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Migratory crisis in the eyes of the party leaders during the parliamentary campaign in Poland in 2015

Political Preferences nr 13, 21-34

2016

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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**MIGRATORY CRISIS IN THE EYES OF THE PARTY
LEADERS DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY
CAMPAIGN IN POLAND IN 2015**

Abstract:

The issue of the migratory crisis was one of the most important ones during the parliamentary campaign in October 2015 in Poland. An overview of the crucial comments and stances of the party leaders, together with the verification of their election results may point towards a strategy, displayed in the public discourse, opposing receiving the refugees in Poland. A sweeping victory of Law and Justice, together with a good result made by KUKIZ'15 suggests that the electorate wants to support the nationalistic attitudes and potentially to protect Poland against a flood of refugees. The political failure of the left-wing parties with no representation in Sejm, was perceived by many experts as a total failure of the multi-cultural policy and openness to refugees.

Key words:

Parliamentary campaign in Poland 2015, migratory crisis, party leaders

Politics is an art of dealing with multiple problems at a time. A vital part of any political campaign is to familiarize oneself with the burning issues that have been perplexing the society and to offer and promote solutions that potentially should be brought to life. In order to decide which party to support the electors evaluate the solutions and validate their own priorities. In an ideal world, the competition between the parties would make them follow these priorities and would make the electors benefit from it (Brzeziński 2015).

In reality though, the parties run their campaigns in such a way as to juggle their priorities. This phenomenon, known as *priming*, allows the parties to attend to some issues and not others. The principle of dominance formulated by William Ricker states that when a given party dominates on a particular issue, it will take the issue to the foreground of the public opinion, whereas an

opposing party will reject the issue (Riker 1993). The principle of dispersion, on the other hand, states that once there is no dominance of any party over a particular issue, the issue is rejected from the public discussion. The two principles entail certain recommendations for spin doctors, as each party should capitalise on their strong qualities and point to the Achilles' heel of their opponents. Nevertheless, Riker does not specify what exactly allows political parties to get an advantage in certain areas (Brzeziński 2015).

The parliamentary elections in Poland, held on 25th October 2015, were, according to many experts and media pundits, influenced by the greatest influx of refugees in the modern history of Europe, the so-called migratory crisis. It acted as a catalyst for numerous pre-election discussions and debates in Poland.

This article aims at analysing the messages of the political leaders in Poland concerning the migratory crisis, whether they were given to the public while meeting with the electors or to the media. The subject of the analysis are the messages that can be found in the archives or on the internet.

The migratory crisis and anti-refugees attitudes

Together with a surge of media interest in the topic of refugees coming to Europe, and in relation to more and more frequent incidents involving foreigners in many European cities, Poland witnessed a decline in social support for receiving refugees. In May 2015, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS, Centre for Public Opinion Research) conducted a poll, which showed that the attitudes of the Poles towards refugees are quite ambivalent. Of those participating in the poll, 72% stated that Poland should receive refugees from the countries torn apart by a military conflict, whereas 21% rejected this idea (the rest had no opinion on the issue). This trend was reversed in the face of a surge of refugees arriving from the Middle East and Africa. 53% of the poll takers were of the opinion that Poland should not offer any shelter to refugees and only 33% supported the idea of receiving some part of the migrants in Europe (CBOS 81/2015). Some other polls carried out in August, September, and October saw the attitudes of the Poles intensify as the migratory crisis developed. It could be observed that fewer and fewer people supported the idea of receiving refugees in Poland (56% and 54%, in comparison to the previous 72%), and simultaneously the number of opponents increased (38%, then 40% and 43% in comparison to the initial 21%; CBOS 122/2015; 133/2015; 144/2015; Świdarska et al. 2015: 2).

A change in social attitudes was quickly scented by the political leaders, who started to make use of the migratory crisis as a showcase for their negative attitudes towards receiving refugees in Poland. According to some publicists, e.g. guests of *Debata Poranka*, a Polish Radio 24 programme aired on 18th

September 2015, the issue of refugees works to the advantage of the Law and Justice party and is a nuisance for Civic Platform. According to Piotr Gursztyn, a journalist of “Do Rzeczy”, the leaders of Civic Platform “went against the current of attitudes of the party electorate” when it comes to the issue of refugees. – The electorate of Civic Platform was of the same opinion on the migratory crisis as those supporting Law and Justice – said the guest of *Debata Poranka* (Debata Poranka 2015). Ewa Kopacz, the prime minister at that time, pointed out that during the migratory crisis Poland should express solidarity with other members of the European Union, and stated that the government accepts the decisions made at the diplomatic summits concerning potential refugee quotas in Poland. However, according to Jarosław Kaczyński, the involvement of Warsaw in the migratory crisis should be limited only to financial support (Ibidem).

Bearing in mind an increase in the anti-immigrant attitudes during the parliamentary campaign and the ever-growing popularity of the right-wing parties in Poland, we can put forward a thesis that the final outcome of the elections was influenced by the migratory crisis, and particularly by the anti-immigrant stance of Polish political leaders.

Radicalization of Jarosław Kaczyński’s stance on the issue of refugees

The parliamentary elections in Poland brought a change of power. Law and Justice, previously forming the opposition in the government, won the election with 37.58% votes, and 235 seats in the Sejm (the lower house of the Polish parliament) of the Republic of Poland. This allowed the party to control an absolute majority of the seats in the Polish Parliament. This was possible due, among other things, the radicalization of the language used by Jarosław Kaczyński. The leader of Law and Justice, during a special meeting concerning refugees delivered one of the most radical speeches during the campaign. He said that “it is not about receiving this or that number of foreigners, but it is about the risk of initiating a certain precedent. It can begin with a sudden increase in the numbers of foreigners, then they will not abide by our law and customs, and simultaneously, they will impose, in an aggressive way, their own sensitivity and demands in the public sphere” (kłó/ja 2015). Kaczyński presented examples of the countries with considerable numbers of immigrants. He mentioned Sweden as a country where national flags are not displayed on the school buildings. “Do you want this to happen also in Poland, do you want us not to feel host at our own country? Poles do not want this and Law and Justice also does not want this”, he said. Kaczyński, during the same

speech, mentioned that “We have the right to protect ourselves from calumnies thrown at Poland by its mortal enemies. Not doing it is not only a dishonour, not only a shame, but also a great political mistake”. Kaczyński continued: “We have to distinguish between refugees from economic immigrants. Which country created a social magnet attracting economic migrants? It was Germany and it is their problem. Orban was right. It is their problem, not ours. We can help refugees but in a way that is risk-free to our country” (Ibidem).

This message of the leader of Law and Justice, so explicit and firm, acted as a green light for other members of the party to openly criticise the government on the issue of receiving refugees by Poland. Kaczyński’s messages that followed were formulated along the same lines. During a meeting in Maków Mazowiecki, the leader of the party referred to the media speculation on receiving 100,000 Muslim immigrants from the Middle East. He asked: “Is it true? The Minister of Health should answer the question, since there are symptoms of dangerous and exotic diseases brought by immigrants to Europe. Cholera in Greece, dysentery in Vienna, various parasites, protozoa. It does not mean that should discriminate against immigrants, but we should carefully examine them” (*Kaczyński o imigrantach*).

On 16th October 2015 Jarosław Kaczyński met with the citizens of Biała Podlaska in front of the gate of the local center for foreigners and tried to explain his previous words on the diseases that could be brought to Poland by refugees. Because of this message he was accused of promoting Nazism. “My words, which I uttered during one of the meetings, came in for a violent protest, strong backlash. There were many accusations hurled, some of them funny, some of them strong and unjustified. We care about safety and security of the Polish citizens, we do not want to take any actions that could pose potential threats”, explained the leader of Law and Justice (pw, mw 2015).

According to Jarosław Kaczyński, the authorities should explicitly state what are the plans of migrant relocation. “One cannot make decisions which would be against the citizens’ interest, behind their backs. Here we are dealing with such a situation, with different information being disseminated. I hope the information is false”, added the leader of Law and Justice. “It is all about decency of the authorities towards citizens. Decency, which should be required at all times, especially in a democratic state. The subject of the authorities, their sovereign, are citizens” (Ibidem).

Such messages produced by Jarosław Kaczyński sparked a series of comments, mostly from his political opponents¹ and journalists. Cezary Michalski from *Newsweek Polska* claimed that fear is grist for Law and Justice's mill. In the internet version of the paper he wrote: "People are afraid of Russia, immigrants, Islam, another economic crisis. Any politician who can liberate them from fear will be endowed with unlimited authority. In order for people living in constantly-growing fear to give a full control to 'a powerful man' and 'a powerful party', the fear has be intensified" (Michalski 2015).

Defensive narration of Civic Platform

Civic Platform, a party which in October 2015 tried to defend its good parliamentary result from the last elections, took a stance on refugees which, according to many experts, brought the party down. The leader of the party, Ewa Kopacz, since the very beginning of the migratory crisis claimed that Poland should receive refugees. However, in the course of time her stance evolved. At the beginning of 2015, when the number of refugees was not considerable and the migratory crisis did not spread across the whole Europe, Kopacz declared support for migrants from Syria and Northern Africa. Yet the parliamentary campaign forced Civic Platform to take a more toned-down approach. This was evidenced during a debate in Sejm concerning the reception of refugees in Poland. Ewa Kopacz paid attention to the fact that the problem would not disappear on 25 October but would persist. She promised that the minister of her government would offer exhaustive information in this regard. Addressing the ministers of Law and Justice, she said: "If you do not want to receive refugees, tell it to your voters. If you want to accept all of them, say it as well". She added: "We, Civic Platform, will act openly and accept all those that are in need" (Sikora 2015).

The debate in Sejm was fierce and resembled a struggle between the Prime Minister Kopacz and Kaczyński. Quite frequently during the discussion, the Prime Minister addressed directly the words of the leader of Law and Justice. She said: "With the words of their leader, Law and Justice, during the parliamentary campaign, five weeks before the election, revealed its true face of an anti-European, xenophobic, argumentative party. It is a preview of making Poland leave the EU, and the Poles should be aware of it" (jad 2015). "Kaczyński mentioned that family is of the greatest importance, only then come the citizens. I believe he forgot to mention the party, his party, which he loves

1 Soon after Jarosław Kaczyński's speech, Janusz Palikot stated that he will bring a prosecution against him. He said "If the prosecution process doesn't start today or tomorrow, I will notify the court about committing a crime by Jarosław Kaczyński (mm 2015), which is spreading fascism and racism in Poland".

more than everything, more than the nation”, she continued. “I would like to ask the leading defenders of life and the first Catholic what is the price of that. He says today: ‘let’s pay’, so I’m asking Law and Justice what is the price of a human life” (Ibidem).

The debate did not improve the opinion polls for Civic Platform and it did not stop the downward trend observed since the presidential elections were lost by Bronisław Komorowski, who was supported by Civic Platform. In this context, the party board decided to take a more conservative stance on the issue of refugees. It was presented by a member of Civic Platform, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rafał Trzaskowski, who, after another European Union summit concerning the migratory crisis, declared: “Poland will receive about 5,000 refugees. Today we made the decision. What is most important, there is no automatism here, we have said from the very beginning that it must be an autonomous decision of the EU members, without any imposition on numbers”. The Vice Minister pointed out that the key postulates made by Poland were maintained and accepted by the European community: “From the very beginning we said the sheer division of quotas is not enough. The EU must have a comprehensive plan of coping with the problem, which mostly concerns securing the borders. Secondly, there must be a clear distinction between economic migrants and refugees. The EU cannot afford to accept everyone, we are going to help only those who flee their countries because their life is in danger” (PO 2015).

To reinforce the message presented by Trzaskowski, special figures were available online on the official website of Civic Platform. The figures promoted the success of Ewa Kopacz’s government during the European summits (Ibidem). They informed about efficiency of the government, e.g. their policy of rejecting migrant quotas based on a mathematical formula. The EU obliged to tighten the outer borders and invest more sources to verify which migrants belong to the economic group and which are refugees.

Polarity of the political stances concerning refugees

An opportunity to confront stances on the migratory crisis between the leader of Civic Platform and the Law and Justice candidate for the prime minister, Beata Szydło, was their meeting on the TV programme “Beata Szydło - Ewa Kopacz. Rozmowa o Polsce”². The debate took place on 19th October 2015 in the studio of the Polish Television, and was broadcast by TVP Info and TVP1, and also TVN24, Polsat News, Radio Jedyńka, and Polskie Radio 24.

2 The debate attracted about 8 million viewers, which gave the 7 broadcasting channels the market share value of 45.98%, and 38.01% in the group of 16-49 year-olds, according to Nielsen Audience Measurement carried out for Wirtualnedia.pl (PP 2015a).

The debate covered many issues, one of which was the issue of immigrants. Ewa Kopacz asked Beata Szydło if Jarosław Kaczyński was right talking, among other things, about immigrants being a potential epidemiological threat. She added that she had to clarify Kaczyński's words abroad. Beata Szydło replied that she wanted to discuss the interest of the Poles, and not Polish politics. She emphasized that she cares more about the voice of the Poles rather than the politicians in Europe. She also asked Kopacz if it was true that the government wanted to introduce a tax that would finance immigrants' staying in the EU. Would it be accepted by the Prime Minister? Kopacz reassured that "there will be no need to finance it from our budget. Every refugee will be financed. We are sensitive. We helped and will help. Today we made a contribution to the European food fund in order to help refugees" (Debata).

According to the commentators, the debate of the two most popular politicians was a disappointment, mostly due to the defensive approach they undertook. The topic of refugees, of a very general character, boiled down to the statement about solidarity with those in need. A second television debate, this time involving representatives of 8 political parties, was more dynamic when it comes to the interaction between Szydło and Kopacz³. Polarity of their political views came into the fore after a question asked by the host, Grzegorz Kajdanowicz. It directly concerned the stance on the so-called refugee quotas, fixed during a European Union summit in Brussels. The question was: "How many refugees should Poland receive, and will the potential government, which you could form in the future, accept all the decisions made in Brussels?" (mk 2015). The first to answer was by Ewa Kopacz: "I am the Prime Minister whose ministers negotiated the numbers of migrants that will be received by Poland. I will be very precise, they are not migrants, they are refugees, there should be a distinction made here, and thanks to a solidary yet firm stance taken by Poland, we prevented another risky moment when all the European Union members would have the refugee quotas imposed. We decided, and it is the final effect of the last summit, of the last European Council, that we will do the refugee politics in a comprehensive way. At the same time, we will demonstrate solidarity not only with the countries of the European Union, but mostly with those who flee from the risk of losing their health and life. We will protect the external borders of the European Union, we will create hot spots and distinguish between refugees and immigrants" (Ibidem).

These views were not shared by the second speaker in the debate, Beata Szydło, the Law and Justice candidate for the prime minister. "Our stance is clear. We believe that we must focus on humanitarian aid. We need to tackle this

3 The debate was broadcast on 20th October 2015. According to the data of Nielsen Audience Measurement prepared for Wirtualnemedial.pl the debate viewing figures was 6.69 million, which is 1.3 million less than the previous debate. The market share was 38.79%, with 33.62% in the group aged 16-49 (PP 2015b).

problem in such a way so that financial help is directed to those countries which are in need so that the people receive help, and they receive it in their own place. The solution put forward by the European Union is a bad solution, and first and foremost, it is not a systemic solution. The Poles have all the right to be afraid because they do not know what is imposed on the Polish government. Today, the Poles worry about their safety and security. And yes, we say that safety and security of the Polish citizens is of utmost importance but we also believe that we should help those in need. We need to think about humanitarian aid, financial aid sent to those countries whose citizens are at risk” (Ibidem).

This debate also offered a chance for other party leaders to present their stances on the migratory crisis, often so different from each other. The clearest views were presented by the right-wing politicians, e.g. by Ruch Kukiz’15, for whom the migratory crisis acted as the driving force behind their campaign. Radical comments made by the party leader, Paweł Kukiz, shaped the political program of the party. During the debate, Kukiz questioned the term “refugees”, suggesting that “it is hard to call these people refugees, as, according to the Geneva Convention, they would be refugees if they were in Turkey or Greece, the first country without any conflict. In any other situation they are economic immigrants. If the government comes to a conclusion that we can afford to receive such immigrants, it means that Civic Platform politically supports Germany” (mk 2015). The migratory crisis became for the Kukiz party an opportunity to manifest their political programme concerning repatriates settling down in Poland. Kukiz asked: “Why are we only now mentioning the Poles living in the East? I have been talking about it for many years, about the necessity to bring back people from Kazakhstan, Donbass, regions at war and at risk” (Ibidem).

It should be remembered that Kukiz’s stance on refugees changed many times. A month before the debate, during a radio interview with Monika Olejnik, a journalist of Radio Zet, as of 7th September 2015, Kukiz applauded the appeal of Pope Francis that every European parish, monastery, sanctuary could receive one refugee family. Kukiz admitted that he changed his mind on the issue of refugees due to the media influence. He said: “It is a very good appeal, and in fact the Church should take part in the process (...) of taking care of people. To be honest with you, at the very beginning I was an opponent of bringing refugees here, however, when I saw pictures, children’s dead bodies carried by soldiers, this is all devastating, and really, it is two thousand people, whereas there are about 10,000 parishes in Poland. It is a great challenge for the Church, it is not only missionary activity, but also charity, doing good” (Lipiński 2015). Kukiz claimed that aid should be distributed to refugees with caution. He added: “There are a few risks that need to be supervised, firstly, that the number of refugees does not increase overnight. Secondly, refugees should not be located

to these centers in big numbers”. When asked by Olejnik whether the Polish government should receive refugees or build a wall, he opted for a golden mean. “We should monitor those coming to us, or even ask the American service to monitor those coming to us, because, willy nilly, Mrs Kopacz declared to receive two thousand of them, supposedly, so the decisions have been made already. The Church should get involved in this, it is its great mission” (Ibidem).

However, two weeks later, Paweł Kukiz radically changed his views. On the 22nd September 2015 he appealed to the Polish and European authorities so that they would not receive refugees from the Northern Africa and Middle East. Together with other members of his political movement, Kukiz petitioned the diplomatic post of the European Commission in Warsaw. “Borders of the EU should be protected, every new thousand of immigrants increases the risk of a terrorist attack, so a plan for the immigrant countries should be created”, Kukiz wrote to Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council, and to Martin Schulz, the President of the European Parliament. Kukiz explained that there are many arguments against receiving refugees by Poland. Some of them are difficulties with verifying the identity of refugees, which may be conducive to terrorist acts. He also mentioned economic reason. “It is just common sense. How can we, in a country which was left by 3 million people, think about receiving those who will be needing jobs”⁴. It is difficult to explain Paweł Kukiz’s change of views just with the argument of a lack of sensitivity. It is possible, on the basis of pre-election polls, that Kukiz’s spin doctors advised him to take advantage of the anti-refugee stance. Furthermore, it may be possible that the national, conservative wing came to power within the movement.

A similar radical stance to Kukiz’s one was presented by Janusz Korwin-Mikke in a TV debate. The leader of the KORWiN party pointed out the motivation of the migrants coming to Europe: “It is obvious that these who come are usually young men. Did they leave their families in Syria? No. (...) they left them safely in camps, but go to Germany because the social benefit is higher there. And Mrs Merkel, after seeing that they come in great numbers, demands that we create concentration camps for these refugees, that we watch them so that they will not escape to Germany (...). They do not want to be in Poland. The social benefit in Poland is too low. Everyone who comes to Poland, leaves it” said Korwin-Mikke (mk 2015).

4 Kukiz’s appeal was issued on the day of the meeting of European interior ministers in Brussels, who tried to find solution to the distribution of 120,000 refugees to particular countries. The EU summit, concerning the migratory crisis, with the European presidents and prime ministers present, took place on the next day. 28 members of the European Union agreed on sharing 120,000 refugees, which was proposed by the European Commission in order to help Italy, Greece, and Hungary, facing an unprecedented flood of refugees at that time.

This statement of Janusz Korwin-Mikke's, who is known for his sharp tongue, is an example of his consistent opposing strategy to the refugees reception. As a deputy of the European Parliament, during its proceedings on the 9th September 2015 and a discussion on the migration crisis, he controversially stated: "We are destroying Europe. This is a policy of Europe's fall (...). This is a ridiculous policy. This is flooding Europe with a human rubbish who does not want to work" said Korwin-Mikke (PM//rzw 2015). After this statement, the leader of the KORWiN party was severely criticised both in Poland and Europe. However, in his further interviews and comments, he consequently maintained his view on refugees. He also blamed President Lech Kaczyński for signing the Treaty of Lisbon, which, in his opinion, deprived Poland of its sovereignty and made the Polish law come only second after the European law.

According to Korwin-Mikke, another argument against receiving refugees is that "our money" will cover the cost of their benefits, and that they will want to introduce Sharia. According to the politician, refugees will not be a threat to us as long as they are in small numbers. If only Poland gives way and receives a thousand refugees, soon it will be ten, and then a hundred thousand; "it multiplies this way", says Korwin-Mikke. A consequence of this will be a situation where refugees "will get rich, take the power over and that's it" – claimed the leader of the KORWiN party (Janusz Korwin-Mikke). A solution suggested by Korwin-Mikke in a blog post during the parliamentary campaign was a possibility of receiving refugees by Polish families willing to do so. In such a case, it would be the families who should take care of the newcomers, not the Polish taxpayers. Furthermore, such a system would be an effective method of integration and introducing refugees to the Polish society (*Janusz Korwin-Mikke o uchodźcach*).

Cautious PSL (Polish People's Party) and Nowoczesna (Modern)

Janusz Piechociński, Minister of Economy in the government of Ewa Kopacz, and the leader of the Polish People's Party, tried to find a golden mean between those supporting the reception of refugees in Poland and the official stance promoted by the government. In the debate he seemed to find a constructive solution of the problem rather than point the finger of guilt at politicians or the European Union strategy. He said: "What is the root of all migration? It is war, poverty, poor economy that does not provide people with jobs (...). What do we offer? Firstly, let's make use of what we have, Polish food, Polish medicine, sanitary facilities, this could be the foundation of the Polish humanitarian success" (mk 2015).

In one of the interviews, the Minister stated in Radio Trójka that politicians should not rely on the language of the Internet when it comes to the issue of immigrants. When asked about Ilona Antoniszyn-Klik's comment in which she accused the users of one of the social media platforms of "political prostitution", he promised to scold her for the comment. "I was not aware of this comment. I will scold her because she is using a language which should not be used by politicians or other citizens" (*Ilu uchodźców...*).

During a meeting with the electorate in Lublin, Janusz Piechociński urged them to promote an open dialogue with regards to the migration issue. "It would be good if Poland started using the united voice in politics. We need to talk to each other in an honest and open way, firstly: the President, the government, party leaders, Church leaders, if there is such a need, denominational groups. It should be our joint national reply to the new phenomena and threats" (PAP 2015).

The need of solidarity was also mentioned by another PSL member, John Godson, who was very active during the campaign as far as the migratory crisis was concerned. During one of the Sejm debates, he stressed that Poland had always enjoyed an opinion of a country of solidarity that offers shelter to the repressed ones. However, this opinion can be easily destroyed. He claimed that if Europe ceases to be of a Catholic character, it would be because the Christian testimony was too weak, and the Islamisation of Europe does not stem from Muslim minorities rising in power, but rather from Christians losing faith. He added that if Poland would not express solidarity with the countries who face waves of immigrants, it has to bear in mind that those countries would also turn their backs on Poland in the future (jad 2015).

Of a similar balanced tone were the comments by Ryszard Petru, leader of the new political formation, Nowoczesna. In one of the interviews for Radio Zet, he maintained that "as Polish people we have a moral duty to receive refugees, yet we are not attractive for immigrants" (TM 2015). According to the leader of Nowoczesna, Poland should shrug off the label of a country that does not want to receive refugees, so typical of the Central-Eastern Europe. He added that "people have the right to be afraid, because there are also terrorists among refugees", but he would really like to avoid "situations like in Hungary", where a journalist tripped the refugee up and kicked them (*Ibidem*). Broadcasting this and presenting it in the media is unnecessary. "We do not have the competence in receiving refugees. Poles have always fled their country, and have not received others. We can learn from Germany. It would be best, after Pope Francis' message, to invite them to our parishes". On his blog, Ryszard Petru presented his own strategy to solve the migratory crisis⁵.

5 According to Ryszard Petru, the Polish government should: 1. Open new centers able

Left-wing parties supporting refugees

A clear stance on the migratory crisis was taken by the left-wing parties in Poland. They declared an openness towards refugees. Barbara Nowacka, the leader of Zjednoczona Lewica, vice-president of Twój Ruch, during a meeting in Silesia, offered a specific strategy of receiving and integrating refugees. She said that “those coming to us should be given a chance to know the Polish culture, values, and customs. They should see where they are. An example comes from Germany” (Grzędziński 2015). Nowacka was critical of the fact that the refugee issue appeared before the elections. “No political campaign should be built on human suffering and fear. In Poland it happens in a nervous atmosphere. After all, it is all about a long-term policy. We need to pose questions about whom to receive, how to receive, and how to distinguish between refugees and economic migrants, how to assimilate and who to assimilate, what can we do within a international community in order to end the conflict in the Middle East. This is what we wanted to know from the Prime Minister, Ewa Kopacz” (Ibidem).

Barbara Nowacka, during the parliamentary campaign, had to face competition from a new left-wing group, embodied by Adrian Zandberg. The leader of the Razem party, created by the liberal media to be a potential left-wing leader, gained popularity at the end of the campaign, during a debate in TVP in which all the party leaders took part. He appealed to the Poles to behave decently, when it comes to refugees. “If these people, fleeing war, death, starvation, knock at our door, it is our responsibility to take care of them, and people who take pride in limiting the number of refugees, who are proud to say that we will not help them, are of dubious morality. Another thing is that a part of the Polish political class wants to capitalize on scaring people with refugees, who flee war, and this is a disgrace” (mk 2015).

Razem, with one of the lowest budgets of all officially registered parties in the elections, organized more press conferences rather than party rallies and gatherings. The National Council prepared statements and its official stance. One of them, as of 4th September 2015, concerned the migratory crisis in Europe, in which it demanded that “Poland should demonstrate solidarity and realize its moral duties to those fleeing war, persecution, and starvation, and to the citizens of Syria, Eritrea, and other Asian and African countries”

to receive 2-3 times bigger numbers of refugees. 2. Improve the standard of the centers, if needed. 3. Provide the refugees with professional counselling (in many cases this kind of aid was offered by people with no psychological or linguistic competence). 4. Offer a therapy for those suffering from PTSD. 5. Provide refugees with lessons of the Polish language. 6. Initiate grants for social and non-governmental organizations that would help to integrate the refugees (Petru 2015).

(Przybylski 2015). Razem also protested against discrimination based on faith or ethnic origin. Such an attitude was compared to the policy of the closed door, with tinges of racism and prejudice (Ibidem).

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