

Social Democratic Party of Poland after one year (brief outline)

Social Democratic Party of Poland (SDPL) was formed on March 26th, 2004, to offer an alternative to voters disenchanted with the method of governing and functioning presented by the Alliance of Democratic Left (SLD) which, after taking power in 2001, instead of 'returning Poland to normality as per their slogan, participated in or tolerated corruption, nepotism and party cliques. As a result, almost 4 million voters stopped supporting SLD over a period 2.5 years. The support for the party fell from 41 percent to 6 or 7 percent.

Attempts to heal the Alliance from within, taken up by activists at the Congress in June 2003 and at the Convention in June 2004, failed. In this situation, these activists - in the main SLD senators and parliamentarians, together with several Union of Labour Parliamentarians and a group of left-wing politicians from outside the parliament - decided to form their own left-wing party.

The Head of the Social Democratic Party of Poland is Marek Borowski, a previous SLD Parliamentary Speaker (he resigned from the position at the same time as he left SLD and formed a new party). Among the other leaders are: Jolanta Banach - the head of the SDPL Parliamentary Club (previous Deputy Labour Minister), Tomasz Naęcz - Parliamentary Deputy Speaker and a previous Union of Labour politician, Andrzej Celiński, Marek Balicki - Minister of Health (both were active in Solidarity) and Izabela Sierakowska.

We currently have 32 parliamentarians and 9 senators. We are not within the ruling SLD coalition but have formed a particular agreement with Marek Belka, the Prime Minister. We have announced that we will support the government (votes of confidence, support for some legislation) so long as our postulates are carried out. These postulates concerned political reforms such as decreasing the influence of the parties upon the civil service and introducing socio-economic policies that are friendly to people. For the most part they have been fulfilled. Taking into account the short period of time till elections, we did not present any conditions in terms of positions within the government. Our only representative within the government is the Minister of Health, Marek Balicki.

We also have three Euro-deputies. SDPL is represented in the European Parliament by: Genowefa Grabowska, Józef Pinior and Dariusz Rosati.

Currently, the party has almost 6 thousand members as well as 3.5 thousand registered supporters. A third of our members have not previously belonged to any party and 40 percent are less than 35 years old. We have already formed district-level structures and before March 2005 the provincial-level structures will also have been formed. We have agreed to the principle that every SDPL member ought to be active not only in the party but also in non-governmental organisations, professional or community association or ought to be active socially in some other manner in the area where they live. They must also keep to strict moral standards. At the beginning of February we presented detailed proposals for political reforms aimed at healing the State and for SDPL priorities. Our main priority is education. We wish to ensure that all children get an even start by reforming primary education as well as changing teaching methods (limiting the testing of encyclopaedic knowledge in favour of developing the ability for independent analysis and to find information). We believe that every child and young person that wishes to learn ought to have that opportunity, so we wish to ensure that all who require scholarships receive them. In general, children ought to experience school as a friendly place and come out of it as citizens aware of their role in society. This is also aimed at countering criminal behaviour among minors.

Other important issues include:

- resolutely combating corruption (forming an Independent Anti-corruption Agency)

- lessening party influence upon the civil service and other State bodies (strengthening the civil service, open contests for positions within the government and local administrations, higher standards for politicians and civil servants)
- improvement in the quality of regulations (creating a Legislative Council, open procedures for the institution of laws by the government)
- healing the Medical system (shorter waiting lists, cheaper medicines, a program to fight cancers)
- combating unemployment (lower taxes, a climate friendly towards economic activity and investment, combating unfair competition)
- civil rights (equal status for men and women, right to terminate pregnancies, access to anti-conception, employee protection against being exploited by employers who break the Labour Code, counteracting sexual discrimination)

In the economic sphere we stress the need to create optimal conditions for investment and the removing of any barriers to the development of enterprise - we have a number of proposals in this area.

In matters of foreign relations we support the maintenance of a balance in our relations with our partners within the European Union and United States.

We support the rapid ratification of the European Constitution.

Statement of position of the 1st National Conference of the Social Democratic Party of Poland regarding the situation on the left

On March 26th, 2004 Social Democratic Party of Poland was formed. The split on the left became a fact. It was not caused by personal animosities nor by personal ambitions. Those who believe that it was impede the carrying out of a proper analysis of the reasons for the collapse of the left and a drawing of conclusions from it.

Instead of such an analysis, regularly appear calls to unity, joint electoral lists and joint candidates. The customary claim that the split on the left only helps the right is often heard. These kinds of views and behaviour are an attempt to escape reality. For many years we had been united and numerous. This did not save us from catastrophe. The right grew fat upon our errors, not after the split but while we appeared to be united.

The truth is unpleasant but ought to be clearly stated: the left lost because it treated power as an aim and not a means to carry out its programme. The left lost because it increased party influence and plundered the State to an even greater degree than AWS. By committing nepotism and favouring their mates it created the conditions for scandals, corruption and underhanded agreements. The left lost because all of these phenomena were tolerated by a significant number of the most prominent activists, ignoring warning signs, including those that came from party members.

Social Democratic Party of Poland is, thus far, the only left-wing party that has carried out this analysis and has drawn conclusions.

We have made the creation of an honest State the most important point in our party's programme and will undertake many concrete initiatives to achieve this aim. We have raised the bar upon what we expect from ourselves. We do not fight for positions but for causes.

Unfortunately, no such analysis has been carried out by SLD. No honest assessment of the causes for the loss of popular support has been carried out and the attempts to increase party influence and to plunder the State continue. In matters of significance to the left, the absenteeism and wilfulness of some of the SLD parliamentarians leads to failures that could have been avoided. Activists under whose noses erupted scandals, who showed particular arrogance and incompetence, still hold their heads high and, without shame, publicly praise or reprimand others.

We have no wish to lecture anyone but if appeals to unity and joint electoral lists with SLD are persistently directed to us, we must reply that while this state of affairs will continue, no alliances or coalitions are possible. Citizens who had decided to once again trust the left, to trust Social Democratic Party of Poland would feel cheated.

At the same time, we declare that our main political opponents are on the right, particularly the radical, fundamentalist right, and not in SLD. We know that within SLD there are people that think same as we do - we just do not know if they will be able to carry out the necessary changes. It is primarily to them that we direct our statement of position - the rivalry with the right can only be won by a left that is honest, trustworthy, that treats politics as a public duty and not an opportunity for achieving private or sectional gains.

This is the party we are trying to create. This is the kind of left Poland needs.

Warsaw, October 10th, 2004

Statement of position of the 1st National Conference of the Social Democratic Party of Poland regarding the continued presence of Polish forces in Iraq

1. Poland responded to the appeal from United States for assistance and co-operation in removing the threat that Saddam Hussein's criminal regime presented. Polish soldiers, for the first time in such numbers, took part in a stabilisation mission outside Poland's borders. The declared goals of the mission were to ensure order and the safety of Iraqis, assist in the rebuilding of the country and transfer power into the hands of the Iraqi nation.

2. Unfortunately, after more than a year of Polish forces being stationed in Iraq, these goals are still far from being achieved. The conditions in which the soldiers of the international contingent are functioning are far from those that had been assumed. The stabilisation mission, at first carried out without major interruptions, has run into major difficulties and is changing in character. Questions regarding its meaningfulness, duration and conditions for withdrawal are being asked more often.

3. We share the belief that the world without Saddam Hussein is better than with the dictator in power. However, today's Iraq is not making the world a safer place. **The Iraqis must take their fate into their own hands as soon as possible.** We feel that the actions aimed at creating an independent Iraqi government and effective security forces in Iraq have been, thus far, inadequate and burdened by serious errors.

We feel that the general Iraqi elections which are planned for the start of 2005 must take place on time and should lead to the creation of a credible Iraqi government with the mechanisms to govern effectively. That course of events would be beneficial to Poland and the world. **Polish soldiers should, therefore, take part in carrying out this plan, helping Iraqis to form their own democratically elected government.**

4. Taking this into consideration, the participants in the 1st National Conference of the Social Democratic Party of Poland:

Firstly, given the increased threats to the well-being and lives of our soldiers, call upon the government of the Republic of Poland to ensure that Polish units have the very best protection in the form of modern equipment, including the kind of equipment possessed by our allies.

Secondly, react with anxiety to signals which suggest that the Iraqi elections might be postponed. The Conference participants believe that the Polish government should inform the American government that the failure to hold elections or the failure to form a credible government in Iraq would mean the end of the Polish military mission in that country. Social Democratic Party of Poland demands that in that situation Polish forces be immediately withdrawn.

Thirdly, they feel that, assuming that an Iraqi government is formed, the possible further presence of foreign forces, including those of Poland and the nature of the mission in Iraq after the elections should be determined again by the UN and the new Iraqi government and the decision of the Polish government should be taken after consulting with the Parliament. All declarations that are made today regarding this matter are premature, we feel.

Because of this, the Conference participants appeal to the President and the Government of the Republic of Poland to start at the UN, the EU, NATO and in bilateral discussions the

initiative to work out a new form of international assistance for the stabilisation and rebuilding of an Iraq that will not be a danger to its neighbours and the rest of the world.

Fourthly, Poland, as a member of the UN, the EU and NATO, ought to again respect the principles of a world order based upon multilateral dialogue between interested parties and using international institution, principles that it, itself espouses. Unilateral actions motivated by 'terrorist threats' or 'the axis of evil' do not create an opportunity for stable, balanced or just solutions.

Warsaw, October 10th, 2004

Statement of Position of the 1st SDPL National Conference regarding the European Constitution

1. On May 1st, 2004 our country became a fully fledged member of the European Union, the Polish nation's desire for this to occur having been expressed through a general democratic vote. From the start, this outcome was opposed by radical organisations that presented the joining of the EU as the beginning of a catastrophe. Today, even the sceptics see how mendacious this argumentation was. We have started to benefit from European funds, export is rising as are the incomes of farmers - the group that, according to the Euro-sceptics, was to first suffer.

2. The opponents of EU membership have not given up, however, but have merely changed their methods. Today, their criticism is aimed against the Constitutional Treaty that is to be the basis for European co-operation. Politicians within the League of Polish Nations, Self-defence, Law and Justice as well as the Polish People's Party call for the rejection of the Treaty and, thereby, for Poland's exit from the EU.

3. The enemies of the EU make false claims about the European Constitution, just as they previously tried to scare people with the apocalyptic consequences of joining the EU. They misrepresent the fact that the government of the Republic of Poland has managed to defend Polish interests and ensured that our country has a strong position in the process of forming EU decisions. At the same time, Poland has not acted as an impediment that would block the EU's functioning, something that would necessarily lead to us becoming marginalised within the Union.

4. Social Democratic Party of Poland unambiguously supports the principles for the co-operation of the free European nations that are contained within the Constitutional Treaty as well as it being signed by the Polish Head of Government on October 29th of this year in Rome. At the same time, we support the holding of a national referendum regarding the Treaty that would allow all citizens to once again decide on our involvement in building a joint, safe, united and just Europe.

5. We believe that the referendum should take place at the same time as Presidential elections so that those who would take on the responsibility of becoming the head of state, responsible for the co-ordination of foreign policy, would have to clearly declare their views to what is the most significant issue today. Immediately after the signing of the Constitutional Treaty the SDPL Parliamentary Club should lodge with the Parliament a motion for the holding of a referendum on this matter. [...]

Warsaw, October 10th, 2004