



mediawatch POLSKA

Need for a new daily newspaper in Poland that would change Polish political situation

We distribute this leaflet to provoke the new market entry to our media market. It is urgently needed to remove the jam in Polish politics, especially on the centre-left wing, where one media group gained actual monopoly. This group used its market power to influence politics, to shape it even. Politicians connected with this media empire gained enormous power.

This empire is Agora S.A. It emerged due to agreement made during the Polish round table, by giving a permission to print it and attributing paper needed to print this newspaper by planners of the planned economy. A medium was created in planned economy, that from the very start was the political platform of the Solidarity forces. From the start on it was chaired and controlled by politicians. It grew in power, to the point where it became the main media power in the country except for public media.

I disagree with the line presented by the author in the article featured in our leaflet. „Wyborcza” is by western standards a centre-conservative newspaper. In a Polish market, which lacks capital, there was no group that could organise a newspaper from the scrap, as Wyborcza did thanks to the forces of planned economy. It was the last 5 years, that many daily conservative newspapers appeared, such as Nasz Dziennik (ultracatholic, printed by media groups linked to Catholic Church) or Dziennik (Axel Springer). Before, it was Gazeta Wyborcza who was the political platform for both the left and the right, although from the start on it was definitely centre-right-wing by Western standards.

I definitely agree that Polish left need to jump over the empire of Agora’s media oligarchs. Agora’s media tycoons concentrated too much media power in their hands, some of them become influential politicians in not only Polish, but European context. It happens, if You are the only media on the market. Agora’s role was like that, until recently when „Dziennik” cut off large spheres of the right-wing spectre. „Wyborcza” now moved to reconquer this market, so it became even more conservative. It left the Polish left in limbo, as the median voter moved to the right with the public opinion. Wyborcza, by allowing certain political forces and blocking others, caused that this side of political spectrum become less attractive and voters left it. By no doubt Polish conservatives have now more periodicals than the Polish liberals or centrist forces, that have either Wyborcza or nothing. No new Polish left-wing forces could emerge on the market without being „blessed” by this media empire, as until now it is the only medium that rarely prints the politicians of the left.



I disagree with the criticism of Mr. Adam Michnik featured in the article that follows. Agora was using the politics to their own means too, such as the idea of gaining a license for national TV station by buying Polsat. This failed when Agora refused to pay a bribe of \$17,5 million to the government for the license and revealed the whole affair. An enormous scandal erupted, and Michnik in an act of revenge killed Polish post-communists with this move.

However, it is clear that the ghost of post-socialism still looms over Poland. Even I would describe economic ideas of Agora's media moguls as postsocialist, a kind of Christian left giving their strong ties with the Catholic Church. This type of policy, hat I would tag as somewhat exotic in Europe, You might find in Latin America. In Poland, it is a remnant of political forces, such as Catholic Church, who were building this medium and who were creating Polish opposition in its early years.

Adam Michnik, most powerful of Agora's media moguls, was an object of unbelievable wave of criticism. A significant part of modern Polish antisemitism from the end of 20th century and the first five years of 21st century was aimed predominantly at him (he was a Jew by origin, what he was personally admitting). Polish right-wing media created the term „saloon” to describe the type of pressure group where this tycoon would exercise his media power enabling him to create and destroy political forces using defamation and granting them access to public opinion.

Faithfully,
Irie Lion, MediaWatch Polska team member

Attached You find two featured articles, authors of which granted permission to reproduce them without giving their names and affiliation.



Nie chcemy być pieskami Michnika.

We do not want to be Michnik's pussy cats

I will tell You why, we, the Polish left, failed? Because we are ruled by a media oligarch. Imagine a country where there is only one left-leaning media concern, and the only way for a political group, or any group having some ties with the left, is to be obedient to this media mogul, media oligarch.

Agora S.A. Oh yes, they control all the left, they are simply the only private media concern that could print some new faces. But You will not get through, if Your views on economics or anything else are different than theirs. They have their concept of economic policy, or foreign policy, and forget it- they are so powerful that without their blessing You won't get through.

I am sure of only one thing- if there will be no competition to Agora S.A. and their policy, as this concern simply does politics, bearing no responsibility for their actions, then polish left will be unable to reorient itself. No new ideas concerning economic policy will be able to get through.

We, the left, are jammed. We have no media to promote us, to write about us. There are only some obscure websites that are done by ourselves to promote our policies. But they differ from Agora's political line, so they will never be heard by the broader audience. We are called „pieski Michnika” because since years we are unable to come across the network of informal influences of this media oligarch. Only those who share same ideology (economic, social etc.) as Agora's media oligarchs, can get through. A media empire was built, that killed Polish left. Aside from Agora, only postcommunists have their own party media of small audience and that was it. Nothing else exists.

As media economist I can say only one: any change on Polish political scene is possible only with new liberal/ liberal left media concerns, that have to enter Polish market as soon as possible, to make the needed competition and allow for different voices to be heard than the dominant voice of Agora's political line.

These people built media empire that cannot be jumped over. They have market power enough to rule the left. We tried to raise the capital to start with competitive daily newspaper, but we are politicians, not media entrepreneurs, that have different things to do than to fly around and convince people to enter this business. We need a new media in Poland, that would end this strange situation, where the politics is in fact done by powerful media monopolist and not by us.

How it works? Adam Michnik, one of the media oligarchs, is a good example. He is a brilliant politician with wonderful network of contacts across Europe. Although not possessing shares in Agora, he controls everything there. For example, is the only person allowed to smoke cigarettes freely in the smoking-free building. This politician has his own vision of economic policy best suitable for Poland (although he has



studied only history), he has his views of religious and social policy, as well of international affairs. A politician that wants to play a key role in Polish democracy and also on international level.

He is not acting in an open way, as politicians used to act. He moved from the world of politics into the world of media and pressure groups. He talks behind your back, he tags everyone, can cause failure to any efforts aiming at creating new political parties. He is considered to be a politician that attacks from behind the curtain. To fight with this kind of saloon guerrilla is outrageously difficult- You are not even aware of the arguments used. Michnik is a media tycoon that rules from behind the Polish left, without being called to responsibility for his failures. And Adam is the type of person who hates to be made responsible. He loves to rule without him being blamed for anything. This kind of comfort he obtained by his media, where he acts as a prince by creating and destroying parties. He is definitely a shadow politician, his counterpart on another fringe being Father Rydzyk.

I would blame him personally for the total failure of Polish left. He has no knowledge of economics, he does not possess any qualifications in this field. He supports some form of etatism mixed with dismay for any forms of market liberalisation. His economic ideas were disastrous for Polish left, as he was letting through his newspaper only those with such type of etatist/neomarxist economic policies. No liberalisations whatsoever, just forget it. He laid all the left to the grave, he introduced „Wyborcza terror” in all the left part of political spectrum.

He had some ideas for religious policy, such as the forced reconciliation of politicians with the Catholic Church, and he was only letting through parties that were cooperating with the Church. It was disastrous in its effects, as large parts of the clergy, even most of the clergy, are anti-Semitic and racist. Radio Maryja, polish racist hate-radio, gained most of the clergy to its side. The idea of forcefull cooperation and reforming of the Church was sick from the start as for many people basic ethics was not allowing to give any support for an organisation that has a record of racial and religious hatred, but You mean nothing to him and he will not discuss such things with someone from nowhere, not from his group of followers. He learned how to play with people from his former boss, Antonii Slonimski, who was using such technique.

Michnik, only one of the media moguls of Wyborca (other key person there is for example a Master of Catholic Theology) is too powerful to discuss his political ideas with anyone. Even if caught, he won't admit being ever wrong. The only way to came it over is to create any other media alternative that would allow to avoid this huge network, huge lobby group, that can create mainstreams, and sometimes is even not aware that the things that they create are at odds with the political reality in other parts of Europe. Wyborcza empire is so powerful that they can create whatever they wish- they keep all the left in their hands. Please come here and destroy it by building a competition to them. Please, allow for democracy, allow to get rid of shadow politicians that seek to implement their policies without being made responsible for them.



A new medium- where shall it locate to allow new political forces to reach public opinion?

Dear Ladies and Sirs,

Poland lacks good quality and independent newspapers. This 38.6- million people country has only 3 quality newspapers, all of which are heavily politically biased, they are involved in supporting certain political parties and organisations such as religious groups. There are no independent printed media, what is especially difficult for Polish liberals who are at the same time interested in modern market economics without any monopolies and in guaranteeing of human rights to minorities (religious, sexual, worldview etc.).

Poland urgently needs modern newspaper to Polish readers. The new independent title should be free from any political bias. As it is difficult to produce a newspaper without any ideological orientation, such newspaper should represent liberal, progressive ideology both in social and in economic issues. It should be located somewhere between „Guardian” and „The Independent”, as there is the largest gap in Polish media landscape.

The market of the new entrant are the readers of the most popular Polish daily, „Gazeta Wyborcza” (circulation: 442 000), and the way to attract them is to be more liberal in social and economic issues. Its readership mix shall consist of voters for Social Democrats (SdPL), Liberals (no political representation or FL), Greens, parts of Postcommunists (SLD), and some minority of moderate conservatives (PO and PD). It should be possible without major problems to achieve an average daily circulation of 150 thousand copies. It would not start as a newspaper of record, but within 3 years time it could become a newspaper of record with full and unbiased coverage of events.

New entrant should expect to rip off approx. 30- 50 % of „Gazeta Wyborcza” readers. Its goal should be to attack the media moguls from Agora S.A. by a mix of independence, courage, and more radical viewpoints. It also should not to be biased politically, as other newspapers from this segment („Trybuna” is said having strong links with postcommunists (SLD) and „Wyborcza” having deep ties with both moderate Catholics and politicians tied with „Solidarnosc”). Wyborcza can be described as centrist-right, the new will be a bit more radical towards the liberal side of the spectrum.

It should use outsourcing, cooperating with large groups of free-lance journalists (allowing for large share of female journalists), printing lots of feedback from our readers. It should have small team of cooperating people scattered across the country. The newspaper could be web-based, decentralised, journalists will act as bloggers. The printed version will be created by a small team using the content published on-line by the contributors on their blogs.



It should represent social democratic and liberal viewpoints focusing on a free-market approach in economics, i.e. something completely opposed to most of mainstream conservative Polish media. Its scope should mainly be life-style and well-being, arts, culture and entertainment. Politics and economy shall be treated in the background, but this being offset by high quality and competence of staff. It should be non-clerical- a novelty for Polish mainstream daily press. Its target reader should be young urban professional or intellectual with postmodern aspirations, aged 24- 35, party-seeking, non-clerical, frustrated and annoyed by current political situation. Target markets are large cities, editors should be less interested in rural readership.

There is some risk associated with this project- there has never been a liberal newspaper in Poland, however, the simulations of start-up costs show that an entry is deemed to be a success.

Looking forward to hearing from You,
-anonymous media economist-

Fig. Polish quality press market plotted on political spectrum, and daily circulation

Nasz Dziennik Estim. 100 000 (cons.-Catholic)	Dziennik 259 039 (conservative)	Rzeczpospolita 145 021 (conservative-govt.)	Wyborcza 442 149 (centrist-Catholic)	New entrant 150 000- planned (social, liberal)
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