

SPEECH TO CCBS CONFERENCE 18 FEB 2016

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THANK YOU FOR THE INVITATION TO TAKE PART IN THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE ON BREXIT AND TO SPEAK ABOUT THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF AN EXIT BY BRITAIN ON THE MIGRANT COMMUNITIES AND IN MY CASE THE POLISH COMMUNITY WHO ARE THE LARGEST ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITY IN BOTH PARTS OF IRELAND. 175,000 IN THE SOUTH 30,000 IN THE NORTH

BEFORE I BEGIN I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT AS FAR AS POLAND IS CONCERNED THE UNITED KINGDOM IS A CRUCIAL PARTNER IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ONE OF POLANDS KEY ALLIES IN NATO, SO FOR POLAND IT ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THAT RELATIONSHIP OF COURSE DID NOT START WITH POLAND JOINING THE EU, IT GOES BACK IN HISTORY ESPECIALLY TO WW2 WHEN THOUSANDS OF POLES LOST THEIR LIVES FIGHTING ALONGSIDE BRITISH FORCES IN BATTLES SUCH AS, MONTE CASINO AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN WHICH WAS COMMEMORATED IN PARTICULAR IN THE YEAR GONE BY 2015

SINCE 2004 WHEN THE A8 COUNTRIES ENTERED THE EUROPEAN UNION BRITAIN, IRELAND AND SWEDEN WERE THE ONLY COUNTRIES TO OPEN ITS BORDERS AND ALLOW CITIZENS OF THOSE COUNTRIES TO COME AND WORK HERE.

NOW WHY DID BRITAIN DO THAT :

I WOULD SAY IN THE MAIN FOR ITS OWN ECONOMIC REASONS. IT WANTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VALUABLE SKILLS THAT A COUNTRY LIKE POLAND

COULD PROVIDE, ENGINEERS, WELDERS, JOINERS, MEDICAL PERSONELL SUCH AS DOCTORS & NURSES, AND MANY MORE.

MANY OF THESE SKILLS BRITAIN HAD LOST.

IMIGRANT WORKERS WITH LOW SKILLS WERE ALSO PREPARED TO TAKE UP LOW PAID JOBS THAT LOCAL WORKERS WERE NOT PREPARED TO TAKE UP ANYMORE, SUCH AS THE MEAT & FOOD SECTOR, WASTE RECYCLING, CLEANERS, FARM WORK SUCH AS MUSHROOM PICKING AND MANY OTHERS.

THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES ARE NOT A BURDEN ON THE BRITISH EXCHEQUER AS ONE IS OFTEN LED TO BELIEVE.

OCCORDING TO RESERCH A FEW YEARS AGO BY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON CENTRE FOR RESERCH AND ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN MIGRATION, E U IMMIGRANTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED NET MORE THAN 20 BILLION TO UK FINANCES BETWEEN 2001 & 2011.

EU -15 COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTED 64% MORE IN TAXES THAN THEY RECEIVED IN BENEFITS AND FROM THE A-8 CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE ACCESSION COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTED 12% MORE THAN THEY RECEIVED IN BENEFITS.

IF YOU TAKE JUST NORTHERN IRELAND ALONE E U IMMIGRANTS ARE NET CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ECONOMY BY ROUGHLY 1.8 BILLION POUNDS.

IN ADDITION THEY HAVE ENDOWDED THE COUNTRY WITH PRODUCTIVE HUMAN CAPITAL THAT WOULD HAVE COST THE UK 6.8 BILLION IN SPENDING ON EDUCATION. THE VALUE OF THAT CAPITAL TO THE UK LABOUR MARKET BETWEEN 1995- 2011 WAS 49 BILLION HAD IT BEEN PRODUCED BY THE UK EDUCATION SYSTEM.

BRITAIN I BELEIVE WILL DO GREAT DAMAGE TO ITS ECONOMY IF IT LEAVES THE E U EVEN ON THIS ISSUE ALONE.

THE PROPOSAL OF PRIME MINISTER CAMERON TO PUT A REQUIREMENT OF 4 YEARS RESIDENCY TO QUALIFY FOR WELFARE WILL MEAN THAT E U IMMIGRANTS WILL NOT WANT TO TAKE UP EMPLOYMENT IN BRITAIN AND RISK THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEEN MADE UNEMPLOYED WITH A FAMILY TO SUPPORT.

BRITAIN WILL LOSE THESE BADLY NEEDED SKILLS THAT HAVE BEEN LOST WITHIN THE LOCAL POPULATION.

DOES BRITAIN THINK IT CAN PICK AND CHOOSE THOSE WORKERS IT WANTS TO TAKE IN IF THEY LEAVE THE E U AND THROW AWAY THE REST INCLUDING THE WIDER FAMILY OF THESE CHOSEN WORKERS. I DONT THINK SO.

SO WHAT DO POLISH IMMIGRANTS MOST FEAR IF BRITAIN LEAVES THE E U.

HAVING SPOKEN TO MANY THE MAIN FEAR IS UNCERTAINTY BECAUSE IT HAS NOT BEEN CLEAR WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BREXIT WOULD BE AND IT HAS NOT BEEN SPELLED OUT IN DETAIL BY THE EUROSCEPTIC SIDE OR THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT TO DATE.

IMMIGRANT WORKERS ALREADY HERE NEED CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCAL ASSURANCE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE AFFECTED BY A BREXIT AND THAT THERE CHILDREN LIVING HERE WILL HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS BRITISH CITIZENS AND THAT THOSE EXISTING RIGHTS WILL NOT BE WITHDRAWN.

THE MEETING BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER CAMERON AND POLISH PRIME MINISTER SZYDLO JUST OVER A WEEK AGO HAS BEEN ENCOURAGING AND IT WAS MADE CLEAR BY PM SZYDLO THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO CHANGE IN THE CONDITION OF POLISH CITIZENS WHO LIVE AND WORK IN THE U K THAT WOULD DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THEM, WHILE ACCEPTING THE RIGHT OF BRITAIN TO INTRODUCE REFORM OF THE BENEFIT SYTEM FOR THE ENTIRE POPULATION.

POLISH PEOPLE FEAR LOSS OF PRIMARLY TAX CREDITS WITHIN THE BENEFIT SYSTEM SINCE MANY OF THEM ARE ON MINIMUM WAGE AND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN THESE LOW PAID JOBS AND WILL BE FORCED TO RETURN HOME TO POLAND OR GO ELSEWHERE IN THE EU. WE DONT THINK EXISTING IMMIGRANT WORKERS WILL BE AFFECTED BY THIS ISSUE RELATING TO TAX CREDITS AS SUCH A CHANGE WOULD AFFECT ALL BRITISH WORKERS AS WELL.

SUCH REFORM ALSO WOULD BE EXPECTED TO BE MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGES TO THE MINIMUM WAGE.

ITS IMPORTANT TO SAY ALSO THAT 95% OF POLISH WORKERS ARE NOT ON BENEFITS CONTRARY TO THE VIEW OFTEN PUT OUT THERE.

POLISH IMMIGRANTS ALSO FEAR THAT IF THEY DONT HAVE BRITISH NATIONALITY THEY WILL BE FORCED TO LEAVE AND THIS WILL HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR CHILDREN WHO HAVE GROWN UP WITHIN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ENGLISH HAS BECOME THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE.

THIS FEAR NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND TO ALLAY SUCH CONCERNS.

THE POLISH GOVERNMENT IS VERY OPEN TO NEGOTIATIONS IN BRINGING ABOUT REFORM WITHIN THE EU SHORT OF TREATY CHANGE.

AS FAR AS THE RENEGOTIATION IS CONCERNED PRIME MINISTER CAMERON'S VISITS TO POLAND BOTH RECENTLY AND LAST YEAR DISCUSSED ALL AREAS THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM SEES AS REQUIRING REFORM, SO POLAND IS VERY AWARE IN GENERAL OF THE REFORMS BRITAIN WANTS.

THE PRIME MINISTER HAS SAID THAT HE AIMS FOR A PROCESS THAT WILL BENEFIT ALL MEMBERS OF THE E U. IF THIS IS SO POLAND IS READY TO DISCUSS ANYTHING THAT WILL BE PRESENTED TO THEM AS SPECIFIC PROPOSALS.

SOME THINGS WILL BE EASILY AGREED, SUCH AS REDUCUNG RED TAPE, AND ENHANCING COMPETITIVENESS.

POLAND IS NOT IN THE EUROZONE, IT HAS A DEROGATION WHILE BRITAIN HAS AN OPT OUT, SO POLANDS FUTURE IS DIFFERENT AND WILL BE REQUIRED TO JOIN AT SOME FUTURE DATE.

HAVING SAID THAT POLISH OPINION RIGHT NOW WOULD BE TO MAINTAIN THE POLISH CURRENCY, "THE ZLOTY" AS IT PROVIDES MORE FLEXIBILITY IN REGULATING AND BUILDING ITS ECONOMY WITHIN THE EU.

GREECE IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A COUNTRY THAT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN THE EURO DURING THEIR FINANCIAL CRISIS.

POLAND THEREFORE WILL BE VERY INTERESTED IN THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN EUROZONE AND NON EUROZONE COUNTRIES.

THE INTERGRATION OF THE EUROZONE SHOULD NOT JEPRODISE THE INTEGRITY OF THE SINGLE MARKET IN ANY WAY AND SHOULD NOT DISAVANTAGE THE INTERESTS OF THE NON-EUROZONE MEMBER STATES, BECAUSE IT IS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE.

POLAND AS I ALREADY SAID COMES FROM A DIFFERENT STARTING POINT WHERE ITS A "PRE IN" COUNTRY WRITTEN IN ITS ACCESSION TREATY AND THEREFORE MUST JOIN THE SINGLE CURRENCY AT SOME POINT, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO CREATE ANY DIVISIVE LINES AND SHOULD HAVE A LOT OF UNDERSTANDING FOR COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE EUROZONE.

IN ALL THESE AREAS POLAND IS READY TO TALK TO BRITAIN ON CONDITION THAT ALL THE SOLUTIONS ARE NON – DISCRIMINATORY AND WILL BE DONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH E U LAW AND THAT A CONSENSUS CAN BE REACHED.

POLAND IS VERY KEEN TO HELP BRITAIN BECAUSE IT IS IN ITS INTEREST TO HAVE THE UNITED KINGDOM AS A VERY ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION.

THERE IS VERY SUBSTANTIAL GOOD WILL TOWARDS BRITAIN NOT JUST ON THE PART OF POLAND BUT IT BELEIVES FROM THE REST OF EUROPE.

THE RESTRICTING OF THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE IS FOR POLAND THE MOST DIFFICULT ISSUE THAT WILL REQUIRE FURTHER SUBSTANSTIVE DISCUSSIONS UNTIL A COMPROMISE IS REACHED WITH BRITAIN.

ANY CHANGES MUST BE COMPATIABLE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE SINGLE MARKET.

POLAND BELEIVES A COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED AND SUPPORT FOR THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE UK REFORM PROPOSALS WITH THE POTENTIAL TO MODERNISE THE EUROPEAN UNION, INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS AND A STRONGER ROLE FOR NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS.

HOWEVER AS POLAND CONSIDERS THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT TO BE ONE OF THE FUNDEMENTAL VALUES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, PROPOSALS REGARDING THIS AREA REMAIN THE MOST SENSITIVE ISSUE FOR POLAND, AND WHY WOULDEN IT BE CONSIDERING THE LONG HISTORY THAT POLAND HAS ENDURED.IN THIS REGARD IT WILL NOT SUPPORT ANY SOLUTION WHICH WOULD BE DISCRIMINATORY OR LIMIT FREE MOVEMENT.

IN CONCLUSION THE NEW POLISH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS SAID RECENTLY THAT "IF THE UK DECIDE TO CUT BENEFITS FOR ALL OF ITS

RESIDENCE THEN IT WON'T SAY NO, AS EVERYONE WOULD BE AFFORDED THE SAME TREATMENT, LIMITING BENEFITS CAN BE DISCUSSED PROVIDED THEY WILL APPLY TO ALL PEOPLE LIVING IN THE UK, WITH NO GEOGRAPHICAL OR TIME EXEMPTION, BUT IT CANNOT AGREE TO REFORMING THE WELFARE BENEFITS IN A WAY THAT WOULD SEGREGATE RESIDENCE ACCORDING TO THERE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND SO DEPRIVING THEM OF THERE ENTITLEMENTS TO BENEFITS.

WE CANNOT PROTEST OR INTERFERE IF THE CUTS IN BENEFITS APPLY TO ALL U K RESIDENCE”.

HE WENT ON TO SAY : “PRIME MINISTER CAMERON’S 4<sup>TH</sup> DEMAND TO LIMIT THE FREE MOVEMENT OF E U CITIZENS IS CONTRARY TO E U TREATIES AND STRIKES AT A FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOM. THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE AS IT WOULD SET OFF A PATTERN OF REVISIONS POSSIBLY TARGETING OTHER FREEDOMS AND MATERIALLY AFFECTING THE SCHENGEN VISA ARRANGEMENT”

FINALLY I WOULD LIKE TO FINISH BY SAYING THAT FOR POLAND IT IS MOST DISAPPOINTING THAT A STRONG ALLY LIKE BRITAIN IS CONSIDERING LEAVING THE EUROPEAN UNION.

POLAND SEES ITSELF NOT JUST GEOGRAPHICALLY AT THE CENTRE OF EUROPE BUT POLITICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY AS WELL.

THE HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION SET UP AFTER THE HORRORS OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> WORLD WAR TO ENSURE THAT NEVER AGAIN WOULD WE SEE THE SLAUGHTER OF MILLIONS OF THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE, AND WE CAN NOW SAY AFTER 70 YEARS THAT THE E U HAS BEEN SINGURARLY SUCCESSFUL IN THAT GOAL. POLAND COULD AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN PART OF THAT ORIGINAL COMMON MARKET HAD IT NOT BEEN SOLD OUT AT YALTA. IT HAD TO WAIT FOR ALMOST 45 YEARS TO BE FREED OF COMMUNIST DOMINATION AND A FURTHER 15 YEARS TO JOIN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND REALISE ITS TRUE PLACE AS PART OF THE FAMILY OF EUROPEAN NATIONS ALONG SIDE ITS OLD ALLY GREAT BRITAIN.

END