

Sikorski snubbed over NATO top job

EU leaders and the US line up to thwart Foreign Minister's candidacy

As Poland this week celebrated ten years since acceding to NATO, it looks as if the bid by Foreign Minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, to become Secretary General of the organisation has ended in failure after reports circulated that the NATO big powers had moved to back the Danish prime minister for the influential post. Germany, France and the UK have, apparently, fallen in behind the United States in backing the Dane Anders Fogh Rasmussen over Radek Sikorski, who has also served twice as Polish defence minister. While Mr Rasmussen could undoubtedly bring a wealth of experience to the job what may have set him apart from Mr Sikorski is that he exudes an air of neutrality. Mr Sikorski, at a time when the United States has placed great priority on currying favour with Moscow, could well be regarded as having too much latent Polish antipathy to the Russian bear. This was alluded to by the US ambassador to NATO, Kurt Volker. In an interview with the Bloomberg news-service the ambassador, while stressing the best candidate should get the job, said "What we need to do is get someone who can bring a balanced view that unites NATO."

For many Poles this implies that anybody from Poland, which has always pursued



© NATO

Poland's hopes dashed as Sikorski is overlooked

a line both tougher and at odds with its Western NATO colleagues when it comes to Russia, could prove unpalatable to most in the military bloc.

This has added to a general feeling of unease in Warsaw that the West has started to sideline Poland in its quest to bring Russia on side when it comes to troublesome issues such as Iran and Afghanistan.

The controversial US anti-missile shield, which was strongly opposed by the Kremlin, could well have succumbed to this process. Despite bilateral agreements signed in the summer between Poland and the US, Warsaw has become irritated

that Washington might shelve the plan to appease Moscow.

"A deal was signed, and I think regardless of which administration is in power in the US, agreements have to be implemented," said President Lech Kaczynski on an early morning talk show last week, adding that a failure to do so would be an "un-friendly gesture".

Seen in some circles as being equally unfriendly is the news that US President Obama won't be visiting Poland during his European tour in April, which will take in Britain, France, Germany and the Czech Republic.

NATIONAL**p.4****Big Brother database**

Personal details of millions of Poles could soon be found on one vast and central database, under the auspices of a controversial government plan, which critics say ushers in a new era of Big Brother for Poland.

The government hopes to store details such as an individual's tax payments, national insurance and whether they have a criminal record or not.

NATIONWIDE**p.6****Without rhyme or region**

I've lived in Poland for almost twenty years now, yet I never cease to be amazed by it. Walking around on a daily basis things seem so ordinary, so boring, and then a chance conversation tears the veil. Sitting alongside an acquaintance the other day, she mentioned a few problems she was having. There was a tension in her voice that encouraged me to listen.

BUSINESS**p.9****Govt. won't extend budget deficit**

GDP growth for 2009 will fall somewhere between 1.7 percent and 3.7 percent, Polish Finance Minister Jacek Rostowski said at a banking forum this week. "Whether GDP growth will stand at 3.7 percent or 1.7 percent or something in between - well I assume it will be somewhere in between," Rostowski said. He also indicated that the current budgeted deficit of PLN 18.2 bln will not change.

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From the editor



In Poland it is often remarked that bad news comes in pairs. This week, it came in threes.

Germany, France and Britain all ined up with the US to reject Sikorski as a candidate for NATO boss, and President Obama left the country off his list of must-sees during his forthcoming European trip.

If Poland was still entertaining thoughts of a special relationship with the US, or anyone else for that matter, there is probably a certain amount of head-scratching going on in Warsaw at the moment.

And then there's next month's G20 summit on April 2. Until recently, the Poles didn't seem to care much whether they were included in the world's rich club or not. But now there seems to be a growing concern that, in addition to agreeing upon financial regulations, the group will become something of a forum for discussing world issues. Warsaw is worried it will be left out.

And so it asked this summit's host, Great Britain, if it could go along. London said no, despite having said yes to letting the Spanish and the Dutch attend an earlier meeting in February, even though neither are members.

That left Warsaw not just head-scratching but positively seething at what it considers to be yet another massive snub.

The question, therefore, is this: what's going on? The tempting answer is to blame Russia, or rather everyone else, for wanting to keep Putin, et al., on side. But it may also be to do with teaching Poland a lesson about washing its dirty linen in public.

Either way, if, as one old card once put it, "Diplomacy is the art of saying 'Nice doggy', until you can find a rock," it seems western leaders are finding some pretty big rocks to throw at the moment.

Quotes of the week

"Anyone breaking the rules of decency and honesty, or lacking competence, will not last a single day in this government." PM Donald Tusk, before the press revealed his deputy Waldemar Pawlak was profiting from public funds by choosing his friends' firms as business partners to fulfill orders for the nation's fire departments.

"She is as fit for negotiations between Germany and Poland as is an anti-Semite to negotiate with Jerusalem." Govt. envoy Wladyslaw Batoszewski on WWII museum protagonist Erika Steinbach.

"After people of such stature, an empty space remains for a long time." PM Donald Tusk's statement on former Health Minister Zbigniew Religa's death.

This week in history

1919 - Gdańsk is granted status as the Free City of Danzig

1931 - Polish Sejm abolishes all privileges connected to nationality, place of origin, language, race or religion.

1932 - Jerzy Hoffman, Polish film director who made classics such as *Ogniem i Mieczem* (with *Sword and Fire*), was born.

1990 - Central Statistical Office says that inflation during the previous 12 months was 136% - the highest indicator of inflation in the history of Poland

1996 - Krzysztof Kieślowski, Polish film director, dies. He is famous for, among other things, the colour trilogy.

Readers' thoughts

Dear sir

I am writing regarding the article 'Polish UK workers in *Catch 22*' (NPE 9/12). I'm Polish and have been living in Lincoln for three years. I have been in a full-time job for two years.

We are living in difficult times now, when many people fear for their jobs. This has happened to those 30 Poles who have lost their jobs and I have pity on them as I do British people who are in the same situation. But I can't understand why those people want to live in tents when they don't have to.

Speaking for myself, I would never have come to the UK if my life had become worse than in Poland. Being in such a position I would be desperate to return home and having no passport wouldn't be an excuse as there is a way out of this.

Simply jump on a train without a ticket, go to London and worry about the consequences later.

The Polish Consulate will be more than happy to issue new passports and lend some money to enable those people to go back to Poland.

There may be even a local authority to help them get in touch with the local Polish Consulate to see what the options are. For some reason this group of Poles never thought about it or never wanted it.

I'm very grateful to everybody who has been helping my fellow countrymen but on the other hand I'm concerned these Poles are giving the whole nation of Poland a bad name and are making English people think Poland is a Third World country which it is not.

There are a great number of Poles in Britain who contribute to local society, help the British economy by spending money on British goods and paying taxes etc. They are not only migrant workers, they are people who just settled over here, so please don't think about us as of a nation, try to think about individuals.

K. Klab

Send comments and letters to editor@nwe.pl

Kaczynski vetoes education bill

The long and often bruising battle between President and Prime Minister returned to the headlines this week when the President shot down a key education bill.

Wielding his presidential powers, Lech Kaczyński vetoed an education reform bill, which would have lowered the age for the start of compulsory schooling from seven years old to six. The President claimed that at a time when the global financial crisis was wreaking havoc on the nation's budget the government was ill-advised to rack up more costs by creating another year of education.

"The president spoke with understanding of the need to send six year olds to school"

Showing a more sensitive aspect of his character President Kaczynski also claimed that he had the welfare of his grandson in mind when he vetoed the bill.

"The president spoke with understanding of the need to send six-year olds to school. (But) He did also have certain questions as to the issues concerning the offices at the

education ministry and the proposed regulation that a school director need not necessarily be a teacher," said Education Minister Katarzyna Hall.

In response, a defiant government vowed to try and generate enough support in parliament to overturn the veto by enlisting the help of the left-wing Democratic Left Alliance (SLD).

The government and supporters of the bill have argued that with a starting age of seven, Poland falls out of step with much of Europe and because of that foreign children have a head-start over their Polish counterparts.

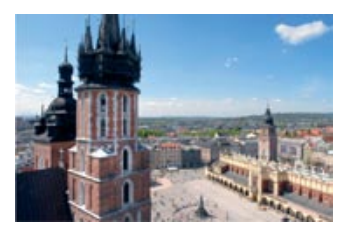
They also point out that amongst those that can afford to, it has become common practice to send six-year olds to private schools. Lowering the school age, the bill's proponents say, creates a more level playing field.

Whether the government gets the support needed to overturn the veto is moot, but both the bill's supporters and detractors warned that if any action is going to be taken it needs to be taken now.

With the clock ticking down on the current academic year, parents need to know soon whether they will have to pack their six-year olds off to school come September or not.

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Tusk sparks 'ethics' outrage

A recent call by Prime Minister Donald Tusk for an open debate on issues such as IVF, abortion and euthanasia, has sparked outrage amongst the church and far-right groups.

"Abortion, IVF, the termination of treatment when there are no chances to cure a person, possibly have no party affiliation. [...] But we need to start talking about them in a human language," Tusk said last week.

But one Bishop has spoken out publically against the call, believing that discussing such topics, is not only unnecessary, but harmful.

"If someone wants a war, they will have it at their own request. The stance of the Church has always been negative on these matters and I don't see much place for discussion here," said Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, in an interview with Poland's Dziennik newspaper.

He also specifically stated that there is no place in society for euthanasia, adding, "Doctors are there to protect life until the very last moment."

The issue of euthanasia, which is still illegal in Poland, recently made the headlines, after there were calls to aid in assisted suicide for family members of the terminally ill.

Jaroslav Gowin, one of Civic Platform's (PO) more conservative members, echoed the Bishop's views this week when he said on Polish Radio that he believes Poland's culture is deeply rooted in Christianity, which "promotes respecting and the protection of life."

He did however say that Poland does indeed need to discuss these sensitive issues.

The MP has also been placed as head of the 'ethics committee', set up to draw up legislation on IVF. At present, the committee is still at loggerheads, with the more liberal-minded calling for the state to fund the procedure while the more conservative are against the idea.

Church stops vetting

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland has said its vetting of bishops suspected of collaborating with communist-era secret police will no longer be continued and that no wrongdoing has been found.

Following an investigation by a special Church historic commission that ended last year, the findings, which were kept secret, were sent to the Vatican for analysis.

In a statement issued Wednesday, the Polish Episcopate said "The matter is now closed." It added that the Vatican had found "no grounds" for accusing any of Poland's bishops of intentional, willful or conscious collaboration with "former repressive regimes."

The decision to screen bishops came after it was discovered in 2007 that a freshly appointed archbishop of Warsaw had been in cahoots with the former Security Service (SB).

Big Brother database planned to house personal details

Personal details of millions of Poles could soon be found on one vast and central database, under the auspices of a controversial government plan, which critics say ushers in a new era of Big Brother for Poland.

The government hopes to store details such as an individuals' tax payments, national insurance and whether they have a criminal record or not on a new super database by 2011.

"These are practices from Orwell's novels"

Under the plan, information from a number of ministries, social insurance agencies and even energy and telecom providers will be intertwined with details from the 2011 census to provide a complete picture of each individual. But critics of the scheme have already labelled it as a step towards an authoritarian state, especially given that 2011-census details will include even more information, such as religious beliefs and how many children people plan to have, in a step that has been labelled "intrusive" by opponents.

"These are practices from Orwell's novels," said database critic Michal

Kulesza, a professor of administrative law at Warsaw University, while others opposed to the plan have raised concerns that governments may be tempted to abuse the information stored rather than using it for one stated and specific purpose.

To many Poles the prospect of having more of their personal details on government files will have sinister echoes of the past when Poland's communist regime stored vast amounts of information on the minutiae of people's lives.

In addition to this, IT critics have voiced fears that the large database, which will be based at the National Statistics Office, could become a target for hackers intent on stealing information or wreaking havoc.

These worries echo security concerns in other countries over the increased amounts of personal information that government agencies now store.

Attempts by the British government to centralise and store more data electronically have been dogged by a string of embarrassing security lapses, with systems being broken into and CDs containing the personal information of hundreds of thousands of people going astray or being left on trains.

Police nab 56 in child porn raids

Police have detained 56 people in the latest of a series of internet child pornography swoops.

The arrests took place on Tuesday after officers raided homes across the country and seized over 6,500 CDs and DVDs, 15 USB drives, along with two digital cameras and eight memory cards.

According to spokeswoman Magdalena Zielinska, police identified 65 addresses from which child pornography was being distributed. "A nationwide operation on Tuesday enabled the arrest of 56 people suspected of involvement," she told AFP. A police statement on Wednesday added that several of those arrested had already been charged, while the rest were being questioned as witnesses.

The arrests follow that of 78 people three weeks ago snared in a series of similar nationwide raids for possessing and distributing child pornography. Police then warned that further arrests would follow.

In January 35 other people were also caught following another crackdown.

This brings the total number of arrests for internet child pornography to several hundred in recent years and is part of a Europe-wide police operation involving Europol, the EU agency that helps the bloc's 27 members exchange information on criminal suspects.

If convicted of spreading child pornography, the suspects face up to eight years in prison.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Demonstrations in Warsaw

Thousands of demonstrators gathered in Poland's capital to protest against a fall-off in state orders in the country's arms industry and the number of job cuts within the industry.

The protesters, who carried banners, threw fireworks and burned tyres, were mobilised by the Solidarity trade union.

In order to try and tackle the current economic crisis, the government cut the yearly budget by PLN 19.7 bln last month.

The amount spent on armaments, and various other military equipment, has been slashed from PLN 4.7 bln to PLN 2.2 bln.

HIV tests to become obligatory

HIV tests are set to become obligatory for pregnant women within the next few weeks.

Until now, such examinations have only been recommended to those who fall into the high-risk categories, such as intravenous drug users etc.

The new directive, issued by the minister of health, will be funded by the National Health Fund (NFZ).

But there is still confusion as to the ins and outs of the new law, as patients will still have the right to refuse medical examinations, leaving it up to gynaecologists to convince them of the benefits of such tests.

Myspace closes down

Popular social networking site Myspace is closing down its main office in Warsaw, after failing to make any real impact on the Polish market.

The Polish version, which lasted just five months, has struggled to compete with other similar sites, such as nasza-klasa and facebook.

Poland is not the first country where Myspace has failed, with the Netherlands and South Korea having also previously pulled the plug.

The site, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. also announced last year that it was to ditch another of its Polish ventures, TV Plus.

Bringing home the Eagle

Malgorzata Szumowska has received the Eagle 2009 award for Best Film, for her feature length movie, '33 Scenes from Life'

The film also scooped awards in the LA awards ceremony for Best Editing.

The plot revolves around a successful 33-year-old photographer, who, after receiving devastating news, sees her life begin to fall apart around her.

Jerzy Skolimowski picked up Best Director for 'Four Nights with Anna', which saw him make a return to the film-making scene after almost 20 years.

House prices fall

House and flat costs are continuing to plummet right across the country.

According to Open Finance, prices have fallen rapidly in many of Poland's cities compared to last year and show no sign of stopping soon.

Homes in Wroclaw are down by approximately 12.5 percent, while Gdansk has seen prices decrease by as much as 13.9 percent.

Govt. set to oust right-wing TV boss

Poland's coalition government has unveiled plans to reform the state television broadcaster (TVP) and by so doing pave the way for the removal of its controversial head who has a neo-Nazi past.

Piotr Farfal, a member of the right-wing League of Polish Families (LPR), a former skinhead and erstwhile editor of a neo-Nazi magazine, became acting Chief Executive of TVP towards the end of last year following an internal power struggle.

But despite saying he has renounced his association with extreme right-wing ideology, the Tusk government says it wants Farfal out and needs the new media bill to do this.

Many in the hierarchy of TVP owe their positions to the previous PiS-led coalition government, under which Farfal served until Tusk's

party defeated them in elections in 2007. Under the current rules they cannot be easily dislodged.

The government has thus teamed up with the small leftist Social and Liberal Democrat (SLD) opposition party in order to push the bill through.

Mindful of President Kaczynski's wont to block new legislation, and perhaps wary that he vetoed a similar bill aimed at reforming state media last year, Tusk needs SLD support to overcome any presidential problems. Under Polish law, the government needs a 2/3 majority to sidestep the President's veto.

The new bill will not only force a shake-up in TVP's management hierarchy and reduce the possibility of political meddling, but also scrap the licence fee and prepare the broadcaster for digitalisation.

Tusk votes with his feet

PM Donald Tusk was caught off-side this week after skipping a parliamentary vote to play football instead.

According to reports on the private television station TVN and in the daily Tabloid Super Express, the centre-right politician, who has taken to playing footy every Tuesday and Thursday, decided that last Thursday he would take to the pitch, instead of joining his government colleagues and law-makers who were busy voting on pension plans.

On Monday, the PM admitted skipping

the vote and apologised, saying: "It shouldn't happen and won't happen again. There are no special words to justify it."

Political rival and President, Lech Kaczynski, upon learning of the incident asked, "What was the score? Did the Prime Minister score a couple of goals?"

That, says the tabloid, was left unanswered but on Tuesday this week, a parliamentary day off, the PM knocked five in to the back of the net earning himself the title of best scorer and a certain amount of respect from younger colleagues.

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WITHOUT RHYME OR REGION



I've lived in Poland for almost twenty years now, yet I never cease to be amazed by it. Walking around on a daily

basis things seem so ordinary, so boring, and then a chance conversation tears the veil. Sitting alongside an acquaintance the other day, she mentioned a few problems she was having. There was a tension in her voice that encouraged me to listen, and the following story poured out.

She and her husband are owners of a beautiful villa in a beautiful part of the city of Poznan. They've lived there a long time and invested a lot of hard work and money into it.

A part of the property was recently bought by a gentleman who proceeded to deliberately damage a gas pipe, forcing the gas to be cut off. He is now obstructing repairs to the pipe (in his portion of the property), leaving the other residents without heating or means to cook. He has been kind enough to offer to buy my friends out, for a fraction of the market value.

A local solicitor blanched on hearing this gentleman's name and suggested the Russian mafia as the only means of getting a rapid solution to the matter. Other than my friends arranging for a hitman, the only option is for them to move out and rent the property to a security firm or a brothel.

I hope one day I shall no longer be so amazed - sometimes, the boring and the ordinary is to be wished for.

PODLASKIE



Bialystok is to lose its logo, that was designed only recently, after Civic Platform (PO) politicians finally lost interest in defending it. The logo, that of a yellow and red sun, sparked controversy from the start, initially from local opposition politicians who were perplexed as to what the symbol was supposed to represent.

Matters really got out of hand, though, when it was revealed that the

logo was virtually identical to that used by a New York gay association. While prosecutors somehow managed not to find evidence of outright plagiarism, the symbol after that became tainted in the eyes of Bialystok residents. It seems likely the PO councillors were loath to abandon a project that had cost PLN 500,000. Belatedly, they have had to concede that the project has no support and needs rethinking. Rafal Rudnicki of the Law and Justice party (PiS) commented, "To be honest, we should throw the whole thing in the bin and attend to more important matters."

AROUND POLAND



International Ladies Day, celebrated annually on March 8th, was observed by a series of demonstrations around Poland, demanding better treatment for women. The now traditional Manifa marches took place in Warsaw, Krakow and Gdansk, with women's rights movements co-opting the day that was once the epitome of patronising male attitudes towards their female counterparts.

In the 1980s Ladies Day emphasised the decorous aspects of women's nature, as demonstrated by the Andrzej Rosiewicz song 'Polish girls have the most vitamins', and much flower giving was in evidence. Now it is the feminist demonstrators in Krakow that are handing out the flowers. The Young Democrats handed out orange tulips, while the Young Social Democrats preferred red

ones. In Krakow's main square a local artist stood dressed in an enormous skirt, spreading out around her, and inviting people to rest on the material, to symbolise the connection between the personal and the political.

In Gdansk the protest was along more standard political lines, with placards demanding equal treatment at work, help in the struggle against domestic violence, access to prophylactic medical tests and opposing Mr Jaroslaw Gowin's proposed anti in vitro legislation. The Civic Platform MP was the target of protestors in all three marches following his attempts to end funding for in vitro fertilisation.

In Warsaw, demonstrators on the tenth Manifa, under the slogan, 'whoever rules - it's the same fools' walked from the Parade Square to Parliament, where there were speeches and happenings. Also there were members of the extreme right-wing All-Polish Youth organisation, who greeted them with such slogans as, 'everyone's different - they're all ugly' or 'Hitler introduced abortion to Poland'.

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MAZOWSZE



The news around Warsaw focuses on vision this week. Firstly police recovered fourteen works of art by three of Poland's most famous artists and at the same time stumbled on a fugitive from Gdansk, wanted for killing a pedestrian in a road traffic incident. The paintings by Kossak, Chelmonski and Jozef Brandt range in value from tens to hundreds of thousands of zloty and are mostly of landscapes or battle scenes. Three people have been arrested in connection with the finds while the paintings themselves are checked by experts to assess their authenticity.

Elsewhere, a visual feast is promised in the capital's Wola Fort, where the country's first 5D Extreme cinema has opened. On top of the massive 3D screen, spectators

are subjected to a range of other effects appealing to the senses of smell and touch, thereby heightening the intensity of the viewing experience. During screenings, viewers sit wearing 3D glasses in vibrating chairs that can also imitate gusts of wind, water dripping onto your face or things brushing against your leg. In the past, though, similar 4D projects have failed to catch on, ending up as a kind of travelling sideshow.

Meanwhile, an architect has had his plan for brightening one of the ugliest bridges across the Wisla by painting it red rebuffed by bosses at the national railways PKP. The so-called Diameter Bridge, a rusty, grey eyesore on the main line through the capital, which is currently being renovated, could become a symbol like San Francisco's Golden Gate bridge, if architect Marek Garbacki gets his way. Unfortunately, his proposal has not met with approval from senior PKP official Ryszard Moryc, who dismissed the simple idea, saying, "we don't use that colour on the railways".

POMORSKIE



The Central Anticorruption Bureau has arrested two officials in connection with planning permission granted for a hotel in Gdynia Dabrowa. The four-star facility was to be built on a narrow strip of land, 230m by 44mm, alongside the Gdynia bypass. Normal regulations require a 40m gap between major arteries and such objects, which rendered the land practically worthless. Following a concession reducing that gap to only 20m, the land was sold for PLN 3 mln. CBA officers have arrested two members of the local planning committee who they suspect of arranging a positive outcome to the planning request in return for cash.

The lack of hotel space in the Tricity, though, is a major headache for the region as it prepares to host Euro 2012, but a local architect has come up with small, modular capsules providing adequate accommodation, but which can be easily removed once surplus to requirements. The simple, skeletal framework, which is filled out with plywood, can be stacked and grouped to provide a quick, low cost construction suitable for a motel or other short-term facilities. Similar ideas have already caught on in London and Amsterdam.

When the football fans arrive, they'll be pleased to discover a new, single tariff in operation on all public transport in the Tricity area, making it cheaper and more convenient to get about. In the past many a tourist has fallen prey to ticket inspectors, following confusion over the different systems that applied; there will also be fewer excuses for the locals. While the fans are here it will be interesting to see what they make of the herring tortilla on offer at the Gdynia stall in the tourism trade fair in Berlin as a local speciality.

However, the fans may find it difficult reaching the Tricity in the first place as the national carrier LOT is in severe financial difficulties and is currently unable to pay its landing fees at Gdansk airport. While the landing fees for the small Embraer aircraft used on internal flights is a mere PLN 900, the two month backlog in payments could amount to as much as PLN 4 mln. The airport is in theory allowed to "arrest" aircraft belonging to a debtor, but says it won't be taking such a step, "at the end of the day, they're a long-standing business partner", said a spokesperson.

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GORNE SLASKIE



The news from the Upper Slask area this week is a load of rubbish. The city has been awarded PLN 57 mln from the European Cohesion fund for the construction of a 21st century rubbish dump. The city has long been in need of new facilities and without the funding would have struggled to meet the increased EU regulations by the 2013 deadline. The funds are to be spent on a new sorting hall, a composting centre and warehouses for storing recyclable materials. Even better, an old part of the tip that has lain unused for years, will be reclaimed, soiled over and replanted, becoming a pleasant green island in a sea of waste.

The funding for the tip will be too late though for the 200 patrol cars which will

be dumped this year by the Slask Police service. The need to make cuts has forced police authorities to dump all cars whose repair costs exceed their actual worth. Officers on the ground view matters differently, one policeman saying, "we can't afford to get rid of these cars, even if they're wrecks, because of the 130 cars we are statutorily required to have, there are only 90". His view is shared by Roman Wierzbicki, head of the regional police officers union, claiming this will impact on safety in the region as speed of response is crucial, adding, "and for that we need patrol cars, not police-sprinters".

Unwanted text messages create no waste, but this hasn't presented a Bielsko-Biala court from banning a 27-year-old Katowice resident sending any more to the girl who dumped him. The relationship ended when he crashed his girlfriend's mother's car, but the man refuses to leave her alone and has threatened to kill her mother for coming between them. Now a court has ordered him to stay away from them both.

WIELKOPOLSKIE



Pachyderms and their main attribute, memory, lead us through the news from Wielkopolska. Two female African

elephants arrived in Poznan zoo this week from Hungary, soon to be joined by a male from Holland. The two ladies, Ninio and Yzic, have settled in well and started eating. For now, they are under close observation in two small enclosures, but staff hope to release them soon into a 2.5 hectare meadow, where they will be able to graze at their leisure.

Memories are long in Poland, and a visit by Gen. Jaruzelski to speak to students at the School of Humanities and Journalism this week stirred up a lot of emotions. The General needed a dozen or more minders to protect him from protestors, about fifty of whom were there dressed as milita-

men, beating truncheons against cardboard shields. Journalists were upset they weren't allowed to ask questions, only students, but the school's rector pointed out it was the students that invited him as part of a series of meetings with Presidents of the Third Republic. Students were divided as to their assessment of what he had to say, but an elderly, female demonstrator was clear, "it's a disgrace to educate young people in this way," she said.

The Railbus Manufacturing Company, part of Poznan's Cegielski corporation, has been eliminated from the tender process to produce PLN 400 mln worth of new trams for the city. Officials explain there are clear reasons for the disqualification, including the fact that the company hasn't sold more than ten trams in the last three years. Cegielski's are threatening to take the matter to court, but if they do, the delay will mean Poznan can forget about PLN 156 mln in funding, dependent on the contract being realised by 2012.



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CLASSIFIEDS

The Krakow Hash House Harriers (KH3) will have their inaugural run on Saturday, May 16, 2009, at 14:00. The meeting place is at the entrance to the Jordan Park, at the end of ul. Romana Ingardena. If you are a Hasher already, or looking for a bit of exercise, socializing, and a beer (or two), then please come along for the founding of the kennel. If you are new to Hashing and want to know more about what to expect with KH3, please visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hash_House_Harriers
For additional information, please call Jim on +48-668-389-164.

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Govt. won't extend budget deficit

GDP growth for 2009 will fall somewhere between 1.7 percent and 3.7 percent, Polish Finance Minister Jacek Rostowski said at a banking forum this week.

"Whether GDP growth will stand at 3.7 percent or 1.7 percent or something in between - well I assume it will be somewhere in between," Rostowski said.

He also indicated that the current

budgeted deficit of PLN 18.2 bln will not change because it is sufficiently in line with the savings plan implemented by the government in February.

"There is a risk that by increasing the deficit significantly, we could pay much more for the debt. The whole increase of the deficit could be consumed by the increase of debt servicing costs."

The Finance Minister also explained how savings on social welfare, wages and investments would be enough to deal with this year's deficit.

Poland had based its budget deficit on a prediction of 3.7 percent GDP growth for 2009. The figure was revised to account for a worst case scenario estimate of 1.7 percent GDP growth in February.

Poland best bet in crisis, says Moody

The economic outlook for Poland received a confidence boost from international rating agency, Moody's Investor Services, on Tuesday. The agency reported that Poland's economy has a very good chance of weathering the storm along with some of its neighbours.

The report focused on how the econo-

mies of Central and Eastern European countries would react in the face of the global downturn.

It suggested that those most likely to escape serious damage were Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic. The ratings were based on each country's financial credibility.

Ukraine received the worst rating

from the agency as it feared the country will not get the necessary amount of aid to pump into its economy from foreign sources.

A sell-off in the Central and Eastern European markets and currencies was triggered by Moody's in February when it warned that banks in the region could have their ratings downgraded.

IN NUMBERS

10.9 %

February's unemployment rate figure of 10.9 percent rose from 10.5 percent the month before, according to the Polish labour ministry Monday.

0%

"We foresee a negative outlook for the banking sector in 2009, with a GDP growth of 0 percent." The assessment of BRE Banking Investment House about Poland's banking sector performance over the next year.

1.77%

The WIG-20 blue chip index reflected the global confidence felt by Citigroup's profit by finishing 1.77% up after trading Wednesday.

NBP OFFICIAL CURRENCY RATES - 13/03/2009

Currency	Symbol	Mid-rate
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	1 CNY	0.5084
Estonian Kroon	1 EEK	0.2865
Euro	1 EUR	4.4833
Hungarian Forint	100 HUF	1.5200
Latvian Lats	1 LVL	5.3413
Lithuanian Litas	1 LTL	1.2984
Pound Sterling	1 GBP	4.8726
Romanian Leu	1 RON	1.0481
Russian Ruble	1 RUB	0.0999
Swiss Franc	1 CHF	2.9292
Ukrainian Hryvnia	1 UAH	0.4276
US Dollar	1 USD	3.4721

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SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND: Travel musings from inyourpocket's 'Uncle' Alex Webber

I had planned to use this column to natter about St Patrick's Day, then two things happened. First off I realized that if you need to be told what it is, or where to enjoy it, you're probably still writing in crayon. Suffice to say anywhere with a vague Irish association is going to get lively – in the capital I suggest either Bradley's or Bar Below for that end. Secondly, alarmingly, my parents arrived in Warsaw, instantly nuking the plans I had for reacquainting myself with the Irish institutions of Poland. So, instead of tanking back booze and road-testing Guinness I was left with the formidable task of impressing my kin. That's usually a tricky mission, but I needn't have worried. I entertained in a place

called Villa Rossini, and if you haven't been there yet then make sure it's the first thing you do. Stats first: it's in the middle of no-man's land Mokotow, aka Tyniecka 16a. The location is a pain, but your efforts are repaid by way of a setting that blasts most out of the water. VR comes packaged inside a mansion formally used by the British Embassy and amazingly, you'll still find voices from this past, primarily in the bathrooms where big whirlpool tubs have been left as was. You'll probably end up in one and all, because the sommelier here is the best I've faced in Poland. I'm from the Blue Nun generation, and don't know red wine from Red Bull, but this charmer had no problem matching our food with the liquid, thus jump starting the conversation by factor ten. As for the meal... I thought my mum was having a Meg Ryan moment

when she saw the sea bass, while my steak was the best excuse I've ever seen for hitting a cow with an axe. With my inheritance secured I didn't think things could get any better, but then I didn't gamble on head chef Frank rounding the corner. You bet this guy is a talented cook, but just as importantly he proves an excellent host. I've no idea what an Oscar winner feels like, but I'm happy to guess it wasn't as special as he made me feel. Cue more wine, a tour of the restaurant (book the chef's table for some kitchen action), and an end result that left me top of the world. Of course, there was still capacity for things to go wrong; I was gripping onto my chair with the sweaty terror of the accused waiting for the bill – but worry not. At about 70ish zlots for a main it's expensive, but find a better restaurant in this country and I'll buy you dinner.

St Patrick's Day

Tuesday sees celebrations to mark the patron saint of Ireland. Here are a selection of events from around the country marking one of the world's biggest cultural exports.

Gdansk

15 March St. Patrick's Day in Brovarnia
Brovarnia, ul. Szafarnia 9, tel. 058 320 19 70, www.elduende.pl
An appropriate venue to celebrate St Patrick's and no mistake. A roistering night out with a show of Irish dancing from Gdansk group 'Elphin' followed by lessons in said high-kicking and clicking. It will all be accompanied by lashings of green beer. Don't plan anything for the morning after. ▶ Event starts at 19:00. Admission free.

Gdynia

17 March DuoAcoustic on St. Patrick's Day - Concert
The Docker's Inn, ul. Waszyngtona 21, tel. 058 711 96 99
A gargantuan supply of Murphy's, Guinness, Bishop's Finger, Old Speckled Hen and Oyster Stout should lubricate proceedings nicely as you listen to DuoAcoustic playing their own songs as well as covers by The Red Hot Chili Peppers, U2 and Coldplay. During the break there's your chance to take part in the annual competition of banging in nails using a hammer with a hole in it, worth the trip to Gdynia on its own I'd say. ▶ Concert starts at 21:30. Admission free.

19 March Polandia - St. Patrick's Day - Concert
Blues Club, ul. Portowa 9, tel. 058 621 09 43, www.bluesclub.pl
Polandia is a six-piece musical project and tonight they will be playing their interpretation of Irish folk melodies as well as songs from

broadway shows like 'Riverdance' and 'Lord of the Dance'. Integral to the experience will be a slideshow of photos by Andrzej Jastrzebski. They don't mention huge quantities of beer, but I'd be surprised if there weren't a tippie or two. ▶ Concert starts at 19:30. Tickets 15zł. Available before the concert.

Warsaw

17 March St. Patrick's Day in Rampa Theatre
Rampa Theatre, ul. Kołowa 20 (Targówek), tel. 022 679 89 76, www.teatr-rampa.pl
Celebrating St. Patrick's Day in The Rampa Theatre has become something of a tradition. This is your chance to see the song and dance experience that is the BELTAINE & COMHLAN CELTIC MOTION PROJECT. Modern takes on all things musically Celtic and a cracking night out. ▶ Event starts at 19:00. Tickets 50zł. Available at www.eventim.pl and Rampa Theatre's box office (open 11:00 - 19:00, Sun 15:00 - 19:00).

Krakow

17 March St. Patrick's Day in Old Port
Stary Port, ul. Straszewskiego 27, tel. 012 430 09 62, www.staryportkrakow.pl
Irish beer and music in the centre of Krakow as The Old Port tavern welcomes The Grogers. Founded in 2001 in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, The Grogers are now based in Kraków and play classical Irish songs and ballads according to the oldest traditions. Tonight you'll hear Irish Drinking and Rebel Songs (no surprise there then), as well as a few numbers from Wales, Canada and Scotland. Dancing boots compulsory. ▶ Event starts at 19:30. Admission free.

Katowice

15 March Irish Evening in Irish Mbassy Pub
Irish Mbassy, ul. Wawelska 1, tel. 032 204 05 14
An authentic St Patrick's night is guaranteed as this Irish-owned and run pub celebrates 19th March with music from The Reel Jigs,

dancing from The Galway-Irish dance group and lots of the black stuff. ▶ Event starts at 19:00. Admission free.

Wroclaw

17 March St. Patrick's Day in Mlecznaria
Mlecznaria, ul. Włodkowica 5, tel. 071 788 24 48, www.mle.pl
Come and see the celtic dance style of Wroclaw's very own ELLORIEN. The plan is to ease us in gently and lull us with delicate ballet shoes and tiptoes. Later, after some green liquid has been flowing, it will be time for some heavier hob-nailed choreography. Finally, the dancers are going to invite the audience to practice some simple steps with them. Let's hope the steps are very simple as it might be getting late - all good clean fun. ▶ Event starts at 19:00. Tickets 5zł. Available before the event.

Poznan

17 March St. Patrick's Day -Trabba & Dun Laoghaire - Concert
Brogans Irish Pub, ul. Szewska 20a, tel. 061 852 50 73, www.brogans.pl
One of the biggest Irish pubs in Poznań celebrates St Patrick's day with Dublin outfit 'Trabba i Dun Laoghaire' playing modern takes of traditional Irish folk melodies. It's going to be loud. ▶ Concert starts at 20:00. Admission free.

Katowice

17 March St. Patrick's Day in Pirate's Nest
Gniazdo Piratów, ul. Wólczańska 44/50, tel. 042 632 66 84, www.gniazdopiratow.com.pl
St. Patrick's day in The Pirate Tavern. Shiver me timbers - Green beer and sea shanties played by the mightily named Flash Creep. Founded in 2003 this Kraków ensemble should be recording their first album soon, so this is your chance to check them out and say you were there. ▶ Event starts at 20:00. Admission free.

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Poland is an increasingly important centre of culture, and artisans, performers and musicians from all over the world now regularly arrive here to showcase their various talents. From art house sculptors to top-name bands, In Your Pocket is dedicated to bringing news of these events to as wide an audience as possible. Besides the listings on the print guide, we also regularly update our website with all the news and events as they reach us, sometimes after our print guide has gone to press. For the latest event information make www.inyourpocket.com the first place you visit.

Gdansk

13 March Vandermark 5 - Concert

Żak, ul. Grunwaldzka 195/197, tel. 058 344 05 73, www.klubzak.com.pl

One of the biggest names in jazz makes his first visit to the Tri-city. Although synonymous with the avantgarde world of free improvisation, he always comes back to his roots. An essential night out for all serious jazz addicts. ▶ Concert starts at 20:00. Tickets 15-35zł. Available at Żak box office (Open 15:00 - 21:00, Sat, Sun 16:00 - 21:00) and before the concert.

15 March Skalbaniya Band - Concert

Kwadratowa, ul. Siedlicka 4, tel. 058 347 12 10, www.skalbaniya-music.com

'It ain't got that thing, if it ain't got that swing,' as they say. The Skalbaniya Band play the swing classics of such musical behemoths as Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller and Jimmie Lunceford. Toe-tapping obligatory. ▶ Concert starts at 18:00. Tickets 15 - 30zł. Available at Kwadratowa's box office (Open 10:00 - 16:00, Wed, Thu 8:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun) and before the concert.

Gdynia



13 March Żywiołek - Concert

Ucho, ul. Św. Piotra 2, tel. 058 661 81 81, www.ucho.com.pl

Eurovision nominees and assorted folk festival winners Żywiołek play what is described as Slavic biometal, folkmetal and hard folk. A curious night out to be sure for those who like their music eclectic. ▶ Concert starts at 20:00. Tickets

25/20zł. Available at Ucho box office, ul. 3 Maja, N-1 (Open 10:00 - 16:00, Closed Sat, Sun) and before the concert.

Sopot



19 March Dorota Miśkiewicz - Concert

The Sopot Polish Chamber Philharmonic Concert Hall, ul. Moniuszki 12, tel. 058 555 84 51, www.bart.sopot.pl

The Forest Opera celebrates their 100th birthday this year, and Dorota Miśkiewicz has been booked to get the party started. Past experience includes working with Anna Maria Jopek, Nigel Kennedy and Cesaria Evora, and fans can expect to hear her promoting work from her new album - Caminho. ▶ Concert starts at 19:00. Tickets 40/30zł. Available at www.ticketonline.pl and Bart box office, ul. Kościuszki 61, L-4 (Open 10:00 - 17:00, Closed Sat, Sun).

Warsaw

17-19 March Stomp

Congress Hall (PKiN), Pl. Defilad 1, tel. 022 696 99 00, www.makroconcert.pl

The last time Brits Stomp visited they had to expand the tour from 5 to 18 shows, such was the demand and interest. Making music by banging anything and everything, dustbins mainly, their brand of musical mayhem has made them world famous. ▶ Event starts at 17:03 at 19:00, 18/03 at 17:00 and 19/03 at 20:00. Tickets 60-250zł. Available at www.ticketonline.pl and www.ticketpro.pl.

Krakow

15 March Eska Rock Tour: Happysad - Concert

Studio Club, ul. Budryka 4, tel. 012 617 45 45, www.klubstudio.pl
This popular Polish rock band will stop in Kraków as part of their "Long Way Tour." Their 2007 album 'Nieprzygoda' (Unadventure) hit first place in the Polish rock charts and was one of the best selling records of the year. ▶ Concert starts at 19:30. Tickets 40/35zł. Tickets available before the concert.

Katowice

14 March Tzymański Yass Ensemble - Concert

Jazz Club Hipnoza, Pl. Sejmu Śląskiego 2, tel. 032 785 71 31, www.jazzclub.pl

Tzymański is a Polish composer, multi-instrumentalist, poet, singer and show off. His music can be described as a mixture of jazz, funk, pop, rock but it is genuinely difficult to categorise. If that wasn't enough, he has written music for well-known Polish films like Sztos and Wesele. The Tzymański Yass Ensemble will be promoting their latest album "Free Tibet", a cause close to Tzymański's heart; he is also an activist against Chinese aggression against Tibet. ▶ Concert starts at 20:00. Tickets 20zł. Available at jazzclub Hipnoza (Open 10:00 - 02:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 02:00).

Wroclaw

19 March The Stawek Dudar Quartet feat. Natalia Grosiak & Maciek Mazurek - Concert

Jazz Club Rura, ul. Łazienna 4, tel. 071 799 09 07, www.jazzklubrura.art.pl

This is your opportunity to get over St Patrick's and hear material from the latest album by saxophonist Stawek Dudar's group. The Guests include vocalist Natalia Grosiak and guitarist Maciek Mazurek, both of whom appeared on the album. A sophisticated evening. ▶ Concert starts at 20:30. Tickets 9 - 16zł. Available before the concert.

Poznan



13 March Maciej Obara Trio - Concert

Blue Note Jazz Club, ul. Kościuszki 76/78, tel. 061 657 07 77, www.bluenote.poznan.pl

This group of three young, talented ambitious musicians is inspired by the likes of Miles Davis, Tomasz Stańko and Ornett Coleman. At the Krokus Jazz Festival Maciej Obara was awarded the title of the best saxophonist. In years to come you will be able to brag to your jazz chums that you saw them first! ▶ Concert starts at 20:30. Tickets 15-25zł. Available at Blue Note box office (Open 12:00 - 19:00. Closed Sat, Sun) and before the concert.

Lodz

19 March Keith Javors Trio & Oleg Kireyev - Concert

Wytwonia, ul. Łąkowa 29, tel. 042 631 80 00, www.toyastudios.pl
Your chance to hear a unique combination of east and west. Kireyev is a Russian saxophonist and will perform together with the American pianist Javors. Check out the great sounds of ethno-jazz and post-bop. ▶ Concert starts at 20:00. Tickets 15-30zł. Available at www.eventim.pl, Empik (ul. Piotrkowska 81, C-2. Open 09:00 - 21:00, Sun 11:00 - 19:00).

Live sports on television this week



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Fri 13.03
FOOTBALL
Polish League
Jagiellonia v Legia Warsaw KO 8:00 PM

Bundesliga
Wolfsburg v Schalke 04 KO 8:30 PM

Sat 14.03
FOOTBALL
Hibernian v Hearts KO 1:30 PM
Manchester Utd v Liverpool KO 1:45 PM

RUGBY
6 Nations CUP FEVER
Italy v Wales KO 4:00 PM
Scotland v Ireland KO 6:00 PM

FOOTBALL
Doncaster Rovers v Birmingham KO 6:20 PM
Gks Belchatow v Wisla Krakow KO 6:20 PM
Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid KO 10:00 PM

Sun 15.03
FOOTBALL
Chelsea v Manchester City KO 2:30 PM
Bristol City v Cardiff City KO 2:30 PM

RUGBY
6 Nations
England v France KO 4:00 PM
FOOTBALL
Celtic v Rangers KO 4:00 PM
Aston Villa v Tottenham Hot KO 5:00 PM
Atletico Madrid v Villareal KO 7:00 PM
Almeria v Barcelona KO 9:00 PM

Mon 16.03
FOOTBALL
JJB Premiership
Linfield v Glenorran KO 8:45 PM
Premier League
West Ham Utd v West Brom KO 9:00 PM

Tue 17.03
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FA Cup 6th Round
Arsenal v Hull City KO 8:45 PM

Wed 18.03
FOOTBALL - Scottish FA Cup
Aberdeen v Dunfermline KO 8:45 PM

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Lech hold their nerve

Lech Poznan retained their two point lead at the top of football's Ekstraklasa after a Robert Lewandowski goal earned them a slim 1-0 victory over struggling Bialystok. Legia Warszawa moved to second following a 4-0 tonking of relegation candidates Odra Wodzislaw while Wisla Krakow scored a crucial 2-1 win over surprise package

Polonia Warszawa. Two goals from leading scorer Pawel Brozek were enough to seal the win for Krakow, and the result moves the defending champs into third. At the lower end of the table Cracovia remain in trouble after falling 4-3 to LKS Lodz, while Gornik Zabrze stay rooted at the bottom after mustering a 2-2 draw with newly promoted Arka Gdynia.

Boruc terror target

Reports in the Daily Express suggest Poland will step up security around the national team when they arrive in Northern Ireland for their World Cup qualifier on March 28. The news comes after a bloody week which left two soldiers and a policeman dead. A Polish man was injured after being caught in the gunfire, and

controversial Celtic keeper Artur Boruc has been identified as a possible terrorist target. Polish coach Jan de Zeeuw refused to rule out the possibility of switching the tie: 'Whether the venue is changed is ultimately FIFA's decision, but it's something we can't rule out. If the situation remains uncertain we will be forced to consider such a request.'

Malysz soars again

Ski jumper Adam Malysz rolled back the years this week, finishing third in the Kuopio tournament in Finland. Malysz disappointed on his first jump, reaching a distance of only 119 metres, but showed his class on his second outing jumping an impressive 127 metres. That was enough to land him third place overall, his first podium

finish since March 25, 2007. Japan's Okabe and Switzerland's Ammann finished first and second. Malysz, who won an unprecedented three consecutive world titles at the start of the decade has struggled with form this season, and the four time world champion recently suffered the ignominy of seeing his sponsorship contract with Audi cancelled.

Smuda linked with Poland job

Lech Poznan manager Franciszek Smuda heaped the pressure on Poland coach Leo Beenhakker by announcing this week he'd be happy to step into the Dutchman's shoes and take over the national team. Speaking to Fakt Smuda declared, 'If the contract with Beenhakker is broken and someone

from the FA asked me to replace him, I would accept'. Smuda's Lech Poznan side have proved a class act this season, and currently sit top of the table. Lech's success has proved a double edged sword however, and with several European clubs sniffing around their stars a mass exodus could prompt Smuda to walk out. While

Poland remain just two points off the top of their World Cup qualifying group the Polish press claim Beenhakker faces dismissal should Poland drop points against Northern Ireland on March 28. With a ready-made replacement now lined up it now seems a question of when, not if, Beenhakker will be fired.



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I am from Canada British Columbia., I am trying to locate some family members from Poland who are related to the late Wojcek Kazmiere Szymczak if u can be so kind and help me reunite with our long lost family members can you get back to me and let me know if you may be able to help. His birthdate was Jan 20 1944. Okay, thank you,
Molina Snow
molinasnow@gmail.com