

A few insights into modern Poland

Lesson 15

This time, it's modern Poland, seen through the eyes of Timothy Garton Ash. Enjoy! ☺

"Rutinoscorbin is like the sixth member of our family!" an implausibly gleaming model mother chirps from the television, in one of many American-style commercials for health products. Outside, in the spring sunshine, BMWs and Mercedes glide past freshly painted facades and smart coffee shops. Young Poles send text messages using neo-Polish words such as *trendi*, *seksi* and *kul*. Half the old friends I want to meet up with are abroad: in the European parliament, in Paris, on the Canary Islands. (...)

Less than a lifetime ago, the whole city centre was razed to the ground by Hitler's troops after the heroic, doomed Warsaw rising of 1944. Those handsome facades you see in the famous Old Town have all been reconstructed. A writer of my acquaintance used to say, with some poetic exaggeration, that the oldest things in Warsaw are the trees in the Lazienki park.

This new Poland has just joined the "pact for the euro". If the euro survives, and things go on as they are, Poland will be in the eurozone long before Britain is. Its economy had a growth rate of 3.8% in 2010, one of the best in Europe. It takes the rotating presidency of the EU in the second half of this year. It is a member of NATO, and has troops in Afghanistan. On the surface, it looks more and more like a western consumer society, with mortgages, private insurance schemes, television celebrities and entertainment culture. The new cults of health and fitness – as propagated in all those TV commercials – increasingly supplant the old ones of church and nation. (...)

Yet neither the Poles nor outsiders can quite believe the transformation is for real – and some don't like it even if it is. A few years ago, a British branding consultancy was asked by the Polish chamber of commerce to come up with a suggested new brand for Poland's national identity. This is itself a sign of the times. In the past, Poland created its brand by mounting an armed insurrection against Russian rule, and then having romantic poets such as Adam Mickiewicz immortalise the martyrdom of this "Christ among nations". Now it hires a branding consultant.

Source: T. Garton Ash, *Poland: a country getting to grips with being normal at last*, "The Guardian", 4 April 2011.

Find words in the text which have the following meaning:

- ✓ to make a characteristic short, sharp sound, as small birds and certain insects:
- ✓ to tear down; demolish; level to the ground:
- ✓ a conveyance of an interest in property as security for the repayment of money borrowed:
- ✓ to take the place of (another), as through force, scheming, strategy, or the like:
- ✓ to go up, ascend, set sth or place at an elevation:
- ✓ to reproduce, transmit (e.g. values), disseminate through a medium: