

## Hope for a powerful Europe

By François d'Alauçon , on 13/5/2020 at 06:00

**Radoslaw Sikorski**

*Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland*

**Back on the political scene, the former head of Polish diplomacy pleads in favor of a "great compromise" between Paris and Berlin to strengthen the European Union.**



His crossing of the desert lasted less than four years. Since his election to the European Parliament in May 2019, Radosław Sikorski, 57, a former Polish foreign minister, has returned to the political scene with a message focused on Europe. *"The challenge facing us in this crisis is whether we will be a center of power on the world stage or whether we will end up as subcontractors or vassals,"* said the former minister, confined to his mansion in the village of Chobielin, in northern Poland.

In June 2015, Radoslaw Sikorski, then president of the lower house of the Polish Parliament, resigned, four months before the victory of the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in the legislative elections. The former head of Polish diplomacy even let go of his mandate as a deputy to withdraw. Between his duties as a senior fellow at the Center for European Studies at Harvard University and the chairmanship of the board of directors of the industrial park of Bydgoszcz, his hometown, Radoslaw Sikorski has distanced himself, cultivated his network on both sides from the Atlantic and recounted his experience of seven years at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a book published in October 2018.

The political animal quickly resurfaced, both within the Civic Coalition (KO, center right), formed in 2018 in Poland, and the European People's Party (EPP). Former Minister of Defense then Foreign Affairs from 2005 to 2014, he strongly opposed the current government, whose *"violations of the Polish Constitution and European treaties"* he condemned. According to him, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the leader of the ruling PiS party, wants to transform Poland into a *"Catholic state"* along the lines of *"Franco's Spain"*. Radoslaw Sikorski claims to be of a *"modern conservatism"*.

A native of Bydgoszcz in Pomerania, Radoslaw Sikorski experienced the slow erosion of Polish communism as closely as possible, under the leadership of Wladyslaw Gomulka and Edward Gierek. At Lycée Ludwik-Warynski, he sang the Internationale to improve his grades. In the narrow family apartment, his father falls asleep while listening to Radio Free Europe. In the summer, his parents take him on vacation to Turkey, via Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria, with their Fiat Polski 125 loaded with products to resell on the black market.

Summer 1981. His *matura* (baccalaureate) in his pocket, Radoslaw Sikorski, 18, left for England for a linguistic stay of a few months. On December 13, when General Jaruzelski established martial law in Poland, several of his friends were arrested. Rather than return, as planned, and risk prison, the student decides to stay, obtains political asylum and begins studies at Oxford. Less than seven years later, on June 4, 1989, Solidarnosc won the first (semi-) free elections. The prodigal son, who has meanwhile become a war correspondent in Afghanistan and Angola, can return to the country.

At the head of Polish diplomacy between 2007 and 2014, Radoslaw Sikorski will print his mark. On November 28, 2011, before the Bundestag, he encouraged Berlin to act against the debt crisis in the euro area. *"I am less afraid of German power than I begin to fear its inaction. You have become the indispensable nation of Europe,"* he says.

Nine years later, this convinced European calls for financial solidarity in the face of the crisis which is shaking the Old Continent. *"The confederal constitutional architecture of the European Union is not working satisfactorily and we must give more authority to the center,"* he says. *Europe must create an instrument allowing its member states, with the necessary guarantees, to borrow at the best possible rate.*

"Radek" Sikorski dreams of a *"great compromise"* between Paris and Berlin, where everyone would share their attributes - the seat of a permanent member of the UN Security Council and nuclear deterrence, on the French side, economic power, on the German side - to create, with the other EU countries, a *"European power capable of treating on an equal footing with China and the United States"*.

*"The current crisis is a constitutional moment for the European Union. Continuing to act as if nothing had happened will not be enough, insists the MEP. We need courageous decisions, the kind of leadership provided by Emmanuel Macron. Let the nationalists not pretend that we can only rely on the nation state. Europeans can only do what is necessary to overcome this crisis together."*

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