

Poland on the Brink of Crisis: Hopes and Anxieties for the Future

by Frank Hahn

Precisely at the time when the Polish people are busy licking their wounds after their October Presidential elections, a brief, humorous interlude was provided by the electoral debacle in the United States. A small delegation of the German Schiller Institute visited neighboring Poland at the end of November, and found not-so-secret *Schadenfreude* (gloating), presented in a typically Polish humorous way, about the fact, that the entire world can now observe the real state of affairs in the world's biggest alleged democracy. Sometimes diplomats, economists, or politicians nowadays even say bluntly: "Just last June, Mrs. Albright was here in Warsaw to lecture the entire world on democracy. Fortunately, she was stopped by French Foreign Minister Védrine!"

The general hearty laughter about the fact that a country which presumably is totally computerized, is not capable of counting a few votes correctly, could nowhere be missed.

At the same time, however, the immense strategic implications of the U.S. political crisis only became clear in the course of several seminars and discussions, which the representatives of the Schiller Institute had with Members of Parliament, as well as economic professors and students in Warsaw and Krakow. Of particular interest in this respect was a small seminar with members of the federal parliament, the Sejm, on Nov. 29, which was addressed by Hartmut Cramer and Frank Hahn. Despite important deliberations and voting going on simultaneously in the General Assembly, ten parliamentarians of different political parties came to discuss for almost three hours, the worldwide economic crisis and its solution.

They listened with keen attention to the following analysis of the strategic situation:

1. The election debacle in the U.S.A. reflects the deeper underlying loss of power of the Anglo-American financial oligarchy.

2. This is directly connected to the outbreak of a severe economic crisis in the United States itself, where the stock market crash of the "new economy," the record-high trade deficit, as well as the internal indebtedness of the United States, are only the most visible cornerstones of the disastrous situation.

3. Precisely these economic facts, which U.S. economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche has emphasized for many years, have now confirmed Dr. Chalmers Johnson, a well-

known U.S. Asian affairs analyst, in his view that the American empire is about to collapse, in the same way that the Soviet empire did in 1989 (see his interview in *EIR*, Dec. 8). This thesis, published in many interviews as well as in Johnson's book *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, points to the enormous opportunity that now exists, to use the present vacuum of leadership in Washington, to take measures to solve the global crisis—measures which, up to now, had been considered completely unthinkable.

4. This is exactly the meaning of the success of the Nov. 24-25 "ASEAN-Plus-3" meeting in Singapore, where the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, plus China, Japan, and South Korea, de facto founded an Asian Monetary Fund, as an alternative to the bankrupt International Monetary Fund, with the explicit aim, to protect themselves against speculative attacks on their currencies, and to use the newly built regional stability to invest in large-scale, long-term infrastructure projects.

5. Also in Europe, there are constructive beginnings in this direction, as is visible, for instance, in Italy, where there is an official initiative before the Italian Senate, sponsored by 25 Senators, to convoke an international New Bretton Woods conference, as LaRouche has proposed.

6. Since there is a direct connection between this Italian initiative and the Vatican's Jubilee 2000, Catholic Poland should no longer hesitate to follow this example.

During the discussion, which centered around the present U.S. situation, the Polish parliamentarians especially wanted to know, how the American trade unions would react to this situation, and what role LaRouche and his faction in the Democratic Party can now play in American politics. In his concluding remarks, Cramer underlined: "The United States right now is at the beginning of a revolutionary process. Whoever becomes President, *has* to act in the framework of the global financial crisis, which is now in its end phase; the situation is totally open. Gore is in big trouble, since he has tried everything to ruin the traditional Democratic Party. As a consequence, LaRouche's influence in that party is now increasing, and especially trade union layers and 'minorities' are tilting toward him. This is a huge opportunity for change, because LaRouche could now play a catalytic role, to orient the U.S.A. toward a policy in the spirit of President Franklin D. Roose-

velt. That would mean, that the United States could build up a true partnership for economic development with Europe, Africa, Asia, and Ibero-America, as FDR intended to do, before he died in April 1945.”

The parliamentarians considered this view as a “very constructive” one, and thanked the guests for the seminar, because “we not only have become more wise, but also morally strengthened.” The resolution of the Italian Senate for a New Bretton Woods was already on the table, translated into Polish, and was circulating among the participants. The coming weeks will show, how far Poland will go in the direction of a New Bretton Woods. It should also be noted, that at a public meeting in Warsaw, which the Schiller Institute representatives held with some friends and former government officials, the latter decided to inject the Italian resolution into the political debate in Poland, in a targeted way.

Palpable Fear

At the moment, the political scene in Poland is dominated by the neo-liberal and post-communist clique, which uses blackmail and corruption, as well as the media, to get their way. Yet big cracks in the previous political consensus can be recognized.

Generally speaking, there exists in Poland fear of a coming avalanche, an economic breakdown crisis; such a fear has never been so palpable in Poland, during the past ten years since the collapse of communism. Government officials and economists, students, and the “man on the street” express the unanimous view, that the post-communist boom (which was always nothing but a “virtual” boom) will now collapse. The country has an official unemployment rate of 14.5%, which — also according to official estimates — will rise to 17.5% at the beginning of next year. Poland’s Central Bank has the highest interest rate in all of Europe, 23%, in a desperate attempt to attract foreign capital and keep it inside the country. The withdrawal of just a couple of hundred millions of dollars of foreign capital would immediately lead to a currency crisis, and therefore to a threatening bankruptcy. The high interest rates have almost completely dried out the market for private banking credits. Since the public budgets are also operating on the brink of bankruptcy, there is almost no investment activity going on; bankruptcies of enterprises are increasing, together with a climate of fear of much worse things to come.

And the Catholic Church?

It has been exactly in such times, that the Catholic Church in Poland has always played an extraordinary role of integration and guidance. Can it do so, too, today? We cannot answer that question. But, representatives of the Schiller Institute were able to get a picture of the emotional situation in the Catholic milieu, since, besides the political seminars, on Nov. 24-25, they were invited to attend a two-day conference of all Polish Catholic lay associations.

Here, two notable speeches stood out, because they



A scene in Warsaw. The Polish Catholic Church is at a crucial juncture: Will it back the Italian resolution for a New Bretton Woods, or allow the nation to sink into a new dark age?

sounded like an appeal for survival to Catholic laymen. First, the president of the European Council of Bishops, Cardinal Vlk from Prague, spoke, recalling his personal experiences under communism: that as a priest, he was forbidden to preach, and that he was therefore forced to fight for his very survival by looking for odd jobs. He recalled how bitterly he had complained about his harsh fate, until he made the decision to *live* the Gospel as a human being, and in this way to be much more efficient than if he were to merely *teach* it as a function of his position. He began to collaborate with like-minded people, Vlk said, and very soon they reached, with their message of justice, *agapē*, and atonement, growing circles of people, especially non-believers — a truly Pauline concept of the spreading of Christian values and ideas!

Father Adam Schulz, the director of the movement of the associations of all Polish Catholic laymen, also spoke. People in today’s Poland are very busy trying to somehow “make ends meet” in their daily fight for existence, he said, so they do not have time to really think through religious or philosophical ideas. “How, then, can we fulfill our task of giving an example of the power of Christian faith?” Father Schulz asked. He warned that although many people would always come up with quotes from the papal encyclicals, they nevertheless, because of weak character and hypocrisy, would simultaneously participate in corruption, bribery, and public

lies. His conclusion was that we must become “saints,” and “professional saints” at that; no abstract, esoteric figures, but “full-blooded saints,” so to speak, like Mother Teresa.

The essence of both speeches was: Stop the hypocrisy; real life demands real answers to real problems! And if the Church is not able to provide these answers, the Church is finished.

The helplessness of the Church, unfortunately, became visible during the discussion of unemployment, on the second day of the conference. It is especially in the cultural realm, that the rapid, dangerous “re-evaluation” inside Polish society is showing itself. In a private discussion, one participant related to me a recent event in the city of Katowice: The director of the biggest concert hall in this city, which is right in the middle of Poland’s industrial belt in the South, had refused to sign a contract for a rock concert with the American rock band “Marilyn Manson,” because the group quite openly practices satanic rituals. Thereupon, the liberal and post-communist media had launched a witch-hunt against him, accusing him of going back to the old times when art was censored, and saying that he was trying to create an index of forbidden works of art, and so on. Finally, he was accused of sticking to the archaic, totally outmoded Christianity! Naturally, we know about such tendencies here in the West, where truth and human dignity are neglected under the guise of “liberalism”—but in an, at least so far, thoroughly Catholic country such as Poland, this was all shocking. Clearly, the Church is being pushed onto the defensive in Poland.

Therefore, it is all the more important, that Catholic circles become interested in the strategic world picture. With this aim in mind, the Polish Catholic Social Association (PZKS) had organized a meeting, during the first evening of the conference of laymen, where the Schiller Institute’s Grégoire Mukengechay spoke on the theme “Africa: Between Debt and AIDS.” Mukengechay, who was born and raised in the Central African country of the Congo, had studied in Poland in the 1960s, and speaks Polish fluently. He gave a very vivid report on the consequences of the International Monetary Fund policy of “globalization” and neo-liberal “free trade” in Africa. He demonstrated the dramatic indebtedness and the consequent disastrous collapse of the health system, in which the AIDS epidemic has taken on threatening dimensions. Catholics from Poland and Belarus passionately debated with him about the solution to this African tragedy. It became clear once again, that “African conditions” are really not so far away from us, if we don’t change economic policy on a global scale.

With that, we come back to the beginning: Poland is at a turning point, on the road to a severe crisis, after it has slavishly fulfilled all the brutal dictates of the Anglo-American financial elite for ten years. The most clever people in the country now see a unique chance to use the present vacuum in the United States, to finally act politically in a sovereign manner.

Neo-Nazi Witch-Hunt Implodes in Germany

by Rainer Apel

A sovereign nation needs an elite that is, first of all, sovereign in its views and actions. This requires that the elite, the political establishment, deal with real problems, especially economic and social ones. But, the elite of Germany is doing almost the exact opposite. In an attempt to escape real problems, it is constructing virtual ones with which it can “deal,” and thereby deflect from the ugly reality of the economic depression.

A Hysterical Response

But neither has this approach worked well, nor have the real problems gone away, and the German establishment’s response has been hysterical. Increasingly, scapegoats are being looked for, to blame them for the troubles that have become apparent.

The one big challenge to the German elite as a whole, namely, the need to find a policy to restore economic and monetary sovereignty for Germany, as the first step toward restoring such sovereignty also for the the rest of Europe, is being circumvented. And what is being circumvented at the same time, is the urgency of replacing the disastrous Social Democratic Party (SPD)-Green coalition with a Grand Coalition of the SPD and Christian Democratic Union/Christian Socialist Union (CDU-CSU), which would have the big majority in the national legislature that is required for introducing emergency measures to restore political control of the credit system, mobilize industrial production, and create several hundred thousand jobs in a short period of time.

This is what a clear majority of citizens and voters would prefer—and this is what the spin doctors, especially among the governing Social Democrats, want to sabotage. Their response to the threat of a new Grand Coalition has been a black propaganda campaign that is portraying the opposition Christian Democrats as right-wing extremists with whom no coalition were possible in any case.

Reality has it, however, that on numerous issues, the SPD is much more right-wing, and pro-monetarist, than the CDU-CSU, which implies that the propaganda campaign is not going that well. In a desperate flight-forward, the Social Democratic spin doctors have decided to launch a witch-hunt against “right-wing-extremist violence,” apparently hoping