

The Elections in Poland

October 11, 2001

The new Prime Minister (designated) announced on October 10 a proposed new government that must be accepted by the parliament. The Prime Minister on the slate is Leszek Miller, leader of the SLD party. Three vice prime ministers were proposed: Marek Belka for Finance; Marek Pol for the new post of Infrastructure; and Jarosław Kalinowski for Agriculture. Of interest to those in the energy-related industries, the following ministerial posts were proposed: Jacek Piechota, for Economy; Wiesław Kaczmarek for Treasury; and Stanisław Drelchowski for Environment and Natural Resources. The full list is found on the following page.

The new government will be a coalition of SLD, UP, and PSL.

It will be interesting to watch the way SLD works its way through the issues that were controversial in the elections: privatization, the budget deficit problems, and EU accession. Clear signals and results are not likely in the next few months as the new coalition learns to work together. Miller has promised to run a tight ship, dismissing any minister immediately who pursues an agenda other than as agreed by him. This may be easier to promise than to deliver.

Background: Parliamentary elections were held per normal schedule on September 23 throughout Poland to elect a new parliament (upper house-Senate, and lower house-Sejm) and by derivation a new government. The position of president was subject to elections last year and resulted in the re-election of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a member of the SLD party (Democratic Left).

The presidential elections produced a convincing victory for SLD and presaged a landslide victory for SLD in the parliamentary elections. In fact, they did win a considerable portion of the seats in the Sejm (216 seats of 458 or 47%), but it was not a simple majority as had been widely expected.

Second place went to the Citizen's Platform (PO), a new party formed last year by Andrzej Olechowski at the time of the presidential elections. This was no surprise. In the parliament we suspect that SLD will turn often to PO for support on issues on which the two find common ground but on which SLD does not find common ground with PSL, Samoobrona or LPR.

Third place was a big surprise. It went to the Samoobrona party, headed by the factious Andrzej Lepper. Lepper made headlines in 2000 by stirring up unrest amongst farmers, blocking roads and precipitating some violent demonstrations. He has emerged in this election as a political force to be reckoned with. Although Samoobrona was left out of the formation of a new government, their voice is likely to be influential in the new Sejm.

Poland has a percentage cut-off system. Parties that do not collect enough votes to make the cut-off do not enter parliament, and their percentage is spread amongst those who do make the cut in allocating seats in the Sejm. The party (UW) that had been a member of the coalition government (AWS and UW) did not make the cut. The election was a total defeat for AWS. They both almost disappear from the political scene. (AWS was not a political party, but a coalition of parties, all of whom did very badly in this election.)

PSL, the Polish "Peasant Party" also just made the cut. They have joined with SLD and UP (who ran together in the elections) to create a government with a very small parliamentary majority.

The last party to have made the cut is LPR (League of Polish Families), an extremist, right wing party. Their presence on the political scene is new and disturbing. Their influence could well be far more than their very small presence due to the tentative nature of the ruling margin.

The Full List of Proposed Ministers

October 10, 2001

<u>Post</u>	<u>Proposed Minister</u>
Prime Minister	Leszek Miller
Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance	Marek Belka
Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure	Marek Pol
Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture	Jarosław Kalinowski
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz
Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration	Krzysztof Janik
Minister of National Defense	Jerzy Szmajdziński
Minister of the Economy	Jacek Piechota
Minister of the State Treasury	Wiesław Kaczmarek
Minister of Labor	Jerzy Hausner
Minister of Justice	Barbara Piwnik
Minister of Health	Mariusz Źopiński
Minister of Education	Krystyna Źybacka
Minister of Science	Michał Kleiber
Minister of Culture	Andrzej Celiński
Minister of the Environment	Stanisław Źelichowski
Chief of the Cabinet of the Council of Ministers	Marek Wagner