to political thought and decisions of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the president of the Republic of Poland between 1995 and 2005. I will present Aleksander Kwaśniewski as a political decision maker and political visionary focusing on his activity in internal and international politics. He was an architect of the Polish political and constructional system and one of the most influential politicians in Poland. He created new attitudes of the head of state. His presidency was during the time of political stabilization and consolidation of Polish democracy. Dialogue and conciliation were features of his political character. He tried to avoid political conflicts however he represented a clear political doctrine. He defined himself as a social democrat and social liberal. Indeed, the analysis of his speeches, interviews and publications reveals his political vision and situates him as a representative of the centre-left. International politics was a next important sphere of his activity. During his presidency Poland became a member of NATO and the European Union.

Key words:

Presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Poland. Political thought. System transformation.

Introduction

Aleksander Kwaśniewski has been the 3rd Polish president since the collapse of the communist system and the 2nd one elected in the general election. His ten-year presidency (both terms of office) deserves a special attention. The fact that he was awarded a title of *doctor honoris causa* by fraternal Slovak University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava induced me to focus on this very important person for a Polish transformation and democracy. Because of the specific and sublime ceremony of awarding of Aleksander Kwaśniewski the title of honoured doctor which accompanied the conference where my paper was presented, it does not have a critical character. I would rather concentrate on his achievements in internal and external politics. I have to mention here that during his presidency, the Polish constitution was established and the Republic of Poland became a member of NATO and the European Union. Almost a decade has passed since the end of his term of office. That is why we can look at achievements

of Aleksander Kwaśniewski from a certain perspective and distance. I am interested in Aleksander Kwaśniewski as a political architect who clearly and unequivocally showed assumptions of own political strategy and vision.

His political thought is contained in numerous speeches, commentaries, letters as well as books and interviews. We can also learn from his political decisions and actions. And decisions and actions are actually the most precise measure of political intentions. They show how strong the attachment of a politician to declared ideals is and what is their ability to compromise. But they can also reveal if the politician is either a person with expressive convictions or a populist readily declaring empty election promises. So, decisions and activities could be treated as a source for the research focused on political thought similarly to program documents, publications, speeches etc. Political thought is targeted at a political practice in a particular dimension. It is connected with precise time and place. In this sense it is an opposition of political philosophy that is characterised by a universal message (Karnowska, 2011: 8-9). Distinguishing both categories – political thought and political philosophy – we will treat Aleksander Kwaśniewski as a political strategist who has his own political vision and a determined ideology but not in a fundamentalist way. Of course I use this term in its neutral meaning. Aleksander Kwaśniewski is not a political philosopher however he is a political visionary. Political philosophy is not his ambition; he is a practitioner, although we can find some philosophical inspirations in his political thought and practice. For example we can find there some references to a classical liberal philosophy as well as to a conception of social democracy.

1 Model of presidency – general reflection

The Polish political system based on democratic principles has been ultimately shaped during the presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski who was one of the main architects of the Polish political and constitutional order. We can describe him as an *architect* of Polish democracy not only because he was a chairman of the constitutional commission in the Polish parliament – *Sejm* or because he was the president who signed the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (1997). In my opinion his political attitude and establishing of unwritten patterns of behaviours as the head of state pertain to other constitutional institutions is more important than his work in the constitutional commission or than signing the Constitution.

He gave the Polish presidency a specific character which was not directly implied from the constitutional norms but from the way of the holding of the office. Briefly speaking, he established unwritten patterns of the attitude of the head of state and determined for president a conciliatory role while social and political conflicts appear. Avoidance of the presidential model promoted by some political factions, especially from the right wing of the political scene, protected the Polish political system against authoritarian attempts which we can observe in the post-soviet republics. Aleksander Kwaśniewski was an advocate of the parliamentary system as a democratic form of power in the states of the system transformation. Presidential power could be used by persons with authoritarian tendencies to marginalize a political opposition, to violent an independence of judiciary, to dominate a parliament and ultimately to take a full of power in the state (Riggs, 1997: 253-278). However not all authors, e.g. Samuel P. Huntington, are sure that any reliable and convincing evidence exists which could prove a thesis that the parliamentary system is a more appropriate form of power for countries transforming their political systems (Huntington, 1995: 278-279).

The term of office of Aleksander Kwaśniewski had begun before the new Polish Constitution was established and started to take effect changing the Polish political system into the parliamentary democracy. However in opposition to his predecessor Lech Wałęsa, Aleksander Kwaśniewski did not reveal any authoritarian inclinations. An authoritarian attitude was not a feature of his character. After a few years of taking the office, he stated: *“After a presidency of Lech Wałęsa that was an ideological and politically violent presidency, I proposed a brand new style of presidency for Poles. I wanted to be a president who does not divide people but who links them. I did not want to cause wars between politicians but I wanted to extinguish conflicts and disputes. I wanted to avoid provocations but I wanted to search conciliation, also with politicians who have radically other views than mine”* (Kwaśniewski, 2001). Imposing his own will and opinion was not necessary to dialogue and compromise declared and realized by Aleksander Kwaśniewski. He underlined it during his inaugural speech upon taking office as the president of the Republic of Poland. He redefined there the role of president declaring: *“I am going to establish in a Polish political life a permanent principle of negotiations and dialogue”* (Wygraliśmy przyszłość, 2008).

The presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski was not neutral or colourless limited to the representative sphere although the Constitution established in 1997 strengthened a position of the parliament as well as

government and prime minister in relations to the head of state. In this time the political system was transformed into the parliamentary republic though some constitutional institutions derive from a semi-presidential system which was characteristic for Poland in the first years of the system transformation (till 1997). That is why the Polish political system is sometimes defined as a rationalized parliamentarism. We should state here that Aleksander Kwaśniewski proposed some institutional solutions strengthening a power of the president, particularly in politically critical times and during the unstable roles of parliamentary minority. For example he proposed the president take some competitions regarding the constructive vote of no confidence. In his proposition the president could appoint a candidate for prime minister when parliamentary factions are in conflict and cannot do it (Godlewski, 2006: 136-137).

In the light of article 126 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland established on 2 April 1997, the President of the Republic of Poland is “the supreme representative of the Republic of Poland and the guarantor of the continuity of State authority”. The President “shall ensure observance of the Constitution” as well as “*safeguard the sovereignty and security of the State as well as the inviolability and integrity of its territory*” (The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997). The principal role of the president concerns the function of political arbitrage. It is specifically magnificent in the time of threats of fundamental constitutional values and principles, i.e. sovereignty, territorial integrity and democracy. It is important also in the time of revealing dysfunctions of the state power. During the discussion about competencies of the president in the political system of the Republic of Poland the role of arbitrator and authority who can “be active in potential political conflicts”, who stabilizes “constitutional order” and who can be a protector of “elementary values for existence of the nation and state” is very often underlined (Skrzydło, 2003).

The strong position of the president in the system of the power in Poland is undoubtedly a result of the way of election in the procedure of general election. Direct legitimacy which the president gets from the nation entitles him/her to an active participation in political life as a mentioned arbitrator in the political disputes as well as an initiator of political and legislative actions. The president elected in the general election is not accountable to the parliament. He or she is independent of parliamentary majority; he or she is not also a political hostage of their own political faction. The significant range of presidential competences concerns foreign policy as well as issues of defence and national security. And although from the formal point of view the president does not have

any real tools to manage armed forces, he or she as their “supreme commander” as well as a guard of national defence and external security of the state, can use the political instruments for the realization of the mission appointed by the Constitution [Skrzydło, 2003: 312-316]. Something that Aleksander Kwaśniewski did during his presidency.

2 Political thought, decisions and activities – selected aspects

During the presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski his political vision matured. In my opinion it is important to present his clear vision of internal politics indirectly and partly explained in the above section on the presidential model promoted while he was the president of Poland as well as to present his attitude in foreign policy or wider in international policy which Aleksander Kwaśniewski became an active actor. Due to a short character of this paper I will only pay attention to several the most important issues.

Internal politics

Speaking about domestic policy, I would like to present achievements of Aleksander Kwaśniewski where his features of character and political attitude were clearly revealed. Apart from the above mentioned influence of Aleksander Kwaśniewski on a forming of the model relation between the head of state and other state authorities, I would have to refer also to his opinions on the topic of relations between a state and religion – I mean mainly the Catholic Church, his conception of social and economic relations as well as widely understood identity problematic that also determines his attitude to the heritage of real socialism and to Polish People’s Republic. The last issue was a main axis of the political disputes in Poland during the transformation period.

Reflecting upon relations between Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the President of the Republic of Poland and government and parliament, one notices that his presidency occurred in the time of dynamic changes which were happening on the Polish political scene. Polish political system, especially party system, was unstable. While Aleksander Kwaśniewski was the president Polish political system was diametrically remodeled. He was the head of state in the time of rules of his political friends from *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* (Democratic Left Alliance) as well as adversaries from the right wing. Despite his deep-roots in post-communist formation which Kwasniewski was a co-founder, he created a non-partisan

presidency free from ideology and ideological disputes. But he was free from neither political sympathy nor pretty clear political views. Despite the involvement in political interests, he was still able to become an independent arbitrator and authority whose the role is distinctly defined by the Constitution.

In this place I have to mention the determination of protection of the Constitution that characterized his presidency. Janina Paradowska, one of the most prominent Polish columnists describes Kwaśniewski's attitude: "*Considering ten years of presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, we can easily point at the fundamental elements. Primarily I think about protection of the Constitution*" (Paradowska, 2005: 10). His determination in this matter had to be huge if he was able to defend an independence of constitutional financial institutions – I mean the Council of Monetary Policy and the Polish National Bank – against his own political fraction with Leszek Miller, the prime minister who was a leader of the left wing. I will not obviously interpret this fact as a heroic act. But mention let us notice an expressive prostate attitude of President Kwaśniewski. As a guarantor of the Constitution he protected it heedless political bonds which link him with political followers. So, he was characterized by ability to prefer the common good of the state above any form of cronyism or triviality and particular political interests. However, as the columnist notices, he was not consequent in his constitutional principlism. The lack of the consequence – in Paradowska's opinion – was revealed during the famous political scandals, co-called *afery Rywina* (*Rywin Affair*) and *afery Orłenu* (*Orlengate*). Both scandals contributed to marginalize the left wing in the Polish political life. In this time, Aleksander Kwaśniewski called by the parliamentary special commission sent inconsistent signals according to a call of the president for investigation by the commission. It was not his mistake that he did not come for the investigation but that he did not decide to ask the Constitutional Court about the interpretation if the parliamentary commission does not violet a presidential immunity calling the head of state for the investigation (Paradowska, 2005: 16-17).

Treating the presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski overall but not from the prism of the single mistakes, lapses or failures, we can notice his undeniable input in the forming of the Polish constitutional order as well as in the stabilization of political system (Kasińska-Metryka, 2000). Of course we can meet opinions which are in opposition to that presented above. They accuse Aleksander Kwaśniewski of particularism. Despite political adversaries these opinions can be met also among intellectualists. For example, famous and respected Polish columnist Roman Graczyk

accuses Aleksander Kwaśniewski that during presidency of Lech Wałęsa he was preparing a draft of constitution limiting prerogatives of the president. The situation was changed – in Graczyk’s opinion – when Aleksander Kwaśniewski became the president of Poland. Then his political followers tried to influence the parliamentary constitutional commission to strengthen a power and competences of the president. This activity, as Graczyk asserts, was undertaken by Aleksander Kwaśniewski as well (Graczyk, 1997: 170-172).

The relation between the state and Catholic Church is one of the essential topics of political disputes in Poland. The Church has strongly influenced political, social, economic and cultural life of Poles for centuries. Its social role increased in periods of Polish national life when the Polish nation did not exist or was enslaved by external powers. Moreover, socialism, its real sense of the term, strengthened a position of the Church in Polish society. It was an enclave of freedom where people could function in a parallel way to the communist reality. New democratic authorities tried to compensate the Church for the lost privileges and goods during communism. Even more, earlier in their decadent period, communist authorities launched institutional mechanism to restore property to the Church trying to propitiate Catholic hierarchy. Generally, the positive role in the Polish way of democratization is undoubted. That is why some decision makers saw it necessity to help the Church in reconstructing its public position. Aleksander Kwaśniewski also noticed the importance and relevance of the Catholic Church in Poland as well as personally the pope John Paul II. He was conscious to the input of the Church and John Paul II in Polish transformation. That is why he stated during one of the papal visits in Poland: *“Let it sound clearly: the changes would not exist if not [for] Your Holiness and the Catholic Church in Poland”* (Wygraliśmy przyszłość, 2008: 26).

But expectations of the Church were not appeased. The Church was not satisfied. Favourable for the Church regulations and decisions initiated the other ones. The Church became a huge political and economic institution in Poland what inevitably led to the confrontation with anticlerical powers. The attitude of the ruling left in 1993-1997 and 2001-2005 was ambiguous in this matter (Modrzejewski, 2011: 144-146). From the one side, politicians from the Left formulated policy to limit the influences of the Church. They demanded to reject a concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland as well as to establish clear constitutional norms regarding to secular character of the Polish state. From the other side, in the left wing some conciliatory voices appeared trying to

extinguish tension in relations with the Church. President Kwaśniewski belonged to the second group of the left wing. He wanted to fulfill expectations of both conflicted sides – the Church and the Polish left. Even as a leader of *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* (*Democratic Left Alliance*) before the taking an office of the president, he expressed his opinion in one interview that agreement between the Church and the left is necessary (Kwaśniewski, 1995). The projects of the Constitution as well as the concordat were very important issues in Kwaśniewski's conciliatory activity (Sowiński, 2014: 666-667). It was a pragmatic compromise. Kwaśniewski realized that he could not discourage moderate Catholics. That is why he supported a project of the preamble of the Constitution by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first non communist prime minister. He recommended it to his own political faction, of which, a majority had a negative attitude to the Church and the Catholic hierarchy. He was convinced that the confrontation with the Church could contribute to the loss of some strategic political and international aims, e.g. integration with the European Union. The influence of the Church on Polish society was very strong during the presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski. So, a support of the Church hierarchy was an ingenious element of pro-integration strategy. He especially avoided a confrontation with the moderate part of the Polish Catholic hierarchy that represented a pro-European attitude. Efforts of Aleksander Kwaśniewski found an appreciation among representatives of co-called *open Church*, i.e. Catholic intellectualists who are important, however more and more silent, voice in the Polish Church. Rev. Adam Boniecki, the former editor-in-chief of the "progressive" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, is one of them. He respects the achievements of Kwaśniewski in relation with the Catholic Church. The Catholic clergy noticed that conciliatory attitude of Aleksander Kwaśniewski according to the Catholic Church and religion in general as too much friendly and amicable exposes him to criticism of own left formation. But "The president – Boniecki says – chose this way being aware that he cannot provoke the conflicts. Political parties can be conflicted with the Church. But the head of the state cannot be" (Boniecki, 2005).

The next important issue that I would like to mention is the attitude of Aleksander Kwaśniewski to economic issues. For the readers from out of Poland and other countries of the former Soviet bloc it could be curious and even strange that the former activist of the party that is colloquially determined as communist one became a politician of the modern social democratic left whose liberal opinions also regarding economic issues are

coincided with the mainstream European left. But it should not be astonishing. It also became a part of the Western left powers which from the socialist positions evolved in direction of the moderate social democratic liberalism that is just defined often as a social liberalism. It is not accidental that Tony Blair, the former British prime minister and the most prominent leader of the European left, who was clearly oriented toward the free market economy, became a mentor of Aleksander Kwaśniewski. President Kwaśniewski determined himself as a social democrat who wants to be a social liberal similarly to Tony Blair (Kwaśniewski, 2000a).

This declared social liberalism is primarily a political attitude but not a philosophical construction. Why a politician who defines himself/herself as a social liberal is free from methodological doubts which can be source of theoretical problems for a political philosopher or a political scientist and historian of political thought who would have a problem with bonding of divergent political and philosophical visions. But what were as a fire and water while the modern political ideologies were forming, today has been synthesized by political practice. Due to the fact that a long co-existence of the liberalism and social democracy, the co-existence of various ideas derived from both ideologies implemented in the contemporary political life of the modern, or better postmodern, Western societies have been a stable element of their political, social and economic systems. That is why we can say that the model of political thinking which could be determined as the social liberalism is in fact a result of the specific “centripetal” evolution of different political ideas (Godlewski, 2002). Political program and activity of Aleksander Kwaśniewski and his political formation is also a product of this evolution which was of course deeper than in the circle of the Western politicians because he derived from a party with a communist heritage.

The economic program sketched by Aleksander Kwaśniewski concerns elements of both, social democracy and liberalism, i.e. sensitivity to the social issues which is obviously a sphere of social democracy as well as the faith in free market that is a pillar of liberalism. It is in fact a program of *the third way*, however free from mistakes which appeared during a realization of the idea of the *welfare state*. Aleksander Kwaśniewski as the president believed in liberal fundamental assumptions that *“the social justness is primarily is an equality of opportunities but it is not an equality of redistribution”*. He was convinced also that it is necessary to *“find a new balance between rights and responsibilities, between individual and collective responsibility. It means that the role of the individual activity,*

enterprises and creativity as well as self-organization and self-help which are a realm of institutions of civic society have to be strengthened. [...] Free market activity – however controlled and regulated – cannot be eliminated and necessary social solidarity should not destroy competitions desirable in many branches. [...] The new role of the governance should not be similar to a traditional left vision. But from the other side it should not refer to the second extreme, i.e. a classical model of laissez fair” (Kwaśniewski, 2000b: 121-122). So, the proper role of state power is, in opinion of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, an activity for a macroeconomic stability, support of technological and productive innovation, promotion of export as well as an efficient control of the international movement of capital (Kwaśniewski, 2000b: 122).

At the end of this part of my consideration I would like to pay attention to the attitude of Aleksander Kwaśniewski regarding the past. His first presidential campaign in 1995 was held under the slogan: “Let’s choose a future” (Polish: *Wybierzmy przyszłość*). The slogan in some sense reoriented the public debate from discussion about the problems with the (communist) past to the discourse about the new shape of the Polish state and society. It was of course a marketing ploy. However, in my opinion the choice of the slogan was not only a smart marketing strategy but it also revealed the pragmatic character of Aleksander Kwaśniewski and his presidency. While promoting the slogan he seemed to propose his adversaries to stop a main dispute about the past and to concentrate on current cases which decide about quality of public institutions and life of people. Of course he did not avoid becoming involved in discussion on his political genealogy and identity. He was without a doubt the most important Polish politician who could not legitimate a “Solidarity” genealogy. Before the democratization of the country he was a member of The Polish United Workers' Party (Polish: *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*); in the 1980's he held the high offices in communist state. Being in his thirties he was a minister for youth affairs. When he won the presidential election in 1995 the alarmist theories appeared announcing the return to the communism. In a quite moderate tone, Radosław Sikorski, later to become a minister of foreign affairs and currently the speaker of the Polish parliament, wrote in the American magazine *Foreign Affairs* about “*the end of era of Solidarność (Solidarity) in Poland*” (Sikorski, 1996).

Aleksander Kwaśniewski did not forget about his past as well as activity in the structures of the communist party and the instructions of the state governed by communists and their allies. But he discerned a necessity to settle with the past what was a condition of national reconciliation. As he

confessed in one of his books: “self-critical reflection is an obligation of all. A critical settlement with the past, with a bad tradition is a duty of politician as well as each political formation that wants to participate in democratic conditions”. And he continued his consideration further: “*We can find many great and invigorating acts in the tradition of the Polish left-wing. But we have to confess honestly that many crimes and wickedness made in Poland under banners of the left. Only words of apology are proper here*” (Kwaśniewski, 2000b: 175). On 9 November 1993 being a leader of *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* Aleksander Kwaśniewski said “*We apologize!*” in his own name as well as the name of his political faction (Kwaśniewski, 1993). In this way he has symbolically finished the settlement of his own formation with communism. He noticed, realized and expressed the harm the communist system did towards many people. During one of his presidential speeches he stated indirectly: “*Communism was a huge tragedy for millions*” (Wygraliśmy przyszłość, 2008: 466).

International strategy – integration with the Euro-Atlantic structures

The sphere of foreign policy was an important aspect of political activity of Aleksander Kwaśniewski. I will mention only pivotal issues which appeared in the political program of his presidency. Of course we can find more essential aspects of activity of Aleksander Kwaśniewski on the international scene. But it would require monograph rather than a modest article. From the historical point of view both issues are surely magnificent. While Aleksander Kwaśniewski was the president, the Republic of Poland became a member of NATO and the European Union. It was a historical paradox that the president derived from the post-communist formation integrated Poland with the West, introducing Poland to the Euro-Atlantic structures. Paradox seems to be higher due to the post-communist party that Aleksander Kwaśniewski co-created is one of the most pro-European political powers in Poland. Polish post-communists have been oriented for integration of Poland with Euro-Atlantic structures since the beginning of the Polish transformation. Initially they were skeptical about Polish membership in NATO but in the second half of the 90s they became proponents of accession to the military alliance. In 1995 Aleksander Kwaśniewski in the above mentioned interview expresses his conviction that “NATO is only one actual organized and efficient system of the security” [Kwaśniewski, 1995: 124]. He gave a positive to a question of journalist asking whether Poland should access the alliance by all means.

His international activity as the head of state was focused on convincing member states of NATO that Poland is an important link and actor of the European security system. He also tried to convince the Russian side that the integration of Poland with NATO is not directed against Russian and that it is not a threat for Russian interests. In 1996 during his speech before the Northern Atlantic Council he substantiated the Polish aspiration to be a member of NATO. He stated: *"It is not our intention to establish a new divisions in the European continent. Contrary, we want to overcome these ones which still exist. Enlargement of NATO will mean a wider area of security and stability in Europe. It will strengthen a democracy"* (Wygraliśmy przyszłość, 2008: 390). In parallel he promoted also the idea of integration of Poland with the European Union, seeing in organizations, i. e. in NATO and EU, a complex project for the Polish and European security as well as guarantee of development and democracy (Wygraliśmy przyszłość, 2008: 400-401). Both these aims were realized during presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski.

Aleksander Kwaśniewski saw Poland as an active member of NATO and the European Union being not only a beneficiary but a subject of integration process and acts implying from the treat mutual commitments. He expressed it strongly in the time of war of the USA and their allies against terrorism. During one conference dedicated to terrorism he presented his opinion: "Europe really is becoming a common continent where we all use from the security and development but also we are co-responsible for our fate and share a risk of fight against all kinds of danger" (Kwaśniewski, 2002). Although the decisions made commonly by the president and Polish government were and still are controversial, we can notice that they were a consequent realization of a strategic vision.

It is worth mentioning something else. Aleksander Kwaśniewski saw Polish efforts to be a member of NATO and the European Union in the wider geopolitical context. His vision of integration did not finish in Poland and countries culturally linked with the West. Before Poland became a member of NATO and the European Union he assumed the possibility of enlargement of both organizations by other countries. Some of them as Bulgaria and Romania became full-fledged members of NATO and the European Union. But in 1997 Aleksander Kwaśniewski was sure that the inclusion of Ukraine, if the Ukrainian people express a will, to the orbit of the Euro-Atlantic structures, will increase and improve European security. That is why he declared a support of efforts of "the neighbours of Poland" (Wygraliśmy przyszłość, 2008: 410-411). These words are taking a new and proper meaning in the face of events which currently happen in

Ukraine. We can treat these words as a proof of political maturity and understanding of international politics. The ability of predication is a desirable but unfortunately also deficient feature of politicians.

Conclusions

Aleksander Kwaśniewski belongs to the most important contemporary Polish politicians. We cannot overemphasize his influence on the shape of the Polish political system and Polish political culture as well as on geopolitical situation of contemporary Poland. Obviously he was not a man without faults. He did not avoid mistakes and wrong decisions but we can look appreciatively at his constant achievements. I was wondering where we should search his success. I think that his personality is a key to understanding. Vaclav Havel, the former president of the Czech Republic and great Central European intellectualist, stated that the features of the character of Aleksander Kwaśniewski were one of the reasons why he memorialized him. Havel mentioned his gaiety and openness which helped in the public life as well as in international politics and diplomacy (*Wygraliśmy przyszłość*, 2008: 22). Aleksander Kwaśniewski was not and he is still not a type of ideologist, closed in his own claustrophobic world, isolated from the real world and its problems. This attitude is possibly a characteristic for revolutionists, destructors, but not for people who want to gain aims in peaceful and conciliatory way. It needs rather moderation and pragmatism which Aleksander Kwaśniewski did have. Thinking how I could define his political attitude I acknowledged that the most adequate will be the term *anti-ideological pragmatism*. However, he is not a person who could be recognized as devoid of ideals. During his presidency he clearly defined political orientation. But he was sure that his activity should be guided by realism, not ideology. And in this attitude we find his successes in internal and international politics.

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