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Insider Interview

Europe's New Eastern Question

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With right-wing populists ascendant in Poland and Hungary, and gaining ground elsewhere in the European Union, politics in the West looks increasingly like politics in Russia. For Sławomir Sierakowski, Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Warsaw, and Adam Michnik, a leading architect of Poland's Solidarity movement and of the country's postcommunist transition, Europe's illiberal turn reflects cultural insecurity and political failure as much as economic distress.

SS: As a leader of Solidarity and architect of Poland's democratic transition after 1989, do you feel a sense of defeat at the populist Poland that has emerged under the Law and Justice (PiS) government and its de facto leader, Jarosław Kaczyński?

AM: I do not feel a sense of defeat, because the movement I participated in from 1965 dreamed of a free and independent Poland. What we as a society have done with that freedom is a different matter.

SS: Do you think you committed any errors? As dissidents you were beloved, but today you are rejected. Why is that?

AM: I do not feel rejected. I am the editor of what remains the largest daily newspaper not only in Poland, but in the entire region. I travel around the country, I have meetings in cities large and small. The rooms are packed.

SS: Antoni Macierewicz [far-right politician, controversial Minister of Defense] draws even bigger crowds.

AM: Maybe, but he's not traveling the country, he's building a private army. Meanwhile I am traveling around, and I absolutely do not feel rejected. But I do have the sense that Poland is polarized, much like the United States, France, or Great Britain.

SS: There are two ways to explain the success of populism. One is economic: inequality, insecurity, and the resulting anger. The second highlights an organic

nationalism that is now making itself felt once more. What's your view?

AM: I think both are correct. It is just that inequality, exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination are relative concepts. If we look at the rich countries in Europe, that is where the strongest populist tendencies are. Look at France or Great Britain.

SS: I agree that populism is strengthening across the board. But there is something to the fact that PiS offered a 500-złoty (\$140) child benefit, increased the minimum wage, and introduced free medications for seniors. These are the largest social transfers in Polish history. Why didn't Kaczyński's opponents propose similar policies?

AM: I, too, have wondered why the previous government did not find the right language to reach voters who are pleased with the "500+" program, and I don't have an answer. I think that many of the people you are asking about, former dissidents, thought regaining our freedom and our sovereignty, our entry into the European Union and NATO, should be a fundamental value for everyone. But that did not turn out to be the case. But I also think that, in terms of pro-family policies, the eight years of the Civic Platform-led governments accomplished significantly more than PiS has, but they were unable to fix their real achievements in the collective consciousness. They thought that once they had gotten the job done, there was no point in talking about it.

SS: I don't buy the argument that it was a communication failure. That's what people always say in the wake of populist victories. Can it really be that liberal elites across the democratic world suddenly lost their ability to speak to voters?

AM: They didn't lose it everywhere. Emmanuel Macron has proven to be an effective communicator. But Hillary Clinton scarcely visited the Rust Belt during her campaign. In the Polish context, I think that Bronisław Komorowski's defeat in the presidential election of 2015 was a failure of historic proportions, on the part not only of Komorowski himself, but also of the Polish elites. And here I'm speaking about myself. I was so convinced that Andrzej Duda could not win the presidency. If I had done then what I am doing now, if I had moved my ass and traveled around Poland to campaign, at least my conscience would be clear. But I didn't.

SS: So you contributed to the populist takeover of Poland?

AM: By omission.

SS: But what happened before all that? Why did you become enamored of freedom, rather than equality, unlike some within Solidarity?

AM: At that point, it was unrealistic. The ideas proposed by left-wing dissidents like Karol Modzelewski or Ryszard Bugaj were completely fanciful. I'm talking about a slightly later period, after 2000.

SS: That was when you should have turned left on the economy and social policy.

AM: I will say this: That was when we should have paid a lot more attention to those regions that now see themselves as having been abandoned.

Left in Hard Times

SS: How is it that, around the world, the left has come to be regarded as elitist, while the right has become increasingly populist?

AM: In my opinion, the root of the European left's weakness is the fact that it won. The left's fundamental goals have been realized.

SS: But we have to talk about that in relative terms. The left's aspirations still exceed its achievements, and economic inequality is increasing, rather than decreasing – and at an alarming rate.

AM: Alright, but a new left has yet to take shape. For now, we have the same old left, and the relevant context today, in my opinion, is not the left-right debate, but the conflict between open and closed societies.

SS: But that is a very dangerous formulation. If the political landscape is reduced to the Open Society Party and the Closed Society Party, then sooner or later a populist party will come to power and destroy the state, because even the most gifted politician will eventually make a mistake.

AM: But I am not constructing, let alone advocating for, such a landscape. I am just stating that it exists.

SS: Really? Right after 1989, you started writing that there was no left or right, only the idea of a closed society versus an open one. This was, among other things, a means of placing those who disagreed with you out of bounds, because if you advocate for an open society, then your opponents must automatically be advocates of a “closed” society.

AM: Not at all. You're assuming that once proponents of an open society come out on top, they won't share.

SS: But if you or anyone else had built up a left identity and argued for the values of the left in opposition to the right, people would have had a safe democratic choice to make. Macron is assembling a government of the left and the right, and he's going to end up with the French version of Civic Platform. That sets up populists as the sole opposition. When he leaves power, the populists will step in, and they'll dismantle the French state, like Kaczyński is doing here.

AM: I would reverse that. The polarization you are describing in France is being driven by Marine Le Pen, who is completely anti-system. In Poland, this same polarization was created by PiS, which also wanted to coopt Civic Platform. Had they succeeded, it would have been a terrible misfortune. PiS would “PiS-ify” Civic Platform, using anti-communist slogans. Civic Platform has always been soft in

that regard. They were so scared of being accused of being pinkos that they tried to outdo PiS's pathological anti-communism. And now you see former President Bronisław Komorowski, from Civic Platform, and former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, from the communist successor party, together at rallies, and no one is shocked. Different things matter today.

SS: But don't many voters have the impression of an elite conspiracy – among the media, the courts, and liberal parties – against “the people,” whose sole protector is PiS?

AM: I have never conspired with anyone, neither as a dissident nor later, when I was already in charge of a large newspaper, and I never will. I consider it immoral. It amounts to deceiving people, and that is something I will never do. That's not why I fought for Poland's liberation.

SS: But you praised [former finance minister and free marketeer] Leszek Balcerowicz. You said your heart is on the left, but your wallet is on the right. You never talked about poverty in the provinces.

AM: Now I spend a lot more time in Tarnowskie Góry, Piła, and Zielona Góra.

SS: All previous governments did almost nothing to introduce cultural liberalism in Poland. All used to be afraid of the Catholic Church. Civic Platform was unable to vote through IVF legislation for seven years, even though it had two allied parties and 75% support among the population on this issue. That's how scared they were.

AM: In this instance, I think Civic Platform lacked imagination and courage.

SS: Should this issue have been introduced earlier?

AM: Yes.

SS: What about sex education, or civil unions?

AM: Yes, all of that should have been undertaken.

SS: But you never said anything about it.

AM: I spoke about it many times. You cannot expect me to speak out on issues where I have no competency.

SS: How am I more competent than you when it comes to civil unions?

AM: Your impudence! I lack that!

Kaczyński's War

SS: Why is it that, if we look at the major political conflicts in Poland after 1989, Jarosław Kaczyński is always the instigator, while everyone else just reacts to him?

AM: War is his element. He is a man of war, someone who finds fulfillment wherever there is conflict.

SS: Is that it?

AM: He's a little like Comrade Stalin. He will consistently strive for absolute authority in every area of public life. Look at the theaters, the state stud farms, museums, the Opole song festival – everything. He triggers conflict everywhere. What is crucial is that he is now encountering resistance. And not just from the media, although the media are important. *Newsweek*, *Polityka*, and even *Tygodnik Powszechny* have clearly taken sides, to say nothing of *Gazeta Wyborcza*. But what makes the greatest impression on me is what is happening in small towns. I find it astonishing.

SS: What will you do if they close *Gazeta Wyborcza*?

AM: I'll publish underground.

SS: I'm serious.

AM: So am I.

SS: Come on, Adam, you're not going to publish *samizdat*.

AM: I will publish *samizdat*. I won't give up.

SS: Do you still believe that international pressure can be effective, that the EU can have an impact?

AM: Pressure alone is not enough. But if there were no pressure, things in Poland would be worse.

SS: But it hasn't had any effect. If anything, EU pressure has only furthered Kaczyński's moral corruption.

AM: That's not true. Hundreds of thousands of people in Poland are very well aware of the fact that the European community does not accept the Polish government's policies.

SS: Don't you find it disheartening that everyone knows that the EU can't impose any sanctions on Poland?

AM: Listen, don't repeat the classic error of the democratic opposition. In every country, the opposition likes to repeat that the blame lies with EU policy, or American policy. Don't fall into that trap. We are at fault. You lost the elections and I lost the elections, not [George] Soros and not [European Commission President Jean-Claude] Juncker.

SS: But, unlike in Hungary, we still can handle Kaczyński. The Hungarians can't handle [Prime Minister Viktor] Orbán on their own. They're in a different situation.

AM: Then let them manage. Let them come to some kind of agreement...

Where is Germany?

SS: Aren't you disappointed that [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel is unable to influence Hungary to prevent the closing of Central European University, even though, for economic reasons, the Germans are the only ones Orbán listens to?

AM: But what is she supposed to do? Send in the army?

SS: She could boycott him, like the United States does. Germany is responsible for a third of all jobs in Hungary. Economic pressure would be enough. Don't you think the European People's Party should be deeply ashamed of the fact that 107 of their 199 votes were against the resolution condemning the Hungarian government's repression of CEU?

AM: I find that scandalous, yes. But I am a realist. That is an argument I often had with my friend Sergei Kovalev. He would say, "Why is America..." and I would say, "Enough, enough."

SS: Would Solidarity have succeeded without international pressure?

AM: No.

SS: Then what are we talking about? Don't you think that those who are in a position to respond when something bad happens bear some kind of responsibility?

AM: I'm not saying there shouldn't be pressure. But if we hadn't had the [Gdańsk] shipyard protests, no amount of international pressure would have helped. Let there first be a shipyard, and then we can talk about pressure.

SS: Why is Germany following a policy of appeasement? They should know better than anyone what it means to attempt to mollify a dictator.

AM: It's a double-edged sword. I understand the Germans to an extent. When your past includes Adolf Hitler, you have to be careful. I remember a conversation I once had with a friend. He asked me, "Adam, tell me honestly, what would you prefer: a pacifist Germany, or a militarized one?" I told him that was a highly unpleasant way to formulate the question.

SS: So you disagree with Radek Sikorski, who said in Berlin that he is afraid of a weak Germany, rather than a strong one?

AM: I agree.

SS: Exactly. Then why is Germany proving so helpless on the issue of Hungary?

Germany was not as understanding toward Greece as it has been toward Orbán.

AM: I think what's happening with the CEU is terrible, but I don't blame Merkel. I blame the European Parliament and the EMPs from the European People's Party. Merkel has to bear in mind – and it's good that she does – that she's the chancellor of Germany, not the prime minister of the Netherlands. In Poland, it is very easy to play the anti-German card, as Kaczyński constantly does.

SS: But we are talking about Hungary.

AM: There the question is more nuanced, but they also had a German occupation. It's much more complicated, because Hungary was allied with Hitler.

SS: Rather than Russia becoming more like the West, the West is becoming more like Russia. It's not just Orbán who's imitating Russia; it's also Donald Trump and some Republicans in the United States. What's happening to the West?

AM: That is a very good question. When I asked Isaiah Berlin what causes revolution, he answered, "Boredom." Look at the Netherlands! It was a model, an icon of European democracy and tolerance! If you read [Stanisław] Ossowski, [Leszek] Kołakowski, [Stefan] Czarnecki, that was their model. And suddenly everything has collapsed, and no one knows why. Of course one can point to refugees, to ethnic and religious conflicts. But those factors are not new.

Fear Thy Neighbor

SS: Immigration and the influx of refugees are more politically salient today – and strongly correlated with support for parties that stoke and manipulate xenophobia. Why have we become more vulnerable to that?

AM: Until now, Western democracy – with the possible exceptions of the US, Canada, and Australia – has simply not been very good at handling multiculturalism. Look at France, where they used to say, "As a citizen you can do anything, as an Algerian you can do nothing."

SS: Europe is surrounded by 100 million hungry people. Is it naive to think that strengthening borders will keep them out?

AM: Certainly, no wall can solve this problem. That's Trump's delusion, and it's complete nonsense.

SS: Strengthening the borders is a top priority in all plans for approaching the refugee question.

AM: It's true that borders must be strengthened, if only because of terrorism.

SS: But immigrants have perpetrated only a few of the terrorist attacks in Europe in recent years.

AM: Nevertheless, they are often Brits from Pakistan or Bangladesh.

SS: From the United Kingdom, not from Pakistan or Bangladesh. These people were born and raised in Europe.

AM: Nevertheless, their parents came from these places; they are Muslim. And that's why I think we need stronger border control. That's something I support. I'm also for stricter immigration controls, as well as a Marshall Plan for the Middle East and Africa.

SS: The amount of money in the Middle East, the sheer quantity of petrodollars in Muslim monarchies, far exceeds the Marshall Plan. These are the richest countries in the world, and they haven't taken in a single refugee.

AM: That's why we have to be able to reach agreements with these countries. It's problematic, because of Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Iran, and so on. Nonetheless,

in the long run I see no option other than to help these countries out of that black hole. Of course, Kuwait or Qatar don't need any kind of assistance, because they're virtually vomiting money, but even Iran is different.

SS: Did Merkel do the right thing in taking in over a million refugees? Do you think she was betrayed by the rest of Europe? Had other countries acted in solidarity, would everything have turned out better?

AM: I have enormous respect for her on this account. Maybe that's because I'm from the generation that remembers the images of ships full of Jews being turned away from American ports.

SS: Do you think Poland should take in refugees? How many?

AM: I think the response of [Prime Minister] Beata Szydło's government in this regard is scandalous and unforgivable. The response should be as follows: Within the framework of what is politically and economically possible, we will accept and carefully analyze the postulates of the Catholic Church with regard to refugees.

SS: Is that something Poles would support?

AM: I don't know.

SS: It seems that the Catholic Church doesn't think so, given that it is not exactly being outspoken on the matter. What if winning an election against populists requires stating that no refugees should be admitted?

AM: We can't say that.

SS: So it's better to lose elections. That way we'll end up with neither refugees nor liberal democracy.

AM: That's demagoguery, and it's untrue.

SS: But many politicians either have confronted or will confront a similar choice.

AM: No, no one will confront such a choice. Public opinion is currently being manipulated and people have to understand that this is all nonsense. In my opinion, it was a serious error for Poland to put off joining the euro *ad kalendas Graecas*, and now we're fucked. Lithuania has the euro, Latvia has the euro, so do Slovakia and Slovenia, while we're fucked. And I think that sometimes that's what a political leader is for, to do what's right, even when it's unpopular.

SS: But that amounts to acting against the will of the people.

AM: Not against the will of the people, but against the manipulation of the electorate.

SS: That's a claim any government could make.

AM: That's what a political leader is for – to know the difference.

SS: How is that different from Kaczyński, who has his own idea of who is being manipulated, and by whom?

AM: Kaczyński is violating the Constitution. End of discussion.

SS: But when he isn't violating the Constitution, he makes similar arguments.

AM: When he isn't violating the Constitution, he can do whatever he wants. I criticize him, but he has a right to pursue his policies; he received a mandate. But he has no right to violate the Constitution.

Bolshevism of the Right

SS: You're one of the very few people who know Kaczyński, Orbán, and Putin personally. What is Kaczyński after?

AM: I don't know if they're aware of it, but they've activated a mechanism we know from the history of the Bolsheviks. That is, class conflicts intensify with the construction of socialism. Their policies resemble those of the [communist] Polish United Workers' Party from 1944-1949. The battle for trade, the elimination of pluralism, the encirclement of the village, the revolution in education, a new historical policy – all of this was done back then.

SS: But today there is no USSR.

AM: And that's why I think they're going to break their own necks.

SS: Themselves? You think Kaczyński is his own worst enemy?

AM: Yes, I do. What they're doing is incomprehensible.

SS: They're doing everything they can to ensure their own defeat?

AM: Absolutely, just like the large segment of our clergy who are working toward secularization so diligently that I can hardly believe my own eyes.

SS: Do you think Kaczyński has a vision for Poland?

AM: His vision for Poland is rooted in Polish history. I'm thinking of the period right after [Józef] Piłsudski's death in 1935, and the Camp of National Unity. This was an attempt at authoritarian dictatorship that appealed to the rhetoric and the spiritual dimensions of the National Democracy movement. The Camp of National Unity and the National Democrats hated each other. The logic of that period was, "It's our fucking turn." I think Kaczyński is aiming for a state in which democratic institutions exist only as Potemkin villages. The government is moving toward a completely authoritarian state with elements of totalitarianism, with total subordination of all areas of public life.

SS: Friends from the West often ask me whether Poles and Hungarians have stopped being afraid of Russia, since they're picking fights with their Western allies.

AM: Poles are being manipulated. They are not thinking about Russia. They are told that they are being squeezed by Brussels, meaning Germany.

SS: Support for the EU in Poland is at 88%.

AM: Yes, but there's no such support for the euro.

SS: Still, no one believes that Brussels is oppressing them. Can a Pole forget about Russia?

AM: If you're asking, it means that he can. If people don't understand that the gradual extraction of Poland from the EU amounts to the destruction of the

strongest barrier against Putin's imperialist policies, it means that they have let themselves be manipulated.

Democratic Decay

SS: Will Kaczyński suspend democratic mechanisms in Poland? I'm thinking about future elections.

AM: I don't know. I wouldn't rule it out. He could go about it in only one way: he would somehow have to repeat Piłsudski's May coup or [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan's putsch.

SS: Do you think Poles and Hungarians will be able to defend their democracy?

AM: In the long run, yes.

SS: Are you sure?

AM: I am not sure, but I am convinced. The only thing I am sure about is my own death.

SS: Do you have any arguments other than the metaphysical notion of a "freedom gene" present within the nation?

AM: But we do have that gene. So do the Hungarians and the Russians. Alexei Navalny is a free person.

SS: But Navalny is just one person.

AM: He is remarkably popular.

SS: He would not win in an election.

AM: Not today. But you could have said that about any of us in July 1980. The Communists claimed that their numbers would overwhelm us.

SS: You won in 1989, but a little later even Václav Havel was unable to win elections in the Czech Republic. In fact, he never did win a popular election; he was always elected by parliament.

AM: That's life...

SS: If PiS loses and a reckoning comes, will you defend Kaczyński and the rest the same way you defended communist leaders [Czesław] Kiszczak and [Wojciech] Jaruzelski?

AM: I won't defend them in the same way. I will advocate for law rather than retaliation.

SS: What do you mean, you won't defend them in the same way?

AM: Not to the same extent. In 1989, the wheel of history turned, and we had to proclaim a free Poland for everyone.

SS: You wanted to seduce the Communists with democracy?

AM: Yes. I remembered [Konrad] Adenauer's genius in postwar Germany. He turned Nazis into democrats.

SS: Then why don't you want to make democrats out of the PiS electorate?

AM: I'm not talking about elections. They have a lot of smart people...

SS: Who would tear you apart if you were to approach them.

AM: Some, yes; others, no.

SS: Do you think that in Kaczyński's mind the only fault of the Polish United Workers' Party was that he was not its leader?

AM: I wouldn't put it quite like that. Kaczyński is different in terms of culture. But if we're talking about his conception of the state, then, yes, he was shaped by the People's Republic of Poland.

Putin's Long Game

SS: You call Kaczyński "LiliPutin," but what do you think Putin himself is planning? Is he acting in accordance with a plan or is he just reacting to events?

AM: He wants to be a new Ivan Kalita, to gather the Russian lands. That's the root of the situation in Ukraine. He thinks that there is no Ukrainian nation, that the Ukrainian state is a fiction.

SS: Does ideology play a role in Russia? Or for Putin?

AM: Great power ideology. Imperial ideology.

SS: Then why is Putin acting like Ivan Kalita rather than Peter the Great? Why isn't he pursuing modernization, however despotic?

AM: Maybe because he can't. Maybe it's his environment. That's not a question I can answer. Once I told a friend in Russia that Putin is a Westernizer. He said yes, Putin is a Westernizer, but for him the West is the former East Germany. That's how he sees the world, through the eyes of someone who learned about the West in East Germany. In my opinion, Putin feels insecure. He feels threatened by his entourage. Did you see Navalny's film about Medvedev's villas? Putin hasn't said a word about it.

SS: Why?

AM: Because he wanted to show Medvedev: Sit quietly, know your place.

SS: Do you think the Kremlin quietly condoned this campaign by Navalny, his film about the wealth of the prime minister and by extension the entire ruling elite?

AM: There is a theory – one I don't agree with – that Navalny is entirely a Kremlin project.

SS: Why is he tolerated?

AM: He's tolerated because they don't want to turn him into a martyr. They saw what happened with [Mikhail] Khodorkovsky, whose imprisonment was cited by Putin's critics at every opportunity. That's not what Putin wants.

SS: In hoping for a democratic Russia, should we look to a specific social group, or a specific faction within the government?

AM: In my opinion, hope lies with the democratic tendencies that exist both among the opposition and in the peripheries of the ruling camp. I won't name names. I'll tell you off the record.

The Ukraine Question

SS: What does Putin want from Ukraine?

AM: Nothing. He wants to incorporate Ukraine into Russia.

SS: All of Ukraine? He doesn't merely want to control the Ukrainian government?

AM: He will do it step by step, piece by piece. Maybe it's true, what he supposedly told [European Council President Donald] Tusk behind the scenes: you take Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, the pre-War Polish territories. Let's carry out a partition.

SS: Can you imagine something like that happening?

AM: That's a good question. I'm afraid to imagine it.

SS: Why?

AM: Because it would be a tragedy for Poland.

SS: How many Poles would support it?

AM: That's another good question. I don't know, but I'm afraid it would be very many. It is easy to whip any people into a nationalist frenzy. Remember what happened with the annexation of Zaolzie in 1938, following the Munich Agreement – cooperation with Hitler was a great success that lasted all of three weeks. Unfortunately, this is part of human nature. We saw in the Balkans how easy it is to unleash nationalist emotions, which invariably has tragic consequences. And sowing conflict between Poland and Ukraine is certainly an important component of Putin's policy.

SS: Why has Putin stopped for now?

AM: For a hundred reasons. He doesn't want everything at once. He wants to wait and see what happens in the West. He expected a new Yalta in the wake of Trump's victory. But it's unclear what will happen. No one knows what Trump will do with regard to Russia. Putin expected that Marine Le Pen would win in France and that, together with Brexit, her victory would herald the EU's collapse.

SS: What would it mean for Russia to incorporate Ukraine? Ultimately, there's a government there, a national army. There would be some price to pay.

AM: It would mean Belarus-ifying Ukraine, with the Kremlin installing its own government there.

SS: Do you think that's feasible?

AM: It almost happened under [former President Viktor] Yanukovich.

SS: But would it be possible today, after Maidan?

AM: Not today, but in a year?

SS: Should the West arm Ukraine?

AM: It's probably better to ask someone from the military; they know better than I do.

SS: But it's a political decision. Arming Ukraine means risking a war that could be exponentially worse than what happened in Yugoslavia.

AM: It could be, that's true. But if there is to be a war, it can happen without Western arms. On the other hand, the fact is that Ukraine has strengthened itself militarily.

SS: How can Poland help Ukraine?

AM: For now, Poland should above all do no harm.

SS: Do you think the EU has waved goodbye to Ukraine's European aspirations?

AM: For now. But nothing is definitive with the EU. I think the EU did a great thing by abolishing the visa requirement for Ukrainians. That was a wise move, and it will have very positive effects.

SS: You think Ukraine should join NATO.

AM: That would be a good thing.

Poland's Choice

SS: Were you rooting for Martin Schulz or Merkel in the German election? Who would be better for Poland?

AM: I don't know. I thought about it quite a lot. Based on my knowledge of history, I'd say Merkel.

SS: Because of the Social Democrats' tradition of Ostpolitik?

AM: Because [former Chancellor] Gerhard Schröder is working for Gazprom. Schulz is supposedly different. On the other hand, when it comes to domestic policies and human rights, I'm more sympathetic to the Social Democrats than to Merkel's Christian Democrats [CDU]. But Merkel is not a typical CDU politician. Her policies are smart and decent.

SS: With regard to Russia, is there anyone in Germany or in Western Europe whom you trust more than Merkel?

AM: No.

SS: Can a country like Poland be un beholden to anyone geopolitically?

AM: No.

SS: So we either belong to the West or to Russia?

AM: There is a great risk that we'll fall into Putin's hands.

SS: How do you see that happening?

AM: If you look at Orbán's relationship with Putin, I think it's not impossible that we, too, will have a pro-Russian shift on the right. They'll think to themselves, why do we need Brussels, which is hounding us with the Venice Commission, when the Russians might even give us loans and bring us caviar and salmon.

SS: Do you think Kaczyński will make the same shift as Orbán, who in 1989 shouted, "Out with the Reds," and now lays flowers at the graves of the Soviet soldiers who drowned the 1956 Hungarian uprising in blood?

AM: I remember, I was in Budapest in 1989. I heard Orbán's speech, and I was stunned.

SS: And now he is laying flowers at the graves of Soviet soldiers.

AM: That was a gesture for Moscow's benefit.

SS: Do you think such a change is possible in Poland? How would the PiS electorate respond? Would they continue to follow Kaczyński regardless?

AM: I don't know. I imagine so.

SS: According to the latest polls, PiS has 47% support, while Civic Platform stands at 16%. Do you think that that can change before the next election? What would have to happen on the opposition side?

AM: I am comforted by the fact that [communist-era leader Edward] Gierek enjoyed even higher support in his time. Let's do what has to be done and see what happens.



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