

# Aleksander Kwaśniewski

## President of Poland

*(Since December 1995)*



Aleksander Kwasniewski was born on November 15th, 1954, in Bialogard, (formerly Koszalin Voivodship, presently West-Pomeranian Province). Wife Jolanta, maiden name Konty, daughter Aleksandra (born 1981).

In the years 1973-1977, Aleksander Kwasniewski read for transport economics (foreign trade) at the Gdańsk University. An activist of the student movement up to 1982, having held, among other functions, chairmanship of the University Council of the Socialist Union of Polish Students (SZSP) from 1976 to 1977, vice-chairmanship of the Gdańsk Voivodship Union from 1977 to 1979. A member of the SZSP supreme authorities from 1977 to 1982. From November 1981 to February 1984 - editor in chief of student weekly "ITD," next editor in chief of daily "Sztandar Młodych" from 1984 to 1985. A co-founder of the first computer-science periodical in Poland "Bajtek" in 1985.

From 1985 to 1987, Minister for Youth Affairs in the Zbigniew Messner government, and then Chairman of the Committee for Youth and Physical Culture till June 1990. A member of the Mieczysław Rakowski government, then a cabinet minister and Chairman of the government Social-Political Committee from October 1988 to September 1989. A participant at the Round-Table negotiations, co-chairing with Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Romuald Sosnowski the task group for trade union pluralism. A member of the Polish United Workers' Party from 1977 to 1990. A co-founding member of the Social Democratic Party of the Republic of Poland from January to February 1990, and its first chairman till December 1995. One of the founding members of the Democratic Left Alliance in 1991. A sports activist in the Student Sports Union from 1975 to 1979 and the Polish Olympic Committee (PKOL). PKOL president from 1988 to 1991. Distinguished with the Golden Olympic Order of the International Olympic Committee in 1998 and the Golden Order of Merit of the International Amateur Athletic Federation in 1999, and in 2000 Order of Merit EOC (European Olympic Committee).

Running for the Sejm (lower house of Parliament) from the Warsaw constituency, he won the largest number of votes, 148,533 to be exact. Leader of the parliamentary caucus of the Democratic Left Alliance in the first and second term (1991-1995). A member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and chairman of the Constitutional Committee of the National Assembly from November 1993 to November 1995.

Aleksander Kwasniewski won the presidential elections for the first time in 1995 on the election campaign slogans: "Let's choose the future" and "Common Poland," collecting 51.7 percent of votes, against 48.3 percent cast on Lech Wałęsa. In a year 2000 he won again collecting 53.9% of votes in the first run. His election campaign slogan was: "The home of all - Poland". Sworn into office on December 23rd, 1995, as President of the Republic of Poland. On the same day, President Kwasniewski took an oath as Superior of the Armed Forces at the First Fighter Wing,

"Warszawa", in Minsk Mazowiecki. On December 23rd, 2000 he took his office for the second term.

A co-author of the Constitution draft and a mover of the referendum campaign in favour of passing the Constitution of the Third Republic of Poland, which he signed into law on July 16th, 1997. In 1996, President Kwasniewski submitted the draft of a convention on fighting organised crime to the UN. Took an active part in the efforts to see Poland in NATO. Head of Poland's delegation at the Madrid and Washington summits in 1997 and 1999 respectively. On February 26th, 1999, he signed the instruments ratifying Poland's membership of NATO (during a joint ceremony with the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel). He also took active part in further enlargement of an Alliance supporting invitation for seven new states (NATO Summit 2002 in Prague) and the 'open door' policy. Following the September 11th 2001 events upon his initiative and within antiterrorist coalition there was an international conference organized in Warsaw with participation of leaders from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe to strengthen regional activities in combating international terrorism. An advocate of regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. Host of the meeting of the Presidents from the region at Lancut in 1996. An active participant at such meetings in Portoroz in 1997, Levoczy in 1998, Lvov in 1999. Jointly with Lithuania's President, the driving force behind the meeting "Coexistence of Nations and Good-Neighbourly Relations: the Guarantee of Security and Stability in Europe," held in Vilnius in 1997 and the follow-up conference "Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation: Towards the Integrated Europe of the 21st Century Free of Dividing Lines," held in Yalta in 1999. Author of the 'Riga Initiative' (2002) - a forum for cooperation of Central Europe states towards further enlargement of NATO and the European Union.

Aleksander Kwasniewski also launched the following initiatives aimed at rapprochement:

- between Poland and Germany by co-creating, among other things, a programme of exchange for Polish and German youths "Jugendwerk" in 1986 (in the capacity of Minister for Youth Affairs), patronage over the construction of Collegium Polonicum at the Viadrina University in Slubice-Frankfurt on the Odra (inaugurated in October 1996), putting forth the problem of mutual return of works of national culture in December 1998, joint commemoration with the President of the Federal Republic of Germany of the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II in September 1999
- between Poland and Ukraine - Polish-Ukrainian "Declaration on Reconciliation" in May 1997, Polish-Ukrainian Self-Government Forum in June 1999, proposal to erect a monument to the victims of Jaworzno concentration camp (May 1998) and patronage over the reconstruction of the Cemetery of Polish Eaglets in Lvov and Kharkov
- between Poles and Jews - launching and patronizing i.a. the Auschwitz Programme, help initial the Auschwitz Declaration by the Polish side and a coalition of Jewish Organisations, setting in motion the process of restoring Polish citizenship to persons deprived of it on the strength of political decisions taken in 1968, as well as active participation in the work to regulate the state's attitude towards Jewish religious communities.
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Knight of the Order of the White Eagle

Decorated with the following highest orders:

- Lithuania's Order of Vytautas the Great, 1st grade (1996) and the Order of Grand Lithuanian Duke Gediminas, 1st grade;
- Great Britain's Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (March 1996) and the Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (October 1996);

- Italy's Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (1996);
- France's Grand Cross of the Order of the Legion of Honour (1996);
- Norway's Royal Order of Saint Olaf (1996);
- Greece's Grand Cross of the Order of the Saviour (1996);
- Latvia's Order of Three Stars (1997);
- Finland's Grand Cross of the Order of the White Rose of Finland with Collar (1997);
- Malaysia's Royal Order of Merit (1997);
- Ukraine's Order of Yaroslav the Wise, 1st class (1997);
- Portugal's Order of Infant Henry with Grand Ribbon (1997);
- Estonia's Grand Cross with the Ribbon of Terra Mariana (1998);
- Romania's Order of the Star of Romania with Ribbon (1999);
- Chile's Grand Chain of the Order of Merit (1999);
- Belgium's Grand Ribbon of the Order of Leopold (1999);
- Turkey's Order of the Republic (2000);
- Croatia's Great Order of King Tomislav with the Ribbon and Great Star (2001);
- Spain's Order of Catholic Isabelle with Chain (2001)
- Federal Republic of Brasil's National Order of Southern Cross (2002)
- Republic of Peru's Special Grand Cross of the Order of Merit (2002)
- Federal Republic of Germany's Grand Cross of Merit (2002)
- Japan's Grand Ribbon of the Great Order of Chrysanthemum

Also decorated with the highest distinction of the Orthodox Church in Poland: The Order of Saint Magdalena, first degree with decorations (1998). Also honoured with television personality "Wiktor" prizes on 1993, 1995 and 2000.