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America's Eastern Tier: Poland between NATO and United Europe¹

Following the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States has remained the only superpower standing. Nonetheless, it faces several challenges including rogue, so-called "terrorist" states, a potentially menacing China, a broodingly resentful Russia, and a vexingly enigmatic European Union (EU). Although perfectly capable of defending its own territory, America's foreign entanglements and commitments continuously require the US to cultivate reliable regional allies.

This paper considers Poland as an American friend complementing Great Britain on the Eastern flank of Europe. Against the backdrop of Poland's membership in NATO and the nation's impending access to United Europe, we shall explore the tensions accompanying the integration process and show how they reflect on the future of Polish-American affairs. In particular, we shall deal with three major Polish political forces, the Euroenthusiasts, Europhobes, and Euroskeptics. First, however, we shall describe briefly the historical background.

The Cold War and Its Aftermath

A dozen years ago, the world was divided neatly into "East" and "West." On the one hand, the Soviet Union, its satellites, and China constituted "the Eastern Bloc." On the other, the United States, Western Europe, and, somewhat incongruously, Japan, formed "the Western alliance." The Soviets and the Americans avoided direct confrontation. They fought wars by proxy, preferring to assist their clients indirectly and only exceptionally getting involved directly themselves (Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan).

The overriding concern of the superpowers, their allies, and their clients was the Cold War. It waxed and waned continuously for almost half a century with NATO and the Warsaw Pact states facing each other off. Of course, during this conflict, neither the "West" nor the "East" were monolithic.

For the Kremlin, the breach with China presented the most serious challenge. Rebellions among the Soviet Union's European satellites were less dangerous. Yet, they were serious enough because they destabilized the area – from the Yugoslav schism in 1948 through the Hungarian Insurrection in 1956 and the Prague Spring in 1968. Even tiny Albania asserted itself against Moscow, albeit in a grotesque Stalinist way. And so did Rumania, which coupled its relative independence in foreign affairs with orthodox Marxist-Leninist repression at home.

¹ This paper was prepared for the forum "United Europe, United States, united Poles?" held at the Miller Center of Public Policy, the University of Virginia, on September 7, 2001. I would like to dedicate my paper to Professor Edmund Wnuk Lipiński who asked me about an alternative to Euroenthusiasm.

Arguably, no one was more vexing for the Kremlin than the Poles, who rebelled against the Communist proxy regime in Warsaw in 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, and 1980. That year also witnessed the birth of “Solidarity”. The last Polish rebellion lasted in essence until 1989, when the Communists agreed to share power with left-wing dissidents.

In the West, during the Cold War, the US relied chiefly on the British who loyally supported Washington. At the same time, America had to deal with the maverick French who, sour because of the loss of their influence in world affairs, pursued a flamboyant policy often detrimental to US interests. Meanwhile, since the late sixties, the Germans quietly plied their *Ostpolitik* of rapprochement with the Soviets. A joke current in the 1980s summarized the attitude of Western Europeans vis-à-vis the Soviet Union best: “the French talk tough like the British but ultimately they kow-tow like the Germans.”

Thus tensions between at least two major Western European countries and the United States were real enough. Naturally, there were also misunderstandings among Western Europeans themselves. Much of the strife was caused by economic matters.

Meanwhile, after 1945, the economy of the western part of the Old Continent became operational mostly thanks to an enormous infusion of American capital, know-how, and materiel. Nonetheless, during the Cold War, the West lacked a uniform economic organization encompassing the US and its allies. Although they cooperated much of the time, all too often particularist interests impeded the development of a common economic policy. This vexing impediment affected adversely not only the relations between the US and its allies but also between Western European nations themselves.

Nonetheless, since the 1950s, Western Europeans very gradually created the European Economic Community (EEC), or the Common Market. Significantly, the political idea of the European Union (EU) was presented as an afterthought to economic integration. The process of economic and political integration accelerated rapidly only after the re-unification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Because the EU is still in the making, we are unsure what shape it will eventually take. Admittedly, however, the potential for Europe to become an economic powerhouse is alluring. Prosperity achieved through cooperation should neutralize conflict on the Old Continent. That is the optimistic outlook. According to the pessimistic point of view, the EU is yet another futile exercise in hyperbureaucratic, overregulated, and supercentralized utopia. We shall return to both sets of opinions shortly.

Poland’s Transformations

Before 1989 the Soviets had subordinated Poland to their military alliance, the Warsaw Pact. The Poles were also coerced to join an analogous economic organization run by the Kremlin, the so-called Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). The idea was to lead junior East European partners to the socialist paradise. In any event, Comecon presided over what can only be termed as the “Greater Soviet Co-Misery Sphere.” This economic contraption collapsed following the disintegration of the Soviet

Union. As the old financial and commercial arrangement unraveled, the misery deepened and the newly liberated East Central European states, including Poland, began looking westward for a solution to their economic, social, and political problems.

After 1989, Poland's quest for security became an absolute priority. As a result, after much travail, the Poles joined NATO in 1999. Since then Polish armed forces have participated in numerous military exercises with their American and Western European counterparts. Further, Poland has proven a very reliable ally. It has supported diplomatically America's endeavors in the Middle East (e.g. Poland represented US interests in Baghdad). It has also backed the US militarily in the Balkans (e.g. Polish troops serve as peacekeepers in Kosovo and Macedonia). According to the American commander of NATO forces in Kosovo, General William David, Polish soldiers "are wonderful guys. They are disciplined and magnificently trained."² Polish loyalty toward the United States is exemplary. Consequently, the French press dubbed Poland "America's Trojan horse in Europe."³

Nonetheless, the nation's access to NATO had not been a forgone conclusion. Aside from legitimate concerns of the US and its Western European allies concerning a possibly hostile reaction by Russia, the Poles argued often passionately among themselves about joining the Western military alliance. In essence, the idea of Poland's membership in NATO originated in the center-right circles in the early 1990s. It was only gradually espoused by most of the political elite.

In contradistinction, the idea, first, of close cooperation and, then, integration with the European Union initially enjoyed an incredible degree of both elite and public support from 1989 on. Recently, however, according to some opinion polls, that support has eroded among the population at large. It still holds sway among the elite. For example, very recently Poland's governing party, the center-right Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* – AWS) and all major opposition parties, including the post-Communist Union of the Democratic Left (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* – SLD), the populist Polish Peasant Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* – PSL), the center-left Freedom Union (*Unia Wolności* – UW), and the centrist Citizens' Alliance (*Platforma Obywatelska* – PO), signed a "Pact for [European] Integration." Thus, all significant players on Poland's political scene committed themselves publicly once again to joining the European Union. (A disgruntled right-wing pundit ominously dead-panned that the signing of the document coincided with "the 62nd anniversary of the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact of non-aggression between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union."⁴)

Three Polish Ways

In Poland, as elsewhere in Europe, there are three main attitudes toward the unification of the Old Continent: Euroenthusiastic, Euroskeptic, and Europhobic. These attitudes express both the hopes and fears of their adherents and are reflected in the propaganda disseminated by the advocates and

² Sebastian Karczewski, "Na obcej ziemi," *Nasz Dziennik*, 28 August 2001.

³ See Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, "Poland and the Future of NATO," *The Sarmatian Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (September 1999): 655-659.

⁴ Katarzyna Cegielska, "Jednym fałszywym głosem," *Nasz Dziennik*, 23 August 2001.

opponents of the EU. Often self-contradictory and by no means monolithic, the support or its lack for European integration does not necessarily follow any ideological lines. However, whereas the Euroenthusiast tends to be a socialist or a liberal, the Europhobe stems from the extreme left or the nationalist right. The Euroskeptic usually is a cautious conservative or libertarian. In a nutshell, their arguments are as follows.

According to Euroenthusiasts, EU is the best solution to all problems that have afflicted the Old Continent from time immemorial.⁵ A union will prevent another fratricidal European civil war because it will eliminate the nation state. In fact, crushing nationalism in each and every state will eliminate the chief source of international strife. To foster harmony within the EU, Euroenthusiasts pledge to promote regionalism and nurture the minorities. A judicious application of welfare state capitalism, cultural liberalism, and ethnic multiculturalism should neutralize conflict stemming from traditional labor, ethnic, and religious grievances. Because each member state is proportionally represented in the legislative body and rotatively chairs the executive body of the EU, the democratic process itself will prevent the supremacy of any single state over others. Also, since the smaller states are more numerous than the large ones, the representatives of the former in the European Parliament will be able to join together to prevent bullying by the larger and wealthier member states.⁶ Last but not least, the common European market will both usher in free trade throughout the continent and rationalize its economy through a system of regulations and generous subsidies that prevent or at least limit overproduction, in agriculture in particular.

Euroenthusiasts argue that, although perhaps joining the EU will not solve all the problems, it will remedy many of the economic, political, and social ills that Poland grapples with. Besides, there is no feasible alternative to the EU, they constantly repeat. Therefore we must follow the spirit of the times or risk being left behind, they warn. Their impatience, or some would even say impudence, perhaps best reflects itself when a liberal pundit expressed his displeasure because Polish diplomats dared to make demands on their EU counterparts while negotiating the conditions for Poland's integration into its structures.

A liberal Euroenthusiast has a simple plan for the future: if the nation follows his lead, "from the very first day of its membership, in congruence with the rule of solidarity within the EU, meaning the rule of financial aid, great financial resources will await Poland."⁷ His less sophisticated Euroenthusiastic post-Communist counterpart argues that "Poland should become the coal basin of Europe," forgetting that computer chips and not coal and steel drive the economy of the 21st century. Nonetheless, in light of stringent environmental regulations in Western Europe, Polish Euroenthusiasts may yet see fulfilled the

⁵ For effusively Euroenthusiastic apologetics see any issue of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Wprost*, *Polityka*, and *Rzeczpospolita*, and many other papers.

⁶ Such sentiments were expressed in the paper of Jerzy Holzer, "Polish-German Relations and the New Polish Foreign Policy," presented during the conference "Poland's Transformation" at Miller Center of Public Policy, University of Virginia, 3-5 May 2001.

⁷ Jan Skórzyński, "O co warto się spierać z Unią," *Rzeczpospolita*, 7 July 2001.

wish to have the coal mines, steel mills, electricity generating plants, and other high-polluting industrial enterprises in their backyards.⁸

The Europhobes

Europhobes will have none of that. According to them, the EU is a capitalist rocket of globalist dimensions. Not only will this Western entity exploit its own poor but it will also hold Eastern Europe and the Third World, or “The South,” in perpetual tutelage. Since the EU power structure is still nebulous, it is unclear who exactly would be in charge and how the power will be exercised, a situation that easily lends itself to various conspiracy theories. According to the doomsayers, the EU has totalitarian potential. Small states will be subordinated to the dictate of the large ones. In fact, the EU will be run by the greatest, wealthiest, and most populous of them, Germany, an undisputed economic powerhouse.

Plagiarized from America’s Hollywood and New York, German pop-culture will flood and pervade Europe and Poland. The Germans will buy up properties in western Poland, thus reversing the outcome of the Second World War. Poland itself will be divided into Euro-regions ruled from Berlin. Pretty soon, following the lead of the Netherlands, Poland’s legal system will embrace not only abortion on demand, but also infanticide and obligatory euthanasia for the elderly and infirm. Homosexual marriages will become the norm and pedophilia will be legalized. Animals will have more rights than humans. Although Nazi collaborators and assorted right-wingers will be persecuted and prosecuted (as the case of General Augusto Pinochet shows), selective sensitivity will allow the powers behind the EU to continue to ignore Communist criminals who have enjoyed a virtual immunity in post-1989 Poland (as the cases of émigré Helena Brus in England and émigré Stefan Szwedowicz in Sweden show).

Significantly, the Europhobes argue that the Christian religion will be shoved aside at best and persecuted at worst. In any event, the so-called “Holocaust religion,” an instrumentalized mass-media and political circus based upon the remembrance of the Jewish victims of Nazism, will serve as the official confession for the European Union.⁹ As one of the groups opposing the EU put it, “We say no to the cadaver of the Maastrich Treaty” (*Nie trupowi spod znaku Maastrich!*).¹⁰

What do the Europhobes propose?¹¹ First of all, they argue for the continuing existence of Poland as a nation-state. Many Europhobes are quite anti-American and, of course, even more anti-German.

⁸ Barbara Cieszewska, “Powrót do przeszłości,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 3 July 2001.

⁹ The theory of the “Holocaust religion” was developed in Poland chiefly by the editors of the Wrocław-based ultratraditionalist periodical *Stańczyk*.

¹⁰ See *Prawica Narodowa* 1 (6) (April-June 1995): cover.

¹¹ This inquiry focuses on the mainstream Europhobes, the Christian nationalists, whose thinking is best reflected in the right-wing Catholic daily *Nasz Dziennik* and in the national democratic weekly *Mysł Polska*. There are also other nationalist groups, including the radical strain present among some of the contributors to the now-defunct periodical *Prawica Narodowa* and the currently appearing *Templum* that oppose a socialist and liberal Europe but would like to build an European Union based on the precepts of Jean-Marie Le Pen of France. In addition, there are assorted left wing Europhobes, ranging from the orthodox Stalinists to anarchists (see e.g. the periodicals *Mat’ Pariadka* and *Obywatel*), who oppose the EU for their own reasons, completely unrelated to the nationalists. Finally, some of the

Instead, they favor a rapprochement with Russia and close cooperation with the Kremlin against both the EU and the successor states, in particular Ukraine, which they consider the chief German puppet in the area. The Europhobes call for an outright reversal of the economic course Poland embarked on starting with the so-called shock therapy of the early 1990s. They argue that this hare-brained liberal economic policy brought misery, dispossession, and unemployment for the masses and riches for a few, mostly former Communist *aparatchiks*. It also placed the nation's major industries and finances in foreign hands.

Europhobes therefore want to halt privatization and to re-nationalize crucial enterprises and banks. They promise to stop selling land to foreigners and confiscate the properties and enterprises sold illegally. All activities concerning Poland's access to the EU must cease immediately. The process of harmonizing of Poland's legislation with the laws of the EU should be reversed. Europhobes also argue that custom barriers need to be erected to reflect Poland's needs rather than the EU's demands. They promise to establish a "social minimum" required for the poor to live and adjust the salaries of state employees to that norm. The state bureaucracy must be trimmed significantly, perhaps by as much as 50 per cent.

At a minimum, Europhobes would like to protect Poland's market from "unfair competition." At the maximum, they favor the introduction of autarchy, at least until the successful conclusion of the economic, social, and political reforms they propose to implement. In essence, Europhobes call for emergency measures to prevent the nation's access to the EU.¹²

The Euroskeptics

Euroskeptics have been the least vocal in the game. Mostly, it is because, unlike Euroenthusiasts, they lack access to the mainstream media and, unlike Europhobes, they eschew loud populist rhetorics.¹³ Euroskeptics share neither the rosy-eyed utopias of Euroenthusiasts nor the doomsday gloom of Europhobes.

Euroskeptics are concerned about the anti-American edge of the European Union's foreign policy. Only the United States can serve as an agent of stability on the Old Continent by keeping all rivals neutralized. Borrowing from their British counterparts, Euroskeptics in Poland argue that the Polish foreign policy objective in Europe should be "to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down."

neo-pagan groups join the anti-EU cause for various reasons (environmentalism, anti-globalism, or racism, among others). See Remigiusz Okraska, *W kręgu Odyna i Tryglawa: Neopogonizm w Polsce i na świecie (zarys problematyki)* (Biała Podlaska: Rekonkwista, 2001), 69-84.

¹² See e.g., "Deklaracja w sprawie niepodległości Państwa Polskiego i stosunku do Unii Europejskiej, przeciw nowej Targowicy," *Nasz Dziennik*, 23 August 2001; "Rzecz najważniejsza," an electoral article to be published in *Mysł Polska*.

¹³ Exceptionally, the libertarian weekly *Najwyższy Czas* (High Time!) has always been pro-American and, for some time now, also Eurosceptic.

Euroskeptics view the Franco-German rapprochement as a harbinger of *Festung Europa*, a drive to exclude the United States from Europe. If we denied the Germany of *Der Kaiser* and *Der Führer* the right to supremacy over the continent, why should we grant it to a socialist and liberal Germany, they ask. As the obvious signs of the German drive for hegemony, they see the redefinition of Europe's defense affairs by means of creating an alternative, exclusively European military structure.¹⁴ Other signs include frequent trade altercations which discriminate the Americans on the European market. The results are twofold: European monopolies thrive and the European consumer suffers.

Nonetheless, Euroskeptics see great potential for free trade on the continent and beyond but wonder whether a political union is an indispensable attribute of free trade. They warn about overregulation and hyperbureaucratization, pointing out for example that the EU has issued an instruction on how to climb a ladder properly.¹⁵ These crippling factors will surely stifle freedom and produce grotesque results in the Polish society. An inveterate Euroskeptic has even quipped that "the Euroenthusiasts promise us the the EU will have the wonderful attributes of a German engineer, a French cook, an Italian lover, and an English banker. Unfortunately, the way things look now, we shall have a German lover, an English cook, an Italian engineer, and a French banker."

Frequent embezzlement scandals in Brussels and Warsaw make Euroskeptics worry about omnipotent bureaucrats.¹⁶ They also object strenuously to the so-called "political capitalism" (*kapitalizm polityczny*), where the politically well-heeled secure tax exemptions for their enterprises, obtain state licenses to do business where others are refused them, and procure state contracts despite their lack of qualifications to fulfill them.

Further, according to one view, a conservative is a Euroskeptic because "I love Europe." European Tradition means a variety of cultures. However, the Eurocrats try to crush pluralism and introduce uniformity. Next, under the guise of democracy, the EU conducts its economically socialist and culturally liberal policies even against the will of the majority, as was the case in Austria where the Eurocrats applied a political and economic boycott to overturn the results of an election that displeased them. Politically correct aberrations result, where Brussels praises "rampant feminists but castigates women who want to live their lives according to more traditional arrangements." Then, the Euroskeptic continues, "I am suspicious when I hear the so-called 'moral authorities' shouting hysterically that there is no alternative to joining the EU.... However, the alternative does exist. It is not to join the EU... The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has hardly fallen but we are witnessing the founding of a new camp – the Socialist Union of European Republic."¹⁷

¹⁴ Because of economic troubles, the EU's military projects have recently suffered a serious setback. See John Vinocur, "Economic Slowdown Forces Europe to Scale Back Ambitions," *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 2001.

¹⁵ See Mariusz Saryusz Wolski, "W niewoli norm," *Rzeczpospolita*, 20 June 2001.

¹⁶ In a recent scandal, it has been discovered that the Polish government minister in charge of the Committee for European Integration granted a generous subsidy of taxpayers' money to an Euroenthusiastic private foundation he chairs. See Katarzyna Sadłowska, "Dotacje nie dla każdego," *Rzeczpospolita*, 4 July 2001.

¹⁷ Bartosz Kurowski, "Ja nie chcę do Unii," *Życie*, 2 August 2001.

What is the Euroskeptic alternative? In foreign policy, the Euroskeptics would like to continue the pro-American orientation not only in defense matters but also in economics. In fact, the *enfant terrible* of Polish libertarianism, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, suggested that Poland join the NAFTA. Free trade with the EU nations remains an ideal for Poland but commercial exchange should be conducted on a strictly *quid pro quo* basis. In particular, this concerns agricultural output. Current arrangement covertly favoring subsidized Western European products should be jettisoned, according to Euroskeptics.

However, a slightly different tack should be applied to Poland's relations with Russia. Conventional trade is impossible because of the shortage of cash in Russia. Therefore barter should be put into effect: Polish agricultural products as well as consumer and industrial goods that largely lack a market in the West can be easily swapped for Russian raw materials, gas and oil in particular. Russia must not consider Poland a barrier but rather a middleman to the West. Further, according to Euroskeptics, the Poles must cooperate very closely with the remaining East Central European countries which face a similar predicament. Before any integration with the EU, the economies and even political systems of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic countries, and, eventually, the Balkan nations should be harmonized to mutual benefit. Most importantly, however, we must concentrate our energies at home.

Euroskeptics hold that first and foremost one must put one's business in order before even meditating a merger with another company. Otherwise, one faces a perspective of a union on unequal terms, simply an absorption where the stronger partner gets to make the rules. To put it another way, Euroskeptics argue logically that Poland must first and foremost reform its economic, legal, and political system before any European integration takes place.

To undertake much-needed economic reforms, their authors must concentrate on the most basic issues at hand without expanding their energy on any new or secondary projects. The most basic issue requiring attention is Poland's economy at home. The economy must be cured in its current setting: the Polish state as it exists at the present moment. To effect a cure, the state and its economic, political, and legal environment need to be subjected to severe but necessary stress. Any directly unrelated, additional radical tinkering with the form and shape of the Polish state disturbs the setting and throws further unpredictable factors into the path of reform, thus in effect undermining the process of curing the economy. It is logical then that the success of the reform hinges upon the preservation of the *status quo* of the general framework of the state. Thus, the model of the nation-state with its hard-won sovereignty must be retained for the foreseeable future.

Because there should be as few outside distractions as possible to the existing state structure, negotiations with the EU should be suspended. Legislation of European origin interfering with the reforms should be amended immediately.¹⁸ Also, the interference stemming from the past commitments to the EU and the World Bank economic regulations should be eliminated.

¹⁸ For recent troubles with EU legislation found unconstitutional in Poland see Żaneta Semprich, "Meandry legislacji," *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 August 2001.

Within the existing framework of the nation-state, Euroskeptics propose to effect the following. Learning from the mistakes of their liberal predecessors, they know that economic reforms, including privatization, can only be successful in a state that rigidly observes the law. As the cases of Singapore and Chile show, serious law enforcement and simple rules should limit corruption and embezzlement as well as social strife. Steps must be undertaken to persecute and punish the past, present, and future transgressors mercilessly.

Next, Euroskeptics propose to cut all taxes drastically (Currently, personal and corporate taxes vary from 30 to even 90 per cent). This should encourage native and foreign entrepreneurs to invest in Poland, thus stimulating the economy and alleviating unemployment which stands at over 15 per cent at the moment. Further, like Hong Kong, Poland should become a banking haven with financial laws adjusted accordingly. To trim the state budget, Euroskeptics would like to reduce the government bureaucracy radically and privatize most services performed by the state. At the same time, hefty tax deduction will ensure donations to church and private charities to assist the deserving poor. As for the unemployed, Euroskeptics are divided whether “the market” should take care of them, or they should be employed on state sponsored infrastructural improvement project, in particular highway construction.

Further reforms should aim at devolving power to the regions and localities so that the local self-governing bodies can take care of their own affairs. Ideally, aside from law-enforcement, the national government will step in only as a last measure in emergencies such as natural calamities, including floods, fires, and the like. Last but not least, Poland should avoid radical cultural innovations leading to euthanasia and other revolutionary solutions that disturb a society that needs stability to overhaul its economy. So much for integrating with the EU in the short run. In the long haul, however, according to Wojciech Wencel, “it is worth ‘entering Europe’ mainly in order to evangelize there.” In short, to re-Christianize Europe.¹⁹

To recapitulate, in foreign policy, Poland’s brand of Euroskepticism is pro-American and geared toward regional cooperation with other East Central European nations, as well as other neighboring countries based upon reciprocal free trade. In domestic affairs, Polish Euroskeptics embrace law-and-order conservatism, political decentralization, cultural traditionalism, and economic libertarianism.

Now what?

It is unclear whose vision will prevail. A few short years ago, the nation’s integration with the EU appeared inevitable. Euroenthusiasm seemed rampantly triumphant everywhere in Poland. Right now it still commands the adherence of most of the elite and perhaps 60 per cent of the people. Nonetheless, almost imperceptibly, the attitude of the Poles toward united Europe has been changing.

I would like to illustrate the process with an anecdote. If I recall correctly, according to the *Times* of London, in March 1999, the Eurocrats of Brussels raided an ancient monastery in Italy and slapped the

¹⁹ Wojciech Wencel, *Zamieszkać w katedrze: Szkice o kulturze i literaturze* (Warszawa and Ząbki: Fronda and Apostolicum, 1999), 92.

monks with a substantial fine. The reason for the fine was that what the Eurocrats classified as “food product” made by the monks lacked a stamp with the expiration date. The “food product” was the Holy Communion wafer. When I repeated that story to my Euroenthusiastic friends in Poland – and almost all of them were Euroenthusiasts – they simply refused to believe it. Even those who believed me were incapable of relating to something so alien and bizarre.

Well, I visited Poland this summer and the very same friends told me with great indignation that the European Union objected to the existence of the pride and joy of Polish culinary art: the lightly salted dill (*ogórek małosolny*). The Poles were advised that it did not meet the European standard and should be phased out. The maleficent potential of the Eurocratic bureaucracy finally hit home as far as some of my friends are concerned.²⁰

The reality that one should refrain from blind Euroenthusiasm has only very slowly dawned on the Poles. First, farmers have become annoyed that Polish milk does not meet the EU standards and that much of what they produce is unwelcome in Western Europe. They are particularly incensed because theirs is the ultimate “health food.” There is practically nothing but organic farming in Poland. Then, some of the industrial workers started grumbling after they were laid off and their newly-privatized enterprises liquidated to stomp out competition for analogous factories in Western Europe. Next, the denizens of western Poland became uneasy over the reports of Germans re-acquiring houses and land in their neighborhoods. Finally, feeling themselves under siege, Polish pharmacists demanded to be protected from both foreign and unqualified domestic competition. In the last instance, parliamentarians obeyed the *vox populi* and enacted appropriate legislation.²¹

However, where the politicians failed to respond, the people often resorted to direct action. Serious peasant unrest occurred in 1999 and later, including crippling highway blockades and attacks on trains transporting foreign food products. Industrial strikes broke out as workers objected to the closure of their plants.²²

Meanwhile, a recent survey commissioned by the EU has found that the process of European integration gives rise to inferiority complex among the Polish population. The Poles feel that the Western Europeans regard them as “con-men and thieves.” They fear that their lot in the EU will always be that of “the poor, unknown, and scorned relatives.” To add insult to injury, the EU authorities have judged that the Poles lack “intellectual curiosity” and that their inclination to compromise is virtually non-existent (*nikta*).²³

²⁰ Of course, Euroenthusiasts immediately responded with a media blitz intended to assuage the fears about the Eurocompatibility of Polish food. See e.g. Andrzej Stankiewicz, “Polskie dobre i czyste,” MSW, “Zgodne z normą,” Jędrzej Bielecki, “Przepis na uspokojenie konsumentów,” in *Rzeczpospolita*, 4 July 2001.

²¹ Joanna Pieńczykowska, “Obrona rodzimych aptek,” *Życie*, 25 August 2001.

²² Richard J. Hunter, Jr., and Leo V. Ryan, “Prospects for the Polish Economy in 1999-2000,” *The Sarmatian Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (September 1999).

²³ “Polacy największymi pesymistami,” a Polish Press Agency (PAP) dispatch as reported in “Z ostatniej chwili,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 August 2001 (on line). Strangely, in their opposition to the EU overbearing manners, the Poles may be in tune with other small European nations, notably the Irish and the Danes, who defied their elites and voted “no,” refusing to surrender their national sovereignty to the EU. Similar sentiments are expressed by many Slovenes, who have not yet joined the EU. See George Will, “European folk cast wary eye on EU,” *The Daily Progress* [Charlottesville, Va.], 13 June 2001; and Katarzyna Wypustek, “Byle dalej od Bałkanów,” *Rzeczpospolita*,

Coupled with rising unemployment and other economic problems, which can also be blamed on the European Union, there exists a powerful, albeit yet untapped, anti-European sentiment among the masses which will probably be utilized by the populist Europhobes.

The Polish Elite

How about the elite? The elite remains Euroenthusiastic for the most part. Nonetheless, even among the elite Euroskeptical reflexes surface occasionally. It is easy to illustrate this point with a handful of examples drawn randomly from the press in recent times.

Following the wishes of the voters, as well as their own relatively conservative inclinations, some of the Polish diplomats in Brussels insisted on imposing a moratorium on the sale of land to foreigners (aimed primarily at Germans), if the nation joins the EU. Consequently, Western European media dubbed Poland *l'enfant terrible* of the integration negotiations. The diplomats did not budge despite being also criticized by pundits at home.²⁴ The negotiations have also brought to the surface the evidence of dissent within the Euroenthusiastic camp itself. Center-right and conservative politicians advocate caution and support "tough" negotiations to achieve the best possible conditions for the nation. Only a few politicians, mostly post-Communist and liberal, think that "it is in Poland's best interest to find itself a member of the Union as fast as possible, even at the price of far-reaching concessions."²⁵ However, responding to the utopian wishes that the EU will become "a universal state," former prime minister and leftist Catholic politician Tadeusz Mazowiecki retorted, "there is no such thing as the European nation, and I can't imagine anything like that.... One can spin tales to that effect but it amounts to nothing."²⁶

Print media is full of Euroskeptical information. For example, most dailies casually use the term "political capitalism" (*kapitalizm polityczny*). It was coined by Poland's leading liberal sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis who perhaps unwittingly invited a comparison of its Polish manifestation by pointing out analogous pathologies in the European Union. Economics Professor Stanisław Wellisz has openly admitted that once Poland joins the EU a massive brain drain will occur, as the young and bright will look for a better future for themselves, thus leaving the mediocre and complacent in charge of the country.²⁷ Recently Poland's largest (and staunchly pro-EU) paper has reported that a prominent and popular urban government technocrat, "although he is a Euroenthusiast, the chairman [Witold] Sumiński also

24 August 2001. Furthermore, most of the electorate of the 15 member states of the EU is indifferent or hostile to expanding the Union. It seems that the EU project is basically elite-driven. See Jędrzej Bielecki, "Sprawa dla elit," *Rzeczpospolita*, 3 July 2001.

²⁴ Seventy per cent of the voters want serious restrictions on land purchase by foreigners and demand instantenous access to labor markets in the West. Also, most people refuse to compromise on anything in the EU negotiations. See Filip Gawryś, "Do Unii bez ustępstw," and "Polska nie jest najgorsza," *Rzeczpospolita*, 2 July 2001.

²⁵ Andrzej Potocki of the Freedom Union quoted in Krzysztof Haładyj, "Jak rozmawiać z Brukselą," *Rzeczpospolita*, 2 July 2001.

²⁶ Mazowiecki responded to the centrist Euroenthusiast Jan Maria Rokita. See Andrzej Stankiewicz, "Unia bliższa ludziom," *Rzeczpospolita*, 7 July 2001.

²⁷ Forty-five percent of working-age Poles between 16 and 29, twenty-three per cent between 30 and 49, and ten per cent over 50 would like to move to a job in the EU. See Barbara Sierszuła, "Do UE wybiera się młodzież," *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 July 2001.

sees threats in the EU or, rather, in the frequently unthinking zealotry [*nie zawsze przemyślana nadgorliwość*] and haste with which Polish laws are made compatible with the European standards.”²⁸

Catholic liberal Bohdan Cywiński publicly proclaimed that it was “blatantly against Poland’s national interest” to continue to adhere to the EU’s requirement to keep the nation’s border tightly sealed to prevent Ukrainians, Russians, and others from entering the country.²⁹ Cywiński went so far as to admit that Poland was not ready to be admitted to the EU; that the nation’s elite failed to elucidate an alternative program to the EU; that the country needed to be reformed before joining the EU; and that “the game is simply not just to join, but to join well, wisely, and creatively and, therefore, beneficially.”³⁰

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Władysław Bartoszewski called the German efforts to secure reparations from Poland as a result of the post-war resettlements, deportations, and expropriations, “baseless demands” (*nieuzasadnione roszczenia*).³¹ Another greatly respected liberal pundit, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, warned against the anti-American tendencies of the EU, in particular in military matters, and accused the French in particular of treating the US “simultaneously as an ally and an adversary.”³² Last but not least, the Catholic Primate Józef Cardinal Glemp warned against various modern “doctrines,” including “abortion, homosexual unions, genetic manipulation, and euthanasia.” He then called the EU a lesser evil: “Does Poland want to enter the European Union? Of course the Union guarantees more democracy and respect for national identity than full globalization.... [However,] with its modern doctrines does the Union honestly want to include Poland in its elite of the European nations?”³³

Portents?

Perhaps these are meaningless tid-bits and one should not make too much of them. On the other hand, perhaps they are a harbinger of change yet to occur. Therefore it is pertinent to ask whether the Polish Euroenthusiastic elite will eventually draw Euroskeptical conclusions from its subconsciously anti-EU banter. If so, whom will it benefit?

Both Euroskeptics and Europhobes realize that their stance allows them to define themselves, and to be defined by others, in opposition to the politicians of the right and left who have controlled the country since 1989. The electorate is heartily sick of the ruling center-right coalition. It will also tire again (as it

²⁸ Jacek Krzemiński, “Powódź dobrodziejka?” *Rzeczpospolita*, 20 August 2001.

²⁹ Bohdan Cywiński, “W imieniu regionu,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 24 August 2001.

³⁰ Bohdan Cywiński, “Solidarność słabszych,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 31 August 2001.

³¹ “Nieuzasadnione roszczenia,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 August 2001.

³² Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, “Czy NATO jest zagrożone?” *Rzeczpospolita*, 15 May 2001.

³³ “Głosujmy przeciw aborcji i eutanazji,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 August 2001. Archbishop Glemp is rather Eurocautious, if not publicly a Euroskeptic. On the other hand, the influential bishop Pieronek is wholeheartedly Euroenthusiastic. See Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, “Kościół katolicki a integracja Europy w świadomości polskiej roku 2000,” in *Kościół, Polska, Unia Europejska* (Gliwice: Wydawnictwo “Wokół nas” and Katolickie Stowarzyszenie Wychowawców, 2000). This publication was sponsored by the Office of the Committee for European Integration.

did in 1997) of the resurgent left, which like its adversary in the government is Euroenthusiastic. In four years, the people will have a choice: for or against the European Union. The people will also have a choice whether to vote for or against the United States. If they bet on the Euroskeptics, they will have chosen a Polish nation state firmly allied with America and open to cooperation with all, including the EU.

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