

POLAND Extreme right defeated

From Rafal Pankowski for *Nigdy Wiecej* and Antifa-Net in Warsaw

THE EUROPEAN ELECTION produced a resounding defeat for the far right in Poland. Until recently, the extreme-right League of Polish Families (LPR) was one of the country's main political parties. In the 2004 European election it came second with 16% of the vote. In 2006-07 it was part of Jaroslaw Kaczynski's government and its leader, Roman Giertych, was Minister of Education.

Following electoral batterings which reduced it to a rump of its former self, it contested this year's election under the Libertas label, aided by Libertas's founder, the anti-EU Irish millionaire Declan Ganley. Despite high hopes for a revival, it received a miserable 1.1% of the vote and won no seats.

The result was pitiful despite the fact that Polish state television, run by the former nazi skinhead Piotr Farfal, turned into a virtual Libertas propaganda headquarters for weeks before election day and broadcast live countless press conferences of its leaders. Poland's leading intellectuals and artists have made numerous calls for Farfal's immediate dismissal.

Despite Farfal's assistance, Polish voters were not duped by the new alias of the LPR and its allied All-Polish Youth skinheads. Sometimes they did



The All-Polish Youth joined with Libertas

not even bother to try to hide their extremist background. For example, three days before the election, the leaders of the Polish branch of Libertas publicly distanced themselves from a statement by Ganley promising Europe-wide cooperation against racism and antisemitism with the Simon Wiesenthal Centre.

On the same day, local Libertas supporters proudly posted a video on YouTube, showing one of the most hilarious moments of the campaign: the guitarist and drummer of the nazi skinhead band RPOi playing songs by Konkwista 88 (the main star of nazi white power rock music in Poland), such as "White Honour, White Pride", in the streets of Lublin as a part of the Libertas electoral drive. Passers-by looked baffled and the venture brought hardly

any converts to the cause.

Other fringe parties fared slightly better. The Catholic fundamentalist Right of the Republic received 2% and the once powerful Self-Defence party 1.5%. Neither got seats.

The election was effectively won by the ruling centre-right liberal Civic Platform, which polled 44.4%, an impressive result for a ruling party in times of economic crisis. The main opposition party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski's Law and Justice (PiS), endorsed by David Cameron on his recent visit to Warsaw, got 27.4% and 15 of Poland's 50 seats. It campaigned on a strongly anti-German xenophobic platform.

The PiS has maintained its strategic alliance with the Catholic nationalist Radio Maryja, which is notorious for its antisemitic broadcasts. However, only one PiS candidate directly chosen by Radio Maryja, Miroslaw Piotrowski, was elected. Piotrowski had been previously an LPR MEP, but defected to the PiS following Radio Maryja's change of political allies.

The defeat for right-wing extremists in Poland results from a number of factors, the tireless awareness raising campaign by Searchlight's Polish sister organisation the Never Again Association being a key element. ◀

THE NETHERLANDS Freedom Party breakthrough

Jeroen Bosch reports from Amsterdam for *Alert!* and Antifa-Net

THE RIGHT-WING populist Freedom Party (PVV) made its first major breakthrough in the European Parliament election.

Although Geert Wilders, the party leader, who won 334,846 first preference votes, will not take his seat in Brussels, his party is poised to crash its way into the Dutch national parliament.

Wilders used the European election as a test run to measure his support. He called on voters to desert the current coalition government of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Christians and to demand that the Dutch be put first in European policy considerations and that Turkey never be allowed to join the EU.

In an election marked by the lowest turnout ever, the PVV attracted 17% of

the vote and took four of the Netherlands' 25 seats. The result was all the more surprising as protest voters historically voice their protest by staying at home in the European poll. When Ireland signs the Lisbon Treaty, the Netherlands will have 26 seats, the extra one going to the PVV as well.

Wilders's call, after the results were declared, for the Dutch government to stand down immediately and never return went unanswered, of course. Wilders wants an early general election because the PVV currently heads the opinion polls. The European results bode well for Wilders in next year's local elections. The PVV emerged strongest in The Hague and in Rotterdam, which is normally a secure Social Democrat stronghold.

The next parliamentary election will

be held in 2011 and the prospect of a Christian Democrat, right-wing Liberal and Freedom Party coalition government is already on the landscape.

In the European Parliament, however, the PVV will remain independent of any parliamentary group. Although this means it will get less funding, less speaking time, less access to committees and command less influence, the PVV's confrontational media strategy will make sure it grabs headlines.

The PVV is a win-win situation. If its demands are successful it will be because of the strength of the party and the "justice" of its ideas. If it fails, it will be because the EU "monster", the "pro-Turkey lobby" and the hated "left church" prevented the realisation of its selfish dreams.