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**POLAND: We defend and will defend “Gazeta Wyborcza”, the editorial staff says**

**We defend and will defend “Gazeta Wyborcza”**

*The management of “Gazeta Wyborcza” has lost confidence in Agora’s Management Board and files a vote of no confidence in it.*

By Adam Michnik and Jarosław Kurski

Gazeta Wyborcza (25.11.2021) – <https://bit.ly/3DV0015> –

## Dear Readers,

the last six years have been extremely difficult for the free media, especially the press. However, we have always tried to act in such a way as not to bother our readers with our problems. You all have enough problems of your own in times of Pisan oppression.

However, we can no longer remain silent in your face. “Gazeta Wyborcza” is yours, “Wyborcza” is about you – as a club member, as a subscriber and as our faithful reader you have the right to know what is going on.

Thanks to the enormous effort of our team and your trust, we now have more than 260 thousand digital subscriptions and are among the top ten European and twenty global newspapers in this respect.

We have stable revenues and generate profits, which we want to reinvest in our development – in the editorial office, in people and in technology. In short, we have success, which paradoxically has become our problem. For it gives us something that is not tolerated by any murderous parties or any greedy and short-sighted corporations. Independence.

We are able to cope with the ruling party – despite the flood of lawsuits (about 70 today), attacks by party media, economic discrimination, problems with distribution, and heinous attacks on our journalists. The aggression of the ruling party against our newspaper defending democracy was and is predictable. The party regards us as enemies and is our enemy.

Worse still are the people who claim to be our friends, who declare help and concern. Keep us, Lord, from our friends, for we can deal with our enemies on our own.

### ***A sudden strike***

For the past five months we have been trying to resolve the biggest crisis in the history of “Gazeta Wyborcza” provoked by Agora’s Management Board. On June 8, the President of the Management Board Bartosz Hojka decided to suddenly, without consulting the management of “Wyborcza”, sack our publisher, the architect of our success, Jerzy Wójcik, and merge “Wyborcza” with the Gazeta.pl portal which is successfully going its own way to create a harmful mix of incompatible content and business models.

Agora was looking for savings, which would have made some journalists redundant. Worse, it wanted to deprive us of control over our subscriptions, which are the foundation of “Wyborcza’s” financial independence today and in the future.

Agora’s Management Board informed us of its intentions a few hours before they were announced. The solidarity of our team,

the editorial management and many friends of “Wyborcza” prevented this triple – ethical, political and business – mistake.

The relative calm between us and the Management Board, which prevailed for a month, did not mean – as we wanted to believe – that the crisis was extinguished. The Board used this time to prepare a new war with “Wyborcza”.

On Tuesday, 23 November, Bartosz Hojka – again out of the blue – dismissed Jerzy Wójcik, our editor, on disciplinary grounds. You know these methods. Now this is done from home. Remotely. After 30 years of work, an e-mail arrives, then they disconnect the e-mail account, the card doesn't work, they take away the phone and the computer. And out the door. No rights. This is what “ethics” looks like in a company whose management is full of fine words. And here we have the despicable abuse of an employee.

***“Wyborcza” is yours***

If only the Management Board of Agora had been as consistent in the conduct of its business as in its hunt for the publisher of “Wyborcza”, a share in the company would now be worth PLN 800, not eight.

In fact, this is not a personal conflict to which the Management Board falsely reduces the problem. It is about who “Gazeta Wyborcza” belongs to.

Does it belong to the readers and the people who have left their whole lives in the editorial office? Or to the “machers of cash” and Excel?

Will “Wyborcza” continue to be the home of the Polish democratic intelligentsia? Or is it to be a generator of high profits for the company? In other words: will the hard earned profits of “Wyborcza” be invested in necessary development or will they be taken by the corporation.

Finally, will it be a modern newspaper competing with other media invested by global giants? Or will it – as the head of Agora’s supervisory board put it – only be “13 per cent of the company’s value”, i.e. an entertainment and media conglomerate betting on fast food and popcorn.

So please know, dear readers, friends from outside the courthouses, participants in the protests in defense of the Constitution and in the Women’s Strike, defenders of the rights of persecuted minorities, defenders of the European Union, defenders of our planet, social and local government activists – your “Wyborcza” is today hostage to people with a “13 percent” mentality.

## ***Destroyers***

You ask: what is all this for? Is it all about – and this time, under this authoritarian regime – butchering “Wyborcza”,

destroying its success, creating unrest in the team, weakening its title and brand, and thus neutralizing “Gazeta Wyborcza” in its mission to defend democracy in Poland?

We therefore publicly question this Board: Bartosz Hoyka, Anna Krynska, Tomasz Jagiełło, Tomasz Grabowski, Agnieszka Siuzdak, as well as Wanda Rapaczyński, who patronises them: is this your acrimonious vindictiveness, stupidity or mistake?

We also ask our “founding mother”, the owner of the golden share, Helena Luczywo. It is a painful question for the editorial team and management: Why do you allow all this? Helena, why do you accept the slow destruction of your life’s work as well? Do you really think that the fate of “Wyborcza” will be better taken care of by the corporation than by the “Gazeta Wyborcza” team itself?

We do not have answers to these questions. We do not know what is the hidden plan behind it, but we know that this Board of Directors acts to the detriment of “Gazeta Wyborcza”, that it is simply dangerous for “Wyborcza”. It is made up of people who have no idea what publishing a modern newspaper is all about, and they have just fired one of the best specialists on the market because he did not suck up to them.

***This will not do***

The disciplinary dismissal of our publisher was handed out in violation of labour law and is ineffective. Today editor-in-chief Adam Michnik appointed Jerzy Wojcik as deputy editor-in-

chief for development. Agora's questioning of this fact and preventing him from performing the duties entrusted to him by the editor-in-chief will be treated as yet another assault by the Management Board on the independence of "Wyborcza".

We do not expect anything good from this Management Board. That is why we are not addressing this letter to them, but to you – the real owners of 'Wyborcza'.

The only thing the people from the Management Board could do is to stay out of it, to separate 'Wyborcza' into a separate company or to leave. They do neither the first, nor the second, nor the third.

We therefore declare: the management of "Gazeta Wyborcza" has completely lost trust in Agora's Management Board and is submitting a vote of no confidence in it.

**Adam Michnik** (Editor-in-Chief), **Jarosław Kurski** (First Deputy Editor-in-Chief)

*Photo credits: Dawid Żuchowicz, Michał Mutor / Agencja Wyborcza.pl*

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