Polish bourgeoisie divided over US election

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The responses of the right-wing government and the liberal opposition in Poland to the US election have revealed sharp differences within the country's ruling elites over foreign policy. Like other right-wing governments and movements in Europe, the ultra-nationalist ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) has welcomed the election of the right-wing businessman, whereas the country's liberal press reacted to the news of Donald Trump becoming the 45th US president with disbelief and panic.

The stark contrast in the reaction of the two bourgeois camps has brought to the fore the differences between the liberals around the Civic Platform (PO) and the ruling conservative PiS. Under both the government of the PO and the PiS, Poland has been a key ally of Washington in Europe and has stood at the forefront of the NATO military build-up against Russia.

However, the establishment around the PO wishes to see Poland tied to the Franco-German alliance within the EU, in addition to maintaining close cooperation with Washington. By contrast, the bourgeois layers gathering behind PiS believe they could profit more from aligning themselves only with the US and trying to exploit the crisis within the EU, particularly following the Brexit vote, to strengthen Poland's position in opposition to Berlin's increasing hegemony in the EU.

While individual pro-PiS commentators voiced concern over a possible rapprochement between Washington and Moscow under Trump, the tenor of politicians of the PiS and pro-government media outlets has been to endorse Trump and hope for an even closer military cooperation between the US and Poland.

Polish President Andrzej Duda rushed to congratulate the US president-elect by tweeting "My warmest congratulations to Donald Trump. I am confident US-PL bonds will remain as close & strong as ever. Hopefully even stronger." Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz, who maintains close ties to various fascistic organizations, said similarly: "Polish-American relations will not only continue to be very good, they will be even better."

The Polish minister of foreign affairs, Witold Waszczykowski, stated on Polish national television that he had "accepted the news with hopes for the US to correct its foreign policy by becoming even more explicit and determined." When asked what he thought of Trump's statement that under his leadership America would not necessarily come to the aid of a NATO ally (like Poland) under attack, he said: "Poland does not need to be afraid. Trump has met with the Polish community in the United States several times and has noticed the role of Poland in protecting the flank of NATO. His criticism of NATO will not affect Poland. We'll want to get a confirmation that the allied decisions regarding our national security will be implemented."

The pro-PiS daily *Gazeta Polska* ridiculed the "hysteria" of the liberal media worldwide, comparing the victory of Trump to that of PiS in the 2015 elections. "They use scare tactics against Trump the same way they used them against PiS," the newspaper journalists declared, expressing their hope for allegedly pro-Polish Newt Gingrich to join Trump's cabinet. "If the Republicans want to appeal to the subsequent generations of their electorate, they will have to abandon their centrist policies and turn more sharply to the right," they demanded. For these mouthpieces of the authoritarian PiS, the Republican Party under George W. Bush, which waged endless imperialistic wars and attacks on the democratic rights of US citizens, was not "right" enough.

The conservative *Rzeczpospolita* announced Hillary Clinton's failure to be "the defeat of Western elites" and wrote that "if Trump succeeds, America will come out of this stronger than ever before … we need to keep our fingers crossed for the new president."

In stark contrast to the reaction of the government and its media, liberal commentators have reacted with shock and dismay to Trump's election.

Like significant sections of the ruling elites in Europe, the Polish liberal bourgeoisie is also concerned about the growing political instability in the United States, its single

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most important partner in the foreign arena. Thus, *Polityka* featured an article headlined "The Divided United States of America," in which the long battle for the White House has exposed the state of permanent chaos of the American system of rule as well as deep animosities between the opposing political camps.

However, the central fear of Poland's liberal opposition is that the policies of a Trump administration will serve to further isolate Poland in Europe, and endanger the country's national interest and war preparations against Russia. In contrast to PiS, the PO government had pursued a course in which it combined close cooperation with the US with an attempt to form an alliance with both Berlin and Paris. Under the PiS government, relations between Warsaw on the one hand, and Brussels and Berlin on the other, have significantly deteriorated.

In the run-up to the elections, liberal outlets that are close to Poland's main opposition party Civic Platform (PO), such as *Newsweek Polska* and *Polityka* , had joined the anti-Russian campaign of the Democratic Party against Trump, warning that the Republican candidate would represent a Kremlin stooge in the White House, endorsing full-heartedly the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

Following the elections, the pro-PO newspaper *Wyborcza*, warned its readers that "Putin will propose a new Yalta to Trump." At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin agreed on a division of Europe into "spheres of influence," with Central and Eastern Europe being assigned to the Soviet sphere.

For the Polish bourgeoisie, the conference has historically formed an important reference point for the whipping up of anti-communism, but also the fear that its imperialist allies in the West might strike a deal with the Kremlin at the expense of the interests of the Eastern European bourgeoisie. Fanning those fears, *Wyborcza* wrote: "Trump's victory is the worst news since the war in Iraq, maybe even since Yalta." The liberal *Polityka* declared: "Trump has won and Russia has reasons to be happy."

Just days before the elections, the front page of *Newsweek Polska*, which is close to the opposition party PO, featured a photo collage of a half-face Donald Trump, half-face the leader of the conservative PiS, Jaros?aw Kaczy?ski. The cover posed the question: "Has the world gone mad?" Of the election results, the weekly wrote, "This is not good news for NATO and Europe." Further, *Newsweek Polska* wrote: "The victory of Trump is a gigantic success for Kaczy?ski and PiS, but only on the level of internal party politics. This success, however, comes at a price of geopolitical catastrophe for Poland and the entire region. Even if, in response to Trump's victory, the core of Europe will quickly begin to integrate, we are not part of it anymore."

Liberal pro-EU politicians have seized on the elections as a case in point for a "turn back towards Europe." Thus, the former minister of foreign affairs, Radek Sikorski (PO), tweeted: "With USA likely going introvert and transactional, the European Union is more precious than ever. Needs leadership in reform more than ever." Sikorski urged the PiS government to re-evaluate its foreign and domestic policy before it's too late, arguing: "The victory of Trump will give wings to European nationalists, but it can bury the European Union. The new president will not be interested in Poland, and that's bad news."

The most cowardly, vassal-like response to the new representative of the American ruling class came from the discredited former president of Poland and former Solidarity leader, Lech Wa??sa. Wa??sa, who had just recently declared his official loyalty to PO, asked the EU for help in removing the democratically elected PiS government from power and for EU sanctions on Poland.

In a move that traced the shift of the Democratic Party from viciously attacking Trump to endorsing him as president-elect, Wa??sa, who just days before the elections declared Trump to be unfit for office and a threat, sent his cordial greetings to the US president-elect. Posting a picture of the two of them, Wa??sa wrote on Facebook:

"I am glad that Mr. Trump remembers our conversation that took place in his club in Florida back in 2010. Apparently after our meeting he thought: 'If it was possible for a worker to overthrow communism and become the president of Poland, why a millionaire could not become a president of the United States?' As you can see, my story was an inspiration for him to act. As you all know I always root for changes if they lead to something positive. … I keep my fingers crossed for the success of the reforms in America."

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