
Golgota Picnic in Poland

An account of the events
May-July 2014



MALTA FUNDACJA

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May-July 2014

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— INTRODUCTION

On June 20, 2014, the Malta Festival Poznań cancelled the performance of the play *Golgota Picnic*, one of the leading events of the festival's 24th edition. The play was scheduled to be performed on June 27 and 28 at the Zamek Cultural Centre. The author of the piece, Rodrigo García, was the curator of the festival's Thematic Idiom Latin America: Mestizos.

The decision to cancel the performance — the result of unprecedented attacks by Catholic groups, and the powerlessness of the state — sparked a media scandal, and quickly became a question of public interest. This happened because the issue of *Golgota Picnic* had become another in a series of events that had tested the limits of Polish democracy. The decision to cancel the play provoked a nationwide debate on the condition of the Polish state, the freedom of speech, the relationship between art, the Church, and the government, and provided the impulse for further action.

Let us review the sequence of events.

May 16 marked the first announcement of the planned protests. Shortly afterwards, the Malta team received a petition calling for the removal of the play from the festival

schedule. The actions of opponents of the performance began to pick up steam. Various nationalist and ultra-Catholic media outlets and organizations joined the efforts. The online petition against the performance of *Golgota Picnic* gathered over 40,000 signatures in a few days.

In early June 2014, ultra-Catholic groups received the support of Catholic Church officials. Poznań Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, who also serves as the president of the Polish Episcopal Conference, sanctioned the actions of the protesters in a letter addressed to the director of the festival, and on the TVN television network called for nationwide protests in a few days time. Archbishop Gądecki was not the only Church official to take part in the protest. He was joined by Bishop Wiesław Mering, president of the Polish Episcopal Conference's Council on Culture, as well as the archbishops of Gdańsk and Częstochowa, and the bishop emeritus of Kalisz, all of whom spoke in favour of the archbishop's protest in homilies and during Corpus Christi celebrations. Following the cancellation of the performance, the archdioceses of Krakow, Lublin, Bydgoszcz, and Warsaw joined the protests in response to attempts to screen videos of the play in other cities. All of the archdioceses spoke out against the screenings. No one had yet seen the play or recordings of it. As the protesters admitted, their knowledge of the piece was sourced from the Internet, and they had made references to fragments of the play that had been found on YouTube and taken out of context.

The actions of Church officials were crucial. Their objections gave the protest movement an informal leadership that had authority and access to the media. Their statements on the matter influenced the actions of other parties, particularly politicians and groups outraged over the play. It wasn't, however, the actions of the bishops that played

the key role in the decision to cancel the performance, rather but the position taken by representatives of the Polish state.

On June 16, Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny called a meeting of the crisis management team which included the mayor himself, representatives of Malta Festival Poznań, the Zamek Cultural Centre, the Poznań Police Department, and Poznań City Hall. The police announced that 30 to 50 thousand people were expected to take part in a June 27 protest against the performance of *Golgota Picnic*. It was explained that six thousand people were sufficient to effectively shut down the city center. The Malta Festival team was also told that on the following day, June 28, a Piotr Reiss benefit event was planned at INEA Stadium, which would involve the presence of large numbers of football fans in Poznań. Furthermore, supporters of three football teams had announced their plans to take part in the protest. Despite the fact that the Law on Police makes no mention of such a thing as a declaration of powerlessness on the part of the police, law enforcement officials proposed that the date and time of the performance be changed. This was impossible due to the scheduling constraints of the actors and alternative venues.

Two days later, on June 18, the Mayor of Poznań issued an official letter in which he shifted all responsibility for any escalation of the conflict onto the organizers of the festival. In the final sentence of the statement, the mayor wrote that he would not be attending the play, as it was incompatible with his personal values.

The information provided by the police and the lack of support on the part of city officials and the art community led the Malta Festival to cancel the play on June 20, seven days before its planned performance.

It is worth noting that in France, where protests against the performances of *Golgota Picnic* were also

held, the art community immediately stood up in support of the play, and bishops called for peace. The city and police took the side of the theater. Another important logistical difference was that the French performances were held in a closed theater building rather than an open and multifunctional community center. Furthermore, the French organizers did not have to consider the safety of audiences attending outdoor events. A large portion of the program in Poznań (including concerts, debates, talks, children's workshops, and some plays) take place at Malta Generator, an open space at Freedom Square. Malta Generator cannot be sealed and is thus vulnerable to attacks by such groups as football hooligans.

Although the Malta Festival cancelled the play in Poznań, its organizers did make efforts to move the performance to another Polish city. Talks were held with the cities of Bydgoszcz, Kraków, and Warsaw. After examining its technical capabilities, the Malta Festival Poznań attempted to hold a one-off performance at Krzysztof Warlikowski's Nowy Teatr. Thanks to the goodwill and efficient cooperation of Nowy Teatr, all of the technical and production conditions were fulfilled.

Rodrigo García refused to stage *Golgota Picnic* in Warsaw, however, on the grounds that the piece was too complicated to prepare on such short notice. As a result, the piece was not performed in its entirety. On June 26, Nowy Teatr hosted a performance of *Golgota Picnic* that took the form of an expanded reading (with a concert and screening of video footage featured in the original version). Due to the decision made by Rodrigo García, this was the only possible way to stage the play in Poland.

Despite its efforts in the period leading up to the cancellation of the event, Malta Festival did not receive the mass

support that could have helped it stand up to the thousands of protesters against García's play. The cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* did, however, spark an avalanche of reactions in the Polish cultural world — from unconditional support to harsh criticism of the decision, along with accusations of cowardice.

Among the most active in its support was the civic movement known as Citizens of Culture, which addressed an open letter to the president of Poland. In the letter, members of the movement protested against censorship and expressed their concern with the situation in Poznań. Meanwhile, non-profit organizations, theaters, and private individuals began contacting Malta Festival Poznań, asking to organise public readings and screenings of audiovisual recordings of *Golgota Picnic*. The festival provided a subtitled recording and a Polish translation of the play. Staged readings and screenings were held in over a dozen Polish cities to coincide with the original time and date of the play. Some of these events were cancelled, while others were interrupted by protesters, and most were accompanied by local demonstrations.

Another important event was the debate titled "Who Needs Freedom," hosted by Malta Festival. For over four hours on June 27, participants discussed the events surrounding *Golgota Picnic* in the context of creative freedom as well as the state of democracy and public debate in Poland. Poznań had not witnessed an equally important and impassioned debate in years. Both supporters and opponents of the performance shared their opinions in a calm, matter-of-fact tone. Present at the debate were Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny, who appeared in the audience and was quickly called upon to comment, as well as the legal counsel of Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki. Several hundred peo-

ple attended the event, among them everyday citizens who wished to have an open discussion about the problems facing their city. As Jacek Żakowski put it at the debate in Freedom Square, “*Golgota Picnic* helped Poland’s long-dormant democracy experience a new awakening this spring.”

The symbolic finale of the *Golgota Picnic* affair was the publication of the script in the weekend edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (June 28), the country’s leading and most influential daily newspaper, with a circulation of close to 300 thousand copies. Never before in the history of an independent Poland had a newspaper published a drama, and never before had a single play been so influential. The media’s interest in the whole situation was remarkable, considering the fact that culture in Poland rarely makes its way into mainstream media. The alliance between the Church, radical ultra-Catholic organizations, and football hooligans attempted to censor the play, but instead only succeeded in increasing its popularity. The performance that was supposed to be banned was talked about by everyone this June.

The gravity of the events, combined with the misrepresentation of the sequence of events in the media, indicates that there is a need to compile documentation of the *Golgota Picnic* affair. This report is a collection of letters, statements, and comments, and it describes the actions undertaken by all sides of the conflict. It identifies the main subjects of the events — protesters, bishops, politicians, the Malta team, the police, and the media and arts community — while presenting the scale and variety of actions undertaken by them, both before and after the performance was cancelled. Sub-chapters present the events in chronological order.

In the section titled “The Malta Festival Poznań / After the Cancellation” we present the views of Rodrigo García

and the artists participating in the, *Latin America: Mestizos, Thematic Idiom*.

The report also contains two analyses, one by Wojciech Brzozowski, who discusses the events from a legal perspective, and another by Wiesław Godzic, who analyzes the media representation of the events surrounding *Golgota Picnic*. Included at the beginning is a timeline that enables the reader to follow the chronological sequence of events. We hope that this documentation will serve as foundation for further analysis.

Paweł Płoski, Dorota Semenowicz

— Calendar of Events

- May 16**
— Publication on the portal PCh24.pl - Polonia Christian *Blasphemous art in Poznań*
- May 29**
— Rosary Crusade for the Homeland (Krucjata Różańcowa Za Ojczyznę) announces a call to protest
- May 30**
— Call posted on protestuj.pl to send email protests. *They will mock Jesus - we cannot allow it!*
- June 1**
— Petition requesting cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* sent to the Malta Festival Poznań team
— Statement by Malta Festival Poznań on the staging of *Golgota Picnic*
- June 2**
— Rosary Crusade presents their protest on air on TV Trwam
— 40,000 people have signed up to protest against the staging of *Golgota Picnic*
- June 4**
— Letter from Poznań City Councillors calling on the City of Poznań to cancel the staging of the play
- June 6**
— The “Catholic Confederation” is founded in protest against the play
— 150 protesters in front of the Office of the City of Poznań
— Debate in Parliament and press conference by Law and Justice MPs re: *Golgota Picnic*
— Two parliamentary questions on *Golgota Picnic*: one to the Minister of Culture and National Heritage; the second to the Prime Minister
- June 8**
— Mail to Rodrigo García indicating the beginning of protests
- June 9**
— Opening of Malta Festival Poznań and a debate on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of free elections, with the participation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Bogdan Zdrojewski
- June 10**
— The protest gathers seven additional organizations
- June 13**
— Letter from the Archbishop and President of the Polish Episcopate, Stanislaw Gądecki, to Malta Festival Poznań
— Response letter from Malta Festival to the City Councillors and to the Archbishop
— An open letter initiated by the House of Fire network supporting Malta Festival Poznań
— Member of Parliament Andrzej Jaworski gives false

information about Malta Festival Poznań on the TV programme “Po przecinku”, a TVP Info channel

June 14

- Letter from the Bishop and President of the ‘Polish Episcopate Council on Culture and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage’, Wiesław Mering, to the faithful, condemning *Golgota Picnic*.
- Broadcast on Radio Mercury, attended by Michał Merczyński and Maciej Mazurek

June 16

- Convening of the crisis committee by the Mayor of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny - consultation with the police
- Another interpellation by MPs on *Golgota Picnic* to the Minister of Culture and National Heritage

June 17

- Picket by the Youth Crusade in front of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in Warsaw
- Statement by Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny on *Golgota Picnic*
- Malta Festival Poznań team contact Rodrigo García about the protests

June 18

- Publication of an opinion on the play by Dorota Jarecka and Małgorzata Dziewulska, commissioned by Malta Festival Poznań
- Statement by father Tomasz Dostatni on poznan.gazeta.pl at the request of Malta Festival Poznań

June 19

- Four bishops refer to the staging of *Golgota Picnic* in their homilies during the Feast of Corpus Christi
- Arrival of Rodrigo García in Poznań for a meeting with the Malta Festival Poznań team

June 20

- Second convening of the crisis committee – consultation with the police
- Cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* by Malta Festival Poznań

June 21

- Launch of the civic action “*Golgota Picnic* - do it yourself” – plans drawn to read the play and show the video recordings across Poland

June 22

- Meeting of the Malta Festival Poznań team with artists of the Latin America Idiom on their position about the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic*
- The Citizens of Culture publish an open letter against censorship to the President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski

June 23

- Third meeting of the crisis committee convened by the Mayor of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny - consultation with the police about security issues at the venue
- Statement by the Open University against a confessional state
- Statement by Latin American artists against censorship (Comunicado contra la censura)

— Unum Principum Letter to the Mayor of Bydgoszcz Rafał Bruski regarding the planned *Golgota Picnic* screening at the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz

June 24

— Statement of the Diocese on the screening of the play at the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz
— Letter from the Bishop of Włocławek, Wiesław Mering, Chairman of the 'Polish Episcopate Commission on Culture and the Protection of Cultural Heritage' to the Mayor of Bydgoszcz Rafał Bruski about the screening of *Golgota Picnic* at the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz

June 25

— Letter by Malta Festival Poznań to the police asking for protective measures during the planned demonstrations at Freedom Square on June 27
— Comment by Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny on the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* during the session of the Poznań City Council
— Statement of the Metropolitan Curia in Lublin in relation to the planned screening of *Golgota Picnic* at the Cultural Center in Lublin
— Open Letter by Catholic Action of the Bydgoszcz Diocese to the Mayor of Bydgoszcz, Rafał Bruski and the Law and Justice councillors in connection with the planned screening of *Golgota Picnic* at the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz

June 25

— Statement by the Minister for Culture and National Heritage, Małgorzata Omilanowska on *Golgota Picnic*
— Statement by Law and Justice councillors in Lublin

against the screening of *Golgota Picnic* at the Culture Centre in Lublin

— Response from the Mayor of Bydgoszcz, Rafał Bruski to the letter from Catholic Action of the Bydgoszcz Diocese
— Recitation of rosaries in front of the Polish Theatre in Wrocław against the planned screening of *Golgota Picnic*

June 26

— The 'National Committee for Defence against Sects and Violence' gives notice to eight Prosecutor Offices on the prevention of a crime by ordering the directors of a number of theatres to suspend the planned screenings of *Golgota Picnic*
— Statement by the Metropolitan Curia in Warsaw on *Golgota Picnic*
— Screening of several portions of *Golgota Picnic* with the participation of the artists at the New Theatre in Warsaw, and protests by right-wing and Catholic circles in front of the theatre
— Protests by right-wing and Catholic circles against the screening of *Golgota Picnic* at the Art Factory in Łódź
— Cancellation of the *Golgota Picnic* screening at the Culture Centre in Lublin
— Protests in front of the Voivodship Office in Gdańsk against the spread of blasphemy in Poland

June 27

— Statement by Father dr Łukasz Gaweł, Spokesman of the Katowice Bishop in connection to the planned screening of *Golgota Picnic* in Katowice
— Letter by regional councillors of Law and Justice to the Marshal of Lower Silesia, Cezary Przybylski

- Debate organized by Malta Festival Poznań entitled “Who needs freedom”
- Public reading of *Golgota Picnic* at Freedom Square, as part of “Golgota Picnic – do it yourself”
- Sermon by Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki during the celebrations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, raising the issues of *Golgota Picnic*
- Cancellation of the screenings of *Golgota Picnic* at Teatr Rozrywki in Chorzów, Kana Theatre in Szczecin, and Pinokio Theatre in Łódź
- Demonstrations during the screenings and readings of *Golgota Picnic* in Poland.
- Screenings of *Golgota Picnic* at the Polish Theatre in Wrocław, Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz, TrzyRzeczce Theatre in Białystok, Silesian Theatre in Katowice, New Theatre and the Old Theatre in Kraków
- Closed screenings at the House of Culture in Lublin and Rondo Theatre in Słupsk

June 28

- Publication of the play's text by the “Gazeta Wyborcza” newspaper
- Night reading of *Golgota Picnic* in the rooms of Krytyka Polityczna in Gdańsk

June 29

- Position of the Provincial Council of the Democratic Left Union in defence of artistic freedom in Poland

July 1

- Notification by Law and Order deputies to the Prosecutor on the reading and screening of *Golgota Picnic* in Poland

- Activists from the Polish Nation Remembrance Club demand the sacking of the director of the Słupsk Cultural Centre after the screening of *Golgota Picnic*

July 3

- Democratic Left Union MPs ask for a resolution in Parliament concerning - violations of the principles of autonomy and the independence of the State and the Church.

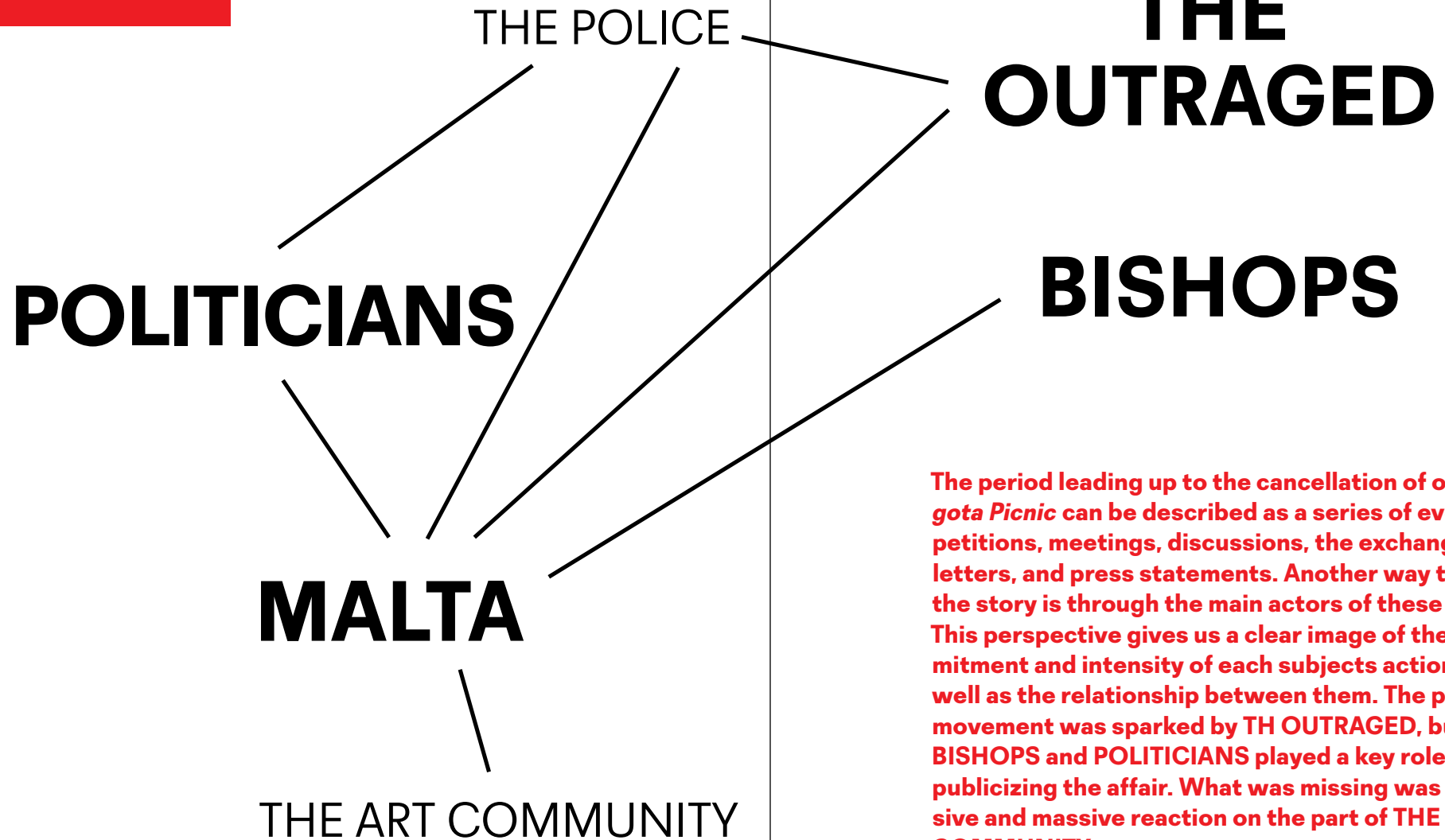
July 12

- Members of Twój Ruch in parliament propose annulment of the Penal Code provision concerning the infringement of religious feelings

Reading of *Golgota Picnic* at the Freedom Square in Poznań during „*Golgota Picnic – do it yourself*”
photo: Marcin Oliva Soto



Before



The period leading up to the cancellation of of *Golgota Picnic* can be described as a series of events: petitions, meetings, discussions, the exchange of letters, and press statements. Another way to tell the story is through the main actors of these events. This perspective gives us a clear image of the commitment and intensity of each subjects actions, as well as the relationship between them. The protest movement was sparked by TH OUTRAGED, but BISHOPS and POLITICIANS played a key role in publicizing the affair. What was missing was a decisive and massive reaction on the part of THE ART COMMUNITY

— THE OUTRAGED

→ 35 days to the cancellation — 42 days to the planned performance

16 may 2014

The first alert – the article *Blasphemous play in Poznań* published on Catholic conservative portal PCh24.pl – Polonia Christiana.

“The play is not only strikingly ugly, it is also blasphemous. The festival director, however, sees an important message in it.”

<http://www.pch24.pl/bluzniercza-sztuka-w-poznaniu,22954,i.html>



22 days to the cancellation — 29 days to the planned performance

29 may 2014

The *Rosary Crusade for the Fatherland* social movement posts a public appeal on its Internet site and summons an active protest.



“We call on everyone to protest actively, we cannot be silent! Please come to Poznań on the day of the performance, there must be as many of us as there were in France and Spain. We will stand arm in arm and we will not let God, His Cross and Scripture – which are most sacred for us - be slandered in our country. We will end another anti-Catholic chutzpah paid for from our taxes, the taxes paid by Catholics. Evil feeds on the passivity or cowardice of good people. (...) Stand up in defence of the holy faith, so that later you will be able to look your children and grand-children in the eye, and when your time comes, so that you can stand with the humility and trustfulness of a Child of God before the Holy Father, whose Son you confessed before in your earthly life and whose honour you protected publicly with your whole self defending him against insults and the abuse of your godless contemporaries.”

During the next several days, the Crusade members were preparing officially to block the presentation of the play with gathering momentum:

“the blasphemy planned by the godless forces of darkness on 27 June, a doubly sacred day of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and on 28 June which is the day of the Immaculate Heart of Virgin Mary... Can we lose on such holy days – the Polish knights

of ages past would dream of taking up arms on such sanctified dates and for such a holy cause! Be there at 19.00! Due to the fact that the monthly Vigil of the Rosary Crusade for the Fatherland on Jasna Góra is planned for this date, let the women folk go to Jasna Góra and let all men of God come to Poznań!”



20 days to the cancellation — 27 days to the planned performance

30 may 2014

Various media get involved in publicising the protest. The PCh24.pl portal reports the matter particularly actively. The portal created the necessary news context for the protest. The article *After this protest France was awakened* raises the following questions: “What does the Catholic protest against the blasphemy of 2011 have in common with the European Parliamentary elections, which were victorious for the Eurosceptics? A whole lot! The awakening of the Catholic and conservative parts of French society began with widespread protests against *Golgota Picnic*”.

The portal refers to the protests against the play in December 2011. At first, French Catholics sent petitions with a demand to cancel the week-long tournée of the play. When this failed to have any effect, “when they were insolently treated by the directors of the Paris theatres, they decided to hit the streets. The officials and especially the media were in shock – there were demonstrations by thousands of Catholics on the Parisian streets, lead by the Paris Cardinal

André Vingt-Trois. The French, outraged with the blasphemous plans, protested with crosses, figures of the Virgin Mary and Bibles in their hands. The demonstrations began with common prayer vigils in Notre Dame. The Catholics were not afraid to protest in front of the theatres where the pseudo-play was staged. Thanks to widespread activation the matter also went to court. The Parisian court, however, ruled that there is nothing bad in scoffing Christ." The author continues (mentioning also matters such as civil partnerships) to prove in his article that "the French at last saw the huge lie of the atheistic, pro-abortion and anti-family creation called the European Union. On Sunday they tossed their vote in favour of the Eurosceptic National Front, which was the winner of these elections. And so Catholic France awakens under its secular occupation. When will the Polish conscience awaken? Will we also be able to protest resolutely against *Golgota Picnic*, which is to be staged from 27 June in Poznań? In France this was the beginning."



20 days to the cancellation — **27 days** to the planned performance

30 June 2014

On the site protestuj.pl under the banner "They will mock Jesus – we cannot let that happen!" there was a call to send e-mail protests against the play. This was the first centre of protest against the presentation of *Golgota Picnic*.

The protest e-mail was received 62,000 times. By 2 June the protest had been signed by almost 40,000 people. Among the recipients were Malta Foundation, Poznań City Hall, Wielkopolskie Voivodship Marshal's Office and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. After the play was cancelled and the screenings of recordings were announced all over Poland, the protest was redirected at the director of the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz. The number of the protests received increased to almost 83,000.

Important technical information: one can generate an unlimited number of protests using one e-mail address and one name and surname.

Protest letter

Dear Sir,

” I was deeply surprised to find out that you, as the Director of Malta Festival, have decided to invite the Argentinean pseudo-artist Rodrigo García to stage his blasphemous anti-play, significantly called ‘Golgota Picnic’.

Even a cursory Internet search clearly shows that the mentioned ‘artist’s’ work is in a huge part seditious and scandalous. This person’s provocative and offensive work has been the cause of public protests for many years. Also ‘Golgota Picnic’ is commonly known to have raised objections in many countries, to mention France, where it caused massive demonstrations of indignant public opinion.

One of the many scandalous scenes in ‘Golgota Picnic’ includes actors openly deriding the Passion of the Christ. While this scene alone would be enough to call the performance anti-art, it includes, besides blasphemy, numerous scenes that are obscene, filled with ugliness and pornographic content. It is therefore hard to understand your decision to invite this scandalistic ‘artist’ for whom derision of Christianity and its symbols has become a specific way of self-promotion. This pseudo-artist will come to Poland to mock and attack Catholicism under your auspices.

Do you really see the Festival you manage – funded also from my taxes – as the right place to present contents that can only be described as cultural vandalism?

The performance is a public and explicit blasphemy that cannot be accepted by any Christian or any man of goodwill. There is also a strong suspicion that during the per-

formance some acts forbidden by law, particularly by the article 196 of the Penal Code which addresses offending of religious feelings, can occur.

Therefore I strongly demand you remove the pseudo-art ‘Golgota Picnic’ from the programme of Malta Festival.

Yours sincerely (signature here)

Up till now the petition has been signed via the Internet portal by over 60,000 people. The portal operates based on a deeply flawed mechanism that allows people to easily manipulate the real scale of the protest. Using the same name and email address anyone can generate an unlimited number of protests.

<http://www.protestuj.pl/beda-drwic-z-jezusa---nie-mozemy-na-to-pozwolic-13,k.html>

The team of Malta Festival prepared an answer almost immediately – a statement in which the significance and the context of the play was explained. They also presented the *Latin America: Mestizos* program, as a part of which the play was to be staged.

Statement by the Malta Festival team, see page 144.



19 days to the cancellation — 26 days to the planned performance

1 June 2014

Deon.pl, a Catholic social networking and news portal, publishes an article by Father Adam Błyszcz on 2 June, who posed a rhetorical question: "Will our protest bring any effect apart from the previously mentioned free advertising? No. So let's give it a rest. Or even better. Let's do what they did in Paris a few years back in the context of this play. Let's meet in our Poznań cathedral, with our archbishop. And pray."

Father Adam Błyszcz *Does a Catholic need to be outraged all the time?*

For a few days now I've been getting information in my inbox about a certain blasphemous play which is to be staged in Poznań. These e-mails (some of the senders are known to me in person) summon me to protest. But somehow, I don't feel like it...

At the end of June this year, Malta Festival is to stage *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García. The information available on the Internet site of the Festival tells me that the author "undertakes in his works the issue of a world ruled by violence, power and consumption". Sounds good. Which one of us does not oppose violence? Who agrees to the rule of

power which violates individual conscience? Who wants to give oneself over to consumptionism?

The presentation of the play itself, however, seems to be more tangled. The play is said to "shock with an uncommon combination of critical communication, strong imagery, music and poetry. It is ironic, obscene and excessive, but it also has scenes requiring focus, allowing for quiet contemplation. The director transgresses conventional genres, omits the pitfall of ideology, instead he uses the possibilities offered by the theatrical medium, creates a phantasmagoric vision of hell in which we live, at the same time allowing space for distance and auto-criticism". For me this sounds like media gobbledygook. We don't know what this irony, obscenity and excessiveness is about. We don't know who is guaranteed and promised this distance and auto-criticism.

Press information suggests that the author of the play uses an event, which for us Christians is a key moment in history, to present his theses. He uses and instrumentalises the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. I don't think that anyone would like the death of their mother, father, brother, sister, friend, wife, husband or child to be used to meet someone's aims. Even the noblest ones. But ironising or dressing it with obscenity seems unacceptable to me. Just now we can observe the scandalous spectacle around the death of General Wojciech Jaruzelski. I understand that there are persons who don't mind that. Who will ironise on the topic of the death of Jesus Christ or their political opponents. I do mind and I will not go there.

It is a well known fact that the Catholic Church is a perfect advertising channel. I get e-mails advising me to go protesting against *Golgota Picnic*. Let's say we will protest, we will collect signatures, we will be outraged. The

press will not write about anything else, but the fact that the Catholic Church attacks the freedom of art. They will make us into fanatics again. And again some artist will be advertised in the media at our expense without spending a penny of his own money. And who will attend the performance? Do you want to know? A few cranky women, a few apostates and a couple of dozen completely random people. There will be those, naturally, who are fans of the talent of the Argentinean director. And for sure, there will be a hundred or so people, who will come, because they heard this is a frightfully important play. And its importance comes mostly from the fact that the Polish Catholic Church does not like it. So it must be phenomenal. Will our protest bring any effect apart from the previously mentioned free advertising? No. So let's give it a rest.

Or even better. Let's do what they did in Paris a few years back in the context of this play. Let's meet in our Poznań cathedral, with our Archbishop. And pray. We will ask him to prepare a good sermon, we will ask the academic ministry to prepare a beautiful celebration. Let us put the cross of our Lord in the centre and let us cherish him. In silence, singing and listening to beautiful music. And at the end let's give everyone a picture of Our Saviour on the Cross to take home.

<http://www.deon.plwww.deon.pl/religia/kosciol-i-swiat/komentarze/art,1658,czy-ka-tolik-musi-sie-stale-oburzac.html>



18 days to the cancellation — 25 days to the planned performance

2 June 2014

The Rosary Crusade for the Fatherland against Gogota Picnic. Anna Kołakowska, one of the leading activists of the Crusade, appeared on TV Trwam and explained:

"First the Church and Catholics are attacked verbally through art and pseudo-culture, then comes the physical violence. We cannot allow it. We intend to stop the staging of this play. That is why we want as many people in Poznań on 27 June as possible. The pseudo-play will start at 21.00, but we have to be there earlier – at 18.00. We cannot say what form exactly the protest will take. We have some well-tried forms of protest from, for example, the time of martial law in Poland. If there are enough of us, we will be able to block the entrance to the building. What is most important is to wake up and stop being passive."



https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=giN0L6ctEjU



17 days to the cancellation — 24 days to the planned performance

3 June 2014

The French showed us how to fight blasphemers...

Maciej Maleszyk, a Youth Crusade member, wrote:

“The blasphemous play *Golgota Picnic* is a real event – flesh and blood – and it is growing nearer and nearer, one slimy step at a time. Whether it will be staged during Malta Festival depends only on us. Are lifeless protests all we have in answer to the jeering and derision to the Saviour? Let’s keep sending protests. If this does not work, we will have to block the sacrilegious pseudo-play. The French showed us how to fight blasphemers... Christianophobie – ça suffit! (Christianophobia – it’s enough!)”.

<http://www.pch24.pl/dali-nam-przyklad-francuzi-jak-bluzniercow--zwyciezac-mamy,23236,i.html>



14 days to the cancellation — 21 days to the planned performance

6 June 2014

On 6 June 2014 between 12:00 and 12:30 there was a public gathering in front of the Poznań Municipal Office on Plac Kolegiacki organised by Bogdan Freytag, which aimed to oppose the staging of the play *Golgota Picnic* scheduled for 27 June. Around 150 protesters gathered in front of the magistrate.

Stefan Drajewski described the protest in “Głos Wielkopolski” in his article *The protest looked like a mass*: “On Friday at noon the members and he supporters of Poznań Patriotic Association “Faithful to Poland” (“Wierni Polsce”) held a protest prayer meeting on Plac Kolegiacki in front of the Municipal Office. The protest had a religious character. It started with a solemn song. After the reading of the resolution and a letter to Mayor Ryszard Grobelny, the protesters prayed a decade of the rosary. The action ended with the hymn *Boże coś Polskę*, including the words “Lord please return us our free fatherland”. Before the action, a representative of the organiser, Bogdan Freytag, said: “We are protesting against a play which is to be staged on the Day of the Sacred Heart and the Virgin Mary. It is a sacrilegious and pornographic play, which mocks the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ, who is the Saviour of all, even those who demean him. We don’t want to let that happen. Bogdan Freytag announced that on the day of the play the Poznań Patriotic Association intends to organise protests in front of Zamek. “Many patriots will come to Poznań’s rescue”, says Freytag. “The members of the Rosary Crusade from

various cities have already declared their arrival. We were assured that we will be joined by football fans from Śląsk Wrocław, Lechia Gdańsk, Polonia Piła, and the members of the National Front and the Law and Justice party". No one from the magistrature talked to the protesters. Rafał Łopka from the press office commented on the situation: "We are not the ones organising the play; we are not financing it from the city budget. Thankfully, preventative censorship is not used in Poland. Let's wait for the play."

<http://www.gloswielkopolski.pl/artykul/3463951,malta-festival-poznan-nabozenstwo-protestacyjne-przeciwko-spektaklowi-zdjecia,id,t.html>

Statements made by Bogdan Freytag at the picket

Bogdan Freytag, onet.pl

"The policy of this anti-Polish government is set to destroy the Church, although the members of this government sit in the first pews in the Church. They are devils, they are wolves in sheep's clothing."

Bogdan Freytag, TVN

"Archangel Michael thrust Satan to hell, he did not ask him: Dear Lucifer, please go to hell."



14 days to the cancellation — 21 days to the planned

6 June 2014

Anna Kołakowska, a representative of the Rosary Crusade for the Fatherland, announced the formation of a protest group called Catholic Confederation. "Let us stand in defence of the holy faith, so that later you will be able to look your children and grand-children in the eye, and when your time comes, so that you can stand in front of the Holy Father with the humility and trust of a Child of God", she appealed.

In a letter to Michał Merczyński, the director of Malta Festival Poznań 2014, Kołakowska wrote that thousands of Poles accuse him not only of offending religious feelings, but also of instigating religious hatred. "In connection with the scheduled performance of the play *Golgota Picnic*, we wish to inform you that we will do everything to prevent it (...) If you wish to shock, we assure you that you will be one to have a shock when you see the crowd of determined Catholics in front of CK Zamek on the days of the performance, who came from all over Poland to defend their faith! We will come to Poznań from all over Poland to prevent the performance from happening!"



12 days to the cancellation — 19 days to the planned performance

8 June 2014

In the daily “Rzeczpospolita” Jakub Paca asks: *How many souls will be healed by Golgota Picnic?* The author refers to Aristotle and flagship examples of American culture wars during the Reagan administration.

Jakub Pac

How many souls will be healed by „Golgota Picnic”?

“Provocation may be a certain form of artistic expression. However, it requires sharp intelligence to make the scandal not play on the basest of emotions, but rather initiate an Aristotelian catharsis in the audience.

The Spanish-Argentinean play does not transcend beyond the first level. It is a typical play servile to the progress of contemporary times. Ridiculing the cruel death of an ordinary person is perceived by the majority of civilised society as an expression of barbarism. Not to mention scoffing the Passion of Christ, which has been an unremitting source of the deepest, most personal and most vulnerable religious experiences for Christians, many of whom died as martyrs, thus becoming witnesses of the redemptive sacrifice of Golgota. How to treat *Golgota Picnic*, the play by Argentinean writer Rodrigo García in this context? Art is supposed to shape moral sensitivity. Symbols presented in plays are to broaden the world, imagination, sensitivity,

create new values and supplement aesthetic experience. Aristotle ascribed it cleansing properties. According to him art tamed atavistic drives, exposed unhealthy instincts, removed the excess of negative emotions and neutralised aggression. The audience underwent a form of “soul healing”, resolution of internal conflicts and assurances of psychological balance. How many souls will be so treated by the Spanish and Argentinean artists? What elements of human sensitivity were touched by García’s play? *Golgota Picnic* is a string of invectives hurled at Christ with elements of pornography, clichéd communications against Catholic tradition, sprinkled with the topic of paedophilia among the clergy. So much for quality didactics. No positive communication. If someone is looking for some fresh ammo against the Church, they will find nothing new. It is too shallow, schematic, banal and obvious. I wonder if Aristotle would last until the end of the play (...).” One could argue that requiring the ennoblement of soul from art and assigning it didactic duties is a naive and dated approach. Contemporary art should be a voice of dissent. Scandal is used to bear human faults and hypocrisy in daily life. Familiarising the audience with the profane, is to broaden the sphere of freedom. Provocation may be a certain form of artistic expression. However, it requires sharp intelligence to make a scandal not play on the basest of emotions, but rather initiate an Aristotelian catharsis in the audience. The Spanish-Argentinean play does not transcend beyond the first level. In the times when Christianity was degraded on every level, mocked and trampled upon, *Golgota Picnic* does not bring anything new, but rather fits in with playing with faeces and the cross, as seen in Andreas Serrano’s *Piss Chris* or smearing mud and pulling pieces of paper from one’s vagina as

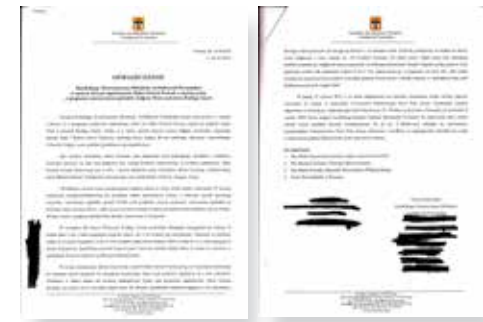
performed by Carolee Schneemann. What new things can you come up with? Breaking in through open doors is hardly every real artist's dream. The creators of *Golgota Picnic* clearly decided that primitive obscenity is a guarantee for success and have given up on any sort of originality. The ease with which they attribute stereotypes is demeaning. But let us assume that the play staged at Malta festival will reveal something, "catch" the Church out on something, accuse, stir the audiences to reinterpret the world. And what next? Will the symbolic transgression beyond the sphere of obedience help them find themselves and face up to the most pressing questions? Will the offered information help them in moments of existential suspension, will it serve as a cultural resource to draw on as if from a vault of treasures? Where is the audience to go? Any proposals? Of course the artists will say that they respect individual choices and that they do not impose any interpretation. It is up to the individual to work through the questions the director posed for him or her. The problem is that an infantile caricature of the Passion of Christ combined with obscenity has in no respect the ability to build something positive. An attempt to crush metaphysics in this brutal way offers no foundations for a constructive vision of the world. Rather, it is a part of the unrelenting tendency to damage people. A typical serf to progress in the modern world. After all, the main task of this play is deconstruction. It shatters the old rules and offers no proposal of what should come after."



10 days to the cancellation — 17 days to the planned performance

10 June 2014

The protest was joined by many organisations. Separate letters were sent by the Catholic Youth Association of the Poznań Archdiocese, All-Polish Youth, President Lech Kaczyński Academic Citizens' Club, Don Bosco Academic Ministry, Catholic Doctors Association, Polish Society of Landed Gentry and the Poznań Stare Miasto Estate Council.



A Statement

**Catholic Youth Association of Poznań Diocese
Regarding the decision of Malta Festival organizers
to include *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García in the
programme of the Festival**



The Board of the Catholic Youth Association of Poznań Diocese wants to object to the fact that the programme of a cultural event such as Malta Festival Poznań includes a performance

of *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García. This play blatantly offends the religious feelings of Christians when it distorts the story of Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, insults the cross, which for us is a symbol of redemption and includes scenes that can be compared to pornographic productions in the history of Golgota.

As Catholics, citizens of Poznań and cultural animators working with adolescents and students, we want to raise our objection to the fact that initiatives of this kind are a part of a state-founded festival. Malta Festival Poznań is in 50% financed from donation granted by Mayor of Poznań, it is co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and state-owned companies (Aquanet, Enea).

We also want to express our concern with the lack of reaction from the city council and local authorities. We believe that ignoring the voice of the citizens who are clearly against this performance (the petition demanding banning the performance was signed by over 54 400 people, there was a picket in front of a City Hall on June 6, the Catholic movements and members of the Parliament expressed their concern) would be irresponsible. Therefore we ask you to take any actions and intervene.

In his interview for "Gazeta Wyborcza" Rodrigo García said: "The iconography of the crucifixion is terrifying. I try to describe it with my specific sense of humour, so it wouldn't sound so pretentious. I invited a theologian to work with me on this project, but soon he resigned, he couldn't understand my point of view. Still I think my proposition is very Christian". The specific sense of humour of Mr García does not change the fact that his performance is a blatant and public blasphemy.

Michał Merczyński and Malta Festival Team wrote in their statement that the role of an art festival is to touch on the

essential issues that are key to understanding modern world with all its complexity. We completely agree. But we cannot accept the form offered by the organisers. If neither the festival, nor the artist intend to hurt anyone's feelings or offend anyone religious beliefs then we don't understand why do you insist on showing the performance. There is a reasonable suspicion that it will violate paragraph 196 of the Penal Code: Whoever offends the religious feelings of the others by insulting publicly an object of religious cult or a place of a religious cult can be sentenced to a fine or prison up to 2 years. Wasn't including the performance in the festival programme simply an endeavour to get the media's attention to the festival through this controversial and scandalous choice? What didactical value is *Golgota Picnic* supposed to have?

On Friday, June 27, the date of the first planned performance, we would like to invite everyone to celebrate the Ceremony of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Eucharist will take place in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Florian's Church (Poznań, Kościelna 5) at 6 pm. The archbishop of Poznań, Stanisław Gądecki, will give a sermon. After the holy mass, a procession will march through the streets of Poznań. A redemptive ceremony for the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be held at Adam Mickiewicz Square, together with prayers for the organizers of the scandalous performance to refrain from the blasphemy that is its part.

Courtesy Copies:

Michał Merczyński, Director
of Malta Festival Poznań 2014
Ryszard Grobelny, the Mayor of Poznań
Marek Woźniak, Voivodship Marshall
The Diocese of Poznań




Open Letter

**Michał Merczyński,
Director of Malta Festival Poznań**

Dear Sir,

” We are a group of young nationalist activists, who recognize the leading role of the Church in the development of our nation and civilization. The community united by the faith in the Son of God was the basic idea that shaped our modern world. We owe to it some great philosophical concepts (i.e. Scholasticism and Thomism), basic ideas that organize our social functioning in accordance to the justice principle (modern tribunals that guarantee a fair trial and respect the rights of the accused), strengthening the basic social cell – family (a marriage can't be dismissed) and the support it gave us during the darkest years of our history (The Partitions of Poland, so called 'real socialism', etc.). These are just few of many great works fulfilled to secure men's place in God's Kingdom, that could have never happened if it wasn't for an honest faith and love for Jesus Christ.

This is why we were deeply hurt by the notion that Rodrigo García's *Golgota Picnic* was included in the programme of the art festival that you organize. It disturbs the reverence and sanctity of our celebration of the death of the Messiah. The blasphemous means of expression chosen by the director are unacceptable.

The material aspect of this issue concerns the fact that Malta Festival is an event donated by an institution subject to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, which means the money comes from the taxpayers, who in our country are 88,5% Christian. Do you recon Poles want to pay for showing a play aimed at the holiness of the Saviour?

Surely, we do not and we demand from you to remove the performance from the programme of the festival. If not, we inform you that we will protest not only against the performance, but also against your leadership over this cultural event. We appeal to you: do not turn the biggest event of this kind, happening in the capitol of Greater Poland, into an anti-Christian mob. You have just a little less than three weeks to protect the festival, which can actually go quite smoothly, from being discredited.

Respectfully,

Młodzież Wszechpolska Poznań



3 days to the cancellation — 10 days to the planned performance

17 June 2014

The Youth Crusade organised a demonstration in front of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage as an expression of protest against financing the “blasphemous plays” from public funds. “The Ministry of Culture funds offending God and offending and ridiculing of the Passion Christ from our money”, says Krystian Kratiuk from Polonia Christiana. He also added that even the title of the play is blasphemous. Also the director and documentary film-maker Grzegorz Braun spoke out: “We expect a system change. What system change. Well, a change so that you can have a child here, send it to school, raise it, without risking that it will be subjected to intellectual abuse, to spiritual attacks at this school, cinema or theatre (...) Let Poland be a safe country, free from depravation, free from public promotion of deviation, free from the state’s engagement in the promotion of depravation.”



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4G1qYADeuw>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KPvtywEqHbA>



3 days to the cancellation — 10 days to the planned performance

The Rosary Crusade Internet site regularly extended the post about *Gogłota Picnic*:

Prayer and Action! Stop offending God! We are blocking the sacrilegious theatre play! Let’s go to Poznań!



Information on how to “protest and block hatred” provided by the Rosary Crusade website

”Below is a short introduction to a nation-wide protest and blockade on hatred:

On 27-28.06.2014 in Poznań at 21.00, at the hour of Apel Jasnogórski, the blasphemous play *Golota Picnic* will be staged during a theatre festival. It is a particularly hateful event, presenting our Saviour as a degenerate, egoist, responsible for all the evil in the world. The play is full of lecherous scenes and Our Lord Jesus is addressed in vulgarities many times. The actors performing naked

mock the Passion of Christ and the whole thing is saturated with pornographic references to the Scripture. As Catholics we cannot allow this blasphemy, we must oppose this evil destroying our society like a cancerous disease. We summon everyone to protest actively, we cannot be silent! Please come to Poznań on the day of the play at 19.00 to Centrum Kultury Zamek (ul. św. Marcin 80/82), there must be as many of us as there were in France and Spain. We will stand arm and arm and will not allow a situation in which God, His Cross and Scripture – which is most sacred for us – are slandered in our Fatherland. We will end another anti-Catholic chutzpah paid for from our taxes, the taxes paid by Catholics. Evil feeds on the passivity or cowardice of good people. (...) Stand up in defence of the holy faith, so that later you will be able to look your children and grand-children in the eye, and when your time comes so that you can stand humble and trustful before the Holy Father, whose Son you confessed before in your earthly life and whose honour you protected publicly with your whole self, defending him against the insults and abuse of your godless contemporaries.

You will find information about the pseudo-play and the tickets on www.malta-festival.pl (to enter inside and conduct an active protest you will have to buy a ticket, those not able or willing to do that will pray with the priests outside).

Let's stand in defence of our faith! Please buy tickets for two dates (27 and 28 June), to the play *Golgota Picnic*. They will not grow richer on our money, because for them it is like a drop in the ocean. We, however, have to be inside to prevent the staging of the play. No to scenes offending God and our faith – we will not allow it!!! Our presence is needed not only inside the theatre, but also in front of it (outside)."

Planned protests

Protests planned directly before and during the performances of *Golgota Picnic* in Poznań. Fragments of information made available by the Citizen Affairs Department of the Poznań Municipal Office.

1
 ”An assembly planned by Mr Bogdan Freitag for 24 June 2014 in front of the Voivodship Police Headquarters in Poznań, ul. Kochanowskiego (planned number of attendants app. 20), to appeal to the police to act honourably during the public assemblies on 27 and 28 June, was subsequently cancelled by the organiser on 23 June 2014 after the announcement of the cancellation of the performance of *Golgota Picnic*.”

2.
 “27 June 2014, a planned public assembly from 18:00 to 24:00 in front of Centrum Kultury Zamek organised by Mr Urban Dybowski, the aim of which is to oppose the godless, blasphemous play *Golgota Picnic*, which promotes religious hatred, offending God, the Virgin Mary the Queen of Poland, and the religious feelings of Catholics, planned number of people 50,000 – the assembly took place from 18:00 to 22:00, 500 people took part.

The organiser Urban Dybowski asked the municipal authorities to ensure the safety of the participants, and declared the participation of security services dressed in high visibility vests, however, these services were not provided, because the play was cancelled. The safety of the participants was ensured by numerous Police units

and a representative delegation of the municipal authority.”

3.

“28 June 2014, a public assembly planned from 18:00 to 24:00 beside Centrum Kultury Zamek organised by Mr Urban Dybowski, the aim of which is to oppose the godless, blasphemous play *Golgota Picnic*, which promotes religious hatred, offending God, the Virgin Mary Queen of Poland, and the religious feelings of Catholics, planned number of people 50,000 – was cancelled by telephone by the organiser on 28.06.2014 before 18.00. The safety of the assembled was to be ensured by numerous Police officers and a representative delegation of the municipal authority.”

4.

“The planned assemblies organised by the Foundation of St Benedict, the aim of which was to oppose the staging of *Golgota Picnic* during Malta Festival Poznań 2014, planned on: 24 June 2014 at 8.30 – 12.00 in front of Poznań Municipal Office on Plac Kolegiacki (planned number of attendants app. 200) and on 27 and 28 June in front of Centrum Kultury Zamek, ul. Św. Marcin, at 20.30 – 22.30 (planned number of attendants app. 500 people) were cancelled by the organiser on 23 June 2014 after the announcement of the cancellation of the performance of *Golgota Picnic*. In his notifications the organiser did not specify the means of ensuring the peaceful proceeding of the assembly, which he had requested from the municipal authority.”

— BISHOPS

With the Church hierarchy issuing statements regarding *Golgota Picnic*, the protest gained leaders that had authority and media influence. Their stance expressly influenced the activeness of other parties – especially the outraged and the politicians.



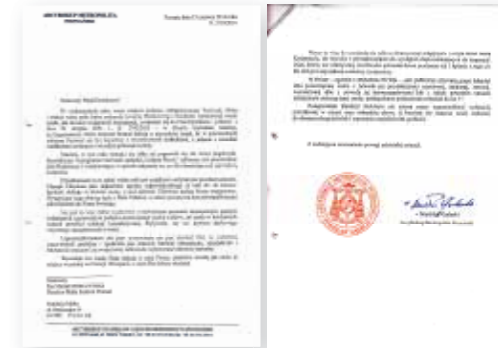
7 days to the cancellation — 14 days to the planned performance

The letter from Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki

13 June 2014

The letter from Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki was the result of an Internet petition and the correspondence sent to Catholic and patriotic organisations. The archbishop states in it that in the case of *Golgota Picnic*, we “are dealing with not only an offence of religious feelings, protected by our Constitution, but also a provocation to protests driving people to desperation”. The Archbishop referred here to Article 257 of the Penal Code. However, the Church did not lodge any formal report to the prosecutor regarding this matter.

The letter was significant because the Archbishop is also the resident of the Polish Episcopal Conference.



Mr Michał Merczyński
Director of Malta Festival Poznań

Dear Sir!

” After the events that happened during the last edition of Malta Festival Poznań and in following the reactions of many of those who complained about the blasphemous character and vulgar staging of one of the performances, I addressed you in writing – a document from 26 August 2013, N. 3742/2013 – to express my hopes that the organizers of Malta Festival Poznań would by all means ensure that the Festival wouldn’t be associated with obscenity, but solely with a wide spectrum of high-culture events.

Regrettably, the situation this year not only shows no progress, but is actually even worse. The performance of *Golgota Picnic*, which is supposed to be a part of the Festival, is in common opinion a blasphemy, a coarse mockery of something that Christians consider the greatest sanctity.

This performance is commonly considered an exceptionally vulgar project. It presents Christ as a degenerate, an egoist, responsible for all the evil in the world. The performance is full of lustful scenes and Christ is an object of numerous vulgarisms. Naked actors deride the Passion of the Christ and the whole thing is loaded with pornographic references to the Holy Bible.

This is in no way an event of a high artistic value targeted at a conscious audience, ready to take a cognitive risk. Neither it is an example of a critical humanistic reflexion that is recently so rare, nor an attitude based on spiritual and ethical involvement in the world.

The decision to show *Golgota Picnic* cannot be justified by the fact that the everyday realities of the media and society are far more obscene, scandalous and hurtful than this artificial and, in the very essence completely created, theatrical event. You know the reaction that the performance causes throughout Poland, just the same as it did before in France and Spain, a fact that you were well aware of.

We are therefore dealing not only with the offending of religious feeling mentioned in our Constitution, but also with a provocation aimed at desperate people who see no other possibility than to take some actions to finally put an end to being humiliated, and enduring mockery at the things which for them are most valued and sacred.

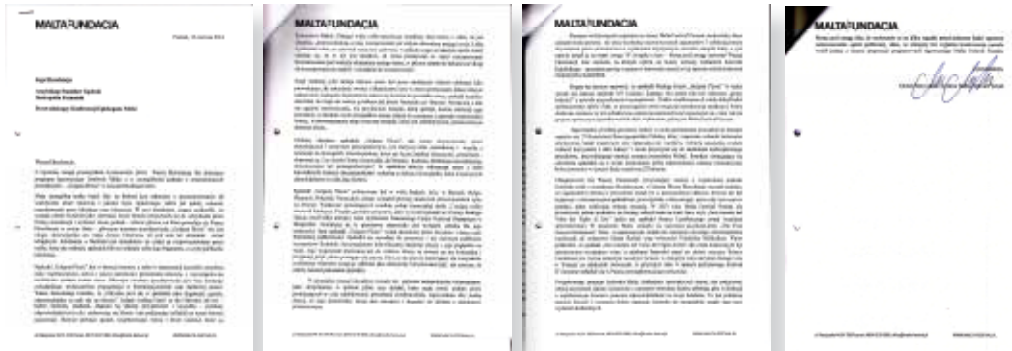
According to the Polish Penal Code, paragraph 257 – “whoever publicly insults a group of people or a specific person because of their nationality, ethnicity, race, religion or lack of religion or whoever violates another person inviolability because of these reasons, can be sentence for prison up to 3 years”.

Therefore the right to artistic exploration and freedom of speech cannot excuse the conduct of the Festival Directors,

since none of these rights are equivalent with the right to insult and violate the dignity of others.

With hope that you will understand the gravity of the current situation,

+ Stanisław Gądecki
The Archbishop of the Poznań Diocese



13 June 2014

Stanisław Gądecki
Archbishop of Poznań
President of the Polish Episcopal Conference

Your Excellency,

“ I have read with great attention Your Excellency’s letter concerning the programme of this year’s Malta Festival, especially of one of the presented shows – *Golgota Picnic* directed by Rodrigo García.

I am particularly concerned about the fact that the festival is accused of betraying the values that determine the quality of social life, such as peace, freedom, respecting the rights of fellow men and tolerance. In this context, I wish to underscore that I respect the opinion of the Church as an institution that contributed substantially to Poland regaining democracy and freedom of speech, however – contrary to the views Your Excellency refers to in the letter – the main theme of the show *Golgota Picnic* is not the Christian

religion or the Passion, neither is it the offending of religious feelings. Information about the blasphemous character of the show is being disseminated by people who have not seen the show or saw only the fragments which were published in public.

In the intention of the director and according to critics’ interpretations, the show *Golgota Picnic* is a metaphor for the ordeal of modernity, it speaks about our loneliness, fear of death and the exhausted possibilities of attaching any meaning to the world. Thus, the main subject of the show is the condition of European society immersed in consumerism and in a spiritual void. Your Excellency maintains that “in the show Christ appears as a degenerate, egoist, responsible for all evil in the world”. However, according to García it is not Christ, but we – people from the West, bored and focused on our pleasures and comfort – that are responsible for this evil, due to our passivity and lack of reflection on our own existence. The director condemns the decay of the modern world and defends the values that are dear to the Church. That is why many people call him a moralist. He says about himself that he is an idealist: “I am an idealist and so disappointment is a permanent element of my life. I like to imagine that man can be wonderful and as a result, every time that it turns out that it is impossible, I experience the same disappointment all over again. Disappointment is an important element of my theatre in which I attempt to show the path from disappointment to hope, and from hope to disappointment.”

The director’s theatrical language may be considered provocative by some viewers, but it is my conviction that accusing the creator of blasphemy is a significant exaggeration. In fact, blasphemy refers to the realm of faith, while a theatrical show does not, just like a work of literature or

film. One can disagree with the director on the merits, reject his aesthetics or message, but in all of these cases we deal with the original voice of the creator, with an artificial situation created by him which is a subjective, processed image of the world.

The physical character of *Golgota Picnic* which is so often referred to by the protesters and called pornographic, is factually justified and is a consequence of the references to Christian iconography, which does not hide human physicality, but quite the opposite – exhibits it. Would we call the works of Giotto, Grünewald's, da Messina, Rubens or Bellini obscene or pornographic? In the show the actors reconstruct scenes from the works of the greatest Christian painters and engage in a dialogue with the iconography which has been part of Christianity throughout its whole history.

The show *Golgota Picnic* has been shown in many countries, including Brazil, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany, but it only triggered protests by Christian circles in France. The majority of the protesters (according to the French police ca. 2 thousand people) were Lefebvrists. Furthermore, despite the protests triggered by the show in France, a few months ago Rodrigo García became the director of the French Centre National Dramatique in Montpellier. The nomination to this prestigious position expressed recognition for his works. The show *Golgota Picnic* was appreciated by critics and a large part of the French audience. The show does not solicit violence and does not publically insult the believers of the Church. It is an instance of the artist's personal expression and a manifestation of his outlook on the world. His statement is addressed to viewers who are open to this message and accept the language the artist employs. The fact that it is not of interest to every-

one, and that some viewers could perceive it as offensive or provocative, does not mean that its presentation should be banned.

In the present circumstances I would also like to express my deep concern about the information that we receive concerning the protesters' pickets and actions aiming at blocking the presentation of the show. The declared actions raise fears that the show's adversaries may be overcome by emotion and commit acts of a violent character.

Despite repeated explanations on the part of Malta Festival Poznań, the circles that inspired the protests do not want to listen to factual arguments and deprive other citizens of the right to participate in an artistic event which they have bought tickets to and, hence, which they regarded as worthy of their attention. In view of that – taking into consideration Your Excellency's authority and the values which underlie the strong moral foundation of the Catholic Church – I kindly request your help in toning down emotions concerning this matter in the circles related to the Church.

I wish to assure you once again that Rodrigo García's show *Golgota Picnic* in no way violates Article 257 of the Polish Penal Code. On stage no one insults a "group of population" due to their religious affiliation. Contemporary art has kindled polarized opinions for centuries. The fact that particular persons may not accept the message or form of the piece of art does not mean that their subjective opinion is to prevent other groups of society from getting to know it – or to hinder a large event such as Malta Festival Poznań.

The declared course of the protests will, it is my conviction, lead to a violation of Article 73 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland which ensures "the freedom of artistic creation and scientific research as well as dissemination of the fruits thereof, the freedom to teach and to enjoy

the products of culture” and can be conducive to setting a dangerous precedent reminiscent of Poland’s grim past. It is my conviction that the demands to cancel the show are an attempt to reintroduce the preventative censorship that was used in our country for the last time 25 years ago.

I read with great attention Your Excellency’s letter last year raising accusations that the festival presents shows of a blasphemous character in which Your Excellency expressed hope that the organizers would spare no efforts in the future so that the popular image of the festival is not associated with obscene shows. In fact, in 2013, Malta Festival Poznań did not present the show which the letter referred to, namely *Sul concetto del Volto del Figlio di Dio* (only this show of Romeo Castellucci was protested against earlier). In turn, the programme of Malta included the show *The Four Seasons Restaurant* which does not refer to the Christian religion in the slightest degree (it refers to Mark Rothko’s paintings and Friedrich Hölderlin’s works). It is worth accentuating that the show *Sul concetto del Volto del Figlio di Dio* appeared as an artistic profession of faith to many clergymen, and the French episcopate backed up the director. Romeo Castellucci is a highly valued artist all around the world, last year he received the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement in Venice and next year a retrospective on his work will take place during the prestigious Festival D’Automne in Paris.

In preparing the programme of Malta festival we spare no effort to show the highest quality art and to work with renowned artists who take a stance in the discussion on the contemporary world and take responsibility for their actions. This is the foundation of our decisions and it determines the good reputation of the festival in the European map of similar cultural events.

Taking into consideration the fact that a few weeks before the show’s presentation, the event has generated great interest in the public opinion, I believe that this letter explains the controversy around only one of three hundred positions in the programme of this year’s Malta Festival Poznań.

Yours sincerely,

Michał Merczyński,
director of Malta Festival Poznań



6 days to the cancellation — 13 days to the planned performance

14 June 2014

The matter is taken up by the bishop of Włocławek, Wiesław Mering, the head of the Polish Episcopate's Board for Culture and the Protection of the Cultural Heritage. In a letter to his flock the bishop "appeals for wise decisions by all those who cherish our Polish culture, and who decide about the financial resources enabling the staging of *Golgota Picnic!*".

Dear Members of Włocławek Diocese Congregation!

I was deeply concerned to receive the news about the performance *Golgota Picnic*. The play is a subsequent attempt to mock and scoff at the most sacred values of Christianity: the Passion of Christ described in the Gospel. This attempt is particularly hurtful in the context of our preparation for the 1050 anniversary of the Baptism of Poland: the same land of Greater Poland, where that historical act happened, is now supposed to be a place of a blasphemous performance.

The incoherent attempts to present the meaning of R. García's "masterpiece" may convince some of the audience of popular magazines and television channels.

This disregard for the sensitivity of others is striking: we see it in social, political and – unceasingly – cultural spheres. It is hard to understand why these are particularly – and solely! – the sacred values of Christianity that become the targets of continuous experiments. It would seem that

culture, art, theatre should particularly reach for the topics that, even if they address human dirt and misery, suggest wise solutions and teach tolerance, which leads us to good, instead of instigating and mocking of the sacred.

Alongside hundreds of thousands of members of the Włocławek Diocese, the Diocese of Lord Servant Cardinal Wyszyński, of Saint Sister Faustyna and Saint Father Maksymilian, I want to express my strong protest and objection toward this blatant blasphemy. At the same time I want to express my gratitude to everyone, especially lay Catholics, who have organised massive protest actions against the demeaning of Christ and Christianity in our Motherland! Nobody shall remain silent, because it can be rightly understood as a sign of consent and indifference towards evil! I call upon everyone who appreciates our Polish culture, and who decide upon the funds which have allowed the staging of *Golgota Picnic*, to make a wise decision!

I want to thank all the Catholic press for their involvement in this case!

+ Wiesław Mering
The Bishop of Włocławek
The Head of THE Polish Episcopate's Board for Culture
and The Protection of Cultural Heritage



3 days to the cancellation — **10 days** to the planned performance

17 June 2014

In a TV interview registered on 17th June 2014 the Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki explicitly states what could make presentation of the play impossible:

“The only form which would cut the matter short and finish off the play would be a nationwide protest threatening unrest. The police could not allow that”.



<http://www.tvn24.pl/poznan,43/arcybiskup-nawoluje-do-protestu-prezydent-boi-sie-zamieszek-zamieszanie-wokol-golgota-picnic,441069.html>
<http://fakty.tvn24.pl/aktualnosci,59/sztuka-odwazna-czy-obrazoburcza-protesty-przeciw-golgota-picnic,440982.html>



1 day to the cancellation — **8 days** to the planned performance

19 June 2014

19th June, during the celebrations of Corpus Christi, four bishops referred to *Golgota Picnic* in their sermons.

**Archbishop
Sławoj Leszek Głódź**

**Archbishop
Stanisław Gądecki**

**Archbishop
Wacław Depo**

**Bishop
Stanisław Napierała**



“Christ is presented in this play in a blasphemous manner. In the name of freedom of speech and the misused idea of tolerance, which often becomes a synonym of modernity and progress. But in this case Article 257 of the Penal Code is broken, which stipulates that whoever publicly insults the values, rules and dignity of another human being shall be subject to a penalty. That is why it should be said clearly: zero tolerance for blasphemy. We cannot allow the ridicule and mockery of what is sacred and dear to millions of Polish Catholics”.

**Metropolitan Archbishop of Gdańsk
Sławoj Leszek Głódź**

Gdańsk

The metropolitan Archbishop of Gdańsk lead the celebration of Corpus Christi, which began with a mass in Bazylika Mariacka. After the Eucharist there was a procession through the streets of the Old and Main Town attended by several thousand people. Figures such as the Archbishop Senior Tadeusz Gocłowski, Bishop Wiesław Szlachetka, the Mayor of Gdańsk Paweł Adamowicz and the parliamentarians and representatives of local authorities attended the celebrations.

“Apart from the life-giving nourishment of the Eucharist, we are also offered another kind of foodstuff which brings destruction, not only to our earthly lives, but also our eternal existence. [...] Blasphemous plays are an example of such poisonous food, vulgarly ridiculing our Saviour, mocking the cross, which is the symbol of all kinds of suffering, the Golgota of the East, Pawiak prison, Fort VII. [...] Maybe it is just about building one’s image on a scandal, which is a common method of existence in an entertainment business which pretends to be art, a way to draw attention to oneself by encroaching on people’s rights, such as religious feelings.”

**Metropolitan Archbishop of Poznań
Stanisław Gądecki**

Poznań

The Poznan Eucharistic procession set off from the Sanctuary of Corpus Christi and proceeded to the cathedral. It was attended by newly ordained priests who were introduced to the archdiocese by Archbishop Gądecki. Apart from the numerous priests, nuns and friars, clerics, members of the order of Malta, university lecturers, the colourfully dressed Bambrzy and scouts, the procession was also traditionally attended by the Mayor of Poznań Ryszard Grobelny and his wife.

“The play *Golgota Picnic* which is included in the festival programme is widely perceived as blasphemous and vulgarly ridiculing what is most sacred to Christians. It shows Christ as a degenerate, an egoist, responsible for all the evil in the world. The play is full of lecherous scenes; vulgarisms are thrown at Christ repeatedly. The actors performing naked scoff at the Passion of Christ, and it is all saturated in pornographic references to the Scripture.”

**Metropolitan Archbishop
of Częstochowa Wacław Depo**

Częstochowa

The Eucharistic procession walked the streets of Częstochowa from Jasna Góra to the Archcathedral of the Holy Family. It was preceded with a Mass celebrated by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Częstochowa on Jasna Góra.

“Despite many protests the play is to be staged for considerable public funds coming from the City of Poznań and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. It is to be staged in the name of artistic freedom. Freedom does not mean the right to do anything with impunity. Freedom means the ability to do good which marks human beings. Freedom is not the right to satanically maltreat the crucified Jesus, it is not the right to hurl blasphemy against God, it is not the right to offend religious feelings and trample on the dignity of believers”.

**Retired bishop of Kalisz,
Stanisław Napierała**

Ostrów Wielkopolski

At the end of the Mass, there was a traditional renewal of the act of offering the town to the Sacred Heart by the representative of the Town Council Jarosław Lisiecki, which was an act originally passed by the Town Council in 1934.

— POLITICIANS

The social protest inspired by Catholic circles was quickly reclaimed by the politicians. Their activity – especially at a local level – was intensified by the upcoming local elections. In June there was just 6 months to the elections planned in November 2014. The case of *Golgota Picnic* was therefore included in the opening of political campaigns. The protests did not, however, become an object of political games at the top level. The most important politicians, such as party leaders or leaders of parliamentary clubs, haven't spoken out about the performance.



22 days to the cancellation — 29 days to the planned performance

29 may 2015

Senator Jan Filip Libicki of Platforma Obywatelska shared a very negative opinion about the planned staging of *Golgota Picnic*. At the same time he suggested that those politicians who spoke in favour of the performance would do so without the support of their electorate. As a result he grimly declared:

“I can only hope that the same tendency will manifest itself in the upcoming local elections. I give director Merczyński my promise that I will do everything I can to keep it that way. And if it stays that way, then the next members of the City Council will surely examine the repertoire of Malta Festival 2015 very thoroughly. And they will do that before the Culture Unit decision concerning granting funds to the festival.”

Post on the blog of Senator Libicki.

Malta Festival's Recidivism

“It would seem that with age director Merczyński would naturally develop more sensitivity towards other people's feelings. As anyone can see for themselves, this is not what has happened. Even the prayers of the Clarisses have not helped. In that case the only sensitivity we can count on seems to be the sensitivity to the budget for next year's Festival ...”.

The upcoming edition of Malta Festival Poznań starts this June. This Festival has been swallowing a huge majority of the municipal budget for culture. In practical terms it

doesn't leave any chance for the small, often valuable, initiatives.

I can remember how many people felt offended when the Festival first started over 20 years ago. It was offensive by its obscenity, situated on the verge of blasphemy. By pseudo-artistic provocations and a wrongly understood freedom of artistic expression. Somehow the majority of the controversies happened to concern Christianity. It was usually Christians that felt offended by the performances presented at the Festival.

In the following years, the issues around the Festival became less vivid. It seemed that its creator and director – who until today remains Michał Merczyński – had matured. That he had given up these provocations. I remember myself how one time he wanted to bring Saint Clara's sisters some eggs and ask them to pray for good weather at the Festival. It seemed that there were no more issues. Unfortunately, it only seemed that way...

And here we are – the upcoming edition of the Festival, 27 and 28 of June 2014, includes a play by Argentinian playwright Rodrigo García titled *Golgota Picnic*.

I haven't seen the play. But it is enough to read its description on the Festival webpage, to learn that the organizers themselves called it “obscene”. It's enough to type the title into Google's search engine to learn that it has caused protests by Catholic circles in France. I refer you to the Festival webpage (<http://malta-festival.pl/pl/program/rodrigo-garcia-golgota-picnic>)

It seems that in these 20 years, director Merczyński has not matured at all. He didn't grow out of the adolescent fascination with obscenity on the verge of blasphemy. Simply, for some reason – probably tactical – he had decided to tone down the obscenity for some time. Today, he presents

it again. He commits a certain – festival – kind of recidivism. It would seem that with age director Merczyński would naturally develop more sensitivity towards other people's feelings. As anyone can see for themselves, this is not what has happened. Even the prayers of the Clarisses have not helped. In that case the only sensitivity we can count on seems to be the sensitivity to the budget for next year's Festival ...

His sensitivity should have had increased after the last elections, which proved that the patrons of this specific type of art are not that much appreciated by the Poles. Well... I can only hope that the same tendency will manifest itself in the upcoming local elections. I give director Merczyński my promise that I will do everything I can to keep it that way. And if it stays that way, then the next members of the City Council will surely examine the repertoire of Malta Festival 2015 very thoroughly. And they will do that before the Culture Unit decision concerning granting funds to the festival.

One a final note. I don't know if Vice Mayor Dariusz Jaworski, who in City Hall is responsible for Culture, had seen the programme of the Festival that seized almost the whole budget of his unit. If he wasn't aware of it, I just hope his reaction to this fact will be as strong as the one he once presented in relation to the excess of Ewa Wójciak – Pałikot's wannabe Euro-deputy. Not showing a strong reaction would be a truly surprising lack of consequence in his behaviour.

„Plusy i Minusy Jana Filipa Libickiego”, blog senatora J.F. Libickiego na portalu Salon24.pl, wpis z 29.05 g. 07:39
<http://jflibicki.salon24.pl/586985,recydywa-festiwalu-malta>

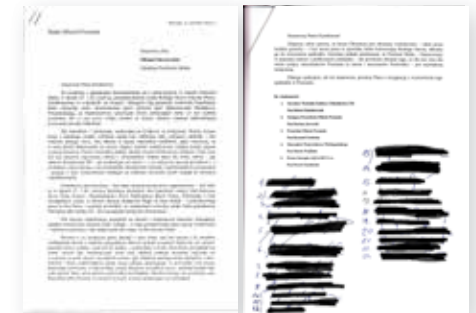


16 days to the cancellation — 23 days to the planned performance

Letter from Poznań City Council Members

4 June 2014

The members of Poznań City Council appealed to the Director of Malta Festival to not present *Golgota Picnic*. Out of 40 members of the City Council, 23 signed the letter: 8 members of Platforma Obywatelska, 7 members of Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 7 members of the Poznań Citizens' Movement plus one other. It should be explained that councillor Ryszard F. Grobelny, whose signature can be found on the letter, shares the same name as the Mayor of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny.



Michał Merczyński
 Director of Malta Festival Poznań



We were sad and concerned to learn about the planned performances of Rodrigo García's *Golgota Picnic*, which are supposed to happen on June 27 and 28 as a part of Malta Festival Poznań. This performance has already raised waves

of protest in France and Spain, where Catholic circles found the content presented by the director to be clearly blasphemous. Since blasphemy means “words that are insulting towards something that is commonly respected or considered sacred in some religion”, we want to point out the most important reason for our concern.

For Catholics and Christians, the events that happened on Golgota are sacred. The death of Christ, which from a layman’s point of view could be considered a shocking spectacle, to us is the central point of our lives. It is present in our everyday prayers, because we believe that that particular moment was an act of metaphysical origin and the things that happened there are beyond time and reality. Most of all though, for us the death of Jesus Christ on Golgota was, and still is, the image of the greatest love and mercy. Even for people, who – as the Polish Constitution states – “while not sharing this belief (...) are still grateful to our ancestors (...) for the culture, rooted in the National Christian heritage, and its universal values” – the memory of those events deserve protection, at the very least for the sake of their fellow citizens’ feelings.

An additional circumstance – that might have not been noticed by the organizers – is the fact that June 27 and 28 are the days of two Catholic holidays: *The Sacred Heart of Lord Jesus* and *The Sacred Heart of Virgin Mary*. Remembering about this special time, when we want to thank God for his love, symbolized by these two Hearts, we have to say that choosing these days to present a play which portrays Jesus as the source of evil is a particularly hurtful dissonance.

We do not want marches, protests on the streets or the throwing of accusations. We respect the differences between individual sensitivities. Still, in the name of respect-

ing our sensitivity as well, we have to ask you not to mock something that we believe to be sacred.

We ask for it especially in the memory of him, who was an artist himself and who many times addressed artists with great respect: “Nobody can understand better than you, artists, genial creators of beauty, what this pathos was that accompanied God when he watched his creation at its very dawn. The reflection of this experience has appeared in your eyes an infinite number of times, when, surprised by the mysterious power of sounds and words, of shapes and colours, you admired your own creations, seeing them as a shadow of the mystery of creation that God, the sole Creator of all things existing, wished to share with you”. Our new patron has also addressed Poles: “Defend the crucifix, do not let anyone insult God’s Name in your heart, social or family life”.

Dear Mr Director!

We acknowledge the fact that the Crucifix is constantly insulted – by human sins as well – and maybe also by the tendencies that upset Rodrigo García and pushed him to create this performance. At the same time we are convinced that Malta Festival – in a major part funded from public money – should not insult the things that for us, as well as the many inhabitants of Poznań (and therefore also Festival sponsors), are the greatest sanctity.

This is why we must ask you calmly, yet firmly, to withdraw from showing this performance in Poznań

Courtesy Copies:

Director of the Poznań Unit of Culture and National Heritage
Mr Robert Kaźmierczak

Vice Mayor of Poznań
 Mr Dariusz Jaworski
 Mayor of Poznań
 Mr Ryszard Grobelny
 Greater Poland Voivodship Marshall
 Mr Marek Woźniak
 COE of AQUANET S.A.
 Mr Paweł Chudziński

Councillors, who signed the letter:

Ewa Jemielity (PiS)
 Maciej Przybylak (PRO)
 Juliusz Kubel (niezrzeszony)
 Mariusz Wiśniewski (PO)
 Wojciech Wośkowiak (PRO)
 Adam Pawlik (PiS)
 Krzysztof Grzybowski (PiS)
 Norbert Napieraj (PRO)
 Joanna Frankiewicz (PRO)
 Wojciech Kręglewski (PO)
 Andrzej Bielerzewski (PRO)
 Maria Nowicka (PO)
 Przemysław Alexandrowicz (PiS)
 Michał Tomczak (PO)
 Michał Grześ (PiS)
 Jan Chudobiecki (PRO)
 Lidia Dudziak (PiS)
 Ryszard F. Grobelny (PO)
 Szymon Szykowski vel Sęk (PiS)
 Bartosz Zawieja (PO)
 Karolina Fabiś-Szulc (PO)
 Przemysław Markowski (PO)
 Sławomir Smól (PRO)



7 days to the cancellation — 14 days to the planned performance



13 July 2014 r.

Poznań City Council

Dear Councillors,

”

In reply to your letter asking me to cancel the presentation of Rodrigo García's performance *Golgota Picnic*, I want to assure you that the topic of the performance is neither Christianity nor the passion of Jesus Christ, and that the performance itself is not anti-Christian in its message, as was noticed by several art critics who had the chance to see it. The artistic and intellectual value of this performance derives from its deep analysis of the socio-political mechanisms that rule the world. The pessimistic vision of the director embraces many phenomena – consumptionism, hedonism, moral indifference. *Golgota Picnic* has been performed worldwide and is acclaimed by both critics and the majority of its audiences. A theatrical critic working for

one of the most important French journals “La Libération” called it “one of the most beautiful works of the director. It’s an incredible and humour full meditation. It would be unfair to let the disturbance that it caused disturb its poetical dimension”.

I respect your objections to the critical message of the director, who shares his personal opinion on modernity, but art allows space for various statements and points of view. Rodrigo García’s goal is not – as you wrote – to offend what is concerned sacred in religion. In his works the director wants to express his doubts and disappointments, and has the right to do that, as do all of us.

Paragraph 73 of the Polish Constitution ensures “freedom of artistic expression, scientific research and publishing its results, as well as freedom to participate in culture”. I kindly ask you to respect this right and refrain from asking Malta Festival for a preventative censorship, as well as to not support the postulates of radical circles whose judgement of the artist and the performance is based solely on superficial messages, and who, in addition, are those planning to take up actions that may disturb public order. The picket to prevent ticket holders from seeing the performance is an act of violence and an attempt to prevent part of society from exercising their constitutional rights.

Malta Festival is a secular cultural event of an international character – the dates of the performances are a result of many factors dependent on dates and logistics. Any concurrence between the dates of performances and the religious holidays mentioned in your letter is purely coincidental.

I want to once again emphasise that the festival’s intention was never to offend anyone’s feelings or to antagonise society. Therefore the performance will be presented in-

side, in a confined space, and only for an audience of 18 year olds and older – those who are responsible for their own aesthetic choices. The performance is one of 130 (!) theatrical events that will take place during this year’s Malta Festival. The staging is planned twice, in a space that can only hold a maximum of 240 people. We deeply regret that the aforementioned protest has covered the whole image of the event, which is as important and distinctive for Polish cities as our Festival.

Regards,
 Michał Merczyński
 Festival Director



14 days to the cancellation — 21 days to the planned performance

6 June 2014

Golgota Picnic as the subject of a parliamentary debate:

Quotes from the stenographic record of the 69th Parliamentary Session on 6 June 2014. Current issues

10:52 am

Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska:

Minister, Sir! Currently, for a long time, there has been an acceptance of blasphemy in Poland, of promoting everything that is targetting our faith, the Catholic Church, the religious symbols. It is beyond our understanding that this process is supported with both the money and the prestige of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. A few months ago we had to deal with the blasphemous installation *Adoration* by Jacek Markiewicz, displayed in the Centre of Contemporary Art. Now we have Malta Festival Poznań, which plans to present a performance called *Golgota Picnic*, a pseudo-art full of obscene and pornographic content, vulgarisms, that mock the passion of Christ and the crucifixion, insult Christ, and portray him as an egoist and a cheat.

Minister, are those things in accordance with the aim that the Ministry of Culture have in its name with protecting National Heritage? Minister, sir, do you allow your ministry to be involved in all those things that are offensive to Catholics? Why did you, as a Minister of Culture, agree to financially participate in a festival that plans on presenting this blasphemy? Why is there no reaction from the Minister of Culture for this kind of initiative, why is there no reaction that would stop this blasphemous and obscene pseudo-play? How are you going to protect the religious feelings of the faithful? I just want to mention that protecting religious feelings is one of the tasks in the Polish Constitution. A minister who does not react to those kinds of initiatives violates Polish law and the Constitution. It is outrageous to us that this attempt to cause sensation, to get cheap publicity (*bell*) is happening with the support of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. (*applause*)

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Thank you, deputy. I would like to ask Mr Piotr Żuchowski, who was authorised by the Prime Minister as State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Please, Minister.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National

Heritage, Piotr Żuchowski:

Madam Speaker! Deputies! This year's donation granted to Malta Festival by the Minister of Culture is one million zlotys, which is not even 20% of the Festival budget. During the Festival there will be 146 artistic events presented by almost 480 artists.

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: So what?)

The aforementioned performance is of course a part of the festival, which presents a wide range of topics related to this field of social problems. It is one of the unique events in Polish culture, an event in the field of free debate, also the debate on values.

Honourable deputies, 35 years ago, on 2nd June 1979, the words that we especially recall in the last 25 years were spoken. We rarely recall the whole context of John Paul II's sentence, so I will do it now.

"And this is me calling, a son of Polish land, this land, and at the same time I, John Paul II, the Pope, I am calling from the depths of this century, on a day before the Pentecost holiday, I am calling together with all of you: Let Your Spirit come! Let Your Spirit come! And renew the land. This land".

"I am calling from the depth of this century..."

In this statement, so crucial for the Poles, John Paul II recalled a specific historical situation, the Millennium of Polish Christianity, reminding us, Christians and Catholics, that every faith has its place and its land.

(Deputy Maria Zuba: But not mockery.)

In his performance, Rodrigo García – as much as I personally disagree with this kind of aesthetic...

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: But you allow it.)

...he portrays the moment... *(Agitation)*

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Madam deputy, please don't disturb the Minister's speech.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:

...portrays some specific, historical moment in his country, Argentina, the moment in which, from a specific position of a sensitive man, he watched his Church. I would like to recall an extraordinary statement of the honourable bishop of Toulouse, who refers directly to this performance, to its reception by religious people and recalled the values which were used to fight this performance. It is always a huge dilemma: in this situation, in the field of unique and unquestionable values, how can another value, that the Minister of Culture and National Heritage is obliged to guard, be protected.

(Deputy Maria Zuba: You are obliged to respect.)

The value I am talking about is not the autonomy of a curator, but the autonomy of an artist. In these situations we always ask ourselves where are the limits. What this question actually includes in a yearning for censorship...

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: Nonsense.)

...yearning for an institution that would censor something before we, as an audience, can even see it. There is no other mechanism – either there is a mechanism of the lawful country and this mechanism is the court, which can give their verdict in a certain case, or we are facing something that cannot be negotiated. The Minister of Culture and Na-

tional Heritage doesn't try to negotiate it and he never has. It is the autonomy given to the artists, to the curator, even in such cases when the stylistics, the taste may raise some doubts.

This is not the first event like that to cause this kind of reaction – depending on who defines those reactions and what is their approach to them. Yesterday there was a court verdict in other case – against the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, for giving a donation to the museum part of the God's Providence Temple. At that time some very critical remarks were coming from the other side of the room, how it was a violation of Polish law, that the Minister had broken all the rules to give this donation. As Ministry employees, we are aware of the fact that we have to choose and stand behind the values that are particularly important...(bell)

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: For the Catholics)

...and in this field this value is freedom of speech, as long as it doesn't violate Polish law. Thank you very much.

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Thank you, Minister.

Excuse me, there is an additional question (*Voices in the room*).

Madam deputy, I kindly ask you not to disturb the session. The additional question will be asked by deputy Andrzej Jaworski.
Please, deputy.

Deputy Andrzej Jaworski:

Madam Speaker! Not only was Minister Żuchowski late, which in a way...

(Deputy Maria Zuba: Offended the Parliament.)

...offended the Parliament...

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Excuse me, the Minister was not late, we moved on faster...

(Voice: He was late, he should have been waiting.)

...on the procedures to that point, so the Minister came on time.

Deputy Andrzej Jaworski:

Madam Speaker had asked for a break, because the minister was not here. It is the Minister's duty to be present in this room and wait for the deputies. If Madam Speaker is not aware of that fact then she should also acknowledge it.

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka

Mister Deputy, please don't waste time with your question, unless there's nothing more you want to ask.

Deputy Andrzej Jaworski:

If you can't be objective then please ask some other vice-speaker to lead this session or at least try to be objective. I am asking my additional question. I understand that for the Minister of Culture and National Heritage it won't be a problem if soon some curator spends public

money for staging plays aimed at Muslims, at Judaism, if they insult Mahomet, Jahwe, if there will be fascist or communist ideology included – you will also say you won't censor those things. *(bell)* The Minister will grant money for that, this is how we can understand your statement. Your statement is scandalous, so if the Constitution, if Polish Law, the Penal Code all these acts oblige people to protect these values, to protect religious feelings regardless if you're Catholic, Muslim or of Jewish descent, your responsibility is...

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Thank you, deputy...

Deputy Andrzej Jaworski:

...to come to a situation when...

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka

Deputy, your time is over.

Deputy Andrzej Jaworski:

...when the law is protected.

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Deputy, your time has run out.

Thank you very much.

Minister, sir...

(Deputy Andrzej Jaworski: I'd hope madam Speaker was always so strict.)

Deputy, your time has run out.

(Deputy Andrzej Jaworski: Because your views are also well known, madam Speaker)

Deputy, please stop these offensive remarks and listen to the Minister's reply.

Please, Minister.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:

Madam Speaker! Honourable deputies! Deputy Jaworski has completely distorted my statement.

(Deputy Andrzej Jaworski: How did I do that?)

You have understood it incorrectly.

(Deputy Andrzej Jaworski: Please, read what you've said.)

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Deputy Jaworski, please stop obstructing the session.

Go on, Minister.

State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:

What I've said and I can repeat it again is that the Minister of Culture and National Heritage is the last institution to be involved any actions that would offend someone's religious feelings.

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: But you do.)

You know what, I would really like you not to call my faith to account.

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: I am a deputy and I can call you to account.)

You know, you...

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:
Deputy, please don't obstruct...

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:
...you can call me to account only in relation to...

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:
...the session.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:
...to what I've done as a Minister, not...

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: What you haven't done.)
...as a Catholic.

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: I am entitled to do that, since you financed...)

You are not entitled.

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: I am, Minister, since you financed...)

You are not entitled to do God's work.

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: I am not, but I am entitled to do parliamentary work. You financed a play that was recognised as offensive.)

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:
I reprimand you, deputy Sadurska. Please, stop obstructing the session.
Please continue, Minister.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:
I will once again repeat what I said before – the freedom of expression is an especially important value in culture. If a particular expression violates the rights of any religious group, any group, there is always the possibility of taking the case to court, so that an independent court would state if it had happened. There is no such possibility that the Minister of Culture and National Heritage would preliminary, a priori, censor any performance, repertoire, art show, censor...

(From the room: So you finance it?)

...if in this very sensitive field, a field that needs very precise definitions, if the law is violated. The Minister has no such power.

(Deputy Andrzej Jaworski: So the Ministry spent public money thoughtlessly?)

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:
Deputy Jaworski, you're not allowed to speak.
Please continue, Minister.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:

The money is spent very consciously and in accordance with clear, transparent procedures, so I will repeat once again: there are situations when the Minister of Culture and National Heritage is attacked for his decision by both the left and the right wing.

(Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: You've consciously given tax-payers' money, 1 million zlotys, to the Malta Festival.)

Vice-speaker Wanda Nowicka:

Deputy Sadurska, you're not allowed to speak.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Piotr Żuchowski:

The Minister of Culture and National Heritage has given this money based on the assessment of an independent committee that runs the programme from which budget the money was from. I can just say that according to the assessment made in this programme, Malta Festival got a very high rank. (Bell) The committee consist of independent experts (*laughs in the room*).

(Deputy Andrzej Jaworski: Ha, ha, ha!)

Thank you very much.

After the parliamentary discussion, three deputies of Prawo i Sprawiedliwość organised a press conference called *The protest against the Minister of Culture financing Malta Festival, which is presenting an offensive performance to Catholics called "Golgota Picnic"*. A few minutes before the conference, the team of Malta Festival sent a statement regarding the financing of *Golgota Picnic*.

11.54 am

To whoever it may concern,

In regards to the press conference called by the Press Office of PiS, called "The protest against the Minister of Culture financing Malta Festival, which is presenting an offensive performance to Catholics called *Golgota Picnic*", we wish to advise that staging *Golgota Picnic* at Malta Festival Poznań is not financed from public funds.

Regards,

The Team of Malta Festival Poznań 2014

12.00 am

At noon of 6 June 2014 three PiS deputies: Andrzej Jaworski, Tadeusz Dziuba and Małgorzata Sadurska started a press conference. These are our own transcriptions of the deputies' speeches (based on the record available at the Parliament website).

Deputy Tadeusz Dziuba: As a part of Malta Festival in Poznań, the Son of God Jesus Christ is portrayed in a performance as an embodiment of evil, which is offensive to the religious feelings of Catholics. I have to add that Mr García was additionally honoured on the festival by being offered the position of its curator. The protest against staging this play has already been signed by over 40,000 people. PiS deputies came up with numerous interventions; myself I submitted five interventions to five of the Festival sponsors, including the minister, the parliament speaker and the Mayor of the city. Despite the fact that *Golgota Picnic* will be a violation of paragraph 196 of the Penal Code – which means an act that may offend religious feelings – this performance, as well as all the others, is funded from public means. The main sponsor of the Festival is the Mayor of Poznań, who paid slightly over 2.7 mln zlotys from the local government budget, which covers exactly half of the costs. It's worth mentioning that 2.7 mln zlotys is at the same time 57% of the whole sum that the local government assigned for culture in 2014, as a part of the task described as: "enriching cultural life in Poznań through art projects, including festivals, contests and workshops,

especially international, interdisciplinary events". I also have to add that a 'strategic', as it was called, partner of the festival is a municipal company subject to the Mayor of Poznań – Aquanet. It is unacceptable to schedule a performance that is insulting to Catholics, both because it causes a risk of violation of paragraph 196 of the Penal Code and that this kind of performance is financed from public means. It has to be added that the organizers and sponsors of this failing event are simply trying to save this event, Malta Festival Poznań, by causing a scandal, so that Catholics are not only insulted, but also instrumentally treated.

Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska: It is outrageous that Malta Festival, where this pseudo-art offensive to Catholics is intended to be presented, is financed from public money of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. 1 million zlotys, which accounts for 20% of the whole budget of the festival, were given by the Minister of Culture; what is more – the minister offered its logo to promote this festival. This is one more of the recent initiatives that have outraged the public, that have recently offended religious feelings. I want to remind you how a few months ago we had the case of CSW and the installation *Adoration* by Jacek Markiewicz. For us religious people, deputies, it's unacceptable that the minister allowed a violation of the law, a violation of the Constitution, of the Penal Code.

One more scandalous fact happened today. When we asked the undersecretary of Culture and National Heritage, assigned by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, about financing this festival from the budget of the Ministry, he answered that he doesn't want to interfere with the autonomy of the festival's curator. Ladies and gentlemen, a Minister as an organ of the State, a major constitutional

organ, is first of all obliged to protect the law, the dignity of Poles, people for whom those different cultural institutions were created, for whom those performances are organised. In this case the Minister is openly mocking religious people, the law, our feelings that will be disturbed when the pseudo-art is presented.

Deputy Andrzej Jaworski: One can't assume that lay Catholics and those atheists who care about obeying the law in Poland will not react. Since the government has not reacted so far, neither Tusk, nor the Minister, the Catholics took matters in their own hands and on the 27th there will be a protest in Poznań to prevent this violation of Polish law and this blasphemous performance from happening. The action was initiated by the Rosary Crusade and now several Catholic and Christian organisations have supported it. Therefore we, as deputies, as members of the parliamentary group against the atheisation of Poland, we want to invite everyone to the march and we plan to attend ourselves.



<http://sejm.gov.pl/Sejm7.nsf/transmisje.xsp?unid=5C554965F457A05AC1257CEF-002C7EAB&SessionID=D1LNBZMRVR>



14 days to the cancellation — **21 days** to the planned performance

On the same day two interpellations concerning *Golgota Picnic* were sent – one to the Minister of Culture, one to the Prime Minister.

Interpellation no. 26827
concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic* that is supposed to take place during Malta Festival Poznań 2014

Submitted by	Maria Nowak
To	Minister of Culture and National Heritage
Submitted:	06-06-2014
Announced	25-06-2014 - session no 70

Reply:

From:	Małgorzata Omilanowska Minister of Culture and National Heritage
Received	02-07-2014
Announced	10-07-2014 - session no 71

Interpellation no. 26827 to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic* that is supposed to take place during Malta Festival Poznań 2014

Dear Minister! The programme of the aforementioned festival includes a performance which has raised doubts and protests by the Catholic part of our society. The presentation of this performance has been banned or restricted in several countries as a result of social protests. This performance is offensive to the religious feelings of Polish citizens and I hope that the voices of the protest will not be ignored.

Therefore I want to ask the Minister:

1. What is your opinion about *Golgota Picnic*?
2. Where is the tolerance for the protest voices of Polish Catholics?
3. How was the performance supported financially? What is the overall cost of "Malta Festival" and to what percentage is it financed from public means?

Regards,
Deputy Maria Nowak
Warsaw, 6 June 2014

Reply of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage to interpellation number 26827 concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic* that is supposed to take place during Malta Festival Poznań 2014.

Dear Madam Speaker! In regard to the interpellation by deputy Maria Nowak concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic* that is supposed to take place during Malta Festival Poznań 2014 (document SPS-023-26827/14 from 11 June 2014) I kindly ask you to regard the following information. Malta Festival Poznań has been for many years considered one of the most important cultural enterprises in Poland and it has been donated to for a three year period from the programme "Artistic Events", priority: Theatre and Dance. In 2010-2012 and in 2013-2015 the Festival was granted 1,000,000 zlotys a year. The amount of the donation reflects the high rank the festival was given by independent experts who assessed the submitted applications. In the last few years it has been given the highest rank of all applications. The high position of this enterprise is confirmed by the large public turnout – last year's edition gathered approximately 80,000 participants.

The ministerial donation for Malta Festival is less than 20% of its budget, and the Festival is over 60% funded by local government. The controversial performance *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García was supposed to be one of 146 artistic events presented during the festival, which focuses on contemporary Latin American culture. Its staging was to take place in a confined space inside a cultural institution in front of a small group of adult audience who bought tickets to see it. In view of the mass of protests, threats and announced marches, the organizers have decided to cancel that performance due to the concerns about the safety of the audience.

Regardless of this fact, it has to be stated that the crucial factor in making the decision about Ministerial donations for artistic projects is their content and artistic value, not their ideological, political or religious involvement. For that reason the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has no authority to interfere in the programme of an artistic event or the freedom of artistic expressions that it includes, regardless of the fact of funding.

The centuries-long theatrical tradition includes various forms of critical activity, though always undertaken after familiarising oneself with the criticised performance. The protest actions which gained momentum before the performance was staged at Malta Festival Poznań have taken that chance away from the Polish audience.

With regards,
Minister
Małgorzata Omilanowska
Warsaw, 2 July 2014

Interpellation no 26846 by deputy Małgorzata Sadurska and other deputies regarding the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage financing the international festival Malta Festival Poznań, which has included in its programme the performance *Golgota Picnic*, which is offensive to religious feelings. – to the Prime Minister.

” Dear Prime Minister! Public opinion has lately been shocked by the news of another state funded initiative targeting the religious feelings of believers. Namely the Malta Festival Poznań, which in its programme includes the performance *Golgota Picnic*.

This pseudo-art, full of obscene scenes filled with pornographic content and vulgarisms, is mocking the passion of Christ and His crucifixion. In an offensive way it portrays Christ as an egoist and a cheat, and accuses Christianity of supporting child abuse. This pseudo-performance is an attempt to destroy the dignity of every Catholic. It is a blasphemous profanation of the most important religious symbol, the cross, which for religious people is a symbol of their faith, as the mocked Passion of Christ is a symbol of God's love to human kind.

Golgota Picnic was condemned by the Catholic Church hierarchy and it has raised protests wherever it was presented (e.g. in France and Spain).

For a long time now there has been consent in Poland to promote anything that is harmful toward the Catholic Church and its religious symbols. For us, the fact that these actions are taken in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage remains inexplicable.

A few months ago we were dealing with the blasphemous installation *Adoration* by Jacek Markiewicz, which was displayed in the Centre of Contemporary Art, a public

institution subject to the Ministry and funded from tax-payer money. Now we face another attack on the faith. It is outrageous that for a consecutive time an attempt to seek sensation and cheap publicity is being supported with the money and the reputation of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

In relation to the facts stated above, we wish to ask the Prime Minister:

1. Why does a Ministry in your control participate in financing a festival that includes content which is offensive to the religious feelings of Catholics?
2. Are you going to ban the staging of *Golota Picnic* and how?
3. Should we take any lack of reaction by you to the growing attacks on the Catholic Church, its hierarchy and religious symbols (such as the cross, the Bible) as a passive acceptance of these kinds of actions?
4. What actions are you going to undertake to protect the religious feelings of the followers?

Regards,
Deputy Małgorzata Sadurska oraz grupa posłów
(Andrzej Jaworski, Bartosz Kownacki)

Warszawa, 6 June 2014 r.

The reply from Minister Małgorzata Omilanowska

” Madam Speaker! In reply to the interpellation by Deputies Małgorzata Sadurska, Andrzej Jaworski and Bartosz Kownacki (no. SPS-023-26846/14), and on the authority of the Prime Minister, I wish to kindly inform you about the issues concerning the ministerial financing of Malta Festival Poznań and refer to the case of the controversial performance *Golgota Picnic* which had been planned to be included in the Festival programme.

Malta Festival Poznań has been for many years considered one of the most important cultural enterprises in Poland and it has been donated to for a three year period from the programme “Artistic Events”, priority: Theatre and Dance. In 2010-2012 and in 2013-2015 the Festival was granted 1,000,000 zlotys a year. The amount of the donation reflects the high rank the festival was given by independent experts who assessed the submitted applications. In the last few years it has been given the highest rank of all applications. The high position of this enterprise is confirmed by the large public turnout – last year’s edition gathered approximately 80,000 participants.

The ministerial donation for Malta Festival is less than 20% of its budget, and the Festival is over 60% funded by local government. The controversial performance *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García was supposed to be one of 146 artistic events presented during the festival, which focuses on contemporary Latin American culture. Its staging was to take place in a confined space inside a cultural institution in front of a small group of adult audience who bought

tickets to see it. In view of the mass of protests, threats and announced marches, the organizers have decided to cancel that performance due to the concerns about the safety of the audience.

Regardless of this fact, it has to be stated that the crucial factor in making the decision about Ministerial donations for artistic projects is their content and artistic value, not their ideological, political or religious involvement. For that reason the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has no authority to interfere in the programme of an artistic event or the freedom of artistic expressions that it includes, regardless of the fact of funding.

With regards,
Minister
Małgorzata Omilanowska
Warszawa, 30 June 2014



13 days to the cancellation — **20 days** to the planned performance

7 June 2014

Radio Maryja reports: Deputy Anna Sobecka has submitted a letter to the Minister of Culture Bogdan Zdrojewski and to the Mayor of Poznań Ryszard Grobelny concerning the pseudo-performance of *Golgota Picnic*. The politician demands intervention from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage that would result in the banning of this blasphemous spectacle.

“I demand that you take immediate action that will result in the cancellation of the blasphemous performance *Golgota Picnic*. I ask the Minister to never again participate in mocking and humiliating millions of Poles living in our motherland, and to finally have the courage to undertake the proceedings that would protect the religious feelings of followers living in our country” – reads Deputy Anna Sobecka’s appeal.

The Radio news additionally explained that in the performance, “a Spaniard-Argentinian pseudo-artist openly mocks the crucifixion of Christ. What is more, it accuses Christianity of fostering the sexual abuse of children by priests and monks”.



11 days to the cancellation — 18 days to the planned performance

9 June 2014: The start of the Malta Festival Poznań 2014

Bogdan Zdrojewski, Minister of Culture and National Heritage, says that “the Malta Festival didn’t waste the opportunity given to it after 1989,” according to the Polish Press Agency. Minister Zdrojewski took part in a debate that launched the 24th edition of the Malta Festival Poznań. The debate, devoted to the subject of culture, was held to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1989 elections. Other participants in the event included film director Jan Holoubek as well as Poznań residents who had been oppressed by the communist regime and played a role in Poland’s systemic transformation: Karol Działoszyński, Piotr Frydryszek, Marcin Kęszycki, Marek Lenartowski, and Nina Nowakowska.

Zdrojewski said that in its 24 years, the festival had changed in character, educated an enormous number of young people, and expanded its scope. “It gave Poznań, Greater Poland, and especially Poland as whole, many interesting debates that helped define our sense of freedom,” said the minister.

Minister Bogdan Zdrojewski,
TVP Poznań, program Teleskop

If I were personally responsible for making the decision, I wouldn’t have picked that play. If someone were to ask me if I’m going to have Mr. Merczyński’s head for picking it, then no, I’m not. If someone wants to chop his head off, then I’m going to protest.



8 days to the cancellation — 15 days to the planned performance

12 June 2014

Golgota Picnic in the show *Po przecinku*. “Christ on stage, plenty of nudity, and outrage by Poznań city councillors. This year’s edition of Malta Festival plans on showing the performance *Golgota Picnic*. Nobody in Poland has seen it yet, but the passionate debate has already begun. Deputies Katarzyna Piekarska (SLD) and Andrzej Jaworski (PiS) will comment”. – announced TVP INFO website.



<http://vod.tvp.pl/audycje/publicystyka/po-przecinku/wideo/12062014/15318567>

The PiS deputy has made many substantial errors, which later – despite several corrections – were repeated by the opponents of the performance. The team of Malta Festival prepared and distributed an official statement correcting deputy Jaworski's mistakes:

Last Thursday, June 12, in the *Po przecinku* show on TVP, Deputy Andrzej Jaworski commented on the issues concerning showing Rodrigo García's *Golgota Picnic* during Malta Festival Poznań 2014. We are not going to engage in polemics with the Deputy, who presented a radical critique of the performance after watching a few bits of it, but we feel obliged to explain a few matters:

Deputy Jaworski's statement	Malta Festival explanation
Deputy Jaworski said: "Please, notice that this performance, this event, costs us 6 million zlotys"	The performance is financed solely by Malta Foundation's own resources, which means revenues from tickets, publications, licences and gastronomy managed by the Foundation. The 6 million zlotys mentioned by the Deputy is the total cost of Malta Festival, which counts 300 various events, including 130 theatre projects. The Festival is financed from public means, its own means and from the European Union's "Culture" programme

Deputy Jaworski said: "we have a curator chosen by the Mayor of Poznań or his men, who organizes this whole event and, in addition, benefits from it financially. I wonder if what we have here is not some kind of corruption".	Malta Festival Poznań is an international performance art festival organized by Malta Foundation. The city authorities have no influence on the festival programme, neither can they choose its curator. Any suggestion of corruption is slander.
Referring to Rodrigo García's performance <i>Incident: Kill to Eat</i> , Deputy Jaworski said: "People paid just to come and see an animal suffering. This is exactly the same situation. The law was violated, but I remember that the prosecutor was not able reach this artist and ended up discontinuing the proceedings".	The prosecutor was able to "reach this artist". The proceedings were discontinued because the way to kill the lobster was far more humanitarian than the manner it is usually killed in restaurants. The director had recreated a situation that happens everyday in millions of restaurants around the world.
In the <i>Po przecinku</i> show PiS Deputy Andrzej Jaworski called Rodrigo García "a Spaniard who lives in Austria. It's a long way from there to Latin America".	Rodrigo García is an Argentinian who lives in Spain, specifically in Asturias. He left Buenos Aires when he was 22 and his mother, whom he often visits, still lives there. Asturias is 2200 kilometres from Austria



4 days to the cancellation — **11 days** to the planned performance

16 June 2014

PiS Deputy Maciej Łopiński submitted an interpellation to the Minister of Culture, accusing the performance of being pornographic and asking: “How did *Golgota Picnic* happen to be included in this year edition of the festival?” The deputy received a reply after the decision to cancel the performance had been made.

Interpellation no. 26948 concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic*, presented during 24th edition of Malta Festival Poznań

Submitted by	Maciej Łopiński
To	The Minister of Culture and National Heritage
Received	16-06-2014
Announced	25-06-2014 - session no 70

Reply:

From	Małgorzata Omilanowska The Minister of Culture and National Heritage
Received	02-07-2014
Announced	10-07-2014 - session no 71

Interpellation no. 26948 to the Minister of Culture and National Heritage concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic*, presented during 24th edition of Malta Festival Poznań

”

The programme of this year’s 24th edition of Malta Festival Poznań includes a play by an Argentinian director Rodrigo García titled *Golgota Picnic*. The play includes obscene and pornographic scenes, shamefully combined with the image of Jesus Christ. The performance has already caused protests and controversies in some European countries, e.g. France. *Golgota Picnic* is blatantly offensive to a huge part of our Christian society. The Ministry of Culture website should never have included a sentence promoting this performance: “In Poznań he will present one of his most famous and acclaimed performances – *Golgota Picnic*, which is a harsh, but also an ironic and funny critique of a consumptionist society”. The performance should have never been included in the Festival programme, especially since it is co-financed by the Ministry and the Poznań municipality. Many Poles feel that this play is publicly offending their religious feelings.

In regard to the facts stated above, I wish to ask the Minister the following questions:

1. How did *Golgota Picnic* happen to be included in this year’s edition of the festival?
2. Why does the ministry co-finance a project which offends the religious feelings of Polish citizens?
3. How is it that the Ministry, despite knowing about the international controversies that the performance had raised,

did not protest when it was included in the programme of the festival?

4. Why did the ministry not protest the play's inclusion in the festival schedule even though it knew that the piece had provoked serious controversy in other countries?

Regards,
Deputy Maciej Łopiński
Gdańsk, 16 June 2014

The reply of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage to Interpellation no. 26948 concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic*, to be presented during the 24th edition of Malta Festival Poznań

” Madam Speaker! In regard to the interpellation by Deputy Maciej Łopiński concerning the performance *Golgota Picnic*, that was supposed to be part of the 24th edition of Malta Festival Poznań, sent on 23 June 2014, SPS-023-26948/14, I kindly ask you to acknowledge the following facts.

Malta Festival Poznań has been for many years considered one of the most important cultural enterprises in Poland and it has been donated to for a three year period from the programme “Artistic Events”, priority: Theatre and Dance. In 2010-2012 and in 2013-2015 the Festival was granted 1,000,000 zlotys a year. The amount of the donation reflects the high rank the festival was given by independent experts who assessed the submitted applications. In the last few years it has been given the highest rank of all applications. The high position of this enterprise is confirmed by the large public turnout – last year's edition gathered approximately 80,000 participants.

The ministerial donation for Malta Festival is less than 20% of its budget, and the Festival is over 60% funded by local government. The controversial performance *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García was supposed to be one of 146 artistic events presented during the festival, which focuses on contemporary Latin American culture. Its staging was to take place in a confined space inside a cultural institution in front of a small group of adult audience who bought tickets to see it. In view of the mass of protests, threats and announced marches, the organizers have decided to cancel that performance due to the concerns about the safety of the audience.

Regardless of this fact, it has to be stated that the crucial factor in making the decision about Ministerial donations for artistic projects is their content and artistic value, not their ideological, political or religious involvement. For that reason the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has no authority to interfere in the programme of an artistic event or the freedom of artistic expressions that it includes, regardless of the fact of funding.

With regards,
Minister
Małgorzata Omilanowska
Warsaw, 2 July 2014



3 days to the cancellation — 10 days to the planned performance

17 June 2014

On June 17 the Mayor of Poznań Ryszard Grobelny published his statement regarding *Golgota Picnic*. The mayor pointed out the unfortunate concurrence of dates – the performance was scheduled to happen on the same day as a procession celebrating The Sacred Heart of Lord Jesus. He appealed for prudence and safety. The rather calm letter ended with a remark that turned out to be big support for the opponents of the performance “I have to admit that the form of the ‘Golgota Picnic’ performance can cause objections and protests; at the same time I wish to advise that I will not be present at it. My decision is a result of the doubts I have about consistency between the content of the performance and the values I am committed to”

Statement by Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny

To Whom It May Concern:

” In recent weeks I have received numerous indications concerning large scale protests raised by the planned staging of Rodrigo García’s *Golgota Picnic* in Poznań. Information gathered by the Police and other city services indicate undoubtedly that the combination of strong emotions and the huge number of people present during the performance of *Golgota Picnic* could lead to reactions that

would be hard to control. On June 27th and 28th Poznań will host several events, both planned and spontaneous, which when combined together pose a potential and very serious threat to City property and the safety of its inhabitants.

The date and place of this performance bear special significance in the context of other events that had been scheduled earlier for the same date. For many years now on this day and in exactly the same place there is a procession in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; we celebrate the anniversary of the 1956 Poznań uprising; this year Poznań is also a meeting place for sport fans.

The organizer assures us that the concurrence of dates is completely accidental. However, it is still highly unfortunate.

Many participants to the aforementioned events perceive the performance as an attack on traditional Poznań values and therefore as a provocation.

As the City Mayor I do not have the legal means that would allow me to administrate over the organizer of any cultural event, or to protest to cancel it. As much as I believe that artistic freedom and the right to assemble are great achievements in Polish democracy, I also believe that there are values that prevail over them. These are the lives and safety of the people of the city and their possessions.

This is why I believe that the organizers of both artistic and social events have not only a legal, but also a moral obligation to anticipate the consequences of their actions. Therefore I hope that both Malta Festival management and those in charge of the potential protests will act responsibly and take the threats I mention into consideration.

At the same time I want to underline that the municipality and its members have no authority to review any artistic event or to impose a preventative censorship on its authors.

The City of Poznań, which is one of the patrons of Malta Festival (along with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and many other public and private institutions), is not at the same time the organiser of the aforementioned performance. Even more importantly, the subsidy granted by the City does not cover the staging of this particular event. Therefore, Poznań City Hall has not spent any of its public resources on financing *'Golgota Picnic'*.

I would like to appeal to everyone to take every action possible to keep Poznań a safe place, a place that is friendly to art and to artists, and that values human dignity. After all, these are the typical Poznań values.

I have to admit that the form of the *'Golgota Picnic'* performance can cause objections and protests; at the same time I wish to advise that I will not be present at it. My decision is a result of the doubts I have about consistency between the content of the performance and the values I am committed to.

Ryszard Grobelny
Mayor of Poznań



2 days to the cancellation — 9 days to the planned performance

18 June 2014



On the second day of her tenure, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage Małgorzata Omilianowska commented on the protests against *Golgota Picnic* in a statement for Fakty TVN (18 June 2014):

“On-stage nudity has been present in European art – including Polish – for decades. Every day in Polish theatres audiences can see nude actors, and nobody has a problem with that.

Offending religious feelings is a very serious concern. Surely, we have to be conscious and monitor for actions that could be harmful. Let me remind you though that the performance was supposed to happen in a confined space and those easily offended could save themselves that offence by simply not buying a ticket and not going to see the performance”.

<http://fakty.tvn24.pl/aktualnosci,59/sztuka-odwazna-czy-obrazoburcza-protesty-przeciw-golgota-picnic,440982.html>

<http://www.tvn24.pl/poznan,43/arcybiskup-nawoluje-do-protestu-prezydent-boi-sie-zamieszek-zamieszanie-wokol-golgota-picnic,441069.html>

— THE POLICE

→ 7 days to the cancellation — 14 days to the planned performance

On 13th June 2014 the team of Malta Festival requested the opinion of the Municipal Police Headquarters concerning public safety at the performance. Cooperation with the police is a standard procedure while organising cultural, artistic or sport events.



Poznań, 13. June 2014

**Junior Inspector Roman Kuster
Municipal Police Headquarters,
Poznań**

Dear Mr Commissioner,

” In regard to incoming information concerning the planned mass manifestations which are supposed to express objections to and interrupt the performance of Golgota Picnic, which takes place on Malta Festival Poznań 2014 on 27th and 28th of June, we request your opinion concerning the safety of our audience. Based on your experience with similar cases, we kindly ask you to provide us with information about the usual course of this kind of manifestations/gatherings, their potential fierceness and predictability. We also want to inquire if you have any knowledge about the alleged number of participant and potential involvement of so-called “national” and “hooligan” circles in these manifestations?

We ask for your opinion on that case, because we are worried about the safety of the audience, artists and Malta Festival team and employees involved in producing the performance. Their safety is our absolute priority. Since the whole situation is dynamic, we find it necessary for the public services to prepare its thorough analysis, based on your knowledge and experience coming from your duties as the guards of public order and citizens safety. Because of a short amount of time left until the scheduled presentation of the performance, we kindly request a possibly urgent reply.

Kind regards,
Michał Merczyński
Festival Director

Courtesy Copies:

- 1) Mr Bogdan Zdrojewski – Minister of Culture and National Heritage
- 2) Mr Ryszard Grobelny – Mayor of Poznań
- 3) Mr Marek Woźniak – Greater Poland Voivodship Marshall



4 days to the cancellation — 11 days to the planned performance

16 June 2014

On 16th June the Mayor of Poznań Ryszard Grobelny called a meeting of the Crisis Management Team to analyse the threats in the announced demonstrations against the staging of *Golgota Picnic*. The meeting included the Mayor of Poznań and Vice-Mayor Dariusz Jaworski and Tomasz Kayser, the director of CK Zamek Anna Hryniewiecka and deputy-director of CK Zamek Zofia Starikiewicz, representatives of Malta Festival – Michał Merczyński, Karina Adamska and Paulina Tarnawska, representatives of the Municipal and Voivodship Police and the Citizen Affairs Unit of the City Council.

Polish Radio Merkury reported: “intensive talks between the Police and city officials in Poznań. The main topic of discussion is – as we were informed by the Mayor’s spokesman Paweł Marciniak – concern safety during the premiere of the performance *Golgota Picnic*, which is scheduled for 27th June as part of Malta Festival Poznań 2014. “I won’t say any more at the moment.” stated Paweł Marciniak. Nevertheless, we found out that there are two planned marches against *Golgota Picnic* on both days of the Poznań premiere: 27th and 28th June. The demonstrators want to protest against the staging of the play. The performance, which according to the protesters offends their religious feelings, is supposed to take place in the Castle Cultural Centre.

On the same day, the Catholic Church is celebrating the holiday of the Holy Heart of Lord Jesus; Archbishop Stanisław

Gądecki will traditionally lead the procession to Mickiewicz Square in the centre of Poznań. The following day there is a benefit for football player Piotr Reiss. The Police are expecting a large number of football fans. The cumulative number of events is a big challenge for the Police, which is the main reason for the intense consultations with City clerks”.

During the Crisis Management meeting, the team of Malta Festival received a reply to a letter submitted to the City Police on June 13th.



A quote from the Poznań Municipal Police Chief’s letter.

”

Poznań Police Commissioner, June 16 2014

On the 27th and 28th June 2014 the following public gathering are planned near CK Zamek (Castle Cultural Centre):

- 27 and 28 June 2014 18.00 – 24.00 with an expected attendance of 50,000 people
- 27 and 28 June 2014 20.30 – 22.30 with an expected attendance of 500 people

The aforementioned gatherings are intended to protest in public against the presentation of the show 'Golgota Picnic' during the Malta Festival.

The above mentioned gatherings are to be attended by members of Stowarzyszenie Wielkopolscy Patrioci (Association of Wielkopolska Patriots), PiS (Law and Justice) party members of parliament and activists, members of Ruch Narodowy (National Movement), Młodzież Wszechpolska, Stowarzyszenie Dzierżoniowscy Patrioci (Association of Dzierżonów Patriots), Stowarzyszenie Gnieźnieńscy Patrioci (Association of Gniezno Patriots), Śląsk Wrocław Football Fans, Lechia Gdańsk Football Fans, Piła Legion (Lech Poznań Fans).

(...) having analyzed the information posted online, as well as information received from other sources, it should be concluded that the participants of the gatherings will take both an active and passive part in actions intended to prevent the performance

Summing up, it is necessary to consider some possible scenarios of the forthcoming events:

1. A blockade of the Castle Cultural Centre building by participants of legitimate public gatherings. It should be mentioned that the gatherings were declared with such time estimates that the participants would have the possibility to enforce an active and passive blockade of the whole building. A gathering of 50,000 participants would also block the streets used by artists and spectators.

2. Active attempts at blocking access to the building for artists, spectators and invited guests.

3. Forcible entry to the building followed by its occupation, which may result in preventing the performance. CK Zamek is a building open to the public, so attempts to do so by the protesters should be expected.

In accordance with the Gatherings Act, it is the organizer who is responsible for the course of events during the gathering. The information received from the Citizens Affairs Department of the Municipal Office shows that the persons organizing the aforementioned gatherings so far have not taken any security measures to ensure the peaceful nature of the event.

I also advise that:

On the 16th June 2014 I referred the request to the Mayor of Poznań to change the date and location of the performance in view of the dire threat to public safety.

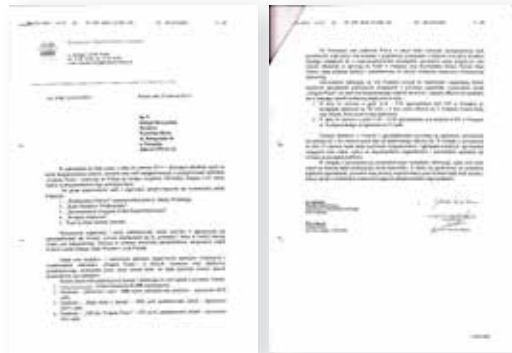
Wojciech Brzozowski, PhD in Law, and an assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law and Administration at the University of Warsaw:

There is one more thing that should be commented on separately – it is the role of the Police, who allegedly recommended the organizers to “change the date and location of the performance for the sake of public safety”. (...)The [Police] Act does not provide an option for the forces of law to declare helplessness”.

→ a few hours to the cancellation — 7 days to the planned performance

18 June 2014

On the 20th June 2014 the team of Malta Festival met with the Police again. The information received was crucial to the decision to cancel the performances of *Golgota Picnic*.



” Poznań Police Commissioner, June 20 2014

To the opponents, persons and organizations protesting against the presentation of the show

1. “Wielkopolscy Patrioci” (Wielkopolska Patriots) represented by Mr. Maciej Witzberg,
2. “Ruch Narodowy Wielkopolska” (National Movement Wielkopolska)
3. “Stowarzyszenie Kongresu Kobiet Konserwatywnych” (Association of Conservative Women Congress)
4. MP Andrzej Jaworski,

The mentioned organizations and persons have declared their participation in the gatherings as well as” joining

the protest”, which is difficult to interpret. That also refers to football hooligans supporting Lechia Gdańsk, Śląsk Wrocław and Lech Poznań football clubs.

In the media and internet we have witnessed the ongoing escalation of negative feelings concerning the presentation of the show *Golgota Picnic*. Third parties, who refuse to disclose their personal information and intentions, have expressed their willingness to disrupt the event.

Given this, and having analyzed all the information, including the sensitive information, I maintain my existing position on the fact that we should expect the participants of legitimate gatherings, protests and Church processions to participate actively and passively in actions preventing the given performance.

As was explained in August 2014 by the Social Communication Unit of the Greater Poland Voivodship Police Headquarters in Poznań: “As part of their legal duties, the Police provide a current analysis of the dangers related to planned cultural, artistic or sport events. In the case where there is information about potential disturbances, the organizer of the event is notified. Any decision concerning potential cancellation of the event is an autonomic decision of the organizer.

Poznań City Police has experience in securing high-risk events. On the 27th October 2013 it secured a football game between Lech Poznań and Legia Warszawa attended by 36,000 fans. The security was provided by 984 Police officers using 162 transporters, 7 motorcycles and a helicopter. The cost of the Police intervention and protection was 319 806, 180.

Organizing and securing these games was regulated by the Act of 20 March 2009 about the security of mass events. According to article 5, paragraph 1, the responsibility for the safety of a mass-event is on its organizer. Police intervention is allowed according to article 22 paragraph 4, only if the actions undertaken by the security services are insufficient for dealing with the situation, or if the organizer or the head of the safety department officially requests help from the Police.

The police have no statistical data concerning cancelled events. They couldn't tell if during the last year there was any event that was cancelled because of safety concerns.

— THE MALTA FESTIVAL POZNAŃ



20 days to the cancellation — **27 days** to the planned performance

On 1st June 2014 the team of Malta Festival Poznań received the first official petition demanding removal of the performance *Golgota Picnic* from the Festival programme. Soon after that, more petitions followed. The team immediately prepared a statement explaining the substantial context of the performance, its message and the Idiom *Latin America: Mestizos* – the festival's programme which included the performance.

2 June 2014

Official Statement on the Staging of the Play *Golgota Picnic* at the Malta Festival Poznań

Ladies and gentlemen,

We address this statement to everyone who has voiced their objections to the staging of Rodrigo García's play *Golgota Picnic* during the 2014 Malta Festival Poznań; both to those who felt offended *a priori* by the play itself (speaking out against a play that they have not, in fact, seen) and to those who have perhaps only heard about the protest.

We respect the right of all audience members to reject imagery that may offend their sensibilities, while pointing out that this same imagery may be relevant to other viewers. We are aware that not everyone can identify with the form or message of *Golgota Picnic* but it is not the intention of the festival nor of the artist to hurt anyone's feelings nor to offend anyone's religious beliefs. The play is an offering, one that we feel is worthy of attention, reflection and cognitive confrontation. Each viewer has the right to decide whether they wish to watch it. The play is not taking place in a public space and we do not force anyone to be confronted with something that they may reject; we do not use mechanisms of oppression against our audience members.

The role of an arts festival is to deal with issues that are crucial to understanding the modern world in all its complexity. The Malta Festival Poznań program always seeks to expand the scope of discourse and to confront its audiences with relevant topics, even if we don't always agree with the artist's approach. All we can do is urge you to view *Golgota Picnic* as a whole; objectively and on its own merits.

Rodrigo García is known to Polish audiences primarily through his 2009 appearance in Wrocław, where he received the Europe Theatre Prize for "New Theatrical Realities"* where he staged, amongst others, his play "Incident: Kill to Eat" in which an actor recreated an event that takes place in millions of restaurants all over the world – he killed a lobster on stage. This play also provoked extreme reactions – the artist was accused of crossing accepted moral and legal boundaries in the arts. According to a court ruling, the method in which the lobster was killed was significantly more humane than the method used in restaurants. There, the lobsters – a luxurious delicacy that only the well-off can afford – are killed en masse and prepared solely to satisfy the refined desires of affluent consumers. In his play, García repeats the procedure, giving it the weight of an indictment – he asks the question of whether we are offended or not at the sight of something we allow to happen every day and perhaps even actively contribute to: violence, rape, the objectification of human beings.

In the case of *Golgota Picnic* we are not dealing with such a radical crossing of the boundaries of fiction and a violent incursion into social reality. In a completely artificial world created by actors, music, video and sound, García presents the pessimistic vision of a Westerner – bored, focused on his own pleasure and comfort. Just as *Golgota* is a metaphor for the passion of Christ, the title *Golgota Picnic* is a metaphor for the passion and suffering of modernity; exhaustion of the possibility of imparting meaning to the world. Thus, the main theme of the play is neither Christianity nor the death of Christ, but the state of European society, mired down in consumerism, hedonism and a spiritual void. This is a vision of a world in

ruin, where people are unable to adopt an ethical stance against violence, exploitation and injustice, choosing instead an ignorance born of egotism, pretending that these things have nothing to do with them.

In this context, the words of the Argentine Pope Francis are particularly fitting, when he points out the Christian duty to reflect upon the reality in which we live. Speaking with Fr. Antoni Spadaro, the Pope said: "those who work in the world of culture are to be inserted into the context in which they operate and on which they reflect. There is always the lurking danger of living in a laboratory. Ours is not a 'lab faith,' but a 'journey faith,' an historical faith. God has revealed himself as history, not as a compendium of abstract truths. I am afraid of laboratories because in the laboratory you take the problems and then you bring them home to tame them, to paint them, out of their context."

García makes references to the Church in his play – as an institution and a force that is in part responsible for forming our present world and one that in the past had committed numerous mistakes. Rodrigo García's critical stance towards the institution of the Church is a result of his own personal experiences. His childhood and adolescence happened to fall in the years of the bloody dictatorship in Argentina. In those days, the Church in Poland was a place of spiritual resistance, of struggle against the communist authorities; a symbol of support for freedom of thought. In Argentina, however, it was a part of the complex system of terror. To this day, many Argentines accuse the church authorities of the day of supporting the military regime responsible for the deaths of thousands of people.

The Church exerts an enormous influence on the daily lives of the faithful, deciding how they should live and

what is good for them, yet, as Argentine history has shown, it can get it wrong. Rodrigo García is not at odds with the transcendence and essence of faith, but opposes the subjugation of this transcendence by authority and politics, thereby putting it in a state of servitude. In this spirit, the bishop of Toulouse spoke out against the demonstrations that took place in France objecting to the play. In spite of his own critical stance towards the play, the cleric called for peace and an avoidance of aggression: "We wish to prevent the political manipulation and fundamentalism that lie at the root of these demonstrations. Prayer cannot be used by Christians as an instrument of coercion; otherwise it becomes contradictory to that which nourishes it: a loving bond with God and one's fellow man. (...) We understand and share the concern that the play has raised amongst Christians. Like them, we are sensitive to anything that offends our faith. But groups that use violence in the name of Christianity also hurt us, as they distort the image of the Church. Jesus never asked for retribution for the harm that was done to him. He didn't answer violence with violence, but rather with forgiveness."

Golgota Picnic is being shown as part of a comprehensive program; an overarching idiom that brings contemporary Latin American culture to Malta Festival Poznań. The program will comprise theatre plays, dance performances, concerts, art exhibits and film screenings that will show both the diversity and the complexity of this part of the world, and above all, the reality in which over 500 million people on this continent live. The difficult 20th century history of Latin American nations is one of the keys to understanding the present culture and socio-political situation of countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

The history of European culture shows that throughout the centuries many works of art have raised extreme emotions, have met with resistance and have been accused of attacks on morality and prevailing values – one can mention Michaelangelo's famous *David*, Édouard Manet's *Olympia* or Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Each of these works has become part of the canon of European culture. Contemporary high and popular culture can also be controversial. Among the less obvious works drawing upon the story of Jesus Christ we can cite Roland Joffé's *The Mission*, Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of Christ*, Klaus Kinski's *Jesus Christ Savior*, Terry Jones' and Monty Python's *The Life of Brian* or Marek Kotorski's film *We're All Christs*. Contemporary culture continually draws from its roots, ensuring that the theme of Christianity remains present and alive. It would be hard to imagine Christianity ceasing to be a source of inspiration and an important reference point for successive artists.

Every artist bears the responsibility for their work and has the right to present their own vision of the world, even if it is incomprehensible, critical and singular; even if, in communicating it, the artist resorts to methods that cause discomfort to their audiences. Rodrigo García's artistic strategy is based on a confrontation of that which is serious, and lofty with the superficial and trivial. In his work, García shifts conventions and boundaries in his plays, forcing active reflection on the part of the viewer, to undermine the safe limits of theatre, forcing the viewer to engage with what they are seeing, to take an active position. It is worth pointing out that irony and exaggeration play an enormous

role in his art. García draws from pop culture and the mechanisms that rule it, simultaneously exposing their emptiness and triviality. In this context, the dramatic text of *Golgota Picnic* is a precisely constructed collage of linguistic clichés, of provocations that seek to topple the politically correct order and of the artist's own particularly poetic and personal opinions.

The play *Golgota Picnic* has been performed on the most important stages and at the most important festivals in the world – it has provoked criticism and visceral reactions in audiences everywhere it has played. René Solis of the *La Libération* daily cites a "...parodist dimension to the piece, the willingness to laugh at that which infuriates and hurts us and at the age we live in. This, which has always been García's trademark, culminates in this play." The French critic goes on to state that *Golgota Picnic* is one of the most beautiful of Rodrigo García's plays. It is a relentless, joyful meditation and it would be absurd to allow its poetry to be overshadowed by the controversy it provokes."

While the images presented onstage by Rodrigo García can spark objections, first and foremost, they mirror the world we live in. The problematic and ambiguous relationship between the image and the world is described by W.J.T. Mitchell, a professor at the University of Chicago. He demonstrates that the strength of an image comes from the fact that it is more than simply an object. The image always works in relationship with its viewer, drawing varied reactions from which it in turn draws its affective strength. He writes: "Images make us anxious. We fight over them, destroy them and blame them for our own bad behaviour, as when we blame 'the media' for encouraging moral decay and outbreaks of violence." In his

opinion, images that offend often hide a history of human debasement, exploitation and dehumanization. As the audience, we thus become involved in a relationship with the image; it becomes a mirror in which we can see ourselves.

Sincerely yours,
 Michał Merczyński
 and the Malta Festival Poznań 2014 team

* Since 1990, the European Theatre Prize “New Theatrical Realities” has been given – besides Rodrigo García – to Anatolij Wasiljew, Eimuntas Nekrošius, Christoph Marthaler, Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Heiner Goebbels, Alain Platel, Rimini Protokoll, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Sasha Waltz, Pip-po Delbono, Arpád Schilling, François Tanguy – Théâtre du Radeau, Katie Mitchell

The circles which inspired the protests did not want to listen to any of the substantial arguments presented by the team of Malta Festival. We were not able to initiate a dialogue. The team was confronted with the actions of – among others – the Catholic Church hierarchy, representatives of dioceses, The Catholic Youth Association of Poznań Diocese, supporters of Unum Principium association, All-Polish Youth, Gazeta Polska Club, Rosary Crusade, The Committee Against Cults and Violence, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość Parliamentary Club and football hooligans, whose main aim was in preventing the

performance from staging in any form. The team of Malta Festival continued the debate over its merits with the opponents:

– to Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki’s letter (see page 62).

The Archbishop summarized Malta’s reply: “The replies are just defending their own concept. It is not certain, so I don’t want to accuse them of using this as a marketing trick for this festival to be more recognized in Poland. But the director and Poznań authorities should take more care of the cultural level of the city.

http://poznan.gazeta.pl/poznan/1,36037,16171984,Abp_Gadecki___Dopuszczenie_do_spektaklu_oznacza_wprowadzenie.htmlIN9ixzz3ELdfatcq

– a reply to Poznań City Council (see page 89)

– the attempts to build a front that would support showing *Golgota Picnic*

The team had put together comments and opinions about the performance; initiated debates, contacted members of cultural circles (see page 164). Some people like Dorota Jarecka, Małgorzata Dziejewska, and Tomasz Dostatni, answered our appeal. Still, the most common answer was “But you haven’t cancelled it yet”.

– The team of Malta Festival Poznań appeared in the main local and national media defending its choice and the freedom of speech, i.e.

9 June 2014, TVP2 WOK – Wszystko o Kulturze

Michał Merczyński: *“We don’t want to offend anyone. The performance is not presented in a public place. Anyone who wants to can attend it. But it’s not offending anyone’s religious feelings. It is, however, a total protest, showing the hypocrisy of consumptionist society. This is what the performance is about, about how we lose Christian values in the consumptionism and hedonism that we live in. Not the other way around”*

12 June 2014, TVP2 Panorama

Michał Merczyński: *“President Komorowski didn’t recently unveil a monument of Free Speech in the place that used to be the Censors Office, only for us to regress and attempt to introduce a preventative censorship. Because this is what would come out of all the appeals and actions by the politicians”*.

Mikołaj Bylka, Malta Festival Poznań spokesperson: *This performance is not about Christian dogmas, but about our modern world.*

14 June, Radio Merkury, show „Widziane z Poznania”

Michał Merczyński debated the performance with right-

wing publicist Maciej Mazurek:

“Neither the performance, nor the festival are attacking or offending the Church and religion. There is no anti-Christian content here, even Catholic priests admit it. Let me quote father Andrzej Luter: <<I don’t see any content in this performance that would disturb anything>>. [...] There are no pornographic acts in the performance. Nudity is not pornography. [...] We are concerned about the announced protests, because they are growing more powerful. Yesterday we submitted an official request to the Police. [...] Some really disturbing slogans are appearing on the pages of Catholic and right-wing Internet forums. There are voices encouraging strong men, football fans, to gather [in front of the theatre] to block the entrance to Zamek and not to let the performance happen.”

the whole talk:

<http://www.radiomerkury.pl/audycja/widziane-z-poznania/widziane-z-poznania-14-June-2014.html>

18 June, TVN Fakty

Karina Adamska: *We asked the Archbishop to tone down public emotions. We emphasised that the performance is not anti-Christian. It touches upon universal human subjects.*

Since early June the team of Malta Festival Poznań have received multiple phone calls, text messages and e-mails demanding removal of the performance from the Festival programme. The goal was to block Malta team's electronic mailboxes. Some of the e-mails were official requests to cancel the performance, other were vulgar and openly threatening.

” Dear Mr Director! The programme of the upcoming Malta Festival 2014 includes, among others, the performance *Golgota picnic*. To multiple protests that are being sent to the Festival address I want to also add ours – mine and my wife, Anna's, because we can't stay silent when someone tries to offend people's religious feelings. This kind of mean behaviour is not accepted in our culture, as is expressed and proven by several law codes. The protest, important as it is, does not solve the problem yet. It is way more important that *Golgota picnic* is removed from the Festival programme. I honestly encourage you to do so, and I equally honestly and heartily ask you to do that Mr Director.

” We've just learnt that on 27 June 2014 you plan on showing the "spectacle" *Golgota Picnic*, whose image and content is offensive to the religious feelings of the faithful. We inform you that as Catholics we strongly demand that this "spectacle" is cancelled and if our demands aren't met we warn you that we will use all legal means to punish those who are guilty of offending religious feelings. We are ashamed by the fact that the city that is the capital of Greater Poland,

the home city of my father (and father in law, and my grandfather), the city where we still have relatives, is the scene of such things.

” Hello! As a Christian and Pole I protest against your attempt to show the pseudo "art" *Golgota Picnic*, which by all means is destroying Christian values, destroying our roots. Are you Poles? What are you going to tell Christ some day? You can still back out! But you can also dismiss God, and who are you serving then!

” I will pray for you to present valuable things, uplifting for the audience, not the ones who treat the spectator as an insatiable animal – yearning for hellish images, that come to the festival to satisfy itself that the world (as it would like to!) is ruled by Evil. Do you think there is no higher art existing anymore???? To contemplate in your soul and to feed your inside with Good??? Wake up to the Light! And stop mocking other people's feelings, including mine, because thanks to GOD, who we believe in, this world still exists.

” If you want to insult me, come see me you blasphemous motherfuckers!!! You, organizers of the shameful "Golgota picnic", pay for these pseudo spectacles with your own money, not mine!!! It's a robbery to fund someone's sick ravings from somebody else's money! You are an intolerant xenophobe, a primitive with no higher feelings if you contribute to showing this "performance".

” I want to ask you a question: Why do you offend my God with the pseudo-performance *Golgota Picnic*? Who gave you the order for this profanation? Why do you exchange National money for Judas' silver? Thank you for your answer.

- ” On your knees
- ” GET THE FUCK OUT YOU BANDIT CARCASS JUST WAIT TILL I MEET YOU
- ” We have Our Own, Beautiful Polish Culture and Art, that is connected with Poland, Traditional, Honourable – Human and Christian for centuries and We The Nation don't want to take the blame and Suffer – as an Oracle for BLASPHEMING AGAINST THE ONLY GOD.
- ” As Citizens of Poland WE PROTEST!!! WE WILL ALL HAVE OUR GOLGOTA, WILL THAT BE A PICNIC? you non-circumcised morons!!
- ” GTFO!!
- ” No tolerance for mutherfuckers!!!! You want to insult Poland, you mutherfucker?? GET THE FUCK OUT OF IT MUTHERFUCKERS.

— THE ART COMMUNITY

→ 15 days to the cancellation — 22 days to the planned performance

The first reaction in the media to the letters of protest was published in “Gazeta Wyborcza” on 5th June 2014. Roman Pawłowski wrote the following in his article entitled “*This is not Iran:*”

The play *Golgota Picnic* by Argentinean artist Rodrigo García is one of the events at Malta Festival Poznań which commences on Monday. There is a letter of protest on the Internet, the authors of which accuse the play Director of blasphemy, offending religious feelings and sneering at Catholicism. An interpellation to the prime minister was submitted by a parliamentary group for the Prevention of Atheisation of Poland. Other such organisations such as the Youth Crusade and the Rosary Crusade associated with Radio Maryja appealed for a demonstration on 27th June, when the performance was to take place in Poznań. They intended to disrupt the play just like they did in November with Jana Klata’s *Do Damaszku* in the Stary Theatre. I do not question anyone’s right to protest; in a democratic state there is space to express all kinds of views. Even more so in case

of *Golgota Picnic*, which is no bedtime story for good children. Rather, it is a radical and unpleasant play about Western society, steeped in consumerism and devoid of contact with values. It is about art which runs out of metaphysical power and about God becoming powerless in the face of the evil committed with human hands. (...) I understand that believers might take it as blasphemy. They have the right to express their discontent. I also understand politicians who would like to score some extra votes on the protest against “a blasphemous play”. However, both the former and the latter do not have the right to prevent anyone from seeing the play and forming their own opinion. And they certainly do not have the right to use violence. This is not Iran, we are not a theocracy, in which the program of festivals is dictated by religion. Similar protests against this play took place in France in 2011. Back then, however, the Church spoke with a voice of reason. The Archbishop of Toulouse Robert Le Gall said: “We wish to advise against the political manipulations and fundamentalism which lie at the bottom of these demonstrations. Prayer cannot be used by Christians as an instrument of pressure, otherwise it becomes the opposite of what nourishes it: a loving bond with God and fellow human beings. (...) We understand the concern which this play has generated among Christians and we share it. (...) However, groups which use forms of violence and invoke Christianity at the same time also hurt us, as they distort the image of the Church. Jesus never asked for the wrongs done to him to be avenged. (...)”



9 days to the cancellation — **16 days** to the planned performance

11-12 June 2014

There was a cyclical meeting of the members of House on Fire (HoF), a European network of cultural institutions to which Malta Festival Poznań belongs. Katarzyna Tórz, the program coordinator of Malta, presented the developments around *Golgota Picnic* in Poland. There was also a discussion with Théâtre Garonne in Toulouse, where there were also protests against the play in 2011 (the right-wing movement was immediately opposed by the left-wing, the theatre also received support from the state and the performance took place).



7 days to the cancellation — **14 days** to the planned performance

13 June 2014

On 13th June the festival received an open letter by people in culture, which was initiated by HoF. The letter was signed by the representatives of the members of the network: LIFT (London), HAU Hebbel Am Uffer (Berlin), Kaaitheater (Brussels), BRUT (Vienna), Archa Theatre (Prague), Maria Matos Teatro Municipal (Lisbon), Frascati (Amsterdam), Théâtre Garonne (Toulouse), BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen). The most significant support from abroad for the Malta Festival Team came before the cancellation of the performance.

Open Letter from People of Culture of Polish and Europe

Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

The following letter is issued to express our concern about the situation which has been building up for the past few weeks around 'Golgota Picnic', a play directed by Rodrigo García, which will be presented at the Malta Festival Poznań 2014. The protest against this play being shown in Poznań is founded on the opinion that it is offensive towards religion and that it propagates anti-Christian ideas. However, as the protesters themselves admit, the only information they have about the play comes from the internet and none of them have actually seen it. Any leniency towards the demands of removing the performance from the festival will therefore be a classic example of preventative critique and an assault on the freedom of speech. It is our belief that this freedom, one of the most fundamental human values, is based on the right to live and think freely, as well as being able to ask questions – even those which are difficult. Art has always been open to experiment, to pluralism and tolerance, to different points of view.

No one should have the monopoly on discussing topics that raise emotions. The history of the Church should also be open to research and commentary. Rodrigo García exercises this freedom – as a human being and as an artist – to express his ethical and intellectual engagement with the surrounding world. The main theme of his play is the condition of European society immersed in consumerism and hedonism, and the fight against an overwhelming spiritual void. The artist does not violate any human rights, no one is forced to see his work. What is more the performance is presented in an enclosed space, tickets are required and it is designed for people who are over 18.

Poland is a place where questions about freedom should be raised, as it is one of those countries which has fought for its democracy for almost 50 years. Recently, on the 'Square of Free Speech' in Warsaw a monument was raised, commemorating the underground publishing movement between 1976 and 1989. During communist times 'The Office for Press, Publication and Performance Control' had its headquarters not far from that spot. Today, 25 years after regaining our independence, putting on a play in an enclosed space is making people in Poland consider preventative critique and a crusade against art, again.

As people who hold culture in high regard, we demand respect for the value of free speech.

Over the next days the letter gained 300 signatories, among them distinguished artists and directors of important cultural institutions, including names such as (in alphabetical order):

Miroslaw Bałka, Jerome Bel, Filip Berkowicz, Romeo Castellucci, Gabriel Chmura, Andrzej Chyra, John Maxwell Coetzee, Krzysztof Czyżewski, Kamil Dąbrowa, Artur Domoślawski, Małgorzata Dziejulska, Maciej Englert, Tim Etchells, Bernard Faivre d'Arcier, Silvia Fanti, Grzegorz Gauden, Jonny Greenwood, Magda Grudzińska, Roman Gutek, Nan van Houte, Koen Haverbeke, Matthias von Hartz, Agnieszka Holland, Anna Hryniewiecka, Krystyna Janda, Katarzyna Janowska, Grzegorz Jarzyna, Jan A.P. Kaczmarek, Stefan Kaegi, Jerzy Kuściński, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Henk Keizer, Dorota Kędzierzawska, Bartek Konopka, Agnieszka Korytkowska-Ma-

zur, Krzysztof Krauze, Joanna Kos-Krauze, Jan Klata, Maja Kleczewska, Krzysztof Knittel, Piotr Kruszczyński, Jan Lauwers, Krystian Lupa, Paweł Łysak, Juliusz Machulski, Joseph V. Mello, Adam Michnik, Krzysztof Mieszkowski, Paweł Mykietyń, Joanna Mytkowska, Jim O'Quinn, Thomas Ostermeier, Jurek Owsiak, zespół Portishead, Paweł Potoroczyn, Jerzy Radziwiłowicz, Wilhelm Sasnal, Tadeusz Słobodzianek, Paweł Szkotak, Mark Timmer, Mariusz Treliński, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Andrzej Wirth, Gisèle Vienne, Andrzej Wajda, Ellen Walraven, Thomas Walgrave, Ewa Wanat, Willie White

Since the protests began, Malta counted on support from the Polish artistic community. There were those who decided to sign the letter without any hesitation and said publicly that Poznań should go through with the play. However, many times Malta encountered the characteristic reaction – “what do you want me to write, it's not like you cancelled the play”. Before the cancellation only a small group of people in culture and the media actively supported Malta Festival in their endeavours to stage *Golgota Picnic*.



8 days to the cancellation — 15 days to the planned performance

12 June 2014

Priest Andrzej Luter, Panorama, TVP2:

The protests against this play strike me as completely unsubstantiated. I see nothing offensive about it, but that's a very subjective issue, and everyone has a different sensibility.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I439pZKvehg&feature=youtu.be>



2 days to the cancellation — 9 days to the planned performance

18 June 2014

Andrzej Wajda, Jerzy Owsiak, and Grzegorz Gauden appear on the TVN show Fakty

Andrzej Wajda, Fakty TVN

“If I see that this as an inappropriate work of art, I will say so – after seeing it. But I wouldn't like to see the return of preventative censorship in Poland, because this is dangerous. Do not do this.

The play should be performed. And only then it will be assessed.”

Grzegorz Gauden, director of Instytut Książki, Fakty TVN

“I am indignant at the stance of Archbishop Gądecki, because this is an attempt to introduce Church censorship. I cannot accept such a stance and the call for riots on top of that...by an Archbishop...No...This is beyond me...”

<http://fakty.tvn24.pl/aktualnosci,59/sztuka-odwazna-czy-obrazoburcza-protesty-przeciw-golgota-picnic,440982.html>

Jerzy Owsiak, creator of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, also appears on TVN's Fakty to comment on the matter. Owsiak also expressed his opinions in an email to Michał Merczyński:



“I have familiarized myself with materials concerning the performance to the best possible extent and I fully support festivals that give the opportunities to present all kinds of art, festivals which dare to introduce artists and their

works even when they raise great controversies. Nothing and no-one can accept – or refuse to accept – a performance better than a festival audience and its open space. It is the audience who decide if they still want to show up at the theatre, or if the performance has left them indifferent and with no emotional impact. It is wrong of someone who doesn't know the play, who doesn't participate in the performance, to give an unequivocal opinion and impose that judgement onto others. Let art defend itself. And its message, even the most radical one, should only be judged by the audience. The last thing I want to say is – myself, I also refrain from watching many art productions which I consider poor, bad and harmful to me, but this will always be just my personal opinion. Do not lose your determination, face the tough reality and show the performance. I only had a chance to get to know it from hearsay, from very polarised and contradictory opinions.”

Comments by Dorota Jarecka and Małgorzata Dziewulska were published on the website of Malta Festival Poznań, Father Tomasz Dostani made a statement on poznan.gazeta.pl

Dorota Jarecka
art critic for the newspaper 'Gazeta Wyborcza'
Opinion

The protest by the organization 'Krucjata Młodych' against Rodrigo Garcías' *Golgota Picnic*, which is spread under the pretence of acting against the corruption oozing from the theatrical stage, is flabbergasting. It is not the first time that

it needs to be explained that art uses metaphors, and that not every appearance of a naked woman or man on stage is designed to question the dignity of the Polish catholic. The 'Krucjata Młodych' [the Crusade of the Young], as its name suggests, should be fighting a religious war. Of course, the main objective is to defend Jerusalem, but it will not hurt to plunder Constantinople on the way. And that is exactly what is happening. The crusaders have reached the island of Malta and target the most vulnerable integral of civilization – art. One has to admit that 'the Crusade of the Young' is a quite adequate pseudonym.

Stigmatizing art, especially in the name of religion, threatens to be followed closely by censorship. It is the protestors who create the atmosphere of scandal. And every leniency towards the demands of the censors is dangerous when considering freedom of speech. First of all, it is unacceptable to allow preventative criticism. Secondly, the petition of 'Krucjata młodych' concerning removing 'Golgota Picnic' from the Malta Festival on the basis of it being offensive to God and religion lacks merit, as it is a play that denounces evil in favour of such values as 'love thy neighbour'. It is also preposterous that a protest by this marginal faction has been supported by some political parties, PiS among them.

What is *Golgota Picnic* about? It is a play full of sarcasm, but far from cynical. It is an allegory on modern civilization on the brink of both an economical crisis and an ecological catastrophe. The play – a spectacular fresco bringing together theater and film – incorporates elements of the Passion with those of the Apocalypse. There are numerous preachers who would not hesitate to show our lives, filled with consumerism and lust for immediate pleasures, as a carnival of hedonism and egoism. And that is what *Golgota*

Picnic is about. But – Oh my! – it is a secular message and presented in the costume of a religious mystery play. The message is – lust and dreams, which are driven by violence and megalomania, weaken art. Art rests on the other side of the balance scale. It is the counterweight, the means for rescue. Hence the performance by a world famous pianist takes up almost a third of the play. An amazing idea. The piece by Haydn *The Seven Last Words of Christ* seems to be a musical painting of an inner Passion, one that each and every one of us has inside.

The play operates on contrasts. Between the diagnosis stating that we have been pushed to the edge and the therapeutic music, lies a flow of beautiful pictures which refer to classic paintings and modern art alike. One can easily spot the allusion to *The raising of the Cross* by Rubens, *The calling of Saint Matthew* by Caravaggio, *Meat Joy* by Carolee Schneemann or *Orgien-Mysterien Theater* by Hermann Nitsch. An attack on this theatrical performance is a suicidal move, as it is an attempt to undermine the whole of western Europe's iconography based on the very motives García uses: the images of suffering, agony and sexuality, that museums are full of. What „Krucjata młodych” is really doing by using Catholicism as a weapon is encouraging iconoclasm, which aims to banish not only García's *Golgota Picnic*, but the whole of experimental culture, Rubens and Michael Angelo included. Shame it does not state it openly. This band of fanatics will never reach Jerusalem and that is not even its intention. Its intention is raising a civil war within its own culture.

Małgorzata Dziewulska

theatre writer

The smaller and the bigger scandal

1.

A play with a simple message about helplessness became stigmatised as a demonic work. The disproportion is staggering. This story is measured against too big a scale, ascribed too much significance. Rodrigo García's monologue is the complaint of someone who was not given the floor, so he takes it for himself, reverting at times to verbal abuse: "If I don't have fun and I don't irritate others, I die". Why is this the case? The driving force behind the play is the feeling of being betrayed. People in *Golgota Picnic* were deceived by high culture. Not by faith, but by culture. The complaint is against culture, which contrary to all its promises, does not serve as a source of development, but as a tool of domination. That is why their hearts "became like a stone". The second thing is the obsession with over-consumption. Those whose parents went hungry now eat too much.

The central image of the play is not the cross, but the piano. The symbol of classic culture, which, according to classic phraseology should be inherently good, but it is not. It is the object of Rodrigo García and his actors' anger. Those who see the play will find out that the author with all his abuse steps aside and leaves the audience alone with a brilliant pianist who has not donned a tail coat, so that his body would assume a classic status. Instead he is naked, as someone stripped for a medical examination or the gas chamber. Great music speaks here about the "stone heart": why is it that music from the past is used to deafen and to raise anger, and not to spread empathy?

2.

Deliberating about the content of *Golgota Picnic* means entering into the discourse of pretence. The present conflict is not about a different rationale. Theatre was used here as a pretext for another episode of a totally different scandal. It is a confrontation which has been going on in Poland for some time, and which is more pernicious than the play itself. The least responsible and the least decent thing to do at this point is to take up arms and vehemently fight on either side of the argument.

The law, whose abidance is to ensure control of the playing of social emotions, should stand for the protection of the play. If it does not – all the worse – the self-driving communal mechanism would only collect more inertia. Situations like this follow the snowball principle, and, contrary to appearances, we are not active in them, but totally passive.

Theatre has lost already because the sense of an uninhibited participation will be contradicted by a falsified reception. Nevertheless, we needn't worry about Rodrigo García, as he is able to convert his fear and rebellion into art. We should be more worried about those who cannot do that and are left with a "heart of stone". They must do something with this venomous residue. The mechanics of confrontation launches passions in those who are less self-aware, those who enter arguments blindly. It does not give rise to an act of free will, but a play of base motives.

The scenes from *Golgota Picnic* are nothing compared to the training in hatred that is offensive to Christianity, and the dishonest strategy and cynicism to which everyone is subjected, both those on the left and the right. The mechanism of the current conflict takes away freedom, because whatever we say is consumed by an uncivilised power, over which no one has any control. The right to an

individual opinion has therefore already been taken from us.

Politicians, who can read the swinging moods, take them as permission to radicalise the language. In the past it ended with a collective tragedy. But this whole process begins with uncontrolled reflexes and micro-emotions in each of us. Culture and its ambiguous functions equip us with the rhetoric that allows us to miss the moment when evil is instigated.

Apart from father Andrzej Luter, the second clergyman to see the recording of the play and issue a statement about it was Father Tomasz Dostatni – a Dominican and a publicist born in Poznań, who was Director of the publishing house *W drodze*. These days he conducts meetings called "Debaty Dwóch Ambon" ("Debates from Two Pulpits"), the Dominican foundation "Ponad granicami" ("Over the borders"), and "Jak żyć?" ("How to live"), a cycle of meetings with philosophers which is part of Theatrical Confrontations in Lublin. His text was published on www.poznan.gazeta.pl on 20 June 2014

20 June 2014

Tomasz Dostatni

I saw *Golgota Picnic*. I am not outraged by it

Father Tomasz Dostatni: Temperatures around the Church and culture reached boiling point in Poznań. And I still remember the first festival of "Solidarity", when it seemed that the permeation of the artistic and religious spheres was a process enriching both of those worlds. The time of martial law in Poland, when churches and cloisters opened for various

artistic events, was when Poznań Ósemki could perform in the Dominican chapterhouse in Kraków. And not only them, and not only there. For my generation, growing up at that time, this experience of openness in the Church was something obvious, something that shaped us. It taught us to be sensitive towards the ways of experiencing the world other than our own. And friendships from those times, despite the trenches of ideological wars constructed between us, stayed alive and still allow for hope that the deep divide between culture and the Church is possible to get over.

What has happened to us?

Let us refer to the symbolic change of perception which took place in the process of mutual acquainting and discovery, mutual interest. In mid-1970 the play *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* was severely criticised by Bishop Bronisław Dąbrowski, and primate Wyszyński in his sermon in Skałka Church in Kraków called it “real smut”. Twenty years pass and in 1998 Grotowski receives the Fra Angelico in Rome, a distinguished international award from the Church, the honorary committee of which is chaired by Cardinal Glemp. He too (Grotowski) – as Konstanty Puzyna put it – took on the “myth of Christ and resorted to transgression via the dialectics of provocation and blasphemy from one side and fascination and longing from the other”. So what has happened to us today that – instead of trying to understand the questions behind the jarring expression of the pain of loneliness – we prefer to communicate through official statements and introduce a logic of street-level “discussion” and barricades, and we do not attempt the difficult art of dialogue and mutual recognition of points of view?

I've seen *Golgota Picnic*. I am not outraged by it, I am not offended by it. Although I understand that for many

of my brothers in faith it may be shocking, blasphemous, obscene, and in places unacceptable in its deconstruction of issues of religion. But the language of theatre, of artistic expression today is different from the language of sermons or religion classes at school. Maybe it's worth us, as Christians of living faith, to at least make the effort of understanding at least the basic message of such plays, in which an important criticism of consumer society is intertwined with a despair resulting from the today's human condition and the deconstruction of the person of Jesus Christ and his message. Artists try to describe the world, to understand it in a different language and with a different sensitivity. They often resort to provocation and blasphemy. One should bear in mind that sometimes they are allowed more, because they are artists.

For me personally the question of what lurks in people's heads and souls is a very interesting one. How are things perceived by my contemporary, an Argentinean director. Maybe in the homeland of Pope Francis, questions about the world in which I live in were posed a generation earlier than in our part of Europe? Questions regarding the change which each one of us has to undergo. What is a modern Gulgota like? Is it only a symbol, or maybe it has a concrete face? What is the face of a truly lonely person like – both the one living in abject poverty symbolised by the favelas, and the one locked in a seemingly safe flat in Warsaw, Paris, Madrid or Poznań? Will I – as a Christian – hear the scream of a lonely human being who is not willing to be indifferent to the evil of the world, even though it is expressed in a language other than my own theological, religious sensitivity? This play is also a criticism of egoism, people and societies, expressed from a perspective different from my own. But is it wrong? I prefer such thinking to a

confrontation on the street. Because such a confrontation not only leaves no space for dialogue and clarification of one's intentions, but also may slip out of control and leave us all feeling ashamed that we did not prevent it. I always give priority to dialogue, to sitting down at a table together, although I am not naïve and I know that sometimes it is humanly impossible.

Remember the rebellion of Konrad?

The essence of democracy is discussion on every topic – my friend, a priest, reminded us of this fact in the context of a different one of our Polish disputes – there are no banned or inconvenient topics. Every voice on important matters should be heard. One should not be afraid of it. And the voices with which we do not agree in most part, should be particularly well heard by us. Because there may be something in them that we were not able to notice ourselves. We should not address people with whom we do not agree from a position of moral superiority, or treat them “as if they were intellectual monstrosities”. As about issues of iconoclasm in art, theatre, literature. Grotowski is one example close to home, but first and foremost there is Mickiewicz, in whose *Dziady (Forefather's Eve)*, Konrad's rebellion is shouted to God's face and it constitutes a part of our national literary canon. We are taught that at school. And somehow we are able to understand both the general situation and the stance of the Vatican towards our national uprisings. Even if we still do not agree with many facts.

I want to believe that, when emotions cool, Poznań's experience with *Golgota Picnic* will allow us to sit down together at a table – let it be a round one – and attempt to understand the various worlds we live in, both people from artistic circles and people of religion. Because despite

what we might think these worlds permeate each other. Diversity is a great treasure. All we need to do is step outside our own circles of absurdity that we have chalked around ourselves.

http://poznan.gazeta.pl/poznan/1,36037,16185612,O__Dostatni__Obejrzałem__Golgota_Picnic___Nie_jestem.html



Cancellation

20 June 2014

Announcement due to the cancellation of the performance *Golgota Picnic*:

Resulting from an enormous risk of riots, the scale and form of which could present a threat to the spectators, actors and bystanders as well as the possibility of the demolition of public buildings in the city of Poznań, we are forced to cancel the performances of 'Golgota Picnic' that were supposed take on the 27th and 28th of June. We do not wish to be part of the alarming display of hatred towards a different worldview that has been planned in our city during those days.

We would like to emphasize that the one and only reason for the cancellation of the performances is the rising threat to public safety. We act as a result of our responsibility for the spectators, artists, and guests as well as the citizens of Poznań. Once again we underline, that the performance is not anti-Christian in its tone or approach, which is exactly what the protesters, oblivious to rational argumentation, accuse it of. The persecutions and attacks target both the festival and the director of the show, Rodrigo García, as well as the employees of the Malta Festival and CK Zamek who received threatening letters and phone calls. The anonymous and often vulgar content of those threats should be strongly condemned as there is no justification for them. The fierce persecution of the festival is followed closely by something we cannot ignore – the immediate possibility of an attack on the people involved in the performances, spectators and actors alike. And those attacks are most likely to occur, seeing that the demonstrations were planned out with no consideration or care for public safety.

As far as the Police and Municipal Office reports go, on the 27th and 28th of June a demonstration of over 30,000 people is to take place who, as it has been made clear, are going to actively participate in the disruption of the performance. As of this moment, the protesters have not yet made any attempt to ensure the peaceful outcome of their demonstration. What is more, the organizers of the protest, which is supposedly derived from the will to protect Christian values, encourage mostly men to take part in it. Several football gangs have also announced their participation. According to the Police it is highly probable that the demonstration will paralyze the centre of the city and that the protesters are most likely to storm into the building of CK Zamek – the place where the performances were to take place. The urging from the Police to change the date and place of the performance out of consideration for public safety does not require a comment. Ignoring that kind of suggestion would be a tremendous negligence.

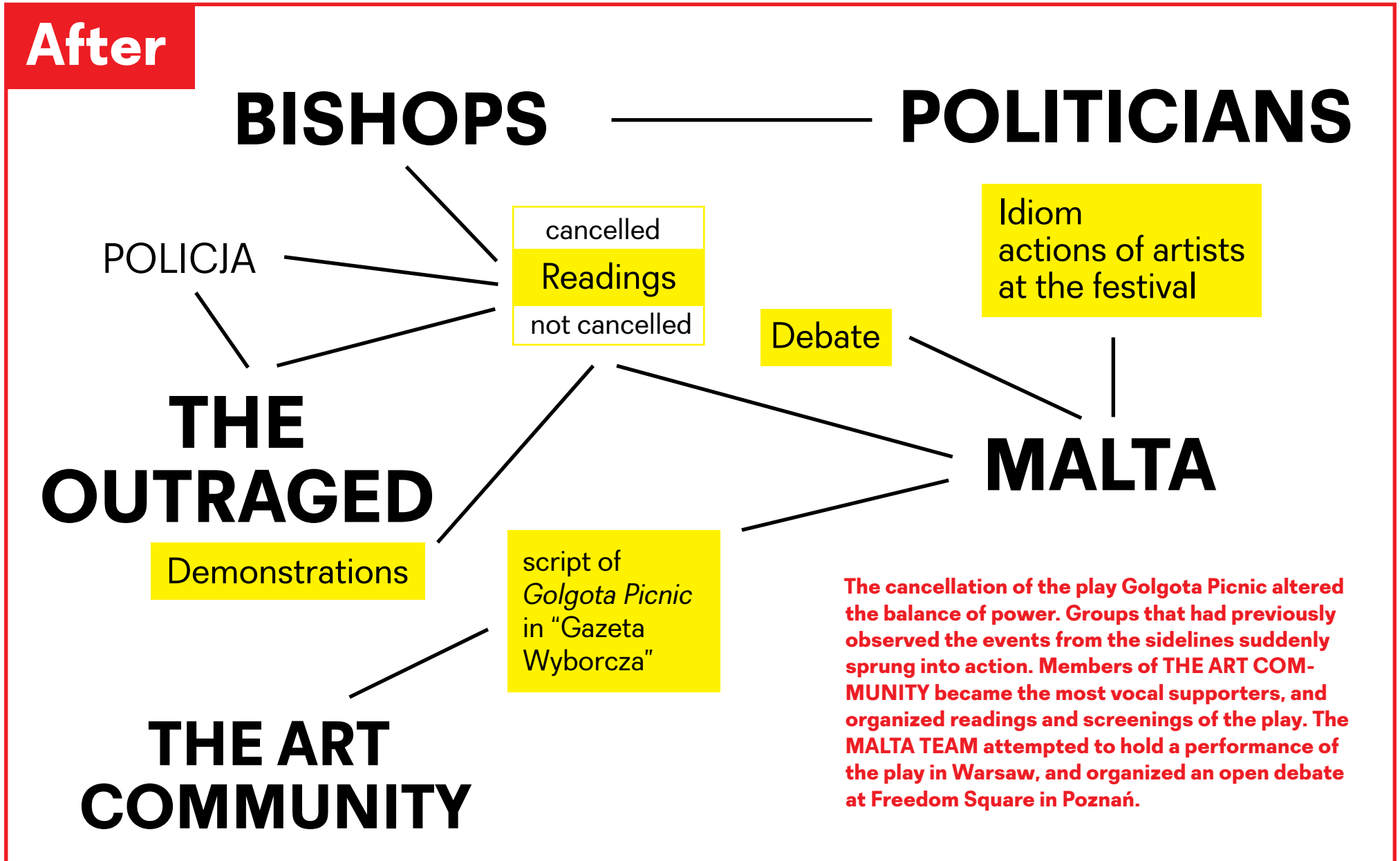
Unfortunately the whole situation becomes even more ominous in the light of the 25th anniversary of the new democracy in Poland. It is at this historical moment and during the 24th edition of the Malta Festival, which has always encouraged creativity and pluralism, that radical groups violating the right to freedom and requesting preventative critique come to the fore. We want our decision not to be the end but the beginning of a discussion on the elementary value of freedom. As people involved in the preservation of the freedom of artistic expression we truly regret the outcome of the whole situation. The main motivation for our decision is however the concern for the life and well-being of the spectators, actors and the employees of CK Zamek as well as our own – all those, who might be affected by the actions of the protesters and football hooligans.

We thank all those who have backed us in the last days – those who have taken the side of reasonable argumentation and who encouraged a dialogue. Your support has been very important to us.

To all those who were to participate in the performances of *Golgota Picnic* we apologize for the inconvenience resulting from our decision. The information on returning the tickets is available on our website malta-festival.pl. Any further information about the tickets can be requested at bilety@malta-festival.pl

Respectfully yours,
Michał Merczyński, the director of Malta Festival Poznań
and the festival team.





— THE OUTRAGED



21 June 2014

One day after the performance was cancelled, “Nasz Dziennik”, a Catholic magazine, announced “careful success”. Carefulness meant here the organisers of protests were still willing to come to Poznań. “On 27th of June, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the annual Eucharistic Procession, would pass next to the place where the performance had been planned. As Anna and Andrzej Kołakowski, representatives of the Rosary Crusade for the Homeland, announced in a letter to Michał Merczyński, they plan to come to Poznań that day to participate in the procession.”

Letter of Anna and Andrzej Kołakowski from Rosary Crusade for the Homeland to Michał Merczyński, director of Malta Festival in Poznań



We are very glad to hear about the cancellation of the sacrilegious pseudo-performance planned as part of the festival

which you organise. Whatever your motivation was (even if it was fear), it is the only sensible decision. We have defended our rights, but firstly and foremostly, the honour of God. We would like you to be aware that neither you, nor García, nor any other 'artist' may take away from God's honour, but also that there is only one position one may take at Golgota, namely on one's knees. Christian humility requires kneeling before God but at the same time fiercely opposing evil. As a result of the Argentinian deviant coming to Poland, an extraordinary awakening and unification of many communities took place, and international cooperation has been launched in order to counter anti-Christian actions. Many have realised that their particular interests are of little importance when faced with sacrilege. We have united so that people like you do not feel unpunishable. We will not let you mess about in our pockets, steal our money to promote evil, and spread pornography, ugliness and vulgarisms - even if you call it art. Please consider that despite the cancellation of the show we will come to Poznań in large numbers. We will thank God for the victory, but also remain alert in case you decide to change your mind.

Anna and Andrzej Kołakowscy
Rosary Crusade for the Homeland

<http://www.naszdziennik.pl/polska-kraj/82822,meznie-sprzeciwiac-sie-zlu.html>
<http://www.naszdziennik.pl/wp/82910,sukces-z-doza-ostroznosci.html>



23 June 2014, Bydgoszcz

Teatr Polski in Bydgoszcz announced they will show a recorded screening of *Golgota Picnic*. According to Polskie Radio PiK, the Unum Principium association sent a letter to Rafał Bruski, urging the mayor to act so that the show would be cancelled. 'It is not the first time that Teatr Polski managed by Paweł Łysak uses culture for barbaric activities aimed at Catholic axiology important for a significant majority of our nation', we read in the association's statement.

The following day, Paweł Łysak, theatre director, told Polish Press Agency: 'I think that it is precisely in the theatre and not on the street where such things should occur. If we stop expressing our opinions and just meet on the street, it would be a step in a very wrong direction, and any dialogue would end. Theatre is a special place where there is a bit more freedom. In there, blood is not really spilt; there are no real dead bodies'.

The news of the screening at the theatre caused protests by numerous groups which sent statements to the city Mayor and the media. One was prepared by the curia. 'Gazeta Polska's' club in Bydgoszcz and Solidarni 2010 association appealed to residents to organise protests and pickets or to write letters. The Law and Justice committee in the city council appealed to the mayor to 'act immediately in order to remove the show from the institution's repertoire'.

http://bydgoszcz.gazeta.pl/bydgoszcz/1,48722,16203790,Sztuke__Golgota_Picnic__pokaza_w_Teatrze_Polskim_w.htmlN9ixzz3F1zlgpbn

**24 June 2014, Poznań**

'Gazeta Polska Codziennie' reports that the *Golgota Picnic* performance will be presented in Warsaw. The news concerning plans to stage *Golgota Picnic*, a play offending Christians' religious feelings, was revealed on Sunday evening on TVP Poznań by editor Robert Chodyła. During a debate on the play, he claimed that the Mayor of Warsaw Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz is interested in a staging. 'I may confirm the news, but so far it is unofficial', Chodyła informs 'Codzienna'.

<http://niezalezna.pl/56670-obrazoburczy-spektakl-golgota-picnic-w-warszawie-i-bydgoszczy>

**25 June 2014, Warszawa**

Columnist Tomasz Terlikowski via Twitter:

Let's collect tickets to *Golgota Picnic* at Teatr Rozmaitości. With rosaries in hands, let's block the screenings.

**25 June 2014, portal Fronda.pl**

Take a rosary and come to the screening of *Golgota Picnic* at Teatr Rozmaitości.

The editors of Fronda.pl encourage readers to collect the free-of-charge tickets from Teatr Rozmaitości. The more of us that take them, the more of a godly hullabaloo we will make during the screening. This is what we must do - manifest our faith when a sacrilege is committed under our very eyes.

Ticket boxes of Teatr Rozmaitości are open from 11am to 7pm. The theatre is located at Marszałkowska 8. We en-

courage all Fronda readers from Warsaw, all believers and supporters of religious sensitivity to come next Friday to *Golgota Picnic* at 4pm. This will be the best audience for this screening. God's strength given by the rosary and prayers will definitely lead to none of the sacrilegious record's film frames appearing on screen at the theatre.

Remember: we cannot just sit and do nothing while the satanic *dance macabre* plays out in front of us, camouflaged as art or culture. React!

Fronda.pl

We already have the results of our action. Teatr Rozmaitości has just officially stopped giving out tickets. The official reasoning is that they have gone already.

<http://www.fronda.pl/a/wez-rozaniec-w-dlon-i-przyjdz-na-spektakl-golgota-picnic-do-teatru-rozmaitosci,38836.html>

**25 June 2014, Bydgoszcz**

An open letter from Catholic Action of Bydgoszcz Diocese to the Mayor of Bydgoszcz Rafał Bruski

Mr Mayor,

Once again we see that our hopes related to your management of our City have dissolved in the complicated labyrinth of what is public and what is individual.

We are able to say so, when we compare two things: the last sentence from our letter to you concerning the profanation of the Holy Week, and your approval to present the sacrilegious *Golgota Picnic* performance on 27th of June this year, in Teatr Polski in Bydgoszcz. We remain hopeful that your answer to our letter will be the type of

acting in the future which does not hurt Catholics who constitute the majority of Bydgoszcz residents.

We have filtered out the words of our protests in order to avoid various emotional and crude expressions, but we could not resign from one: the word 'surprise'!

It stems from various roots; we would like to share some with you.

1) By agreeing to show *Golgota Picnic* you have become one of the destroyers of Latin civilisation. We defend it just as many other Catholic communities in Bydgoszcz, as proven by a quote from representatives of these groups coming from a 2013 letter to the creators of the 'Masterplan for the culture of Bydgoszcz' document. The document lays out citizens' strategy for the development of culture in 2013–2020. The quote concerns basic ideas behind the *Masterplan* project which were not clearly set when it was published. They should have been, because if such a long-term culture development strategy is to come from 'citizens', then the citizens need to know how the Authors of the project understand culture and what moral and ethical values they associate with it. A thorough reader will find, in dispersion, many expressions which suggest the ideology of the Authors. Here is one: '(...) Everyone has their own system of values. Axiological differences are the most important feature of modern urban culture. A common path is the development path for culture in the city, so that each of the systems of artistic values and each type of artistic expression may be protected. (...)' [p. 10]. This statement could be replaced by a much more understandable quote, defining '[...] culture as everything that people do, think and own as members of a community. (...)' (Robert Bierstedt).

This may be true. However, nowadays there is no doubt that 'each type of artistic expression' leads to breaking barriers which even recently seemed impossible to be broken: common sense, good manners, and religious sacrileges. There are numerous examples. A horse's carcass with a crucifix in the belly (Maurizio Cattelano), laminated human corpses (Günther Hagens), a pyramid of animal carcasses (Katarzyna Kozyra), striped boxes (Leon Tarasewicz) or welding (Jagoda Siegień). There is no obligation to understand culture in this way, if it manifests in such works. Taxpayers surely include people who will not be fooled by neo-Marxist interpretations of reality or fresh intellectual frauds. For anyone who is touched by such works of art: pictures, words or music, we would like to recommend private galleries, stages and salons financed from private resources.

Mr Mayor! Will you be satisfied if we add *Golgota Picnic* performed in Teatr Polski to the above list of 'artistic works'?

2) Agreeing to show *Golgota Picnic* means that you stand among those politicians in Poland who have mouths full of clichés on respecting democracy or the 'voice of the people' but in fact are disrespectful and contemptuous towards both the people and their voice.

Mr Mayor! Are 60 thousand votes of protest against the staging of the play during Poznań's Malta not enough?

3) By agreeing to show *Golgota Picnic* you place yourself among the protectors of Teatr Polski's spokesperson who accept her following words: 'The play should be performed at Malta. Cancellation will be treated as a fail-

ure of freedom of speech. This is a sign of solidarity'. Mr Mayor! Do you agree that taxpayers should bear costs of solidarity with any case close to the heart of any administrative worker?

4) By agreeing to show *Golgota Picnic* you stand - too soon - among the losers in the elections. Mr Mayor! Have you really decided not to be elected again? Mr Mayor, it is possible that our hopes will once again be disappointed in the turmoil of what is individual and public. This time, therefore, we do not even present them, and make no requests.

This time, as our citizen and human rights allow, we demand from you the cancellation of the *Golgota Picnic* screening in Bydgoszcz, on behalf of the Catholic Action of Bydgoszcz Diocese.

With best regards,

Rev. Krzysztof Panasiuk, Diocese Assistant of the Catholic Action of Bydgoszcz Diocese

Hanna Marchlik, President of the Diocese Institute of the Catholic Action of Bydgoszcz Diocese

<http://www.naszdziennik.pl/polska-kraj/83149,zadamy-odwolania-golgota-picnic.html>



25 June 2014, Lublin

Lublin's Culture Centre, which is an institution subordinate to the Town Hall, decided: 'Due to ongoing discussion in media and social media concerning the content of the cancelled performance, we would like to give a chance to our audience to form their own opinions on the subject. We would therefore like to participate in the national action conducted by many cultural institutions and organisations in Poland, and will organise a special screening of the performance'. It will take place on Friday, 27th June at 9 PM in the cinema at the Centre. Tickets are free of charge.

Grzegorz Reske, the person behind the screening and organiser of Konfrontacje Teatralne festival explains that the Centre will not spend even one zloty on the screening. 'There is nothing that violates the law in the performance. We are showing it to a closed audience of 90. Those who want to form opinions may come and see the performance. Many participants of the discussion have not seen it and only repeat what they have heard', he told 'Wyborcza'. 'So far, no form of art has been censored in Lublin; I hope it will be so this time as well, and the Mayor shall not intervene. We are not breaking the law in any way. The screening is free, closed and available to people over 18 years old. I do not see any pretext for any institution to forbid it.'

It is known that at 9 PM on Friday, if the screening takes place, a common picket of pro-life movement, far right-wing circles and nationalists will take place. 'After the unsuccessful attempt to stage the sacrilegious *Golgota Picnic* play in Poznań, its organisers are trying to show the 'work' in other Polish cities. We definitely oppose this disgusting, sacrilegious pseudo-play! Screening of the vulgar and

pornographic *Golgota Picnic* mocking Christ's Passion is organised by an institution subordinate to the City!', says the statement signed by Pro-Life foundation, the National Movement, Koliber association of Lublin, Natan Association of Pedagogues, ONR of Lublin and the All-Poland Youth of Lublin.

If the town hall does not change its decision, they will demonstrate on July 1 in front of the hall at plac Łokietka, demanding the dismissal of Centre's director, Aleksander Szecht.

At the same time, Ruch Młodych (the youth branch of Twój Ruch political party) points out to Law and Justice that they return to 'phallus' rhetoric in their statements. Ruch Młodych reminds councillor Drozda of what he said on the topic of the citizens' budget: 'Let us imagine for example that a group of students motions for the construction of a statue of a phallus at plac Litewski. The idea may receive many votes in a referendum, or even win it. Will we build the statue or not?'

http://lublin.gazeta.pl/lublin/1,48724,16211547,PiS__Nie_dla__Golgota_Picnic___Pomoga_narodowcy_.i.html?piano_d=1

A letter by 'Falcon' Polish Gymnastic Society in Lublin to Krzysztof Żuk, mayor of Lublin, concerning cancellation of the sacrilegious *Golgota Picnic* screening to take place next Friday in Lublin.

Krzysztof Żuk, Mayor of Lublin

Following protests, the performance was cancelled in Poznań. Instead, the director made a recording of *Golgota Picnic* available to interested Polish institutions. Lublin's Cultural Centre which is supported with money from our taxes would like to take advantage of this 'offer'.

Mr Mayor!

The Polish Gymnastic Society 'Falcon' in Lublin firmly protests against screenings of this sacrilegious performance in our city. What is most outrageous is the fact that the screening is planned at the Cultural Centre, an institution financed from the city budget. It may be openly said that if mayor of the city, representing the Centre's owner, does not block the undertaking, he will be partially guilty of a crime - as the Archbishop of Poznań calls it. Mr Mayor's potential lack of approval for protests will be even more shocking, since as far as we know you believe yourself to be a practising Christian who receives Sacraments. At the same time, we hope that your subordinates planned the screening without you knowing about it. We request the dismissal of the Cultural Centre's director. We also hope for you to react adequately. A lack of reaction would mean you are not worthy of being the mayor of Lublin. Although the Society is not a party in political disputes, and will not recommend particular candidates

for the mayor this autumn, it will definitely engage in an informational campaign analysing who is unable to perform this function due to moral reasons.

On behalf of Polish Gymnastic Society 'Falcon' in Lublin,
Piotr Mazur, Secretary of the Society

<http://www.naszdziennik.pl/polska-kraj/83164,musimy-bronic-naszyc-wartosci.html>



25 June 2014, Warszawa

Rev. Jarosław Wąsowicz, historian, columnist, organiser of the National Patriotic Pilgrimage of Football Supporters to Jasna Góra: 'I think Catholic Charismatic Renewal should organise prayers for their former sister, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, who clearly needs them since she agrees to screenings of *Golgota Picnic*'.

FRONDA: Many Catholic groups - but not only them - protest against *Golgota Picnic*. Will football supporters also show their disagreement?

KS. JAROSŁAW WĄSOWICZ: Supporters also belong to these brave people who defend our honour and protest against the sacrilegious play. They will definitely appear in places where protests against *Golgota Picnic* will be held. I know that, as many young football supporters have asked me how to become involved.

F: There is already news that the play cancelled in Poznań may be staged or shown in other Polish cities... Screenings are to take place in Bydgoszcz and Warsaw...

J.W.: I am sorry that there are Poles who want to present such a sacrilegious play. Most particularly, I am moved by Warsaw, where Ms Mayor allows sacrilege in the capital city of our country, and not for the first time. An example may be Madonna, who performed on the anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, and before that on August 15, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, one of the greatest Catholic holidays. Even in her pseudonym this singer refers to one of the most sacred symbols of Catholics, and she tarnishes her name in a sacrilegious manner. Now, it turns out, Ms Mayor gladly allows for *Golgota Picnic* to be shown in Warsaw. I am especially sad because Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz used to be an active member of the charismatic movement, and participated in various prayer meetings of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. This shows that even when being very close to God it is possible to get lost at a certain stage of one's life. This regrettable example shows that we all must pray for loyalty to Jesus until the end of our lives. I think the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a movement with a great power of prayer, and they should organise prayers of atonement for their former sister who clearly needs them.

F: However, also among Catholics there are voices that despite the controversy of *Golgota Picnic* it cannot be deemed sacrilegious. Rev. Andrzej Luter, for instance, said that there is no factual basis for protests against the performances, which only make believers more radical.

J.W.: The statements and opinions of Rev. Luter are of completely no interest to me. I am interested in statements from shepherds of the Church which are clear in this case. Rev. Luter needs to be reminded that Christianity in itself is very radical. If Rev. Luter enjoys such performances and *Golgota Picnic* is no sacrilege for him, I think he should try a retreat in order to thoroughly reflect on various things.

F.: Others say that protests against *Golgota Picnic* only spread the word about the show. How to solve the dilemma...

J.W.: ... there is no dilemma here! If Jesus is offended and the most sacred event, the redemption of humanity at the cross, is portrayed in an obscene way, there should be no dilemmas. Sacred symbols of faith have been profaned for some time now in Poland by so-called pseudo-art. What are we talking about? What does this discussion concern? What is sacrilege? Perhaps Rev. Luter will answer the questions, for example via 'Gazeta Wyborcza', where he often writes...

Interv. MaR

<http://www.fronda.pl/a/ks-wasowicz-dla-frondapl-odnowa-w-duchu-swietym-powin-na-zorganizowac-modlitwy-ekspiacyjne-za-prezydent-warszawy,38843.html>



25 June 2014, Wrocław

Several people prayed a rosary in front of Teatr Polski in Wrocław, with the intention of conversion of the creators and actors of *Golgota Picnic*. A screening of the recorded performance was planned for Friday, 27 June, at 7 PM in Teatr Polski in Wrocław, on Jerzy Grzegorzewski's stage. Among others, Lower Silesian Solidarity and church circles oppose the screening.

Opponents prayed a rosary for God's mercy. 'We pray as compensation for both creators and actors. We pray for their conversion and mercy for them. We do not pray against; we pray for God to somehow forgive them'.

A Dominican, Father Norbert Oczkowski, was leading the prayer. Piotr Baron, a famous saxophone player from Wrocław, also belonged to the group.

A link to the recorded prayer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=RUKQe_1FMKg
<http://www.mmwroclaw.pl/484844/kontrowersje-wokol-golgoty-picnic-we-wroclawiu-odmowili-rozaniec-o-nawrocenie-przed-teatrem-polskim-wideo>



26 June 2014, Lublin

The Cultural Centre in Lublin decides to cancel the screening of *Golgota Picnic*: 'As people of the Art Community we regret that the play has become an object of political games, and worsened the ideological dispute'. The Curia, councillors of Law and Justice and various other circles have protested, among others: the Pro-Life foundation, the National Movement, Koliber association of Lublin, Natan Association of Pedagogues, ONR of Lublin and the All-Poland Youth of Lublin. In a common statement they announced they would

demand the dismissal of the Cultural Centre's director if the screening takes place. After the councillors' appeal, e-mails from protesters flooded the mailbox of Krzysztof Żuk, mayor of Lublin.

<http://www.kurierlubelski.pl/artykul/3485415,emisja-golgota-picnic-w-lublinie-odwolana-centrum-kultury-ugielo-sie-pod-protestami,id,t.html>



26 June 2014, Wrocław

For yet another time, opponents of screenings gather in front of Teatr Polski and pray for mercy for the performance's creators. The Archbishop of Wrocław spoke on the matter on the same day. Archbishop Józef Kupny issued an official communication explaining that presenting the performance may raise worries and that he supports prayer in the intention of people promoting *Golgota Picnic*. At Saint Adalbert's church, the intention during the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy was to 'apologise for the sin of public sacrilege, namely *Golgota Picnic*.' The Archbishop underlines that freedom cannot be referred to as a reason for offending religious feelings. Carmelite nuns and Sisters of Mercy of St. Borromeo also joined in the apologetic prayers.

Town councillor Maria Zawartko in an interview for Radio Rodzina: 'A private theatre may stage whatever they want. But a public one where our money goes should allocate it to beautiful performances. Why are our religious feelings constantly offended?', she asked.

Professor Ireneusz Józwiak of the Wrocław Institute of Technology announced that he would notify the Prosecutor's Office. 'People responsible for the contents of this performance violate legal standards binding in Poland. If it

is a celebration of pornography and violence, with a portrayal of sexual acts, the situation is undisputable.'

<http://www.prw.pl/articles/view/36106/Golgota-Picnic-wroclaw-modla-sie-o-nawrocenie>



26 June 2014, Warszawa

The script of *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García was read out in Nowy Teatr in Warsaw. A crowd of protesters gathered at the front and tried to block the entrance for the audience. They formed two lines to protect the door and pushed the audience away. Protesters prayed and sang religious songs, as well as held banners stating 'We do not want donation for profanation', 'Enough with murdering Christians', and 'Barbarians or artists'. Later on, they would strike pot covers they brought to disrupt the reading.

Despite the protest, the audience at Teatr Nowy was full. *Golgota Picnic* received a standing ovation. A meeting with the director was to be held afterwards, but somebody tossed a bottle with a stinky and suffocating substance into the room. The meeting was cancelled.\

<http://dzieje.pl/kultura-i-sztuka/golgota-picnic-w-warszawie-tlum-protestujacych-przed-teatrem>



26 June 2014, Gdańsk

At 3 PM in front of the Regional Office in Gdańsk a protest against the promotion of sacrilege in Poland was held.

**26 June 2014, Łódź**

The screening of *Golgota Picnic* started at Fabryka Sztuki at 7 PM. Over a hundred people from right-wing and Catholic circles gathered in front of the building, protesting against the performance which offended their religious feelings. Protesters recited the chaplet to the Divine Mercy, and continued praying together at a mass in the cathedral. They announced another demonstration in front of Teatr Pinokio on Friday - when a public reading of the *Golgota Picnic* script will take place. ('Dziennik Łódzki')

Earlier that day, Catholic Saint Adalbert Club notified the Prosecutor's Office of a planned crime, referring to the screening of *Golgota Picnic* planned for Friday at Fabryka Sztuki in Łódź. (PAP)

<http://www.dzienniklodzki.pl/artukul/3486591,golgota-picnic-w-fabryce-sztuki-w-lo-dzi-protesty-katolikow-zdjeciafilm,id,t.html?cookie=1>

**26 June 2014**

The Polish Committee for Protection against Sects and Violence notified eight Prosecutor's Offices of potential crimes which they should prevent by forbidding directors of several theatres to screen *Golgota Picnic*. 'I think that only through the Prosecutor's Office will it be possible for those who plan to mock God and Christ to withdraw from this undertaking', said Ryszard Nowak, president of the Committee.

<http://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/zawiadomienia-do-prokuratur-ws-pseudospektaklu-golgota-picnic/>

**27 June 2014, Wrocław**

Catholic Action joins protests regarding the plan to screen the sacrilegious pseudo-performance *Golgota Picnic* in Teatr Polski in Wrocław and many other cities on 27.06.2014. The performance has caused controversies in numerous countries, led to mass demonstrations and had been previously cancelled from the schedule of Malta Festival Poznań.

This is not the first attempt at showing a pseudo-play which only aims at showing sacrilegious content, hurting Christian values and the conscious offense of believers' religious feelings. We would like to appeal to all to boycott the screening. Send your protests to the Director of Teatr Polski, local government and the Marshal of Lower Silesia region.

<http://www.tygodniksolidarnosc.com/pl/articleCategory/showArticle/id/4735.html>

**27 June 2014, Chorzów**

Teatr Rozrywki in Chorzów cancels the screening of *Golgota Picnic*, 'under pressure of blackmail', says the director. On the day the screening was planned, the theatre was bombarded with telephone calls from opponents of the sacrilegious, according to some, play. 'Telephones and intruders. Only protesters would come, threatening demonstrations and turmoil', Grzegorz Juranek, a worker at the theatre, said. According to the sources of the theatre, members of the National-Radical Camp and All-Poland Youth planned a protest in front of the building.

<http://www.dziennikzachodni.pl/artukul/3487279,teatr-rozrywki-szantazowany-pokaz-golgota-picnic-wideo-odwolany-ktos-grozil-dyrektorowi,id,t.html?cookie=1>



27 June 2014, Szczecin

Teatr Kana in Szczecin has called off the screening of the recorded *Golgota Picnic* performance as a reaction to activities by Ruch Narodowy. The nationalist association for Zachodniopomorskie region created an event on Facebook entitled 'No for *Golgota Picnic* in Szczecin' and called for a boycott of the screening. 'We managed to block the staging of *Golgota Picnic* in Poznań, but unfortunately a recording of the performance is to be show in Szczecin, as well. WE CANNOT LET THIS HAPPEN! Let us meet in front of Teatr Kana at plac Piotra i Pawła 4/5, on Friday at 6:30 PM. We would like all the patriotic and Catholic circles to mobilise, as well as those of you who simply do not agree to having your religious feelings offended. Let us share the event and invite friends! We cannot allow vulgar attacks on Christianity and Christ's Passion in our city! Vivat Christus Rex!'

http://www.wszczecinie.pl/aktualnosci,kana_odwoluje_golgote_picnic,id-23784.html



27 June 2014, Bydgoszcz

Opponents of the screening started to gather near the theatre two hours before it was to start. Over 500 people prayed at the square (other sources report 1500). 'Pensioners from Radio Maryja Friends' Circle and young people from Light-Life Movement came. Probably all Catholic associations active in the town sent their representatives. Supporters of Zawisza football club also came in large numbers. Politics was represented by Solidarni 2010 and All-Poland Youth, as well as individual members of Law and Justice, for instance Marek Gralik, candidate for the city mayor's office. Of course, Bogdan Dżakanowski was there as well. The most famous right-wing clown came with a huge rosary, aspergillum and a bucket of holy water. He would generously sprinkle viewers waiting for the smelly gas to disappear.' The demonstration also resembled a prayer meeting led by priests. Sentences such as 'Christ the King' and 'Catholic Poland' were chanted. Banners read that 'The poor creature thinks the hackwork is culture', 'Hitler and Stalin fought God as well, everyone knows how they ended', 'Poznań kicked them, so they enter Bydgoszcz by the back door' and 'Stupid'. Listeners of Radio Maryja, representatives of Catholic Action for Bydgoszcz Diocese, Rowerowa Brzoza association and supporters of Zawisza Bydgoszcz were among the protesters as well. They chanted 'God, honour, the homeland'. A young priest, Brother Robert Szylman, spiritual leader of the protest, led the rosary. A band sang well-known religious songs with the accompaniment of guitar. 'We pray for the crazies who created the performance and brought it to Bydgoszcz', said somebody in the crowd. 'Whoever offends Jesus, offends me as well. And for our tax money, too', an elegant elderly lady in a jacket

said. Leaflets with appeals to mayor Rafał Bruski, general prosecutor Andrzej Seremet and chief of the police Marek Działoszyński among others were distributed. A statement by the organisers was also given out.

Football jobs and nationalists disturbed the screening at Teatr Polski. It was the most aggressive group of about twenty protesters. They screamed at the audience of *Golgota Picnic*, using words such as 'Secret agents will be f****d!'. They entered the screening room and one of them spilled acrid liquid inside, just when the screening was about to start. A break was necessary and everyone had to leave the room due to the unbearable smell. Paweł Łysak, director of the theatre, tried to describe the performance. Nationalists disrupted his speech with claims that even in the theatre God is the greatest Lord. Security tried to lead the group outside, but to no avail. The nationalists began praying a rosary as well. A priest, Brother Ryszard Szyłman, tried to calm them down, too. He heard only 'If you want to get smart, go outside' in return. The screening began almost an hour later than planned. Windows had to remain open, or else the audience would suffocate because of the gas. They did not hear much because of the noise the protesters made.

[compilation from various sources]

http://bydgoszcz.gazeta.pl/bydgoszcz/1,48722,16232403,Kilkaset_osob_protestowalo_przed_teatrem_przeciwko.htmlN9ixzz3FV5yQA2l

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN9ixzz3F2LRrIKP



27 June 2014, Białystok

Between 300 and 500 representatives of Catholic and nationalist groups, including the National Renaissance of Poland, the All-Polish Youth, Loyal Poland and football supporters, protested against the reading and screening of *Golgota Picnic* at private Teatr TrzyRzecze in Białystok. People prayed and shouted: 'God, Honour, Homeland', 'In our faith our pride', 'Come to us', and 'Poland is national, not red or rainbow'. Some of them carried pictures of Jesus, candles and rosaries.

Everything was quite calm right before 7 PM. The area in front of the theatre was fenced with tape, and police protected the entrance. Those willing to see the screening could enter without trouble. Some people started discussions. 'Freedom is not offending others, young girl! You are offending Jesus, my Lord', said an older man to a young girl. 'You offend me by not letting me see what I would like to see', she answered. Natasza Topor, an artist from Białystok associated with Teatr TrzyRzecze, started to play *Ave Maria* on violin while smiling to people behind the tape. A moment later protesters started to recite the chaplet to the Divine Mercy.

'We've come here because our most sacred values are tarnished: God, honour and the homeland', said Adam Andruszkiewicz of the All-Poland Youth. After a while the crowd started to chant these words. Right before the screening started, several hundred people started to pray a rosary. Organisers of the protest explained that the play offends Catholic and national values. They demanded that Rafał Gawęł, president of Dom na Młynowej association which runs Teatr TrzyRzecze, leave Białystok. The associa-

tion, among others, monitors instances of intolerance, racism and xenophobia. About 30 people watched the screening and listened to the script in the old wooden building which houses the theatre.

After a few days, it was noted that a film had been recorded and made public by 'Gazeta Białystok' - and one can hear how a woman explains to a fellow protester that the building is 'avant-garde financed by the Batory Foundation. This means Jewry'. The person has been identified as deputy conservator of Podlaskie Province, Zofia Cybulko. The following day the voivod of Podlasie decided to terminate her work contract.

[compilation from various sources]

<http://www.radio.bialystok.pl/wiadomosci/index/id/114245>

<http://www.radio.bialystok.pl/wiadomosci/index/id/114388>

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN°ixzz3F2LRrIKP

http://bialystok.gazeta.pl/bialystok/1,35235,16246655,Jak_podlaska_konserwator_zabytkow_demaskuje__zydostwo_.html



27 June 2014, Lublin

The screening of *Golgota Picnic* took place in a private club, Dom Kultury, at the boardwalk in Lublin. Everything was calm. The performance was watched by about a hundred people. Several police officers kept an eye on the club, discreetly. Despite fears, there were no disturbances.

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN°ixzz3F2LRrIKP



27 June 2014, Katowice

A group of praying people gathered in front of the theatre. One of them sprinkled anybody who went inside with holy water. Police had to intervene for the screening of *Golgota Picnic* at Teatr Śląski in Katowice to take place. The entrance to Malarnia stage was blocked by a group of praying people and All-Poland Youth representatives. They had banners reading 'Golgota Picnic offends Catholics'. Police, who had been notified before, made a path for the audience. 'No serious incidents occurred. Documents of participants in the event were inspected. We will further analyse the situation', Jacek Pytel, spokesperson of Katowice's police, told Polish Press Agency. Robert Talarczyk, director of Teatr Śląski, said before the screening that viewers have the right to face the work of art and judge its artistic value for themselves. (PAP)

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN°ixzz3F2LRrIKP



27 June 2014, Łódź

The reading of the play was to take place in Teatr Pinokio in Łódź, but was stopped because a group of protesters came into the theatre. Its director decided not to begin with the reading.

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN°ixzz3F2LRrIKP

**27 June 2014, Kraków**

20 people gathered in front of Teatr Nowy in Kraków. They prayed on their rosaries and were calm. However, police and a security company hired by the theatre kept order. The plan was for Jan Hartman to give a lecture on *'From freedom of expression to the right to forbid'* after the reading. Several hundred people came to Stary Teatr where the performance was screened. They blocked the entrance to the building so well that not everybody with their tickets could get inside. They shouted: 'Great Catholic Poland' and 'Don't let anyone rule in your own house'. One of the banners read: 'The Fighting Church'. A journalist of *Gazeta Wyborcza* relates that when police officers helped her get through the crowd, everyone around asked why she was going there and whether she wanted to go to hell.

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN9ixzz3F2LRrIKP

**27 June 2014, Słupsk**

Several dozen viewers saw a recording of *Golgota Picnic* at Teatr Rondo. Demonstrations by Catholic groups were avoided as there had been no news of the screening. Only selected and invited members of Słupsk's cultural community attended the screening; the organisers wanted to avoid demonstrations and pickets in front of Teatr Rondo. They succeeded.

<http://www.gp24.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140628/SLUPSK/140629638>

**27 June 2014, Poznań**

When the script of the play was being read on Plac Wolności, representatives of the Poznań' Patriotic Association 'Faithful to Poland' ordered 'an exorcism with prayer to saint Michael'. At the same time, on Plac Mickiewicza there was a procession to worship the Sacred Heart of Jesus. 'Somebody told me today: You should also say, your Grace, that the performance is anti-Semitic, because Jesus was a Jew', says Poznań's Archbishop and Head of Polish Bishops, Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki.

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN9ixzz3F2LRrIKP

A link to the film:

http://poznan.gazeta.pl/poznan/10,88284,16233229,Czytanie_tekstu_sztuki__Golgota_Picnic__w_Poznaniu.html

**27 June 2014, Warszawa**

Protests against *Golgota Picnic* were held in front of Warsaw's TR theatre on Friday afternoon. About 200 people trying to stop the screening of the play gathered in front of the building. Several people blocked the entrance to the theatre. They held white and red flags and posters (e.g. 'Stop the culture of death'), and sang religious songs. Viewers who came to the screening had to squeeze through a line of protesters who pushed them and called them names. Police officers were also pushed and abused. 'Gazeta Wyborcza' quoted one of protesters as follows: 'Such a dirty play from our money! Such a piece of crap! Such rubbish!' Police had to intervene to separate the protesters from the viewers

who wanted to come inside. 'Leave the people!' 'Are you proud of yourselves?!', shouted protesters at the police.

In front of the main entrance to the Palace of Culture and Science at Plac Defilad, actors of Warsaw's theatres started reading the script of the play right after 8 PM. A hundred protesters gathered. They sang religious songs, hymns and 'Rota' to the accompaniment of whistles, horns and megaphones. They also carried posters reading 'Enough mocking of Christ's Passion'. Actors were welcomed by a loud ovation from the audience. 'Who has no sense of humour, does not understand life' - one of the first lines of the play was received with much laughter and clapping. Right after the reading started, one of the protesters got on to the stage and put a megaphone next to the ear of one of the actresses. After half an hour of reading, the actors thanked the audience. They also addressed the demonstrators, saying: 'Thank you for your participation as well'.

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16231482,Protesty_na_pokazach__Golgoty_Picnic__w_calym_kraju_.htmlN9ixzz3F2LRrIKP



27 June 2014, Wrocław

On Friday evening, between 200 and 500 people, according to various sources, protested in front of Teatr Polski in Wrocław against the screening of *Golgota Picnic*. Protesters prayed and sang religious songs. The audience of the theatre's large stage was full. Due to a lack of seats, many people could not attend the screening.

'This is prayer and not a protest', said those who came to stand in front of the theatre on the day the recording of *Golgota Picnic* was shown. Director of Teatr Polski went out and invited all the demonstrators to the screening and

discussion. He did not convince them, however. One of the protesters said that 'we were dealing with satanic pornography here'. Polish Radio Wrocław recorded a conversation which occurred before the screening between director Mieszkowski and the leader of protesters,

KRZYSZTOF MIESZKOWSKI: Please, come and see it. I think is it an enlightening performance which may be judged on the basis of one's own system of values.

O. NORBERT OCZKOWSKI: I am afraid that if I went to see the play, I would have to disturb the performance...

K.M.: You have a right to do that.

N.O.: But I don't want that - I am a cultured man. I prefer to be here.

By June 27, three notifications had been filed to the Wrocław Prosecutor's Office concerning the screening of *Golgota Picnic*. Prosecutor Jakub Przystupa told Radio Wrocław that two notifications had been filed by private individuals and one by Ryszard Nowak's National Committee against Sects.

[compilation from various sources]

<http://www.prw.pl/articles/view/36106/Golgota-Picnic-wroclaw-modla-sie-o-nawrocenie>

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16238174,Nocne_czytanie__Golgota_Picnic__w_Gdan-sku__Rozaniec.htmlN9ixzz3FV90IQUC



28 June 2014, Gdańsk

Actors of Teatr Wybrzeże in Gdańsk directed by Adam Nalepa read out the script of *Golgota Picnic* at night in the centre of Krytyka Polityczna.

A hundred protesters appeared at the location of the reading, starting their protest in a peaceful manner. They expressed it in praying a rosary and in singing religious songs. They remained in front of the building guarded by a large group of police officers.

Right before 10 PM, or half an hour before the reading was to start, boycotters from Catholic communities and nationalists started to gather in front of Krytyka Polityczna's office. 'We want to protest against the blunt sacrilege, namely reading or performing *Golgota Picnic*', Tomasz Pałasz, head of All-Poland Youth, said. 'Today we protest in various forms, through prayer and singing. We protest just as we did in Poznań before Malta Festival, where the result was positive and the play was not staged.'

There were about 20 police officers protecting the event. Organisers of the reading had asked participants to send requests for tickets via e-mail, due to safety concerns and the limited number of seats. Only people from the list were supposed to go in. However, the boycotters also subscribed to the event.

In the same building as Krytyka Polityczna is the office of the 'Civitas Christiana' Catholic Association (on the first floor, while the day room of Krytyka is on the second). This association organised a common prayer meeting on that day; something the organisers of *Golgota Picnic* learned about two hours before the reading. Protesters thus had no problem with coming inside the building, as they were urged to do by Andrzej Jaworski, Law and Justice MP.

They prayed in front of the building until late in the evening. Several dozen protesters also stood on the staircase inside, in front of the door to Krytyka Polityczna's day room. Nationalists led by Andrzej Jaworski with a megaphone shouted 'Great Catholic Poland' on the stairs, prayed a rosary, and sang religious songs.

At the beginning of the reading of *Golgota Picnic* an incident occurred in the room full of listeners - one of the protesting women sprayed an unpleasantly smelling substance. 'This was a person who had registered before. We had not verified e-mails since it was difficult to foresee who had bad intentions', Maria Klaman, one of the organisers, said.

According to Trójmiasto.pl this person was taken out of the building by force. The incident did not change the decision to present the script in the end. (...) The reading took about an hour, and almost all the time it was accompanied by songs and prayers from behind the door.

At the beginning of the meeting, organisers read out an open letter to Bronisław Komorowski, President of Poland, concerning the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* and written by Obywatele Kultury organisation. 'This was showing solidarity with all those who think that something wrong happened in Poznań. We want to express it', said the moderator Piotr Wyszomirski.

After the reading, the protesters went home while a discussion on the recent situation and cancellation of the performance in Poznań continued for another hour.

[compilation from various sources]

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,16238174,Nocne_czytanie__Golgota_Picnic__w_Gdansk__Rozaniec.htmlN9ixzz3FV90IQUC

<http://m.trojmiasto.pl/news/Protesty-przed-pokazem-Golgoty-Picnic-w-Gdanskun81065.html>

<http://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/protest-ws-golgota-picnic-w-gdanskul>



1 lipca 2014, Słupsk

Members of the Club for Remembrance of the Polish Nation would like to fire the director of Słupsk Cultural Centre who agreed to a multimedia screening of *Golgota Picnic*. (...)

Members of the Club for Remembrance of the Polish Nation Zbigniew Wojciechowicz, its president and simultaneously leader of Law and Justice in Słupsk, and Bogdan Wątor, vice-mayor, wrote a protest letter to the Mayor of Słupsk. They stated that the Słupsk Cultural Centre (a part of which is Teatr Rondo) did not fulfil its tasks and obligations, and they maintain that 'the sacrilegious pseudo-play violates the statue of the Centre'. Finally, they demanded that the Mayor appropriately punishes the person who organised the screening and informs the public who was responsible for 'this dishonourable act'.

Dawid Zielkowski, spokesperson for the Mayor of Słupsk, informed us that mayor Maciej Kobyliński would not comment on the actions of the Club for the Remembrance of the Polish Nation. The authors of the protest also filed a notification to the Prosecutor's Office.

Three days later, on 4 July 2014, Twój Ruch in Słupsk motioned to the town President for honouring Jolanta Krawczykiewicz, director of the Słupsk Cultural Centre. They would like her to be rewarded for 'special services for the protection of artistic freedom'.

[compilation from various sources]

<http://www.gp24.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140701/SLUPSK/140639945>

<http://www.gp24.pl/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140704/SLUPSK/140709896>

— BISHOPS

Church dignitaries did not fall silent after the cancellation of the show. It did, however, find counterbalance in the voices of Obywatele Kultury [Citizens of Culture], Akademia Otwarta [The Open Academy] or individual artists who defended the freedom of speech. Successive Polish theatres joined the nationwide protest against preventative censorship. Preparations got underway throughout the country to organise readings and screenings of the show's recording as part of the "Golgota Picnic – zrób to sam" [Golgota Picnic – Do It Yourself] action. Subsequently Church leaders voiced their opinions on actions taken



20 June 2014, g. 20:18

Archbishop Brigadier Sławoj Leszek Głódź commented on the matter in an interview he gave almost immediately after the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic*.

Abuse of tolerance becomes the sign of modernity

Izabela Kozłowska talks to His Excellency Abp Sławoj Leszek Głódź, metropolitan bishop of Gdańsk, member of the Legal Council of the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland

IZABELLA KOZŁOWSKA: The massive wave of criticism and indignation against the pseudo-spectacle *Golgota Picnic* has brought the desired effect, the “play” has been cancelled.

ABP SŁAWOJ LESZEK GŁÓDŹ: Let us notice that such a massive voice of protest would not have been necessary had the Polish law been observed. Article 257 of the Penal Code talks directly about religious freedom and respect for religious feeling. The person in charge of putting *Golgota Picnic* on should be aware that the “play” openly transgresses against the Catholics’ feelings, that it blasphemously derides what is most sacred to us, our Saviour’s Suffering. This way, it breaches Polish law, which constitutes a punishable act. [“Whoever publicly insults a group [within the population or a particular person because of his national, ethnic, racial or religious affiliation or because of his lack of any religious denomination or for these reasons breaches the personal inviolability of another individual shall be sub-

ject to a penalty of imprisonment for up to 3 years – art. 257 of the Penal Code – editor’s note]. There is also a different aspect to the case: a profound sensitivity to the *sacrum* has to be awakened in our society. We must not approve of blasphemy, derision of the Church, its hierarchy and believers. Without an articulate voice of objection, persons who deliberately undertake such actions feel the audacity to operate within society carrying the banner of “freedom.”

I.K.: It happens more and more frequently that various acts of profanation and blasphemy take place in Poland under the guise of art and the artist’s freedom of expression.

ABP: There are numerous factors to influence such acts. Abuse of tolerance, which is often used as consent for coming out against God, our Lord, against Christianity, is perceived as a sign of modernity. Such actions wreak havoc and moral corruption in the name of freedom and in the name of art. It is something other religions, such as Judaism or Islam, would never approve. At the same time, it is an attempt to divide society, to which we must not give in.

I.K.: Blasphemous spectacles arouse resistance in society. Is this opposition sufficient?

ABP: The voice of the society and the hierarchical Church must be strong. Only then does it bring the desired results. No one should remain passive. The voice must also be ardent and steadfast. Our silence, lack of objection is an expression of consent and a sign of the attitude of indifference. While in our stance a very firm message must be heard: zero tolerance for blasphemy, derision and insult, nor for the growing audaciousness of anti-Christian and anticlerical circles. There must be no consent on the part of any Catholic community. In particular, we have to sensitise our youth. They are the ones who

make up the generation of the future, and must be aware of the designs intended against our faith.

I.K.: In his statement, Michał Merczyński, director of Malta Festival Poznań, indicated that the reason for cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* was a very considerable threat of riots.

ABP: Approval to putting on this pseudo-play results in upsetting social harmony. We can observe a deliberate intermingling of notions and undertaking actions that may evoke diverse social reactions. For this reason, nobody should feel surprised with the grass-roots voice of society, which says “no” to offending Christ. It is also an objection to moral disarray. Haven’t we had enough of various Maidans? Their multiplication can lead to social unrest and riots. Which should not be in the interest of either of the state or any political or social group.

Thank you for the interview.
Izabela Kozłowska

<http://www.naszdziennik.pl/wiara-kosciol-w-polsce/82730,obrazem-nowoczesnosc-staje-sie-naduzywanie-tolerancji.html>



24 June 2014, Bydgoszcz

Statement of the Bydgoszcz Diocese in regard to the performance of *Golgota Picnic* in Teatr Polski.

The performance *Golgota Picnic* has caused riots and outrage by Christians in every country it has been presented so far. Just recently we were able to experience this process in our Motherland, when attempts were made to show it during Malta Festival Poznań.

What could not be done in Poznań – thanks to numerous protests from Catholic and nationalist circles – is now supposed to happen in Bydgoszcz. It is unacceptable and deserves our strong objection. Even though this is just supposed to be a video projection of the performance, when we consider the recent events in Poznań and the whole country, we can see that it would be a mockery at Christians, Catholics, who has already clearly expressed their concern and emphasised their disagreement for ridiculing the crucifixion of Christ. Seeing the pictures or snapshots available on the Internet is enough to make certain of the character of this performance. Linking it with the date of the projection – the celebration of *The Sacred Heart of Lord Jesus* holiday – proves that it couldn’t possibly be interpreted otherwise.

Still, let’s say this is a coincidence. Let’s assume that the projection in Bydgoszcz is nothing else than a sign of solidarity with those, who weren’t able to see the performance in Poznań, that it is an attempt to understand the motivation of the “artist”, who is supposed to create, to destroy the clichés, even if it takes a provocation or a blasphemy. Let’s say this is how the situation looks like. Still... What about the rights of those who protest, who feel insulted, offended? Do all those, who try to understand the motivations of artists or organizers, would try equally hard to understand the motivation of the protesters? If the artist is allowed to do whatever he wants, then Catholics and Christians should be (at least) allowed to say “no”.

Sylwester Warzyński
Spokesman for the Bydgoszcz Diocese
diecezja.bydgoszcz.pl



20 June 2014, g. 20:18

In view of *Golgota Picnic* readings scheduled at the Polski Theatre, Dr Wiesław Mering, the Bishop of Włocławek, and, simultaneously, Chairman of the Polish Episcopate's Board in charge of Culture and Cultural Heritage Preservation, once again (cf. ...) addressed the issue. In his letter to Rafał Bruski, the Mayor of Bydgoszcz, he protested against the planned screening of the play.

Dear Mr Mayor,

As the Head of a Polish Episcopate's Board for Culture and the Protection of Cultural Heritage I want to object to the planned projection of the *Golgota Picnic* performance, because the text of the play contains aspects, which are offensive to the religious feelings of Poles, carries a blasphemous message and mocks the doctrines of Catholicism.

Public presentation of the performance would be a violation of paragraph 196 of the Penal Code by offending religious feelings and disturbing the freedom of religion and beliefs. Those values are especially protected in the Polish Constitution because of their importance to our tradition, culture and history. Clause 53, paragraph 1 of the Polish Constitution guarantees every citizen freedom of religion and beliefs in political and person life. Therefore, a projection of *Golgota Picnic* is a violation of this right. Paragraph 5 of the same clause additionally forbids any act that would violate the rights of religious citizens in public life.

An organ of the state should therefore protect the law and order; to refrain from actions that prevent a violation of laws is to indirectly contribute to this act.

On these grounds I want to ask Mr Mayor to initiate actions to prevent this act of offending religious feelings. Let me recall clause 304, paragraph 2 of the Penal Code, which obligates local authorities to inform the law enforcement agencies in case they acquire any information about an indictable offence.

With regards,
+ Wiesław Mering, Ph.D.
The Bishop of Włocławek
Head of a Polish Episcopate's Board for Culture
and Protection of The Cultural Heritage



25 June 2014, Lublin

Statement of the Metropolitan Curia in Lublin on account of presentation of *Golgota Picnic* scheduled for 27 June 2014 in Lublin

It was with deep regret that we received information about the planned performance of *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García scheduled to be staged next Friday, the 27th of June, at the Culture Centre in Lublin. The spectacle has given rise to a lot of controversy, not only in Poland. Numerous circles and individuals have already voiced their objection to the presentation and expressed their indignation at its expressly anti-Christian message. From the trailers commonly available on the Internet, from media reports, as well as from discussion taking place in the public domain there

appears a picture of a performance, whose contents and form not only harm the feelings of believers, but also seem to contravene the sense of taste. One also cannot remain indifferent to the formula of the spectacle, which reveals express traits of pornography.

It is already the name of the spectacle that fills one with profound disgust. Calling the events that took place over two thousand years ago in Jerusalem, on the hill of Calvary, i.e. Golgota, by the name of “picnic” cannot be accepted as a case of “artistic expression”. Anyone who has even the remotest knowledge of the cruelty with which Jesus of Nazareth was treated when he was sentenced to be crucified realizes that.

We appeal to the organizers of the performance and to all individuals interested in it to show respect to the most sacred persons, values and traditions of Christianity, and to deeply consider what the Golgota events truly were, and what they mean today.

In this year’s Holy Week, Pope Francis recalled that “it is in Jesus’ suffering that the whole of humankind finds its reflection like in a mirror. It is also in this agony that we find God’s answer to the mystery of evil, suffering, death (...) Jesus takes on all this evil, all this pain. It was him who took all human suffering upon himself, put this burden upon his shoulders”. Derision of the suffering of any man is, indeed, cruelty. We encourage everyone who is in any way moved or inspired by the events of Good Friday, to which the performance appears to refer, to devote himself to serious pondering over evangelical texts, which will provide everyone with an opportunity to arrive at his own opinion as to the sense of Christ’s Suffering and death.

Confronted with the scale of emotion which accompany the event in question, we wish to appeal to all good-willed

people to show respect and understand the reasons of those who expressly voice their objection to the spectacle. We express hope that the organizers and performers of the said spectacle will refrain from its presentation upon realization that their play is likely to hurt numerous people.

Father Krzysztof Podstawka
Spokesman for Lublin Archdiocese
Lublin, 25 June 2014



26 June 2014, Warszawa

Metropolitan Curia of Warsaw on. *Golgota Picnic*

With reference to the intended presentation of the controversial play entitled *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García, the Metropolitan Curia of Warsaw supports the dioceses in Poznań, Bydgoszcz and Lublin, as well as all the individuals who express legitimate and understandable objection to yet another example of transgressing the borderlines of artistic expression.

Above all, we express concern over attempts to contravene the sensitivity of Christians, for whom the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the most important events associated with their faith. Artists are aware of it and this is why they should respect what is most valuable for Christians.

These are also attempts to infringe upon human dignity that raise objections. Respecting and protecting it is a task not only for the Church and every religion, but also for culture. Unfortunately, we do grow accustomed to permanent crossings of the borders of good taste, as well as basic norms and customs in the area of culture and art.

With due respect to the artists' right to freely express their views and opinions, we urge them to be aware that using religious symbols in such a context generates legitimate objection in society. Irrespective of how the question of staging performance in Warsaw will be solved, we remind that everyone should listen to their rightful conscience to decide what their attitude should be.

Father Przemysław Śliwiński
Spokesman for the Archbishop and Archdiocese
of Warsaw



27 June 2014, Kraków

Statement from Cardinal Dziwisz

Our whole country has been witnessing protests against the performance *Golgota Picnic*. We are deeply moved by the fact that the provocative, blasphemous performance under the symptomatic title *Golgota Picnic* is going to be shown in our country. I ask if the freedom of artistic creation is enough of a reason to offend the religious feelings of Christians? For Christ disciples his passion, death and resurrection are the most important events that touch upon the fate of humanity.

The performance shocks with its vulgarity, aiming at everything that is most sacred to the Christians. Is this the form that our art and culture is supposed to take? I am asking if Cracow, the city of the Pope, also wants to participate in promoting this kind of pseudo-culture? I acclaim those, who do not yield to the provocative attempts to impose the models that destroy Christian civilisation – the moral foun-

dation of Europe and Poland – on our healthy society.

It is hard to allow the National Theatre or other theatres to destroy decency in our nation; it is equally hard to consent with so-called authorities who explain that this is art, which serves culture.

We talk about it today [edit. on the day of *The Sacred Heart of Lord Jesus*], when we relive the real events with Golgota, where vulnerable Love was ridiculed and crucified. I appeal for reason and reflection!

Polish Radio Kraków, 27 June, 2:02 p.m.

<http://www.niedziela.pl/artykul/10252/Kard-Dziwisz-ws-Golgota-picnic-nawoluje>



27 June 2014, Katowice

It is with anxiety and pain that we, Christian believers, learn that cultural institutions of the Silesia Province intend to present the recorded version of the performance of *Golgota Picnic*.

At the same time we express regret that works notorious not only for transgressing the borders of good taste, but also for expressing disrespect for the religious faith of believers, and contributing to deprivation can be presented.

Thus, we appeal to believers and all good-willed people to ignore these presentations. Those who have taken the decision to promote the spectacle, which we find harmful from a social point of view, are responsible for their moral consequences.

Father Łukasz Gaweł, PhD
Director of Katowice Diocese's Press Office
and Spokesman for the Metropolitan Bishop of Katowice



27 June 2014, Łódź

Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski, metropolitan bishop of Łódź and Deputy Chairman of the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland, greeted the protesters against *Golgota Picnic* at the gate of the Łódź Cathedral. During the service, which he celebrated, he said that “what is happening now is one major departure from the adoration due to God Almighty. It is also a breach of the Constitution which guarantees each citizen respect for his rights, in particular those of conscience and religious freedom, and which guarantees that no person can be insulted, and we feel very insulted, indeed. [...] For this reason, dearly beloved, first, I wish to thank you for being here, for praying, because this is our answer to those nasty acts which trigger our protests, and which consist in staging this contemptible spectacle.” The archbishop urged to pray for the persons who are involved in the action associated with the performance of *Golgota Picnic*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n45xXVSA5N8>



27 June 2014, Poznań

Like every year, on 27 June, the Day of the Most Holy Heart of Lord Jesus, the Eucharistic Procession was held in Poznań to redeem sins against God and the Church. Traditionally, the procession set off after the service at the Most Sacred Heart of Lord Jesus and St Florian Church in Jeżyce, and went along Dąbrowskiego st., the Teatralny Bridge and Niepodległości avenue, to end with a blessing at the Poznań June crosses in Adam Mickiewicz square.

During the procession, Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, who headed it, said to the group of almost one thousand believers: “There are more of us in this procession than usual, so I have to thank everyone who joined the protest against the presentation, whose name I don’t even want to mention. These persons understood that we are standing at the crossroads: on one hand, there is decency, on the other, a lack of any ethical inhibitions”.

http://poznan.gazeta.pl/poznan/1,36037,16233224,Czytaja_sztuke__Golgota_Picnic__w_Poznaniu__Przeciwnicy.html



28 June 2014

KAI release

Abp Gądecki: *Freedom exists for the sake of good, not evil*

Freedom has its limitations, it is delineated by good, it exists for the sake of good, freedom does not exist for the sake of evil, Abp Stanisław Gądecki said yesterday in Poznań. He spoke at the end of eucharistic procession in honour of the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus. The metropolitan

bishop of Poznań thanked all those who oppose science and art deprived of the ethical element.

“We are standing at a very dangerous crossroads, where, on one hand, there is decency, according to which man has ethical obligations, and on the other, something we call a lack of any ethical embarrassment. This crossing is the gravest problem of our times,” observed the chairman of the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland addressing a few thousand believers who gathered at the monument of the 1956 Poznań June Uprising.

Abp Gądecki reminded us of the words of Father Bocheński, who said that should science and art liberate themselves of ethics, there will be no reason to accuse doctors who murdered their prisoners in concentration camps. “This is the effect of separating art from ethics, this is what we are dealing with,” stressed the metropolitan bishop of Poznań.

The chairman of CEP expressed his gratitude to all those who joined the protests against the performance, whose name he “didn’t even want to mention”. “I am very glad that so many people share the conviction that something like this must not take place in Poland, that it must not be veiled with the notion of limitless freedom,” stressed Abp Gądecki.

“Concurrently, we offer our love to all those who stray,” said the metropolitan bishop of Poznań referring to supporters of the performance of *Golgota Picnic* which was to be staged as part of Malta Festival Poznań, yet was cancelled following protests by Catholic communities. At the same time, in protest against the cancellation of the show, a group of several hundred people read the text of the performance in Wolności Square.

The traditional Heart of Our Lord Jesus procession began with a service in a church in the Jeżyce district of Poznań.

“The cult of the Heart of Our Lord Jesus is, most of all, a way to experience the mystery of God’s love as revealed by Christ. In it, we do not limit ourselves to pious practices and prayers. We are summoned to love following the example we so revere in Jesus’ Heart,” said the metropolitan bishop of Poznań in his homily.

The Chairman of the Conference of the Episcopate of Poland reminded us it was a day of expiation. “Numerous Catholics do not realise that an unfathomable fight against Christianity is currently underway throughout the world. And the reason why they do not realise this, is that the methods used can dull their vigilance to such an extent that even pointing a finger at concrete facts does not bring any effect,” said Abp Gądecki.

“Blasphemy in the name of artistic freedom is accepted as something normal, and there are cases of Christians who support the enemies of the Church,” observed the metropolitan bishop of Poznań.

Encouraging sin-redeeming prayer, Abp Gądecki stressed that prayer is never intended against anyone. “It is in somebody’s favour. It is not a form of protest, but an expression of concern for the salvation of all those who do not believe in God’s unconditional love to man,” said the metropolitan bishop of Poznań

<http://ekai.pl/diecezje/poznanska/x80099/abp-gadecki-wolnosc-istnieje-dla-dobranie-dla-zla/?print=1>

— POLITICIANS



23 June 2014

Jan Filip Libicki, Civic Platform senator, prawica.net

***Golgota Picnic.* Football yobs versus football yobs**

'Personally, I am sorry it happened the way it did for a very simple reason: radical organisations which band together online may now raise their hands in a gesture of triumph. It turns out that it is enough to raise turmoil online - and the noisy minority may enforce their opinions on those who think differently', says Tomasz Cylka, a well-known and acknowledged journalist of *Wielkopolska's Gazeta Wyborcza*, commenting on the sacrilegious *Golgota Picnic* performance.

Well, I myself am not sorry at all. Just the opposite, I am very happy. Let me immediately point out a certain, so to say, inaccuracy in Mr Cylka's statement. The words on the triumph of radical organisations are not true. Are 23 of Poznań's city councillors, thus a majority, radicals? If it is so, then Poznań which chooses such councillors must be perceived, oh horrors, as a city of radicals!

Are Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, Law and Justice MP Tadeusz Dziuba and Jacek Tomczak of the Civic Platform radicals as well? I do not think so! Me neither, I would think; and Mr Cylka knows me well. The same may be said about the hundreds of people who prayed. The radical hypothesis is controversial and yet - let me repeat - untrue.

Of course, football supporters and *Gazeta Polska* readers protested. That is true. It is difficult to analyse everyone's intentions, however - the former wanted to mostly brawl while the latter - for political attention. If such was the case, I believe both attitudes to be unacceptable, harmful and worth condemnation.

In his official statement, Malta's director indicates these groups are guilty of the cancellation of the performance. He has the right to write that. However, I think these 23 'radical' councillors who signed the protest influenced the decision more. Why so? Is not it obvious? They will, though indirectly, decide about the city's budget allocation to next year's Malta Festival. Mr Merczyński probably knows well what he is doing, and I hope that as a form of prevention these councillors will thoroughly analyse next year's festival's programme. And that after this affair will no longer eat up the city's cultural budget.

In his statement, Michał Merczyński protects himself with the reactions of the football supporters. These reactions were absolutely horrendous. Yet, he should not wonder at them. Today, he complains, but before that he acted as a typical supporter who provokes the opposing team's fans when he planned the performance (knowing what kind of reactions it would bring about). When somebody provokes football supporters at the stadium, no wonder they would yank the seats to hit them. This kind of behaviour is deeply

reprehensible, but easy to foretell. Especially since in this whole football brawl, Merczyński would hold a scarf with the word 'scandal' written on it, while *Golgota's* director had one with 'sacrilege'. The director of Malta should not be surprised. If he behaves like a job, other jobs will confront him, along with the whole arsenal of terrible, unacceptable methods.

In my opinion, if there is any winning train of thought in this whole affair, it would be the one of Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki. He spoke as follows during the Corpus Christi celebrations:

'Any assault on God, faith, morality, society and the state we want to tackle with legal means. We will never lower ourselves to the level of those aggressive young people who tried to disrupt the lecture of Rev. Prof. Paweł Bortkiewicz. Freedom is a creative force in social life if it acts within the limits of common good and public order. Authentic freedom builds social order.

Still, we will love every person - even the misled - as our neighbour, entrusting them to God's mercy. Authentic Christianity bears the message of magnanimity, most easily expressed by the words: 'Overcome evil by good'. On one hand, one must call evil by its name, regardless of whether it is done by 'us' or 'them'. On the other, we do not think it is a sort of absolute power which dominates over good; so hate towards evil cannot be the main root of our behaviour.'

Honestly speaking, I do not remember agreeing with Archbishop Gądecki's statement more. After this statement I felt he is the real spiritual leader of our diocese. I really feel so seeing his behaviour concerning this issue.

If there is anybody entitled to triumph, it is rather those who prayed and not those who raised hands to threaten the creators of the Festival.

On a final note: Mr Cylka points out that the majority of Poznań residents were not interested in the dispute. They were not, because they were interested in their everyday lives. Probably yes. But as we can see, not everyone was indifferent. There were still those who were able to organise themselves as citizens for matters more important than everyday life. This is in fact very consoling for me and probably for quite a number of others.

<http://www.prawica.net/38729>



23 June 2014

Andrzej Jaworski, MP of Law and Justice, Fronda.pl:

'I am sure a good thing occurred. We are, however, at the very beginning of a long road and fight for our rights. On this road, numerous traps and dangers await us. One of those is the ideology of hate towards Christian values oozed slowly by 'Gazeta Wyborcza'. Various environments related to GW tried to attack us; and yet we will not give up. I think it is important for us to become more radical'

According to the Law and Justice MP, the action against the pseudo-performance which was to be staged in Poznań allowed various Catholic groups to get to know each other, exchange contact details and somehow prepare for potential troubles in the future. 'This will enable faster and more efficient organisation of certain things. Some even call out for creation of 'RAK' - Radical Catholic Action', Jaworski reveals in an interview with Fronda.pl.

What would such a group do? 'This is an idea worth thinking about. It would gather, among others, communities

which protested against *Golgota Picnic*. This would be an unofficial organisation aiming at quick reactions to disturbing phenomena. Mocking Christianity - something that happens more and more often in Poland, unfortunately - cannot be tolerated', Jaworski explains in an interview with Fronda.pl.

If such a group is created, even if informally, we may imagine the uproar by not only 'Gazeta Wyborcza', but many other liberal communities. It is easy to imagine comments stating that sharia laws are being introduced in Poland or that commando groups are being created to attend to morality. Have such aspects been considered? 'We only preach what Saint John Paul the Second did, and we are proud of that. No pseudo-ideologist, pseudo-moralist or pseudo-ethicist shall dampen our spirits', Jaworski states briefly.

<http://www.fronda.pl/a/jaworski-dla-frondapl-mysle-ze-wazne-jest-to-abysmy-stawali-sie-coraz-bardziej-radykalni,38764.html>



24 June 2014

Statements by Democratic Left Alliance councillors

Two statements were delivered during the final session of the Poznań City Council, both concerning *Golgota Picnic* performances.

'Głos Wielkopolski' wrote that 'Democratic Left Alliance councillors maintain that *Golgota Picnic* should be staged. They appeal to the management of Malta Festival to change their decision. (...) 'The cancellation happened too early and is unjustified', says Katarzyna Kretkowska, DLA councillor. 'The performance should take place. We regret that festival organisers yielded under the pressure of the bishop and city government. We appeal to them to change their decision. K. Kret-

kowska stated that the cancellation of 'Golgota Picnic' caused turmoil. She reminded us that almost 7 thousand people had already signed a letter directed at the President of Poland concerning the matter. 'We proposed that the performance take place somewhere else, outside of Poznań', Ms Kretkowska said. 'Michał Merczyński, director of the Festival, thanked us. He said a 'Plan B' is being considered'. The councillor does not know what the words 'Plan B' mean.

Przemysław Alexandrowicz of Law and Justice was 'enraged that festival organisers portray the artists as victims'. 'Głos Wielkopolski' informs us that 'the statement of Przemysław Alexandrowicz from Law and Justice was a reaction to M. Merczyński's letter concerning the cancellation of the performance. 'Mr Merczyński writes about a dangerous show of hate towards a different vision of the world', P. Alexandrowicz remembers. 'He does not say that under the cross, naked artists would masturbate, roll about in paint and trash. By a show of hate he means our protests'. The Law and Justice councillor underlined the fact that 62 thousand people signed an online protest against the performance. Their opponents call these people 'radical Catholic communities who are deaf to arguments'. 'Michał Merczyński tries to persuade us that the performance is not anti-Christian in nature', P. Alexandrowicz claims. He thinks such lies are unacceptable, and adds that festival organisers present artists as victims and accuse Catholics of various faults, because 'we do not agree to be spat on with our own money'. 'Mr Merczyński may become an agent of counter-cultural revolution, but then the festival should not receive a penny from the public budget', P. Alexandrowicz maintains.

The full article:

<http://www.gloswielkopolski.pl/artykul/3483097,poznan-golgota-picnic-na-sesji-oswiadczenia-radnych-na-temat-spektaku,id,t.html>



24 June 2014

Ryszard Grobelny, Mayor of Poznań

Mr Mayor was asked during a meeting with journalists whether it was good that the performance had been cancelled:

Mayor: From the standpoint of freedom of speech and expression, probably not. From the standpoint of the protesters who feel offended, probably yes. It is also good for the city safety that the performance will not take place. It was wrong for it to even be in the programme of Malta. Most probably, no one expected it would cause such tension.

"Gazety Wyborcza": Do you therefore maintain that in the future the organisers of Malta and other festivals in Poznań should choose performances on the basis of whether they might or might not cause protests? Does it not violate the freedom of speech and expression which you have just mentioned?

Mayor: Anyone undertaking any action should take into consideration its possible consequences. Of course, freedom is important. But it does not mean one may do whatever they want without taking responsibility for it.

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75475,16206264,Prezydent_Grobelny__Zle__ze__Golgota_Picnic__znalazla.html?piano_d=1



24 June 2014

Law and Justice councillors in Bydgoszcz

Regarding the planned presentation of *Golgota Picnic* in Bydgoszcz's Teatr Polski, the Law and Justice committee members in the city council appealed to the mayor to 'act immediately in order to remove the show from the institution's repertoire'. Teatr Polski is a city-sponsored institution. The spokesperson for Town Hall, Marta Stachowiak, told the Polish Press Agency that 'Mayor Rafał Bruski will not intervene in the case, just as he has never interfered with the repertoire or scheduling of the theatre'.

<http://dzieje.pl/kultura-i-sztuka/nagranie-golgoty-picnic-zostanie-wyswietlone-w-teatrze>



25 June 2014

Law and Justice in Lublin

Statement of the Law and Justice club in the City Council of Lublin

We are surprised to learn that the shockingly-titled performance *Golgota Picnic* is to be presented in Lublin's Cultural Centre. We are deeply outraged and would like to categorically and firmly protest. What we deem unacceptable and disgraceful is an attempt to present a pornographic pseudo-play which offends the truth of Christ's agony, the most sacred truth of Christians. What we deem reprehensible is the city cultural institution under the Mayor of the City of Lublin offering to screen

the play. We would like to point out that presenting the work will not bring any positive outcomes; only negative ones, especially among young people who expect us to promote right and constructive models of behaviour. We call on the Mayor of Lublin, Krzysztof Żuk, to remove the screening of *Golgota Picnic* immediately from the repertoire of Lublin's Cultural Centre. We call on all inhabitants of Lublin who possess the constitutional right of respect for religious feelings to protest against the screening of *Golgota Picnic* in Lublin, via e-mails sent to Mayor Krzysztof Żuk: krzysztof.zuk@lublin.eu

Law and Justice councillors club in the City Council of Lublin

Zdzisław Drozd Dariusz Jezior Zbigniew Ławniczak Tomasz Pitucha Mieczysław Ryba Małgorzata Suchanowska Sylwester Tułajew – Mayor

Czytaj więcej: <http://www.kurierlubelski.pl/artykul/3484513,radni-pis-przeciw-projekcji-golgota-picnic-w-lublinie,2,id,t,sa.html>



25 June 2014

Rafał Bruski, mayor of Bydgoszcz

Mayor Rafał Bruski does not plan to put pressure on the theatre director in Bydgoszcz regarding cancellation of the *Golgota Picnic* screening: 'I respect the high independence of cultural institutions. If I intervened, it would be interfering with artistic activity and overstepping my authority; I tend not to do that.'

<http://kultura.express.bydgoski.pl/312772,quotKazdy-prawicowiec-moze-zniszczyc-czyjas-pracequot.html>



23 June 2014

Professor Małgorzata Omilanowska, Minister of Culture and National Heritage commented on the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic*:

'I do not like speaking about what I have no clue about, so in contrast with many protesters I watched a recording of the performance. In fact, I was so deeply moved that I watched it twice. García tells a story about our civilisation which has not created any instruments that would free us from the fear of death. Simultaneously, he refers to numerous works of art inspired by Christianity, which contribute to the amazing visual richness of the performance. Paradoxically, the artist quarrels with Christianity, but does not step outside its field. I am sure Christianity is ready for a discussion about itself.

Something very important is happening and thus the topic of the boundaries of an artist's freedom returns. The most important is the artist's autonomy, the right to artistic expression, freedom of speech and the right of organisers or curators to schedule artistic activities in line with their consciences and will. At the same time, legal regulations must not be forgotten.

I cannot imagine preventative censorship and do not think that in Poland at any time it will be possible to prevent an artistic event by protesting against it without knowing its content.

Curators, artists and directors such as Fabio Cavallucci of Zamek Ujazdowski, Jan Klata of Teatr Stary and Michał Merczyński of Malta Festival have proven with their work

that they are people of culture, consciously making artistic decisions. They deserve respect and support from the public budget since their work is of a high quality, even though it may seem controversial to some.'

Minister Omilanowska referred to her discussion with Michał Merczyński, director of Malta Festival Poznań:

I understand his worries and fears. He is responsible for the whole event, and not only for all the performances to take place. People who participate should leave the place with positive memories, but most importantly - alive and healthy. Merczyński had no guarantee that the performance would not cause somebody to lose their health, life or property. I listened carefully to the protesters and am familiar with the letter sent by the Citizens of Culture [Obywatele Kultury]. As a minister, I do not think this is the right moment for me to interfere with any actions undertaken by the artists. However, I am sure that what we observe is a good example of how Poles are able to mark their position in culture. I know that the play will be screened and presented across Poland. I think a discussion on the value of the play will be purposeful only once the interested parties see it and then engage in polemics.

Quotes from:

http://wyborcza.pl/1,75475,16213516,Nowa_minister_kultury_o___Golgotcie_Picnic___Nie_ma.htmlN9ixzz3DzkJ2f5f
<http://www.mkidn.gov.pl/pages/posts/minister-kultury-broni-wolnosci-artystow-4794.php>
<http://dzieje.pl/kultura-i-sztuka/omilanowska-o-golgotcie-picnic-najwazniejsza-jest-autononomia-tworcow>



27 June 2014

Marek Jurek, MEP, Prawica RP MP

The introduction to the Constitution clearly states that we Poles are thankful to our ancestors for our heritage, the Christian culture, deeply rooted in the life of the nation. The Mayor should not look at the uprooting of such a sanctity, and how the profane demonstrate how they can break and tarnish all the rules. I would like to appeal to President Komorowski - who a week ago publicly expressed his religious views during a procession - to oppose the profanation today.

<http://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/trzeba-bronic-kultury-chrzescijanskiej/>



27 June 2014

City Hall of Lublin

Lublin's city hall addressed the appeal of Law and Justice councillors regarding the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* screening in Lublin.

Spokesperson for the Hall, Beata Krzyżanowska: This should be viewed as a political attack. Law and Justice councillors demanded action from Krzysztof Żuk regarding the previously announced screening of the play in the Cultural Centre. However, the president has no legal right to interfere with the cultural activity of city institutions. The appeal is urging the mayor to violate the law.

<http://moje.radio.lublin.pl/lubelski-ratusz-zarzuca-radnym-pis-atak-polityczny.html>



27 June 2014

Law and Justice councillors from the Regional Council of Dolnośląskie prepared a statement condemning the staging of a pseudo-play *Golgota Picnic* which offends Christians' religious feelings. Yesterday they presented the statement to the Marshal of Dolnośląskie Province, Cezary Przybylski.

<http://www.radiorodzina.pl/wiadomosci/9962/>



27 June 2014

Bogdan Zdrojewski, Civic Platform MEP, former Minister of Culture and National Heritage

Former minister of culture, Bogdan Zdrojewski, comments: 'In no way should a censoring institution be created after 25 years of freedom, especially within the Ministry of Culture. Politicians should remain away from censoring art'. He also noted no one is forced to go to see the play. And added that if he was a director, he would not invite the play to his theatre. 'The thin line of sensitivity or provocation is too often overstepped, for various purposes. It is overused. I agree that religious feelings need to be respected. And I do not think it appropriate for this particular sensitivity to be over-stretched in art', he added.

<http://www.wprost.pl/ar/454076/Zdrojewski-o-Golgota-Picnic-Nie-ma-przymusu-by-pojsc-na-ten-spektakl/>



27 June 2014

Ryszard Czarnecki, Law and Justice MEP

'The intimate area of one's religious life need not be trampled upon', Ryszard Czarnecki, Law and Justice MEP, told TVN24.

According to him, the *Golgota Picnic* play is a 'pseudo-artistic provocation' which shows 'a complete lack of respect for believers'. Czarnecki said that the play is staged on June 27th, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. 'If there is someone who wants to promote this so-called play, they could have chosen another day so as not to provoke Catholics additionally.

I fully sympathise with the protesters', Czarnecki added. 'Financing such controversial events from taxpayers' money is outrageous for these people.'

<http://www.wprost.pl/ar/454076/Zdrojewski-o-Golgota-Picnic-Nie-ma-przymusu-by-pojsc-na-ten-spektakl/>



28 June 2014

Voivodship Council of SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) in Szczecin**The stance of Voivodship Council of SLD on protecting artistic freedom in Poland**

On 27th June Teatr Kana, a centre of contemporary theatrical creation in Szczecin, cancelled a video projection documenting the performance *Golgota Picnic*. The decision was motivated by concerns about the audience's

safety. A few days earlier, fanatics from radical right-wing circles blocked the performance which was a part of a theatre festival in Poznań. Other works of art and speeches of intellectuals have also become targets of aggression – Julita Wójcik's installation on Zbawiciela Square which refers to the rich symbolism of a rainbow is repeatedly destroyed in the name of intolerance and xenophobia; lectures by Zygmunt Bauman, world class intellectual, are interrupted. These are the acts of fascist barbarism!

There are more and more examples of threats to the freedom of artists, writers, musicians. State organs are getting involved in them on the basis of paragraph 196 of the Penal Code (which punishes for the undefined, extremely subjective 'offence of religious feelings'), which instead of protecting the dignity of various religious groups, becomes a tool of nationalistic-catholic censorship. Poland has become sultry from an airless atmosphere of fanaticism and intolerance – on the outside it is considered scary and backwards. The phenomenon of preventative censorship has been resurrected after 25 years of a free Poland, paralysing creative individuals. We cannot agree to the process of limiting artistic freedom!

SLD of Western Pomerania asks the national boards of SLD and the parties' Deputies Club for an urgent intervention with the Prime Minister, Minister of Culture and Minister of Foreign Affairs to guarantee the freedom of artistic expression and safety to all the artists and audience who want to explore their art. It is they – artists and audience – who are the intellectual capital of Poland, its ambassadors in the world. It is they who develop our country, not the ones contaminated with hatred and fanaticism. Protecting the freedom of artistic expression is

the role of the government in a democratic country and the Polish reason of state.

Chairman
SLD Voivodship Council in Szczecin
Grzegorz Napieralski

http://www.wielkopolskie.sld.org.pl/aktualnosci/12964-golgota_picnic_stanowi_sko_w_sprawie_obrony_wolnosci_tworczosci_artystycznej.html



1 lipca 2014

Law and Justice MPs report to the Prosecutor's Office concerning *Golgota Picnic*. They want to prosecute everyone who promotes the play

Law and Justice MPs Małgorzata Sadurska and Andrzej Jaworski have filed a report to the Prosecutor's Office concerning Rodrigo García's *Golgota Picnic*. They want 'all people engaged in the promotion of *Golgota Picnic* in Poland - through public readings of the script or screenings of recorded performances' to be prosecuted. According to Sadurska and Jaworski those persons violated Article 196 of the Penal Code, which states that 'anyone found guilty of offending religious feelings through public calumny of an object or place of worship is liable to a fine, restriction of liberty or a maximum two-year prison sentence'.

Golgota Picnic is a sacrilegious work. This pseudo-play is full of obscene scenes, pornography and vulgarisms. It mocks Jesus Christ, His agony and crucifixion. It shows the

Son of God as an egoist and a fraud. In a terrible manner, it offends Christianity, accusing religion of among others aiding in the sexual harassment of minors. It offends God and is a sacrilegious profanation of our most important religious symbol, the cross. For us and all believers the cross is a symbol of faith, and the mocked Passion of Christ is a symbol of God's love towards humans', Law and Justice MPs wrote in the report to the Prosecutor's Office.

In their opinion 'there is no doubt that García's intention was to offend religious feelings'. Law and Justice politicians argue that *Golgota Picnic* is 'an obvious offence for anybody deeming themselves believers, and also an element of a bigger tendency to limit the sensitivity of public opinion. The audience is forced to think that individual reception is not important in contrast to the unrestricted activity of pseudo-artists'.

Law and Justice MPs also submitted an interpellation to Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, Minister of Internal Affairs. They claim that during the protests against the performance, 'the police were active against the praying crowd and compliant against the offenders'. 'We are asking the minister whether he accepts such behaviour by the police', the Law and Justice MP added.

http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114871,16250915,Poslowie_PiS_donosza_do_prokuratury_ws___Golgoty_Picnic___html



3 lipca 2014

Left Democratic Alliance MPs

'We also condemn disturbances of public order by Catholic fundamentalist groups. The cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* during this year's Malta Festival in Poznań, and performances of hate and disdain in other places- where actors and viewers wanted to learn more about the script, are all reasons for our surprise and horror. Art may be grand or not, good or bad – but it should not be censored and limited, on behalf of any ideology or opinions. What is mostly disturbing is the fact that some of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Poland suggested such behavior, while in the past of Poland they called for respect and freedom of speech so many times.

Hence the Sejm of Poland appeals to everybody to stop arguing and causing turmoil on the streets. Catholics, just as any other religious group in Poland, have their religious beliefs protected by law. However, they are not above the law and their religious feelings do not make them a group authorised to impose their faith and morality on anybody else. We would like to remind you that the constitutional rules of state autonomy and church independence are still binding in the republic of Poland. We call on state institutions and bodies to adhere to the rule



12 lipca 2014

Twój Ruch MPs

Twój Ruch MPs filed a motion for an act in the Sejm which proposes removal of the regulation concerning offence to religious feelings from the Penal Code. TR argues that the regulation is overused and the Prosecutor's Office should not *act as censors*.

What the amendment of the Penal Code proposes is the removal of Article 196, which states that 'anyone found guilty of offending religious feelings through public calumny of an object or place of worship is liable to a fine, restriction of liberty or a maximum two-year prison sentence'.

Twój Ruch MP Wincenty Elsner stated that the article is overused. He referred to *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García which was to be shown at Malta Festival in Poznań, but was cancelled due to protests of right-wing and Catholic circles. A complaint was filed to the Prosecutor's Office by Law and Justice MPs, claiming the performance offends religious feelings.

According to TR politician, such situations make the Prosecutor's Office 'turn into a certain kind of censor who analyses the emotional states of complainants'. In fact, as he said, the Office should 'first and foremost prosecute real criminals'. He added that if somebody feels their religious feelings are offended, they may always seek compensation pursuant to the Civil Code.

The justification of Twój Ruch's project reads that its objective is to 'assure the freedom of expression of thought and opinions publicly without the fear of being accused of offending religious feelings'.

Authors of the project underline the fact that the law should protect all religions and 'not be applied selectively'. 'The paragraph on religious feelings means in practice removal of such content from the public sphere which refers to the sacrum in a manner unacceptable for believers'.

According to Twój Ruch, Article 196 of Penal Code 'treats citizens in a selective manner, even though they are equal under the law. As a consequence, it blocks any criticism and does not allow for an open debate'. Thus, according to TR, the regulation should be removed.

In 2012 the Sejm rejected Ruch Palikota's motion to remove Article 196 from the Penal Code.

<http://prawo.money.pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/arttykul/obraza;uczuc;religijnych;twoj;ruch;chce;likwidacji;przepisu,1,0,1580545.html>

— THE POLICE



June 23 2014

Following the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic*, a third meeting of the crisis management team was called. The main topic of the meeting was the safety of the Zamek Cultural Centre in the wake of the cancellation. All of the participants of earlier consultations were present: Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny, Deputy Mayors Dariusz Jaworski and Tomasz Kayser, Zamek CC Director Anna Hryniewiecka and her deputy Zofia Starikiewicz, Malta Festival Director Michał Merczyński and his deputy Karina Adamska, representatives of the police department and the Voivodeship Police, as well as employees of the Department of Citizens' Affairs at Poznań City Hall.



June 25 2014

Responding to information that the demonstrations had not been called off, the Malta Team asked the police to secure the events at Freedom Square, the location of the open festival center. The team repeated their request two days later, on June 27, and particularly emphasized the need for security at the public debate titled “Who Needs Freedom,” which was scheduled to take place on that date.



**Junior Inspector Roman Kuster,
Chief of the Poznań Police Department**

” Dear Chief Kuster,
In response to the information we received at the last meeting of the crisis management team, according to which the demonstrations have not been canceled, we request that your department pay particular attention to the security of other events held as part of the festival.

We are particularly concerned about Freedom Square as well as the events, talks, performances, and concerts that are planned on these days. The open nature of this location and these events prevents us from screening out attendees with violent intentions.

The festival runs until June 29 and we hope that, with your help, this year’s event will be a peaceful one.

Kind regards,
Michał Merczyński
Malta Festival Poznań Director



**Junior Inspector Roman Kuster,
Chief of the Poznań Police Department**

” Dear Chief Kuster,

In regard to our recent letter, dated June 25, 2014, in which we requested that particular attention be paid to the safety of participants of festival events taking place at Freedom Square based on information we received at the meeting of the crisis management team, we wish to inform you that an open debate titled “Who Needs Freedom,” devoted to the cancellation of the play Golgota Picnic, will be held today, June 27, at 5:00 pm. As the debate will be taking place in the open space of Freedom Square two hours before the reading of Golgota Picnic, also at Freedom Square, we request that you pay particular notice to potential threats to its participants. Their safety is especially threatened by the protests that are still scheduled to be held today in Poznań.

CC:

- 1) Mayor of Poznań Ryszard Grobelny
- 2) Poznań Police Department Chief of Staff Jakub Gorczyński

Kind regards,
Michał Merczyński
Malta Festival Poznań Director

— THE MALTA FESTIVAL POZNAŃ

Following the cancellation of the performance of Rodrigo García's play in Poznań, the Malta team did everything within its power to stage the piece in Poland. There was still a chance that it could happen.

Bydgoszcz, Kraków, and Warsaw were all considered. The management of the festival conducted talks with Paweł Łysak, Karolina Ochab, and Magdalena Sroka. The deputy mayor of Kraków explored the availability of Kraków stages and non-theatrical venues as well as their capacity to fulfill the requirements of the plays' theater rider. After examining its technical capabilities, the Malta Festival Poznań attempted to hold a one-off performance at Krzysztof Warlikowski's Nowy Teatr. Rodrigo García refused to stage *Golgota Picnic* in Warsaw, however, on the grounds that the piece was too complicated to prepare on such short notice.

Meanwhile, the Malta Festival Poznań had spent three months preparing for the performance as a part of the festival. Thanks to the good will and efficient cooperation between Théâtre Garonne and Nowy Teatr, all of the technical and production conditions were fulfilled. The Nowy Teatr team was prepared to set up the performance as specified in the technical rider. Ultimately, however, the piece was not performed in its entirety.

On June 26, the Malta Festival Poznań, in cooperation with Nowy Teatr, held a performance of *Golgota Picnic* in a form proposed by Rodrigo García. It was the only possible form in which the piece could be presented. Performers Gonzalo Cunill, Nuria Lloansi, Juan Oriente, and Juan Navarro read the script of the play. The reading was accompanied by screenings of short films that make up part of the piece, as well as a piano concert by Marino Formenti, who performed Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross* (also part of the original play). The performance was a one-off event planned for an audience of two hundred people. It was accompanied by loud protests held by opponents of the performance, among whom were ultra-Catholic groups and supporters of the local football team. Scuffles broke out during the protest, and the shouting and booing on the street could be heard inside the venue throughout the entire reading/concert. A Q&A with the director was planned following the concert, but was canceled after one of the protesters threw a noxious liquid into the theater. The audience was forced to leave the building due to security concerns.

Meanwhile, non-profit organizations, theaters, and private individuals began contacting the Malta Festival Poznań, asking to organize public readings and screenings of audiovisual recordings of *Golgota Picnic*. The festival assumed an active role in this initiative and provided a subtitled recording and a Polish translation of the play to 26 groups and institutions. Staged readings and screenings were held in over a dozen Polish cities. Some of them were canceled, while others were interrupted by protesters, and most of the events were accompanied by local demonstrations.

(see. str 347)



26 June 2014

As he worked to move the play to another city, Michał Merczyński explained his decision to cancel the performances in Poznań.

“A Spectacle of Submissiveness”

Marcin Kącki talks to Michał Merczyński, creator and director of the Malta theater festival in Poznań.

Gazeta Wyborcza, Duży Format magazine supplement

MARCIN KĄCKI: You’ve managed to avoid controversy since the festival was founded 24 years ago.

MICHAŁ MERCZYŃSKI: There were a few incidents. In 1993 right-wing city council members attempted to revoke our funding after an event in which the theater Turbo Catolet paraded a casket around the city. In 1997 there was outcry following a performance about media manipulation. And in 2011 the tabloid *Fakt* expressed outrage at an actress running around naked in public. The police would show up to give us a ticket at every performance. People would come just to see us getting fined. We had to designate a festival employee to go out and wait for the ticket.

M.K.: How did the controversy over *Golgota Picnic* begin? Six weeks ago a right-wing website known as Youth Crusade launched an online petition targeting the play. I wasn’t expecting it to start that early. I was afraid something like

that might happen, especially after a similar protest took place in France.

M.K.: But the Bishop of Toulouse called for protesters to let it go. In Poznań, on the other hand, Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki wrote in an open letter that the “performance was, in the opinion of many people, an exceptionally vulgar affair.”

And I responded by saying that he was mistaken, and that I hoped we could engage in dialog.

M.K.: Archbishop Gądecki made you out to be the incorrigible student. He scolds you in his letter, writing, “Unfortunately, not only have things not improved this year, they have actually gotten worse.” Should the director of a theater festival be discussing its program with a church official?

M.M.: What was I supposed to do? Just ignore the letter?

M.K.: Had the archbishop seen the play?

M.M.: I doubt it.

M.K.: Perhaps you should have sent a DVD to to the archdiocese?

M.M.: You could be right. The thought never occurred to me; our actions were driven by emotions. I wanted to be polite. And let’s not kid ourselves — his response would have been the same even if he had watched the play.

M.K.: How did the idea of staging Rodrigo García’s *Golgota Picnic* come about in the first place?

M.M.: We’ve invited him because we’re holding a festival panel on Latin America, a society abused by history, much

like ours has been. But while we believed in the US, Latin America believed in the USSR. Then there's the World Cup, the protests in Brazil, the favelas, and maybe Christ, whose "face today is that of a man from the favelas," as the writer Artur Domosławski put it. I first saw *Golgota Picnic* live a few years ago. García scattered 25,000 hamburger buns on stage to illustrate the idea of how jaded we are by consumerism. He intertwines it with religious Renaissance paintings and Jesus dancing among all those buns, that opulence and ennui. Then there's the pianist performing Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross*. The pianist is naked — a statement by García: let's drop our costumes and listen to music in religious rapture on these buns, because we're all at Golgota. It's a critique of our complacency.

M.K.: The petition was the first sign that things were about to heat up. What happened next?

M.M.: Last week Minister Zdrojewski came to the National Audiovisual Institute, which I am the head of, to say goodbye, as it was his final day in office. He told me that at that very moment, my deputy was in parliament being grilled over the issue of the play by a panel of MPs and members of the Committee Against the Atheisation of Poland. I wrote an open letter, publicly reminding everyone that the play is a closed, ticketed event for adults only. On television, MP Andrzej Jaworski from the Law and Justice party called for the performance to be shut down. And no one even asked us for a DVD so that they could see the play for themselves. Last week on Monday, Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny assembled a crisis management team to address the issue. I attended a meeting and listened to a police officer say that on June 28, the day of the play, 30,000 protesters are expected to descend on the city: there is going to be a pro-

cession, a march in commemoration of the events of June 1956 in Poznań, and a national football fan meet-up. The officer recommended that the play be postponed. The meeting ended with no resolutions.

M.K.: The next day Mayor Grobelny issued a statement in which he distanced himself from the play, mentioning the need to respect Poznań values and announcing that he would not be attending the performance, due to "doubts as to whether the content presented in the piece was compatible with [his] values." That's a motion of no-confidence against you.

M.M.: I was surprised. I wasn't expecting him to put it quite like that. Maybe that was his way of launching his campaign, as I've heard some say. From that point on, I knew that I didn't have the support of the mayor.

M.K.: Was there any pressure?
I didn't get any phone calls.

M.K.: The next day Archbishop Gądecki publicly stated that "the only way to definitely put an end to the matter is to launch a nationwide protest that would threaten to spark riots." That sent shivers down my spine. I interpreted that statement as a call to attack, to violence. That was when I first considered the possibility of canceling the play.

(...)

M.K.: You canceled the play, and meanwhile García says "let it [blood] spill."

An artist has the right to say that. I work in this city, in this

country, and he's going to leave. I have to take responsibility for what happens.

M.K.: García went on to say: "I wasn't consulted on this. I can't accept that we're being threatened by a group of fanatics posing as Catholics."

M.M.: I wrote to tell him that tensions were rising and that I was considering canceling the play. He consulted the actors and admitted that some were afraid and that they were split on the issue. (...)

M.K.: Now they accuse you of betraying your principles.

M.M.: Never in my life have I had to face such a liminal situation. And what was at stake? A play that engages with the Christian tradition and makes the controversial claim that symbols give us food for thought, that they stimulate our intellect. I never betrayed that. Now the dispute isn't just about one play but, as Fr. Dostatni wrote, whether in this country different people can discuss different things. I don't want that debate to take place on the streets amid bloodshed. I want a polite debate, the kind we've never had because we've never had the precedent in which a play was canceled under threat of violence. We've reached an extreme state and we have to answer the question of how to counteract the hatred whipped up by the other side. If the result is that my ostensible betrayal leads to discussion on that topic, then I've won. And if I fail, I fail.

M.K.: García said in one interview that "culture has become elitist and doesn't make its way into society." Don't you regret losing the opportunity to reverse that trend? To have young people in the theater and the Poznań elite out on the streets?

It's fascinating, and I was even tempted to film the whole thing, but I'm no revolutionary, and I don't want human shields or experiments. Romantic gestures are foreign to me, though I'm a Poznań positivist with romantic goals.

M.K.: Another quote from García: "We've become slaves to politicians elected by madmen."

M.M.: I don't consider myself to be anyone's slave.

M.K.: 90% of the festival's budget comes from the city and the ministry. How do you square that with creative freedom? García said in an interview: "I understand that they were afraid of losing their jobs." He's talking about you.

M.M.: Is that what he said? Nonsense! I've been doing this for 24 years. The festival has evolved, and there have been problems, pressure, calls to revoke our funding, like in 1994. I've weathered it all, and I've been faithful to my values.

M.K.: You recall the incident involving Ewa Wójciak, head of the Theater of the Eighth Day? She was called in by the deputy mayor of Poznań, who scolded for her views and reminded her that her theater was funded by the city. Did you stand up for her publicly?

M.M.: I told Grobelny that that deputy mayor had lost his moral legitimacy.

M.K.: In private or publicly?

M.M.: In private.

M.K.: García's question is not unfounded, considering how dependent cultural organizers are on outside funding. If every year you have to beg for someone to fund

your particular project through competitions, then isn't that financial slavery? Aren't you at the whim of fluctuating public opinion polls and changing social trends?

M.M.: In all of Central Europe, 80% of funding for culture comes from public sources, so don't tell me I'm dependent on government officials! That's just how the system works. I don't consider myself a slave — I'm a realist, a Poznań positivist, and a local patriot.

M.K.: And what does that mean?

M.M.: I was born nearby. This is where I went to university, and this where I started a festival that changed the city. I was 28 years old when I held the first edition of the Malta Festival. I was still a little brat. I did it for Poznań.

M.K.: Did Poznań play a key role in your cultural education?

M.M.: Before Poznań there was Jarocin, where my mother would take me to see concerts at the Pro Sinfonika club. But I'll never forget the day that truly made me who I am now. It was 1975 and I was in eighth grade. Zimerman had won the Chopin Piano Competition and was touring the country giving recitals. It was my first time at the Poznań Philharmonic. As I sat there, I realized that music would be the most important thing in my life. I lived in Książ Wielkopolski. After that concert I traveled to the philharmonic every Saturday, but I could only stay for half of the concert because I had to catch the last bus home. When Zimerman came back to Poznań, I told myself, "Oh no, this time I'm staying till the end." After the concert I caught a train to Chocicza, but by then the bus to Książ had already left, and I had to walk the whole 8 km home at night. I was happy. Moments like that

are what build your sensitivity, your sense of aesthetics, your humanity. I don't attend concerts as much as I used to because I don't have the time, but when I can, I'll fly to Brussels to see a Castellucci opera. The point is to make an effort to attend things, like I did as a kid. My destinations are just different now.

Then I went to university in Poznań. Professor Krystyna Zamiara, who taught us art interpretation, gave us all the scientific theories, feeding us Jakobson, the structuralists, and the non-cognitivists, and then she said: "But there's just one criterion that really matters in art — it either sends shivers down your spine, or it doesn't." I try to stick to that.

M.K.: Do you recall those shivers?

M.M.: One time when Kantor touched me.

M.K.: Mentally?

M.M.: Physically. We entered a barn in front of which a crowd of a thousand people had gathered, and we stood in front of the stage. Kantor was angry, running around and bumping into everyone to get us to back up. He kicked me [laughs]. Or the first Pina Bausch performance in Poland in 1987, when she put on *Café Müller* and *The Rite of Spring*. Years later I discovered that Grzegorz Jarzyna was there as well. He sneaked in through the bathroom window. I owe a lot to my mother. She was a librarian, so we had plenty of books at home. It wasn't until the 1970s, when I started high school, that Książ got its first real bookstore, where Ms. Ela would set aside all the books we wanted. It's extraordinary, isn't it? Reserving books, standing in line; it's like a whole other world for the Facebook generation.

M.K.: Does the digital world make you nervous?

M.M.: No. After all, I'm the head the National Audiovisual Institute, the Ninateka, where we digitize and post Poland's cultural heritage. As far as books go, I've retained my love of Mann. *The Magic Mountain* is terrible and prophetic. I fear that he was right and that we're at the top of such a mountain today. We don't see anything beyond it because we believe that we can feel safe in a democratic country. And yet here we are, attacked by those who think differently and won't engage in dialog. Mann's book ends with the young Castorp heading off to war after all those intellectual debates. We're dealing with the same thing: debating, planning, dreaming, but I think we underestimate the threat bearing down on us. Did you know that García beat Madonna?

M.K.: At what?

M.M.: On that right-wing website. They managed to collect 60,000 signatures to ban her concert, and García got 61,000.

M.K.: Do you see that threat bearing down on you?

M.M.: More and more each year. In 2011 Professor Bauman had a lecture at the Centennial Hall in Wrocław during the Culture Congress. Afterward an elderly lady came up to him and told him that she disagreed with him. They started talking, and it was all very cordial. Two years later he had another talk, again in Wrocław, but this time around Bauman's safety would have been physically threatened if it weren't for the stately Mayor Dutkiewicz [Rafał Dutkiewicz, the mayor of Wrocław, who attended the lecture in order to diffuse the protest]. They were saved by the police. A week later Bauman was in Poznań where people had raised banners insulting the professor. And this year they

caught up with him in Manchester. This is going on all over Europe, wherever radicals make themselves heard — some over here, some others over there. I don't think there would have been any controversy over *Golgota Picnic* three years ago, at least nothing more than a handful of blog posts and a few offensive e-mails. I wouldn't have believed you if you told me that people would take to the streets. It's just terrible. Have you read *The Kindly Ones* by Jonathan Littell? There's this character...

M.K.: ...Max Aue, who's responsible for the logistics of the Holocaust, but is also a very cultured man.

M.M.: Precisely! He's very well read, with a deep knowledge and love of music as well as poetry. And many of those protesting in the name of the Church are also intelligent people.

M.K.: You see a parallel between the two?

M.M.: And that's what scares me: that ostensibly enlightened people find it so easy to call for and approve of violence.

I had to submit to it in order guarantee everyone's safety, because that's all that mattered. 20 years ago I witnessed the death of an actress at the festival when a rope snapped and she was crushed by a shipping container. The concern with safety has stayed with me to this day.

M.K.: What about the precedent mentioned by Minister Omilanowska? Aren't you concerned that your decision could cause an upheaval in the entire arts community?

M.M.: I hope it'll be an opportunity to set up a system that would prevent that from happening, and that we'll finally wake up. Let me read you something Agnieszka Holland sent me. I wrote to tell her that I hadn't given up, and that

I wanted to move the play to Warsaw. She wrote back: "I agree. But you can't just let it go like Klata [a reference to protests against the director that took place in Kraków] and just get on with our lives. We have to start a debate." I want the support of the state, the government, the police. I want them to back us up instead of implying that they're powerless to help. Oh! [Glances at phone.] Citizens of Culture, a social movement for people in the arts, are writing a letter to protest the use of intimidation, violence, and censorship.

M.K.: Censorship by whom? You're the one who canceled the play.

I realize that I'm losing some of the trust of my community.

M.K.: García said that the entire festival will lose its relevance as a result.

I heard. It's sad. I'm paying the price, but I'm not the one who canceled the play. Reality, politics, and a procession of protesters barged into my festival and threatened the lives of my friends. If nothing happened after the threats against Jan Klata, then maybe this time everyone will wake up! (...)



27 June 2014

Debate: *Who needs freedom*

On June 27 at Freedom Square in Poznań, the Malta Generator festival center hosted a public debate entitled "Who needs freedom," organized by the Malta Festival Poznań. According to the festival program published in early June, a debate on the festivalization of the city was scheduled to take place at the venue at that time. In light of the situation, the topic was changed and the meeting was devoted to analyzing the events surrounding the play *Golgota Picnic*.

For over four hours, the guests (Hugo de Greef, Rodrigo García, Suely Rolnik, Gerardo Nauman, Prof. Andrzej Wirth, Prof. Krzysztof Podemski, Krzysztof Materna, Filip Berkowicz, Beata Chmiel, and Jacek Żakowski) discussed the current situation in the context of artistic freedom and the quality of democracy and public debate in Poland. Among the participants of the debate was Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny, who appeared in the audience and was immediately called upon to comment. Speaking to the citizens gathered at the center, Grobelny explained why he chose not to support the festival, why he wouldn't guarantee the safety the Malta Festival's audience and participants, and why he had stated in a public letter that he wouldn't attend the performance due to a conflict of personal views.

Several hundred people attended the debate. Listeners reacted lively, but the debate was not disrupted nor interrupted. There were opinions voiced by both sides, both supporters and opponents of the play. At several points during the discussion, Malta Festival Director Michał Merczyński read out messages that he had received from cities across the country in which readings of *Golgota Picnic* had been canceled or interrupted. “Who’s the censor here? Football hooligans and nationalists, that’s who. A reading of the play has just been interrupted in Wałbrzych. They broke in and disrupted it. They’re the real enemy.”

Mid-way through the debate, a public performative reading of the text of *Golgota Picnic* was held across the square as part of an initiative titled “*Golgota Picnic: Do It Yourself*.” The reading was a grassroots social and artistic event organized by artists and other members of the art community from all over Poland. That evening Freedom Square became the stage of an enormous happening and discussions. Interlocutors mixed with supporters of the play, actors, protesters, and passers-by. When the reading was over, the guests returned to the stage to continue the discussion.

An excerpt from the debate “Who Needs Freedom”

The recording is available in its entirety at

część 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyEpcYXAgUM&list=UUISRQtPK_RFpyYHWkt3z22A

część 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68rQVKiHWKQ&list=UUISRQtPK_RFpyYHWkt3z22A

MICHAŁ MERCZYŃSKI: My name is Michał Merczyński and I am “the DJ of the Polish Episcopate”. I would like to welcome you all to the debate. This debate was arranged in a different context – our original plan was to talk about the future of festivals, but today we meet to talk about Malta Festival Poznań, about freedom, about *Golgota Picnic* and the whole situation that happened. And has still been happening. First of all I would like to thank Rodrigo, who, despite the fact that I decided to cancel the performance of *Golgota Picnic* because of safety reasons, has come and stayed with us for the whole time. I would like to thank all the artists who joined us at the festival, especially those who were invited to Poznań by Rodrigo – all of those who co-create our idiom: *Latin America: Mestizos*, with whom we had a very long talk on Monday night and who, in most cases, decided to come to Poznań. After I explained the whole situation that we’ve been dealing with for the last few weeks and after I informed them how the Festival and Rodrigo García became targets of attacks, after all this I asked them if we’re in it together or not. They answered: we’re in it together. Nobody left and no other performances were cancelled, even though there were some doubts. They told me they didn’t agree with my decision, but some of them understood it. So today I want to thank all the artists for staying with us and allowing the performances and

Debate: *Who needs freedom*
photo: Marcin Oliva Soto



the Festival go on. Thank you very much! I would also like to thank Malta's audience, which attends all the events and stays with us. This is a very difficult moment for the Festival. Never before have we been in a position when, as a result of six weeks long attacks, we had to cancel a performance. And yesterday, unfortunately, the attacks took a material form in Teatr Nowy, which invited 'Golgota Picnic' in a version possible to present. I want to thank Karolina Ochab, most of all. And Krzysiek Warlikowski, and the whole team of Teatr Nowy, which received us in Warsaw yesterday. Thank you very much! I would like to thank Obywatele Kultury and all those, who during the last few days joined the protest against that decision – a protest which I understand, as well as I understand when Polish theatres, cultural institutions and, let's say, "art community", all of them protest, but at the same time express the things that are going wrong. There are readings and screenings of *Golgota Picnic* happening in several places in Poland, which will be further described by Beata Chmiel who represents Obywatele Kultury in this debate. So I want to thank all of them. It's good that this decision, or this reaction came. It only started on a big scale when we made the decision to cancel the performance. The one last thing I want to underline is that this is a situation with no precedence, since the step back that we took has resulted today – this has to be said – in an intensified activity, in a debate about freedom, about what's important for us, about the place that we found ourselves in after 25 years. Let me just add one note on how we ended up in a situation like this. I will not go over the whole story, the one you followed in media (...). There were two facts that tipped the scale in favour of the decision that we, as a Festival, made. First was the information that was officially given to us by the police. I'm sure at

least some of you have seen it, it was published on our festival website. The demonstration in front of Zamek Cultural Centre, which is supposed to happen today, since it still has not been cancelled, is said to be 50 000 people. When I asked the police if they really expect that number of people to show up, I was told that we can 'count on' as many as 30 000, and even 6 000 is enough to block the city center. And there was a written note concerning football hooligans from three clubs: Lech Poznań, Lechia Gdańsk and Śląsk Wrocław. The second thing, as you know, we got a letter from the archbishop. We responded to that letter and after that there came the infamous sentence recorded by TVN and reported in various media, that probably only causing some statewide riots could stop *Golgota Picnic* from being presented. I created this Festival from its very beginning and I have been doing this for 24 years now, together with many theatre groups and our audience and everyone else involved. I have made this decision because of safety reasons. I believe that the public debate today should not look the way it did yesterday in Teatr Nowy. And the threat of physical violence is not something that we, at Malta Festival, can accept. This is not how we should talk and this is not how we should discuss the ongoing issues. If what remains after this step backwards, will be that we won't finish on these talks, that Malta Festival will end and the topic will continue – so something like this will never happen again, so nobody would have to worry about public menace in any city caused by any performance – then this is an important and significant moment. Thank you very much. I'll stay here and take part in the discussion and for now I give the floor to Jacek Żakowski, who is hosting the debate and who will introduce our guests.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: Thank you very much. So you all know more or less where we start, but only more or less. I had to be at work in Warsaw today, so I've just arrived. And there is this paradox that I realized – I came from Warsaw via the Freedom Highway, to Freedom Square (Plac Wolności), to talk about the lack of freedom. This is something striking, honestly, after these 25 years. And we, as a big group – this is why there are so many people here, on that stage – will make a common effort to understand it. What we will start with though, as Michał said, will be Beata recalling the dynamics that began recently. Because what happened is, obviously, a dramatic event, but it is also an event that started a whole chain of reactions that can bring hope. Beata.

BEATA CHMIEL: Jacek mentioned that you took the Freedom Highway to get to Freedom Square, but today, there are freedom squares everywhere in Poland. Right now, there is a projection happening in Grzegorz Jarzyna's TR Theatre in Warsaw and later, at 8pm., a gathering – artists, citizens and everyone who cares about freedom of art, freedom of creation and participation in culture will gather at Plac Defilad in Warsaw, which today turns into a freedom square, for a public reading of Rodrigo García's play. These freedom squares will appear today throughout Poland: in Bydgoszcz, Białystok, Szczecin, Kraków, Wałbrzych. The schedule for today lists dozens of venues, where readings and projections take place. Including Poznań – as soon as this discussion ends, director Wojciech Ziemilski with komuna/warszawa invites everyone for a public reading of *Golgota Picnic*. 'Poland Picnic' goes on, in spite of what happened, or maybe – paradoxically I would say – the decision to cancel the performance, which was made under a threat of physical violence, has sparked a spontaneous reaction

in citizens – not only artists or Obywatele Kultury – some vehemently needed to protect our liberties, our right to participate in culture. We expressed that need in a letter to the President of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, in which we claim that culture should be protected as strongly as freedom is protected, as our motherland. I see our presence here and the 9000 signatures that are already on that letter, which is still being signed via our website www.obywatelekultury.pl and in all the locations of 'Poland Picnic', as a proof that the citizens are aware that culture isn't something that nobody's responsible for, but something that belongs to all of us. The habitat for art should be a dialogue, not fear.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: (...) I would like to ask you how does the whole story look from your point of view, someone who could have found himself in Michał Merczyński's situation. How do you perceive it?

FILIP BERKOWICZ: Ladies and gentlemen, the more I think about it – after the decision to cancel 'Golgota Picnic' was made – the more questions come to mind. And I can't find any certain answer. But what I can say is that, regrettably, Michał Merczyński did not get any support, including any support from the Mayor of the City Mr. Grobelny, who has joined us here today, that would help him present the Festival program as it was planned. It is not Michał Merczyński's duty to take care of the public services, of issues of public safety. Therefore I have to say that his decision was one of the bravest that were made in this whole situation and, knowing Michał, it was a very dramatic one. For him to resign from showing *Golgota Picnic* was to put at great risk his position, his whole career as a cultural manager and as a

great director, finally, as one of the most important people working in cultural sector in Poland. This is a moment that nobody wants to see coming at him. So I want to address all those who criticize him, who claim they would act differently and make all they could to show *Golgota Picnic*, to consider Michał's arguments. The argument that the state really wouldn't protect the people, as a matter of fact the state has openly said it would not protect anyone. And it was Michał who would have to live with this for years, had anyone suffered any serious injuries or had anyone's life been in danger. So I can't declare what I would do in his position. I am sure that as a municipal employee I would have my boss, Jacek Majchrowski, the Mayor of Kraków, support my endeavors to show the performance.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: Despite the protests.

FILIP BERKOWICZ: Despite the protests. We need courage.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: I have a question for Rodrigo García, which is probably a very obvious one. Do these situations happen to you a lot?

RODRIGO GARCIA: Yes, practically everywhere. In all the countries where we showed the play, there was some pressure. In every country, on every festival. But this is the only place that gave in to this pressure.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: But is the pressure here stronger? Or was it the reaction, was it more cautious?

RODRIGO GARCIA: You mean how many threats?

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: Exactly.

RODRIGO GARCIA: It was not my job to check how heavy was the pressure. My job was to stage the play. For me, it doesn't really matter if it's one person or 50 000. What matters for me is that it disturbs me. I can't focus on my job. And the whole point is not to give in to these things and say 'no!'.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: Even if you know that your audience, not only the audience, your actors as well are in danger, that their physical safety is at stake, you will decide to show the play?

RODRIGO GARCIA: But we're only talking threats here, we're talking some e-mails that were received. I swear I have no words to answer that. You can't succumb to threats, you can't be scared by threats, you simply can't put the democracy in your country at stake. Are you trying to convince me that we should have cancelled the performance because a lot of people were threatening us? For me, that's cowardice – to defend the director's decision and to call that courage.

FILIP BERKOWICZ: I cannot agree with this. This is not cowardice. This is reasonable judgment. Michał Merczyński was given no support. He had to find himself in this situation, making this decision. He had nobody backing him up, neither the Polish public services, nor Mr. Mayor – the host of the city where Malta takes place. He was left alone and he had to make this decision, because he didn't want a Pyrrhic victory on his shoulders, he didn't want to put the responsibility for the health and safety of others on his shoul-

ders. I will defend his decision absolutely. In this particular context – you are left alone.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: I would also like us to try and understand the process itself. What is exactly happening here. Because on one hand this is some very positive change – art became important. For those, who stand in front of theatres with rosaries in their hands and for those, who spontaneously organize readings and projections of the play. This is a rather unordinary thing. Art became something important in the public sphere, in a debate. I work for one of major polish magazines and today my colleagues called me and said – ‘we have to write about it, this is one of the most important topics this week’. How long has it been since the last time we wrote about art on political pages of any magazine? So there is something important and in some way positive happening. But let’s try to understand it. I am very happy that we have here today Suley Rolnik, a psychoanalyst. Maybe she will help us understand what’s going on in our minds – or our collective mind maybe – right now. Suley.

SULEY ROLNIK: (...) censorship has a lot in common with the political power of art. The ideology is not given as a pamphlet, but the artist gives way to the voice of the reality that is present in our bodies, and the effort made by our bodies allows art to create something significant. So this is why the political power of art is based on letting the community experience the same situation, understand this thing that already existed in their bodies, but wasn’t clear yet. I can’t take a strong stand on this subject, because I don’t really know the current political situation in Poland. Of course, it’s easiest to say that the performance shouldn’t have been canceled. But I have come here from Latin Amer-

ica and I know sometimes some very violent situations can happen. And in these situations we have to make this kind of decisions. So later we can become stronger and more radical. (...)

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: What does a Polish sociologist, professor Podemski, think about that? Professor?

PROF. KRZYSZTOF PODEMSKI: I am in a dual role here, because on one hand I am a sociologist, an academic, so I am a creator – therefore I care a lot about the freedom of speech, freedom of creation and I have signed all the possible letters of protest. But on the other hand I am a sociologist and I have to understand the people protesting against something that they find offensive for their religious feelings. I would be a very bad sociologist if I didn’t understand that an artist that treats the sacrum freely will invoke demons, cause conflicts. So I can’t condemn some elderly, less educated, socially excluded ladies, which in good intentions came out on the streets with rosaries to pray. I can condemn those, who used these ladies as a threat to call off the performance, including, regrettably, the archbishop of Poznań.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: I have to add one remark here. I was under the impression that the archbishop has threatened the public not with these ladies, but more with their grandsons, huge guys with clean-shaved heads. And this is a problem. I was in front of the theatre in Warsaw yesterday. These ladies are indeed looking for an agreement. They are not aggressive at all, you can talk with them. I spent an hour talking with them yesterday. But there is a circle around them formed by troglodytes, by thugs and few priests among them. And this is the dangerous part.

PROF. KRZYSZTOF PODEMSKI: Sure, I completely agree. I think this fans, or hooligans, they are the grandchildren of our political situation, which we should probably start describing from Smoleńsk or the debate around gender. I think what we face right now in Poland is something that in sociology is called 'a moral panic', which means that we take some rather marginal phenomenon and turn it into some kind of evil demon, a bogeyman. This is what happened to gender studies a few months ago, when it was suddenly portrayed as some kind of a huge threat. A similar hysteria is created now in relation to *Golgota Picnic*. In my opinion this has ambivalent consequences. On one hand it stimulates civil society on both sides. Both sides mobilize themselves. And that could be beautiful, if it didn't put us in danger of another cultural war. But I also have to say that most of all I disapprove on the actions from the authorities, since it should be their task to ensure it is possible to see the performance even against the opinion of the majority.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: It's an old sociopolitical truth that democracy and freedom are only working if they are protected by an orderly power of the state

PROF. KRZYSZTOF PODEMSKI: Yes, but the state should not look after our morals, we'll manage to do it ourselves.

(...)

BEATA CHMIEL: I see mayor Grobelny and I feel terribly sad. Because three years ago Obywatele Kultury (Citizens of Culture) was born as a social movement which counted over 100 000 people and which resulted in the Prime Minister signing a Pact for Culture. Mr. Grobelny was one of the

first, if not the first mayor of a city to support our Pact, to pledge that he will support culture, its development, participation in culture and that he will support artistic freedom. I would like to remind you that these are not only some ideas of ours, but these are our constitutional rights, written in our most primary law act. (...) I am sorry, but I speak for myself and for these 9 000 Citizens of Culture and many other citizens who organized themselves throughout Poland and work to reverse the situation that happened in Poznań. I'm not going to claim that they put themselves in danger, but they are operating under very rare pressure, very often with no support from the authorities, which has previously signed documents claiming our constitutional rights and liberties. I think that the fact that Mr. Mayor broke his promise, guaranteed by his signature, calls for explanations. (...) A reading is not a performance. We were only allowed to get to know the play, which anyone can also do here and now, in Poznań, for the first time at 7 pm and then in Teatr Nowy at 9.30 pm.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: If there's going to be enough police, right?

BEATA CHMIEL: If the city authorities will protect the safety of artists who came from Warsaw to support artists from Poznań. I think this is the right moment to open the discussion and invite the mayor of the city to take part.

RYSZARD GROBELNY: Of course, ladies and gentlemen, I came here in the first place to listen and secondly, to have a chance to state my position on these arguments. I want to point out one thing to you – it is extremely easy to assume that the world is black and white. It's either good, or

bad. And to find someone to blame for something bad that happened, for bad things in the world. And one can assume that this responsibility falls on the city mayor and the police. I will show you in a moment if this is true. What kinds of actions were taken to protect safety if the performance happened today. The police was ready to guard the performance. There were reinforcements and other means waiting in pretty much all other voivodships, in case they were needed. The City of Poznań was preparing for a big number of people called together by other people that have no competences to organize demonstrations and do not understand the responsibility that rests with the organizers. The City was ready to provide portable toilets and water for those who would come, so they wouldn't faint from the heat. The City was ready to provide additional ambulances and security officers, because, regrettably, the organizers of the protests were simply incompetent. And we were ready to do all these things. We pointed out, I think Michał will confirm that, that this was a very specific situation. We asked if it was possible to change the date or the location of the performance. To move it to a space that would have been easier to protect, where we could control anyone who wanted to come inside more easily, because unfortunately Zamek is an open space and there is no way to control incoming people. We also asked if the organizers were really able to guarantee safety during the performance, until the point in which the police would intervene, because there is no point in sending police officers to the performance and make them sit between the rows, it would be unacceptable. We were really ready to do all these things. It turned out that there's no possibility to change the date or location. And it was still clear that we are ready to fulfill our duties. The Mayor has a right to create a special center for crisis

management, which will set to solve this problem and at that point we made a decision to create this center. I'll just say that we started the exact same procedure that we had during Euro 2012 and the police was ready to call for reinforcements to try and ensure safety. This is real. Could anyone really guarantee that nothing bad was going to happen? The police told me: "we can protect it, but we won't guarantee anything, it depends on what is going to happen". You don't know what was going to happen with all those emotions running high, which is why I have tried my best to mitigate them, asked both sides of the conflict. Poznań is a city that doesn't accept extremes, neither on one side nor the other. I have also underlined how unfortunate was the choice of date and location of the performance. Of course one could say this is a part of the performance and all that it relates to, but on the other hand there is a certain responsibility for all these parts. I don't blame Michał (...) but we had to point out that there were going to be other events very close to that one. And that changing the time or location would help us solve the problem. So from that point on the responsibility was on Michał

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: I just need to ask first, why did you have to declare, that you're not going to the performance?

RYSZARD GROBELNY: Of course, that's the first question. So, firstly – I did not have to, secondly: I felt that I should declare that. Third thing is that I wanted to prove that if there's anyone who doesn't agree with that performance happening, he or she has a simple choice. It didn't bother me that I haven't seen it. There are a lot of performances and movies that I didn't see for many different reasons. So if someone reckons this is not for him, there's a simple choice

– to do the same as I did. He or she can say: “I’m not going”. And this is his choice, same as my choice not to attend. This is not about banning the performance, but a simple decision in one’s conscience – I don’t want to attend, so I don’t.

FILIP BERKOWICZ: But you have declared yourself on one side.

RYSZARD GROBELNY: Which one?

FILIP BERKOWICZ: The one...

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: Not going.

RYSZARD GROBELNY: Not going, that’s right. But did you or anyone else...

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: And you also asked the bishop not to go.

RYSZARD GROBELNY: I mean... I don’t think he would go, but if you really think so, then I asked the bishop to appeal to those offended not to go. Which is not really the same as going out on the streets. There’s a difference here. And I think it’s a case when it’s really hard to say that everyone has a choice. I have a choice, you do, and everyone does. Everyone can decide if he or she wants to go or not.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: So what happened next? If everything was fine, the police was prepared like an army before a battle, Mr. Mayor was ready and waiting in the crisis management center, why didn’t the performance happen?

MICHAŁ MERCZYŃSKI: We met with Mr. Mayor three times, as we informed. After every meeting we were given a writ-

ten statement from the police that we published on our website, stating that there will be 30 000 people and 6 000 is enough to block the city, that there will be no way to reach the main train station, there will be a procession going from St. Florian’s Church to the Poznań June Memorial and the next day the benefit of Piotr Reiss, which means 25 000 football fans at the stadium and if only 1000 of them come to the hall we could have moved the performance, if it wasn’t already booked... There was a suggestion to move it to WTC Poznań area, but the only hall that we could have was unacceptable. And secondly, as I already said, we were informed about three hooligan squads planning to attack us. This was the situation and the atmosphere in which we had to decide. We made the decision after the second meeting, after we asked about updates and heard that nothing had really changed except that there may be more people coming and the amount of aggression on the Internet forums escalated. I would also like to ask Ania Hryniewiecka, who is with us today, to describe the situation and atmosphere in Zamek Cultural Centre, among their employees. I can tell you how it was for the employees of Malta Festival, when our servers could barely operate because of the number of threats we were receiving. And one more thing you should know, the third meeting was, I’m not sure, I think on Friday, when the performance was already cancelled. We were told that the demonstration that was supposed to happen in front of Zamek was not called off. And it still hasn’t been, as far as I know. So the atmosphere was really unusual, this is not the first time we have this kind of situation, we have to cooperate with the police at least once a year. But, as my producer pointed out, usually when we met with the police we made plans, discussed procedures, etc. This time it was simply hostility and a clear suggestion to, either, move, or, best... That’s it.

GERARDO NAUMANN: We came from a country where a politician who can't distinguish between his public and private function ends up in trouble. A politician is a public servant and he can't declare that, personally, he is not going to see something. We won't vote for someone like that. (...).

BEATA CHMIEL: I have to interrupt here to add that art, or artists have no support from the law as well. We have to remember that this is not the first case like this in Poland. Just recently, after 10 years, Dorota Nieznalska's trial has come to an end. And the artists ended up being completely free of all charges, but the trial went on for 10 years and it cost money from the budget that was wasted on defending artistic freedom. This is obviously no coincidence, there are paragraphs in the penal code concerning crimes against freedom of conscience and religion and they are used as excuses, they are used to punish artists for art that may not even be displayed in public. So the threat alone caused by something that only exists in our thoughts, imagination, is treated as a crime committed by an artist. I think all of us, not only those who gathered here, not only those who organize 'Polska Picnic' or the readings of *Golgota Picnic* across Poland, not only artists or Obywatele Kultury, but all citizens should take up some actions to change the Penal Code. So that our opinion, our conscience would stay our conscience. So the authorities, reigning over the morals of others, could not use the Penal Code to ban the freedom of creation, the freedom of speech. I will recall the Constitution again, but it is a key notion here – it means that regardless of what are the political views of the authorities and public servants, we are all obliged to follow the law. This is also our primary responsibility as citizens, to fight for our

rights and liberties – in this case for our right to participate in culture and the freedom of artistic expression.

(...)

PROF. KRZYSZTOF PODEMSKI: I want to ask Mr. Mayor if he agrees with an opinion that is rather common recently and which I also share, that this whole situation had a very bad effect on our city's image, that it destroyed the Poznań KNOW-HOW brand and those thousands, millions of zlotys that were spent on the marketing campaign. So does Mr. Mayor, who maybe tends to think in less ethical, as we do, and more pragmatic categories, have any idea how to get away from this image crisis? Or do you simply think this is not a big deal?

RYSZARD GROBELNY: This is something that was bad for the city image, but I think both me and Michał had asked ourselves this question – if it came to riots and fights between the police and hooligans, would that hurt Poznań's image less? I'd say at least the same and probably additionally burdened our consciences if anything bad had happened. This has to be taken into consideration, it can't be ignored. This maybe surprising but I agree with this opinion that exists now, (...) I am a politician, right, and some particular person running for reelection. And honestly when I gave it a thought without emotions – what do the citizens want – there is a group that would expect the mayor to block the performance by any means possible. I did not do it and I have enemies now in that group. Another group says: the mayor should use all means possible to make the performance happen, regardless of the costs. I did not do it, so I have enemies

in the other group. Sometimes a mayor has to act according to his own conscience, his own beliefs.

BEATA CHMIEL: No. The law comes first, Mr. Mayor.

RYSZARD GROBELNY: The law, in fact the law was not broken, obviously. But in some situations there is no such possibility to make a simple choice based on which option will result in more votes for me. And, at least usually, this is not how this is done. But I have to agree that we, people in Poland, unfortunately this includes Poznań, we lack one skill that I find regrettable – we tend to jump into the form of discussion based on who can shout louder, whose group would be the biggest, which side has more people on it. This is the worst attitude. Why did I actually come here? Also for that reasons, I'll name two. Because it's always bad if things are discussed behind someone's back and there's no way to respond to them, regardless of the response. But also to show clearly that there is no such conflict that couldn't be discussed. (...) This is my main message for everyone. And discussion is not something based on whose army's bigger or stronger. This should not be a part of our national discussions. Everyone should have one presumption in mind: I respect the other side. If I create a performance, I do it in a way – not that it shouldn't exist, this is not the point that it shouldn't exist – but in a way that is acceptable, so it could be a part of a discussion. If I organize a protest against this play, I do it not to attack someone, to destroy someone, but to express my view on it. This is how we should be able to discuss and instead we try to have this attitude, that if some people do something bad, we should prepare bigger weapons then they have. This is in my opinion the main problem in a public debate.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: If anyone in the audience would like to join the discussion, please raise your hand. My colleague will pass you the microphone. The gentleman in a green jacket, welcome.

TOMASZ MACIEJCZUK: My name is Tomasz Maciejczuk and I am a nationalist. First of all, I would like to apologize for the fact that you couldn't exercise your liberties because of some hooligan mob. I don't believe there would be 30 000 people in Poznań for this 'Picnic', But most of all I wanted to apologize for the fact that you couldn't organize this performance of yours, that you couldn't see it. This is a shame for our country, I feel ashamed for the mayor who simply got scared of the hooligans and did not fulfill his duties. And if you love freedom then you have to fight for it. Don't be afraid of the hooligans. And myself, as a nationalist, I love my country and I don't agree with them. I'm with you. You can make your performances, even if I don't like it, this is your right and you have to fight for it. Thank you.

RAFAŁ SZATKOWOLSKI: In regard to cancelling various events because of safety reasons, I had a proposition to cancel, for example, all football games – because of the threat they pose to life, health and property. Football games are way more dangerous. In regard to making choices – I have a question for the mayor – why are all your choices the same? I have a feeling that the history in Poznań runs in circles, I'm not sure, I think it was 2005, the Equality Parade (Poznań Pride) that was banned by Mr. Mayor because of the threat to life and health and property, there were to be hooligans there as well, a very dangerous situation. The church gave a statement about that issue, of course, and you decided to ban the Parade. (...)

MACIEJ KUNERT: Maciej Kunert, good evening. I would like to focus on two aspects – a local one and a national one. Firstly, what we witness here is, unfortunately, not a precedence. Only during the last months – I won't even speak about the trial of Ms. Nieznalska or destroying a gallery object by Mr. Olbrychski – just the last months, there were two dangerous incidents in Teatr Stary in Kraków where Jan Klata's performance was interrupted and then the threats that resulted in taking the "Un-divine Comedy" off stage. The second, local aspect that I find even more important – this controversial play has come to a very unfortunate city. This is the city where, for the sake of not being disturbed, an Equality Parade was delegalized and when it tried to go on its participants were arrested. The city where – not to disturb the peace – the authorities keep their mouths shut when anti-Semite slogans are shouted at the stadium and – not to disturb anyone – the record of this incident gets lost. Where, not to disturb the peace, the members of city council who discuss the gossips about young boys being molested in a choir decide – not to disturb the peace – to make the record of this meeting classified and move over. Mr. Żakowski noted that we're talking about the lack of freedom at Freedom Square, but maybe Poznań does not deserve a Freedom Square, or an Equality Square, maybe we should discuss on a Peace and Quiet Square in the City which quantifies knowledge of how to restrain emotions. Thank you. (...)

ADAM WIZE: Good afternoon, Adam Wize from "Lechia" Academic Corporation. Very briefly, three points: I organized the lecture of a priest, professor Bortkiewicz at the Economic University in Poznań and my personal experience is that this lecture was interrupted before

the police intervened. University security guards were beaten up, a police officer was beaten up by – as I got to know later – members of the Homoterapia group from Poznań and the supporters of gender studies from Poznań. So this whole issue is not that obvious, when you think about the aggression in Poland and Poznań. This is an unambiguous example. The difference between this and interrupting professor Bauman's lecture in Wrocław is that in Wrocław there was some shouting but nobody jumped on the tables, nobody beat up the police or security. All these things happened in Poznań and they were done by the leftists. So the second thing – concerning Mr. Mayor and the city, I have to say I feel sorry for our city since the Festival organizers has put us in this situation of conflict when they arranged this performance to be presented at this festival and they had put the city in a tough position. A very tough position and I feel sorry for Mr. Mayor, because those people knew how this may end, on this date and with this kind of text. After what I've read in the letter to the police and on the Internet, I have to say this thing actually does put Poznań in a bad light, but not because the performance was cancelled, but because it was supposed to happen in our city. I feel ashamed and sad about it. And the third thing, what would John Paul II say. I was often attending the Youth meetings with John Paul II and I have to tell the professor that John Paul II wouldn't have taken the side of those who organize this performance, but actually the side of these older ladies and young people who protest against it. Because he used to say: fight for the cross. He used to tell us that art and culture are only good as long as they can build a man and serve the love and the truth, not destroy them. They should never insult anyone or force

anyone to deny their religious feelings. The Pope was an actor, that's true, and later he was a priest and art was very important to him, because he realized that culture is something primary, something that founds the society, the politics, that influences people. His personalistic vision of culture means that culture is to serve human beings, to unite them. And this is not a kind of art that unites people. Thank you.

KRZYSZTOF KOŚMIREK: My name is Krzysztof Kośmirek and I wanted to ask the organizers, what was the motivation to invite this artist to show his play in Poznań? I don't know, did they see the performance before? Because, in my opinion, I wouldn't actually even call it a play, for me this is simply kitsch. It's kitsch. (...) And for me the people who invited this play to Poznań, I don't know, either they had no idea what they're doing or they weren't thinking at all, they were confused. And one more thing – whose money was spent to bring this play to Poznań? It was our tax money. Yes! Our money from our taxes. And we don't want to sponsor a blasphemy from our own money. (...)

The debate continues after the reading of the play as part of "golgota picnic: do it yourself."

PROF. PRZEMYSŁAW CZAPLIŃSKI: (...). I have two minor remarks. The first pertains to the title of the canceled performance. This remark is addressed particularly to those who believe that it was the title that was the clearest indication of the play's blasphemousness. Having read the play and viewed a performance of the piece, my impression is

quite the opposite. Namely, the intense protest against this play stems from the fact that it essentially tells us that we Christians have turned the passion of Christ and the Easter holiday into a picnic.

What is it that we actually do on Easter when we come home from church? We sit down at the table to eat, and after we've eaten we go out for a walk, then we come home and eat again. Who among us as ever thought about the poor, those who have been cast out by society, or those who have been humiliated in some way? That is what the play is about. What this play says is that all of Christianity has to reconsider the message of Christ. That means it has to turn its entire attention to those who are worse off than we are. In that sense, this play is a voice of despair. Not blasphemy, but despair. Look around yourselves. If you have Christ in your hearts, that means that you're sensitive to the plight of those less fortunate than you are. That's my first comment.

I want to mention another issue. What happened in the wake of Archbishop Gądecki's statement was sad, embarrassing, and disconcerting. It's as if Archbishop Gądecki, by uttering those words, had planted a poisoned seed in the ground. I imagine that a poisoned tree could grow out of that seed in ten or twenty years. By that I mean that ten or twenty years in the future someone, be it the head of some atheist association or group of football hooligans, will address the Catholics of this city and say, "I don't like your Corpus Christi procession. I don't like it because it's unsightly and it offends my beliefs as an atheist." And he'll call upon his friends and his community to intimidate you with phone calls, e-mails, text messages, or whatever means available. You will then turn to the police, and the police will say, "You're right, there's a danger that ten, twenty, or thirty thousand peo-

Debate: *Who needs freedom*
photo: Marcin Oliva Soto



ple will show up to threaten your safety." And then we'll take to the streets and stand next to you, and we'll say, "We're here for you. Your faith isn't our faith, but we want to live in a free country, and for that reason we will fight for your right to conduct your procession from start to finish with a sense of security and social solidarity."

(...)

PROF. KRZYSZTOF PODEMSKI: If I may add one more comment, I'd like to say that as I look out at the people gathered at this square today, my hope is that this will be the most wonderful performance at this year's Malta Festival — one that's spontaneous, lively, and real.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: And open to the public!

PROF. KRZYSZTOF PODEMSKI: And open to the public! A completely non-commercial event, at that — but don't let Michał Merczyński know. I'd also like to mention that the people meeting here today represent different views and parts of the political spectrum. Their discussion was a bit heated at times, but there was no violence or insults. Perhaps that proves that the play could have been held in Poznań, because maybe that threat was an illusion.

(...)

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: Ladies and gentlemen, a complaint was raised that the other side was not represented here. Well, it is. My name is Mikołaj Drozdowicz, and I am a legal counsel representing the Poznań Archdiocese, among other clients.

(...) I wonder whether you would be inclined to put on a play titled, for example, *Auschwitz Picnic*. (...) And today you may say that you would do it, but I'm willing to bet that you wouldn't. You wouldn't do it because there are certain things that are sacred, things that you hold so dearly that you would never violate them, right? And if we're talking about the common good, about the fact that we are one republic, then that means that we form a community. And a community also respects certain boundaries. That community is the reason that freedom has its limits. If we weren't a community, then we could all do whatever we wanted. But we are a community, and thus we do not make light of the Holocaust. Keep in mind that there are countries in Europe in which authors who deny the Holocaust face prison sentences. Sure, they may be controversial, but nevertheless writers like David Irving in Austria do face prosecution, right? So there are things that you simply aren't allowed to do and the question we're dealing with today is how you approach freedom. Freedom also limits your right to intrude upon that which others hold sacred, even if you don't share their sensibilities. Thank you.

(...)

MICHAŁ NOGAŚ: Good evening. I just have one question for Mr. Drozdowicz, before you leave. I would like to ask on what plane, in your opinion, do *Golgota Picnic* and *Auschwitz* intersect? I think this is an important question if we are to establish what we're talking about here.

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: I'm happy to share my point of view. I believe that Auschwitz is a sacred place. The people who died there were of various nationalities, but Jews con-

stituted the greatest number of those killed. Jews consider it a sacred, untouchable place. It's something you can't...

MICHAŁ NOGAŚ: But why were they killed in Auschwitz?

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: The reason was terrible. It was racial and religious hatred. The Holocaust is...

MICHAŁ NOGAŚ: So which was it: racial or religious hatred? Let's get this straight.

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: Racial, generally speaking. Yes, the reason was racial hatred.

MICHAŁ NOGAŚ: Thank you.

(...)

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: I'm familiar with the play. I've read the script and I've seen parts of the performance. It's a question of sensitivity. I believe there are people — not individuals, but a certain group of people — who have the right to feel offended by the piece.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: That's why you have the right not to attend the performance. It's as simple as that.

PROF. PRZEMYSŁAW CZAPLIŃSKI: If I may go back to the question you asked a moment ago. I feel it's a crucial and fundamental issue here. What your question does is construct false symmetry between something like *Golgota Picnic* and something like *Auschwitz Picnic*. Why? Because if someone wanted to stage a play entitled *Auschwitz Pic-*

nic in Poland and various cultural institutions and government officials representing the country and city that was supposed to host the performance addressed Jerusalem, the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, and asked whether we were allowed to put on this play, and the Jews said "no, and if you do, we'll send over Jews armed with baseball bats and we'll start a riot you won't forget until the second coming of Christ," then and only then could you present those two things as symmetrical. Otherwise what we're talking about is the play *Golgota Picnic*, the title of which — and you're right about this — attacks the dominant religion, meaning the religion associated with the government in this country. Therefore the government should be much less sensitive to acts of criticism and critical literature directed at it than it would to critical literature aimed at various minorities. That is what Christianity asks of us.

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: A very general discussion obviously entails a variety of perspectives, but isn't there anything so sacred to you that its violation would cause you to feel offended? Anything that would get you to talk to a lawyer to do something about it? You know, there are different things that people hold sacred. Let's say someone wanted to insult your mother. We happen to be talking about religion, but that's not what this is about. It's not even about my own beliefs, it's about what Polish lawmakers have written. There are, after all, limits to free speech. And they apply to everyone equally. I'm referring mainly to the penal code, which is a poor means of prevention, but it's there. There are crimes of defamation or insult, and it's a crime to insult someone's religious feelings or to call for others to commit acts of violence. There are some things that one is not allowed to do. Similarly, if someone were to insult your

mother, he would certainly be committing a crime. In the same vein, if someone were to call for others to commit racially-motivated hate crimes, he would be committing a crime. The fact that he might consider it to be an expression of free speech or the right thing to do is irrelevant. Like it or not, it's the community that places certain restrictions on itself, and we say: everyone is sensitive to a certain degree, and so we reject radical views in order to preserve the community. It's a middle ground where we don't insult each other.

PROF. PRZEMYSŁAW CZAPLIŃSKI: You know what? Please forgive me for saying this, but I wouldn't want you to represent me in court. Your entire comment was a jumble of disparate concepts and values. Let's start with the very beginning. Where in the play is there a single sentence, a single element that insults you or your mother personally?

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: There isn't any, of course.

PROF. PRZEMYSŁAW CZAPLIŃSKI: Of course there isn't!

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: But I was just giving an example.

PROF. PRZEMYSŁAW CZAPLIŃSKI: Precisely! The problem is that your example is unworthy of a lawyer. A lawyer cannot use an example that has no basis in reality. That's the first issue. Here's another one: what is your understanding of Catholicism? My impression is that there is a crucial problem to be found here. Namely, Catholics in this country — and I consider myself a Christian, not a Catholic — Catholics in this country believe that everyone is en-

dangered by indecent content, or at least content that they believe to be indecent. Do you consider us to be children? Do you believe that we can be demoralized or corrupted by watching a film, reading a book, or attending a play? Meanwhile — to return to the subject of Christianity — the fundamental question that you should be asking as a lawyer and a Christian is a completely different one: would anyone who saw this play become a worse person for it? That's the only question you have the right to pose. Would this play make him capable of attacking someone or taking away someone's values? Or would the opposite happen: would we leave the theater thinking, "My God, we are so self-righteous about our faith that we have completely forgotten what it means to believe in Christ." We have to re-define our faith. That is the relevant message of this play. Nothing more.

(...)

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: But you see, if we were to continue your example, then calling someone a jerk may or may not be offensive. It would depend on whether someone was sensitive to such insults or not. We're talking about a matter that involves a great deal of subjectivity. And the law is there to somehow try to lend objectivity to issues that are, by their very nature, subjective. Perhaps none of you would have been affected by *Golgota Picnic*, left the theater worse off than you were before, or had your morals impaired. But there are those who believe the opposite is true. And those people also have to be taken into account. I'm not talking about Catholicism or Christianity. I'm talking about how freedom of speech works in a republic in general, where we assume that we are all a common good, whether

we're Christians or not. We reject radicalism and that is, in essence, the limit of the freedom of speech. Thank you.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: (...) Never in my life have I seen anything like the phenomenon we have here today. How many people are there standing here right now? 300? More?

KRZYSZTOF MATERNA: I'll tell you, Jacek. 464 people. I counted.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: You see, Materna gets bored quickly and he needs to find something to do. So as I was saying, this is extraordinary. They're standing in the fresh air and talking like at a Greek agora. My congratulations to all of you. I now have a question for the deputy mayor of Kraków, who's been trying to get a word in for a while now. I'll give you the floor in a moment, but first: have you ever seen anything like this in Kraków?

MAGDALENA SROKA: Not in a long time. I envy Poznań for having an event like this. But I just wanted to say something to Mr. Drozdowicz. I think that the accent of this discussion has been shifted to ideology, ethics, and morality, and of course those are important issues to us and are relevant to the debate. But you should be saying what I'm about to say now. Everyone in Poland has the right to legal protection. Kraków City Hall has received criminal complaints for offenses under article 194 of the Penal Code. As you know, readings are taking place in two Kraków theaters. The law on local government requires us to inform the Prosecutor's Office — and I do this personally — that some citizens of Kraków consider their rights to have been violated when their religious feelings were insulted. And that's the legal

protection that everyone has a right to. At the same time, we've been receiving complaints about the violation of fundamental constitutional rights. And what does the municipal government do? It informs the Prosecutor's Office that, in the opinion of the citizens, their right to freedom has been violated. And it is up to the Prosecutor's Office to decide whether or not to take legal action, and whether either side's assessment of the situation has any basis. And that is the legal protection afforded to us. That is the legal protection we adhere to. We don't solve situations like these by exerting pressure and threatening to use violence.

(...)

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: I have to ask Mr. Drozdowicz one more question for the meaning of this answer to be clear. Are you here in a personal or official capacity?

MIKOŁAJ DROZDOWICZ: In the most personal of all possible capacities.

MICHAŁ NOGAŚ: Excuse me, I just have this one question: I have the same job as the host of this debate, but I'm speaking in my personal capacity at this moment. I cover books for public radio. My rule is that I never discuss books before reading them. That's my most important rule: if you have something to say, you digest it through your own brain. And now I would like to say that I'm very happy that Mr. Drozdowicz is here. I admire your courage, because I went to over to where the people are protesting against *Golgota Picnic* (even though they haven't seen it), and I heard them say that the only king in this country is God and the Polish government, if it is ever formed, because there

currently is none, and I was embarrassed. Because my impression is that no one is talking to these people. And maybe it's important that we talk to them.

But I have one question for you. You said that someone is imposing something on others. My question has to do with the issue of freedom in a republic: what are the limits of what can be imposed? After all, no one here in Poznań, or any other city in Poland for that matter, forced people onto buses under threat of physical or other harm and made them watch this play. Is that true or not? There you go. So please don't frame this in terms of something being imposed on someone. We can blame the media for framing it in those terms — perhaps they shouldn't be — or for taking it out of context. But no one's imposing anything on anyone. No one forces anyone in Poland to go to Corpus Christi processions, football games, the theater, or the library. And that's what it means to live in a republic. So let's look for the right words. It is not true that something is being imposed. No one is imposing anything on anyone: you can just not go to the theater.

(...)

RAFAŁ SZATKOWOLSKI: Mr. Drozdowicz claims to be here in his personal capacity, but before that said that he represents the archbishop, so which is it? [...]

(...)

MICHAŁ NOGAŚ: Mr. Drozdowicz, forgive me, but I don't think we understand each other and that's the crux of the matter. A moment ago Professor Przemysław Czapliński expressed his opinion on the difference between Auschwitz

and Golgota. And in response to my question, you agreed that racial hatred was the reason for the genocide of Jews, Roma, Poles, Hungarians, and people of many other nationalities whom the Nazis in Auschwitz and other camps in Central and Eastern Europe didn't like. We're talking about religious reasons, and those cannot be judged. I'm a Christian, I was baptized, and I was even married in a church, a fact that some of you here might not like. But it's true. And at the same time, I don't appreciate that someone is banning my atheist friends from attending this play. In the name of what? That someone might be offended because they went to see it? My opinion is that by trying to find some — I don't even know what to call it — some kind of connection, parallel, or link between Auschwitz and Golgota, you preclude any further discussion. Because you're going for the most important, most sensitive issues. (...)

(...)

TADEUSZ KAZIERSKI: My name is Tadeusz Kazierski, I live in Poznań, and I'm one of those who protested in a completely personal capacity, just as I'm here as a private citizen. I signed the petition saying that it mattered to me that that play not be held in Poznań. Why did I do it? I received word that it might contain certain themes — and it's true, I didn't see the play — that could hurt the feelings of a Christian in general, and a Catholic, whom I happen to be, in particular. The play was supposed to be put on here in Poznań, where the majority of people are Catholics — I think we can agree on that. I see that the path that some of you here, or at least the majority, a loud majority of you, are trying to take, is, in my completely personal opinion, a path, you might say, that leads to bad choices. I have... no, not yet, I'll be done

in a second, if I may.... I have been married for 41 years, because Jesus Christ leads me through my marriage and I have everything I need in life, you might say. And I'm a person who loves Jesus. That's why I signed the petition. If anyone's interested in, I don't know, the details of how to live in a way that lets you be happy with Jesus, then I'll be happy to share, and if someone has any intelligent questions, I'll be happy to answer them. Thank you.

(...)

KRZYSZTOF KOŚMIREK: As someone said earlier, we live in a Catholic country, right? That title, *Golgota Picnic*, sparked controversy and protests. But let's imagine that we were living in an Islamic country, and someone titled a play *Muhammad Picnic*. How would different communities react in that country? Some time ago they published those drawings of Muhammad in the press in different countries. What was the reaction then, how outraged were they? So just imagine what would have happened if we were living in a country like that.

(...)

JOANNA BŁASZKOWSKA: My name is Joanna Błaszowska, I have a question that's mainly for opponents of the play, several of whom are here today. What exactly are you protesting against? A moment ago one woman said that Christians are being persecuted and that's what needs to be protested and that has to be said outright. I want you to give me specifics: what is it about this play that makes it insulting to Christians? Because that's something that no one has said so far. Opponents of the

play have called it an offense to their religious feelings. My question is, where in the play is there anything offensive? Please quote a single sentence that falls under an article of the Penal Code. Because so far you've been speaking in general terms. So let's say I come to you and I say: your mother is ugly. OK? I said it. And now the question is, was that an insult? That's for the court to decide. You can go to court and file a lawsuit and let the court decide if I insulted someone's mother or not. So go file a lawsuit and let the court decide if *Golgota Picnic* insults you or not. Don't get your buddies together to show up with knives, baseballs bats or whatever and intimidate the people of Poznań into not going to see the play, or to cancel the play completely. You were talking about aggression earlier, well that's aggression. If you want to see aggression, just go on the *Gazeta Wyborcza* website and that's exactly what you'll see. That's the aggression that the archbishop joined in on when he encouraged people to riot. If you're against something, please don't take part in it yourself.

MAN: I find the very title of the play, *Golgota Picnic*, offensive, because I associate it with the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus and the title itself offends me, not to mention the content of the play. Thank you.

WOMAN: I've been put on the spot here. I don't want to appeal to authority, but in situations like this one doesn't have a choice. In this case I mean Feliks Koneczny and Leszek Kołakowski. A culture exists only as long as it takes its fundamental values seriously. If it abandons those values, if they become relative, then once you can do whatever you want with them, that culture will crumble.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: I have to ask you a question, in that case. Do those fundamental values include a situation in which an archbishop calls upon guys with baseball bats to trash a theater? Is that part of those values? Why don't you tell the archbishop, "Sure, let's beat those actors up with baseball bats." Or tell him, "Your Excellency, you've gone too far."

WOMAN: There's no such thing as unlimited freedom. Freedom without limits is anarchy, and at the end of all anarchy there inevitably waits tyranny. And that's how the anarchization of life, values, and society ends. Freedom without boundaries just doesn't exist. There's no such thing as unlimited freedom in a functioning society. It's just a question of who sets that boundary. That boundary can be determined through compromise. Here, meanwhile, we're going in the direction of freedom without boundaries. I have a certain vision, a whimsy, and I can act on it. I read a quote by Rodrigo García in the paper where he says that teaches us to look at things differently. This table isn't a table. I'm sorry, but there are certain objective truths in the physical and social real, and there are certain objective hierarchies of values.

JACEK ŻAKOWSKI: So the archbishop was right to call for riots? Was he right or wasn't he? (...)

WOMAN: Since we're on the topic of the archbishop: I just attended the procession. I walked the entire route of the procession, from St. Florian's church to the monument, and the archbishop answered your question by saying that the boundaries of freedom are set by the boundaries of good. Freedom doesn't exist as the freedom to do evil. Only the good of another person and the good of society can limit freedom.

The debate was commented on in the media. The following is a selection of excerpts.

28 June 2014

Radio Merkury

Freedom Square in Poznań hosted what was likely the most important, most widely attended, and most fascinating debate our city has witnessed in years. Held as part of the Malta Festival, the event featured a wide variety of opinions and voices. Several hundred people listened and discussed the limits of freedom from 5:00 to 10:00 pm, with a break for a reading of the play *Golgota Picnic*.

28 June 2014

Jacek Cieślak, rp.pl

Debate Replaces Riot in Poznań

In Poznań 30 thousand opponents of *Golgota Picnic* were expected to protest a performance of the play, but instead a civic debate was held with over a thousand people in attendance.

Friday's discussion was held at Freedom Square in Poznań at the time Rodrigo García's play was originally scheduled to take place. Brawls, conflicts, aggression, and damage to public property was expected to take place, however both supporters and opponents of the performance shared their opinions in a calm, matter-of-fact tone. Present at the debate were Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny, Malta Festival Poznań Director Michał Merczyński, Rodrigo García, theatergoers who could not attend the play, and its opponents, among whom were also nationalists. The host of the de-

bate was Jacek Żakowski. Despite expectations of aggression and behavior typical of football hooligans, citizens of Poznań gathered for a civic discussion, free of insults, with the goal of sharing their views in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

1 lipca 2014

Jacek Żakowski, „Polityka”

Golgota, a Crowd, and a Powerless State

(...) At the request of Michał Merczyński, head of the Malta Festival, I hosted the debate on *Golgota Picnic* at Poznań's Freedom Square. I have met Rodrigo García, the author of the play, and I am confident in his intentions. I have seen a recording of the play, I have read the script, and I am strongly impressed with both. From inside Nowy Teatr, I observed Thursday's anti-Picnic demonstration, the participants of which accused the creators of the performance of blasphemy, offending their religious feelings, and mocking the crucifixion of Christ. I observed, up close, hundreds of people reading *Golgota Picnic* in Poznań and a few dozen people with horns and speakers attempting to disrupt the reading with caterwauling and religious hymns. What I saw and experienced over the past few days has given me a strong impression that the debate over *Golgota Picnic* will have greater long-term significance than the current tape scandal.

Have you ever seen several hundred normal people hold a five hour outdoor debate in Poland? Have you seen a crowd of intellectually impassioned Catholic fundamentalists hold a civilized discussion with equally impassioned sworn atheists and anti-clericals? Have you

seen nationalists apologizing to artists and would-be audience members for the actions of football hooligans and the censorship imposed with their help? Have you seen Catholics apologizing for their bishop's call for riots? Have you seen agnostics, Pastafarians, university professors, students, businessmen, lawyers, anarchists, conservatives, art curators, directors, pensioners, a mayor, a legal counsel representing the archdiocese, and activists of different types gathered in the central square of a major city to debate the limits of freedom and responsibility, the place of religion and art, the role of the Church and artists, civil rights, the responsibilities of the state, and the risks we must constantly assume if we are to prevent the loss of our freedom?

I had never seen anything like that in Poland before last Friday in Poznań (a recording of the debate is available at www.malta-festival.pl). If freedom and democracy are things you hold dear, then you'd witness their best Polish incarnation at Freedom Square. If you're worried about the future of these ideals in Poland, then you might have found the experience uplifting. (...)

“Poland Picnic” proved that citizens who cared about freedom were beginning to wake up. Poznań unexpectedly saw the awakening of several hundred citizens interested in a debate on freedom. As the event drew to a close at 10 pm, most of the attendees wanted to stay and keep talking. And the discussion went on after the microphones had been switched off. In twenty other cities several thousand supporters and opponents of the play met in an atmosphere that was less conducive to reflection. But what matters is that they spoke their minds: some by reading the play, others through prayer and song. If it weren't for the hooligans who decided, to some ex-

tent correctly, that the state was so weak that authority could be exerted with the help of a few hundred baseball bats, I would say that *Golgota Picnic* helped Poland's long-dormant democracy experience a new awakening this spring.

Rodrigo García on The Malta Festival

8 June 2014

The first e-mail informing Rodrigo García about the riots was sent after the first protest letters were published on June 8, 2014. The director's reaction: "Al combate!" ("To battle!").

17 June 2014

On June 17, the day after Poznań Mayor Ryszard Grobelny put together the crisis management team, when the police recommended the performance of the play be moved elsewhere on the grounds that they would not be able to guarantee the safety of the artists, audience members, and the citizens of Poznań, Katarzyna Tórz and Dorota Semenowicz contacted the director via Skype. Malta Poznań wanted to reach a solution to the complicated situation in collaboration with the artist. Due to logistical difficulties, the performance could not be put on at another date and time in Poznań (this was impossible due to the availability of both the actors and theater venues). It was proposed that a closed performance

could be held without spectators, but recorded live so that the audience could view the play online at home. This idea was abandoned following consultations with Théâtre Garonne. There was also a proposal to stream a recording of the performance online, but this idea was rejected by Rodrigo García.

The director asked for time to think about the matter. He was considering whether he should even come to Poznań after the play had been canceled. He reached out to the actors through e-mail that night. Their opinions on the issue were split. Nuria Lloansi openly said that she was afraid: "I can't go to Poznań (with my family) knowing that at any moment one of those crazy Catholics or football hooligans could punch me or hit me with a rock. Aren't you afraid?"

In the meantime, the mayor of Poznań issued a statement which ended with the announcement: "I admit that the play *Golgota Picnic* may provoke opposition and protests, and I wish to announce that I will not be attending the performance, due in part to my doubts as to whether the content presented in the piece is compatible with my values." The lack of support on the part of the police and the city was a decisive factor in the cancellation of the play.

The next conversation with the artist took place a day later, on June 18. The director decided to come to Poland after all. On the way to the airport, García gave an interview to the French website *Les Inrocks*, in which he suggested that the director of Malta Festival feared losing his job as director of future editions of the festival (Michał Merczyński is the creator

of the festival and has been its director for nearly 25 years).

The decision to cancel the performance was made by Malta Festival Poznań. The organizers of the festival are responsible for the safety of the participants of the entire festival: not just of the artist and audience of *Golgota Picnic*, but also that of the participants of events taking place at Malta Generator, the open festival center at Freedom Square in Poznań, which hosts concerts, debates, talks, and performances, and where the festival café is located. Malta Generator is a space that encompasses all of Freedom Square and cannot be closed. There are no doors, gates, official entrances, nor exits.

Rodrigo García was opposed to the organizers' decision from the very start. He was unfamiliar, however, with the context in which it was made, and he incorrectly compared the situation in Poland to that of France, where the artistic community stood up in support of the play en masse immediately after opponents launched their protest campaign; where bishops called for peace, and the police took the side of the theater; where the play was performed inside an actual theater and not at an open community center; and where the organizers did not have to consider the safety of audiences attending outdoor events. Rodrigo García emphasized his differing views in numerous interviews.

27 June 2014

Rodrigo García gives an interview to Mikołaj Lizut, TOK FM Radio.

MIKOŁAJ LIZUT: How did you react to the news that your play at the Malta Festival had been canceled under pressure from protests by radical Catholics and nationalists?

RODRIGO GARCÍA: I was informed about this by the director of the festival two days before my departure, when I was already practically ready to go. I was told that the play would be canceled, so I asked for one night to think about the whole matter. At first I thought that I shouldn't even come to Poland: if the play had been canceled, I might as well just stay home.

But my role at the Malta Festival wasn't just about putting on a play: I'm the curator of one of the sections at the festival and we were expecting many South American artists whom I had invited. They were expecting to meet me there, and I was organizing events for the actors, so there were many people who were counting on me to be there, and that's why I decided to come. I'm glad I did, because it gave me an insider's perspective on the problems.

M.L.: In response to protests and "censorship," Nowy Teatr in Warsaw and other cities have invited people to attend theatrical readings of the script of *Golgota Picnic*. So instead of seeing the play, audiences will attend a public appearance with you. We're talking before the event: aren't you scared?

R.G.: Let's get one thing straight: you're talking about Catholic "censorship," and that's not the case here. There is no censorship happening. The only censorship here is

the self-censorship imposed by the Malta Festival. Catholics can't censor anything, because the play is legal. I didn't create some illegal play; it doesn't violate the constitution. There's such a thing as freedom of expression, and I, as an artist, have a right to enjoy it.

What I mean by that, is that no Catholic "censorship" has the legal or democratic power to ban anything. The people we're dealing with now are aggressive and pose a threat. The decision to cancel the play was made by the creators of Malta Festival. You ask if I'm afraid. No, I'm not afraid now. The only thing that frightened me was how all of this occurred. These are rash, closed-minded people, fanatics who won't listen to those whose opinion is different from what they want to hear. Yes, you could say I'm afraid of them.

I've spoken to the festival director and he has told me that we are prepared to put on the play. He said that they're worried about what could happen in Poznań following the performance: acts of violence, people taking to the streets. It's certainly unpleasant to be here in Warsaw in such a stressful and tense atmosphere. We're all anxious. These aren't the right conditions for putting on a play. That's why we've decided to hold a reading without the actual performance.

M.L.: Conservative Catholics have announced their plans to protest at night.

R.G.: They will protest, and they have every right to protest. I understand that, of course. Why wouldn't you protest against something you don't like? What you're not allowed to do is interfere with the work of an artist. In reality, I don't actually protest. I just don't like it as a means of expressing my opinion.

If I know that that a theater or cinema is showing something I don't like, I don't go see it, but I don't protest it. If people want to protest, they're free to do that. The only thing they shouldn't feel free to do is to use violence to that end. Nor can they disrupt or interfere with the work of a theater company.

M.L.: Performances of *Golgota Picnic* have met with protests in the past, for instance in France in 2011. What do you say to people who accuse you of blasphemy?

R.G.: This is a play. It's a work of fiction. I'm not proposing a new religious doctrine, and I'm not speaking out against any religion. It's just a work of artistic fiction. There are things that one person will consider blasphemous, while someone else will see nothing offensive in it. I can't rely on the opinions of other people. Let everyone think what they will. It's also the task of art, including the theater, to provoke reactions, reflection, sometimes irritation, and sometimes the contrary: to touch the audience. Anything can happen in the theater and there's nothing about it that's incompatible with freedom and democracy.

M.L.: In that case, what is artistic freedom to you? Are there any limits to it?

R.G.: In reality the freedom that interests me is the freedom of life and the quotidian, general freedom. Society is sometimes afraid to make free judgments under social pressure; people are often enslaved by external pressure and guidelines. It's beautiful, interesting, and wonderful that art offers the kind of freedom that provokes envy in society. How is it possible that artists make use of the kind of freedom in their art that I don't dare enjoy in my

everyday life? What I mean by that is that art has a good influence on society.

M.L.: I would like to talk a bit about *Golgota Picnic*. You've said in interviews that the play depicts Western society mired in consumerism, where God is helpless in the fight against evil. What else?

R.G.: My plays don't have specific topics. They offer reflections on many problems, of course. This play touches upon the problem of consumer society, in which leisure time is spent on shopping and entertainment — absurd entertainment, at that. The piece also talks about the issue of education and its role in the lives of children, because children are what we call "our future," after all, and the world will depend on them. What role do teachers and caretakers play in this?

The play addresses a wide variety of topics. My impression is that the religious topics are just an excuse to have a discussion about everyday life. It turns out that Catholicism is a paradox, because the premise is that it's a religion of love and understanding. We're seeing this weird behavior; acts of violence instead of acts of tolerance.

M.L.: *Golgota Picnic* was inspired by Joseph Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross*. What does that piece mean to you? Is it a testimony to the cruelty of crucifixion?

R.G.: You often hear or read accounts and stories about despicable people. "How could people be so vile?" At times religion was blind to the plight of people. It set aside reflection and common sense and concentrated on other values. It was at those points in history that we witnessed pure insanity on the part of the Church. We're all familiar with

historical examples such as the Inquisition, etc. The play is actually full of inspiration taken from works of art devoted to religion, to its best times. One of the main inspirations is Haydn.

It's beautiful music that harmonizes and helps evoke a state of rapture. It's an example of how something beautiful can serve religion. My play is filled with such moments and images, and in the finale there are references to Renaissance iconography, with many allusions to Giotto, Mantegna, and Rubens. It's just full of such references. It's interesting that someone could consider the play blasphemous without ever having seen it.

I find it very interesting that 30,000 people, or however many signatures you need to push an event like this through, can come together against something they are ignorant of and have never seen. That must mean that there's someone who's manipulating these people.

M.L.: Is there anything you oppose in the Catholic Church?

R.G.: Catholicism can do whatever it wants. I think that people who believe in Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the Catholic Church are absolutely wonderful. Just like Muslims and practitioners of any other religion in Africa or Indonesia. What I mean is that it's beautiful that people have their own free faith. They have faith, and I'm free to express myself any way I want.

M.L.: What is your opinion of Pope Francis of Argentina?

R.G.: The pope as a person is completely irrelevant to me. What I mean by that is that he has no connection to my beliefs. The pope is an important person to religious people, but to me he's just a person, one who might as well not exist at all. But I'm not complaining, and I don't have anything

against him, he's just a person who has no significance to me.

M.L.: Are you aware that the pope seeks to change the Church?

R.G.: I am equally uninterested in, say, the life of the King of Spain. Spain is a monarchy, but the king as a person is of no interest to me. The pope wants to change the Church; that's fine, as long as the changes are made with the aim to improve the lives of the faithful and will benefit the Church, because, as we all know, there have been many instances of pedophilia in the Church, many problems with finances, money being spent on things that aren't entirely clear. If the pope wants to change those negative aspects of the Vatican, then that's very good.

M.L.: Your play is a socially engaged work of art. Do you think that change in the world can be effected with the help of art?

R.G.: Art is an expression of human life. The existence of artists is proof that human beings have a need to express themselves in that manner. That means that we feel the need to view art, so it matters to us somehow. Not everything is associated with materialism; people need some kind of spirituality in their lives. For some, that can be faith, and for others it's art. Art is an important part of our lives, so yes, of course.

I spent my childhood in a very poor, peripheral neighborhood of Buenos Aires, where there isn't a lot of money. The crime rate is rather high, and some of my friends were criminals or homeless. That has influenced my art, of course. Even though I live among educated, cultured people, I'm still conscious of my past. My art combines two worlds, the

higher world with the one that's more down to earth. The elements in my art that have the greatest effect on the audience are the ones that juxtapose the mundane with lofty ideas.

M.L.: Why did you leave Argentina in the 1980s?

R.G.: I left because I was young and wanted change. I wanted to see what life was like elsewhere. I was fortunate that the country was finally free after many years of dictatorship; democracy had come, and the social democrat Raul Alfonsín was elected president. He had a lot of ideas for how to renew and improve Argentina.

Unfortunately, those plans didn't work out, in part due to pressure from the Church and the army. We were ruled by an oligarchy, and the Church and the army were the groups that still wielded the most power and enormous fortunes. Life was very difficult, and I didn't see much hope for my own future, so I decided to try my luck elsewhere.

M.L.: In one interview you said, "I would sometimes like not to take part in any military action. I admire the radical movements that fought in South America in the 80s." Were you thinking about figures such as Che Guevara?

R.G.: Of course not. I don't remember that interview, but what I meant was that there were many military and revolutionary movements in Argentina. The people who direct events like those always go down in history as murderers and ruthless leaders. I see them differently. There were no other options back then. Violence and armed struggle were the only viable methods. It was a moment in history when that was the only right course of action.

I took part in armed battles, and I remember them as acts of true courage, driven by a clear goal: improving the

lives of citizens and securing South America's independence from the United States, the threat of Francoism, and any institutions that wanted to profit off of the inhabitants of Argentina.

I admire armed movements in South America. I don't mean to say that their methods are the right way to solve problems; what I mean is that I have great respect for those who were are prepared to die for a greater purpose, to give their lives for others. It's very honorable.

Statement by the Artists Participating in the *Latin America / Mestizos* Thematic Idiom

On June 22, a meeting was between the Malta program team and the artists taking part in the Latin America: Mestizos Thematic Idiom. Following several hours of discussion, the artists decided to remain in Poznań and to display their projects, while reserving the right to perform individual interventions and offer artistic commentary on the situation.

The artists used different means to express their opposition to the censorship of the festival program by the current social and political situation. Katia Tirado created an additional protest tattoo as part of her art project. Emilio García Wehbi interrupted his play to read a special statement, as did Gerardo Nauman. At the start of their performance, the Mapa Teatro team humorously wove the topic of Catholicism into a discussion with an expert on drug abuse in Poland. The artist also wrote a joint letter against censorship, which the Malta Festival Poznań has published on its website.

Statement against censorship

On 20 June 2014, the management of Malta Festival Poznań announced their decision to cancel the performance of *Golgota Picnic*, contrary to the will of Rodrigo García, the director of the play. The decision was made in response to threats from numerous groups of radicals who announced they would cause riots in the city. We wish to clearly state that, as artists, we do not accept this type of intimidation, which is an assault against Polish and European democracy and a symptom of backwardness; which violates human rights and the freedom of expression.

Today, the attacks are directed at art that questions Catholic thought from a philosophical and poetical perspective. Tomorrow, the attacks may be redirected at any issue that is not supported by a group of fanatics.

It took only seventy-two hours for Europe to regress to the stone age. Poland, a country with a painful past, the home of first-rate intellectuals, cannot allow itself to be wounded again.

The festival allowed the artists to change the titles of their plays on the website (all the pieces were subsequently renamed *Golgota Picnic* or combined *Golgota Picnic* with the original title, e.g. *Golgota Picnic / Under de si*).



photoL: M.Zakrzewski

At the artists' request, the festival's printed matter was also stamped with the word "censored." The initial concept behind Katia Tirado's three-day project titled *Xipetotec or the Next Skin* was to embed the Aztec god Xipetotec in a contemporary context. The artist collected information about Poznań. Stories told by the city's inhabitants then served as inspiration for a ritual tattoo. The creator of the event was also "tattooed" with a protest against the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* in solidarity with the other artists invited to the festival.

— THE ART COMMUNITY

The cancellation of the performance of *Golgota Picnic* sparked off a number of reactions in the Polish cultural community. Despite the fact that Malta Festival did not receive the support needed to oppose thousands of people protesting against the performance, the statement concerning the cancellation of the play brought quick results. Immediately after the cancellation, the most prominent Polish activist group, the Citizens of Culture, submitted an open letter to the President of the Republic of Poland, in which they protested against censorship and expressed concern about the situation in Poznań. The letter was signed by 11,000 people within a few days.



23 June 2014

An Open Letter to the President of Poland

Dear Mr President,

On 20th June 2014 the theatrical performance *Golgota Picnic*, the work of world-renowned artist Rodrigo García, was cancelled in Poznań. Malta Festival Poznań made that decision after receiving reports from the Police, warning them against fighting crowds that are using the excuse of allegedly offended religious feelings to introduce into Poland a new form of ideological censorship, based on intolerance and hatred towards everything complex and hard to understand. This is the second time this season – after the cessation of work on the performance *Nie-Boska komedia. Szczątki* in National Teatr Stary in Kreaków – when an important cultural event was called off because citizens are worried about their safety, and the organizers were unable to protect the artists.

Right now Poland celebrates the 25th anniversary of regaining its independence. Freedom of speech and beliefs, freedom of artistic expression and freedom of culture – the foundations of a democratic, independent country – are seriously threatened today, when people who would not refrain from violence to suppress the freedom of speech and artistic expression want to decide about the form of public debate and about our consciences. The artists had their right to freely express themselves taken away, which seriously questions and undermined the authority of the state.

Mister President,

On 6th July 2012 you swore an oath to be faithful to the Constitution. On 20th June 2014, following resolutions of the

Constitution were violated: Clause 5: “The Republic of Poland (...) guarantees (...) the safety of its citizens”; Clause 6, paragraph 1: “The Republic of Poland creates the possibility to popularise and to have equal access to the cultural works”; Clause 13: “It is forbidden to create (...) organisations (...) which programme or make activities (...) allow (...) using violence to seize power or influence state policy (...)”; Clause 54, paragraph 1: “Everyone is free to express their views (...)”; Clause 73: “Everyone is granted freedom of artistic expression (...) and freedom to enjoy cultural works”.

Mister President!

We, the Citizens of Culture, a social movement working towards exercising the rights and liberties guaranteed in the Polish Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as the right to universal and equal access to cultural works, freedom of speech and artistic expression; alongside the Polish citizens signed below, object to violence in public life, including threats of violence, and we expect you to take a strong stance in the defence of these rights and liberties guaranteed in the Constitution. Culture needs to be defended from censorship, ignorance and violence with the same strength that the Motherland is defended from occupation. There is no free country without free culture.

Signed by Agnieszka Holland, Magdalena Środa, Joanna Mytkowska, Hanna Wróblewska, Beata Chmiel, Jacek Żakowski, Iwona Kurz, Paweł Łysak, Michał Zadara, Joanna Kos-Krauze, Krzysztof Krauze, Edwin Bendyk, Agnieszka Odorowicz, Beata Stasińska, Andrzej Mleczko, Kazimiera Szczuka, Krzysztof Podemski among others.



23 June 2014

Foundation of Open Academy

In connection with the cancellation of the theatrical performance of *Golgota Picnic*, the intellectuals of Poznań published in "Gazeta Wyborcza" – Poznań a statement *Against a religious state*. This was also a declaration by the founders of the Open Academy. The Open Academy Manifesto was published on July 2nd, 2014. It has been signed by about 400 people.

Against a religious state

The decision made by Michał Merczyński, Director of Malta Festival, who, as a result of a severe witch-hunt started by the Church – including Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki – right wing parties, AKO, Mayor of Poznań Ryszard Grobelny, various bigot associations and – supposedly – football hooligans, had decided to cancel the performance of *Golgota Picnic*, was a large step in the direction of establishing a religious state, the reactivation of censorship and the restraint of civil liberties and human rights – which include, among others, freedom of expression.

This happened at the same time as an outrage from right wing circles, led by PiS, which warned us of how freedom of speech was at risk after the AWB and the public Prosecutor raided the editorial office of "Wprost" magazine. It is a pertinent example of their hypocrisy, following the rule: freedom for us – prison for you. It also happened alongside the on-going hysterical attacks on gender studies, led by

exactly the same circles: the Church, right wing political parties, AKO, etc. It also happened at the same time as doctor Professor Bogdan Chazan placed his religious rule over national law while those, who were obliged to protect the lawfulness of our country, were completely helpless.

During the last few months Poznań has been scene to events which perfectly exemplify this process. Those events include an academic debate which was called off following pressure from right wing circles, as well as the case of Police brutality towards protesters objecting to the anti-gender lecture of father Paweł Bortkiewicz, which took place at the Poznań University of Economics on 5th December 2013; this case still hasn't been investigated. There's no doubt that we are facing a radical enhancement in the culture war, or rather the second culture war, since the libertarian circles won the first when Dorota Nieznalska, the author of *Passion*, was freed of all charges. Once again, culture becomes a battleground: attacks on Jacek Markiewicz's sculpture *Adoration of Christ* displayed in the Warsaw Centre For Contemporary Art, attempts to disturb Jan Klata's performance *Do Damaszku* in Kraków's Teatr Stary and interrupting lectures by the outstanding intellectual, professor Zygmunt Bauman, in Wrocław – these are all overtly vivid examples to support our observations. This war, the same as the last one, it is not only about culture – it is about deciding whether we live in a free country, or in a country which allows censorship in a form that many of us know from the times of the communist regime. In this case, ideology itself is not that important – the basic issue here is the oppressive mechanism by which civil liberties are being restrained by more or less radical right wing circles, by the Catholic Church, so-called football fans, etc.

It doesn't take much to understand that this argument is not about the performance itself. Those who demanded cancelling it hadn't actually seen it; their religious feelings were not offended, because the performance never happened – the blasphemy, which is also allowed in a democratic state, did not happen, so it is not even obvious that the performance would have been blasphemous. Some members of the Church, such as Dominican father Tomasz Dostatni, claim that it isn't. Neither the Archbishop nor the Mayor of Poznań nor the members of the city council nor the alleged football fans, who are not frequent guests in theatres, have seen *Golgota Picnic*. Apart from the shamelessness of all those mentioned above, who took an authoritarian stand on an issue they knew nothing about, there is another clear message in this situation: it is we who currently seize power, and that our arbitrary decisions will shape Polish cultural policy. It is us: bishops, the right wing, conservatives and hooligans, who will decide what the director of the festival will present. This is the outline of the whole story.

Director Merczyński justified his decision with the alleged obligation to protect the audience and artists' safety. Mr Merczyński needs to be reminded that it is the Police who are qualified to eliminate danger and guarantee safety. But this decision can cause some huge consequences in the future. We have a director of an international festival who gives in to the claims of a bishop and 30 or so bigots that protested in front of City Hall and threatened him with "riots"; we have a City Mayor, watching this protest from the heights of his cabinet window and noticing the danger; finally, we have members of PiS (including deserters, such as Jan Filip Libicki, who decided to join the ruling party: PO), who stepped

up to defend the allegedly attacked Christian values. The festival director is in the position to take care of the artists and the art, to protect the freedom of art, not to bury it. Those, who are objecting to the freedom of artistic expression and the freedom of speech, will end up miserable, even if they are allowed to live comfortably in their velvet prisons. We, however, don't want to live in a velvet prison, we want to live in a free country, where everyone's rights are respected, including, of course, those who wish to protest. They have the right to protest, but they have no right – either moral or (at least currently) formal – to forbid. They also have no right to terrorise and threaten with physical violence. Not only is it indecent, but it is also a crime.

Freedom is indivisible – either everyone has it, or it doesn't exist. Today we face the threat of losing our most important achievement after 1989 – our freedom. If we lose it, if we allow them to build a religious state, we will erase all the efforts of the anti-communist underground and the last 25 years of a free Poland, and return to the rulings of an authoritarian state. We appeal to the members of all social circles to express their strong objection: refuse to accept censorship today, it may be too late tomorrow.

The case of *Golgota Picnic* is part of a larger process of political change that is undermining the foundations of democracy. In response to this danger, we have created the Open Academy – a platform to express public opinion – and we invite everyone who shares our opinions, not only from Poznań, but from other cities as well; not only academics and artists, but everyone who sympathizes with the values we present. We want the Open Academy to put a stop to the increasing wave of igno-

rance, to intellectual mediocrity and intolerance, to the attempts at restraining academic freedom, the freedom of artistic expression, journalism and any other; to resist the tendency to surrender public life, culture and education to an ideology that would control and serve as a tool to build a religious state.

Prof. Przemysław Czapliński, UAM
 Prof. Izabela Kowalczyk, UAP
 Prof. Roman Kubicki, UAM
 Prof. Piotr Piotrowski, UAM
 Prof. Krzysztof Podemski, UAM
 Dr Błażej Warkocki, UAM
 Prof. Marek Wasilewski, UAP



26 June 2014

Readings and screenings of *Golgota Picnic*

Even though the *Golgota Picnic* performance in Poznań was cancelled, Malta Festival immediately undertook actions to move it to another city. There was a chance for that to happen, and among the cities considered were Bydgoszcz, Kraków, and Warszawa. The vice-mayor of Kraków, Magdalena Sroka was checking which of the Kraków venues were available and whether they fulfilled the performance's technical needs. Finally, *Golgota Picnic* was to be performed in Krzysztof Warlikowski's New Theatre, but Rodrigo García did not give his permission to present the whole performance.

Due to the Director's decision, the actors: Gonzalo Cunill, Nuria Lloansi, Juan Lorient, Juan Navarro, as well as pianist Marino Formenti appeared in the presentation. The performers read the text, accompanied by video projections and a composition by Joseph Haydn titled *The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour On the Cross*. Both the concert and the projections had been an integral part of *Golgota Picnic*. The director was supposed to meet with the audience after the show, but the meeting was cancelled after someone

shattered a bottle containing a fetid substance in the auditorium, and the audience had to leave the building.

The show in the New Theatre was part of the public presentations and readings of the script throughout Poland within the social campaign "*Golgota Picnic – do it yourself!*". The readings were organised by the artistic community in reaction to the cancellation of the theatrical performance. The Zbigniew Raszewski Literary Institute in Warsaw and Malta Festival partnered for the campaign. Malta Festival provided 26 institutions with recordings of the performance, along with working subtitles and a Polish translation of the text. The projections and performance readings were held in about thirty theatres and other institutions throughout the country. Some were interrupted, most of them were accompanied by local protests.

About 500 people protested outside the Krzysztof Warlikowski New Theatre. A group of young men blocked the entrance, while elders prayed and tugged at the people trying to enter the theatre. The two policemen were not able to help the members of the audience and some of the spectators managed to get into the theatre through the back door. Police reinforcements came too late. Three hundred audience members were able to participate in the reading only thanks to the security agency hired by the theatre.



27 June 2014

About 150 people tried to prevent the screening of the performance in TR Warszawa. The main activist in the incident was a woman who threw salt, supposedly exorcistic, into spectators' eyes..

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah0WX-llofM>

Recording of the incidents in TR Warszawa
recording, montage: TR Warszawa

A few hours later the Studio Theatre held a reading at Parade Square in Warsaw, in front of the main entrance of the Palace of Culture and Science. The text of *Golgota Picnic* was read by actors from the Warsaw theatres. The audience reacted with laughter and applause to one of the first lines of the play, "He who does not have a sense of humour, does not understand life". Just as in the case of TR, there was a demonstration against García's play. The protesters held red and white flags, sang devotional songs, the national anthem, and a patriotic song – Rota. They had whistles, and horns, as well as banners with "No more scoffing at Christ's torment" written on them. After a half hour performance, the actors thanked the audience, and addressed the protesters, saying "We also thank you for your attendance".

Recording of the reading of the *Golgota Picnic* text at the Parade Square,
source: Straszewski,

wsamymcentrum.blogspot.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr8oh31EB2Q>

Nine actors and an almost 500-member orchestra and choir, audio recording of the events at Parade Square, recording, montage, production: Michał Libera and Wojtek Zrałek-Kossakowski
<https://soundcloud.com/populista/populista-presents-rodrigo-García-golgota-picnic>

In Kraków the New Theatre organised the reading of the play. Outside the Old Theatre, in which the screening took place, the protesters held a banner with “the fighting Church” written on it, and chanted “the Great Catholic Poland”, and “Don’t let anyone rule in your house”. About 500 people participated in the demonstration.

Recording of the incidents outside of the Old Theatre in Kraków, source
Gazeta Krakowska / YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIYeNKALDt8>

In Bydgoszcz around 1500 people took part in the protest. Among them were Radio Maryja supporters, representatives of Catholic Action in the Bydgoszcz Diocese, Bicycle Birch, the All-Polish Youth, and some of the rightist political parties, as well as organisations connected with the Bydgoszcz Agreement Gateway, and persons wearing Zawisza Bydgoszcz shirts. Prayers and chanting by hundreds of protesters took place in front of the Polish Theatre. Protester’s banners read: “Poznań kicked them out,

now they’re coming to Bydgoszcz”, “This hogwash is not culture”, “Hitler and Stalin also fought with God, look how they ended up”. Most probably someone sprayed a fetid gas in the auditorium. The audience had to leave the room for a while, but some of the audience members returned to watch the film till the end.

Protests were also organised outside the Polish Theatre in Wrocław, the Śląski Theatre in Katowice, and the TrzyRzeczce Theatre in Białystok, where The National Radical Camp participated in the protest, while aggressive hooligans suggested that the wooden theatre building is flammable. In Katowice the police had to intervene to enable the audience to get into the building, but there were no serious incidents.

A few hundred people unanimously read Rodrigo García’s text on Freedom Square in Poznań. Wojtek Ziemilski, the organiser of the event was distributing copies of *Golgota Picnic* so that other people could join. “Why do we have Polish national colours on our sleeves? It’s because we represent Poland” – he explained.

In the Pinokio Puppet and Actor Theatre in Łódź, a group of protesters with rosaries and portraits of Jesus Christ and John Paul II prevented the audience from entering the auditorium. In the light of this event, the director decided to cancel the reading.

In Wałbrzych, hooligans forced their way into the Drama Theatre, and interrupted the reading.

The screening of the performance was cancelled in:

the Entertainment Theatre in Chorzów

The theatre's manager, Dariusz Miłkowski, wrote in an official statement that he "surrendered to the pressure of blackmail". According to the information obtained by the theatre, the members of The National Radical Camp and the All-Polish Youth were planning a demonstration outside the institution.

the Cultural Centre in Lublin

"Taking into account the opposition of various communities, warnings issued by the Department of Resident Safety and Crisis Management, and the immediate threat to the safety of the audience, employees, and Cultural Centre's property, as well as an unprecedented appeal by the Lublin Curia, we

decided to cancel the event" – wrote the management in the official statement.

The organisers moved the screening to the private club Community Centre. No protests occurred and about 150 people watched the recorded performance in peace.

the Kana Theatre in Szczecin

The creators of Kana Theatre wrote in a statement: "After a detailed examination of possibilities to ensure the safety of the audience at today's screening of *Golgota Picnic*, and due to the problem of both the audience and the organisers being put in a situation where instead of a space of dialogue, and discussion about values, they would be forced to confront the uncontrolled aggression, we have no other choice but to cancel today's event. At the same time, we declare our strong opposition to the hate talk which surrounds the play and provokes an increasing number of misunderstandings connected with it. We wish for the creation of a space for dialogue of representatives of all communities and beliefs".

the Binimnis Theatre in Wałbrzych

Recording of the incident in Binimnis Theatre in Wałbrzych

source: Panorama Wałbrzyska / YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH1pFOkGsk>

- CK Teatr Sztuk w Jaworznie



June 28th-29th 2014

The weekend issue of "Gazeta Wyborcza" (no. 148/2014) published the whole text of *Golgota Picnic* on four pages, under the title "Against censorship of the play". A photo from the play appeared on the first page with the caption: "Read before you cast a stone". One may venture a statement that the record for the largest number of copies of a modern play's text in Poland has been beaten – this issue of "Gazeta Wyborcza" with the text of *Golgota Picnic* had a circulation of 286,000 copies.



On the second page of this issue of "Gazeta Wyborcza", journalist, Michał Wybieralski, published a commentary:

Catholic extremists and cynical rightist politicians are fueling the panic surrounding two performances of *Golgota Picnic* which were supposed to be staged at Malta Festival.

They had not seen the play, they do not care what is it about. Conservative Bishops have created an atmosphere around the play similar to that of "gender ideology", with which they have been fighting up until now. Gender and *Golgota Picnic* are necessary for the Bishops to create this atmosphere of a besieged stronghold – the Church - in which persecuted Catholics can hide. It is the most primitive and simply dishonest way to integrate followers.

(...)

When protests against the play occurred in France, the Bishop of Toulouse toned down the mood. The opposite happened in Poland, the Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki wrote that the problem could be resolved by "a countrywide protest, which would threaten to turn into riots". I understand his words as a shocking call for violence.

The nature of the protests against *Golgota Picnic*, the statements of a few curiae, and programs in the Radio Maryja, show that the Polish Church is still dominated by those who are ready for another crusade. This is the basis for the cynics like PiS politician Andrzej Jaworski, who made "counteraction to Poland becoming atheistic" the main agenda of his political activity, or Ryszard Nowak, a specialist in the field of reporting false slanders for public prosecution.

More disturbing is the progressing abdication of the state to the religious extremism. (...)

Municipal politicians in Poznań and Lublin chose to endear themselves to the conservative voters, instead of standing guard over the constitutional rights of free speech and access to culture. The police asked the Malta Festival management to change the date and place of the performance, while during a reading of the play in Warsaw's New Theatre they did not have

control over the protesters, who pulled the audience, made it impossible for the viewers to enter the auditorium, and drowned out the performance. The police have shown they are incapable of performing their basic function: ensure safety, enforce obedience to the law.

The new minister of culture, Małgorzata Omilanowska, is the only civil servant who rose to the occasion. She called Malta's decision a dangerous precedent. She stated: "I don't see a place for preventative censorship and I cannot imagine a situation in which it is possible to prevent an artistic event in Poland only because someone, who doesn't know the content of the event, protests against it".

I do not want to live in a phantom country, where clerks don't protect the constitution, the police admit to not being able to fulfil their function, and the Church hierarchy are getting closer and closer to mindless extremism. Such a country is simply dangerous.

Reactions on the "Gazeta Wyborcza" Internet forum to the publication of the text of *Golgota Picnic*:

br47

Perhaps it looks better on stage, but the text alone is, for me, a good justification of why I stopped going to the theatre long ago.

tajnekonto007

But it's gibberish! And such, that you can't be sure whether the line "the litany of artists and angles" is a mistake, or was it really supposed to be like that.

I protest against the Catholic protests, because they won't let me go to this play and boo that pathetic gall! Now this Spanish smartass will play a martyr artist.

Marcin Whosoever Gajowniczek

A request to think creatively and stage an identical performance, but about the escape of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina... something like "Muhammad Picnic".

randeus

Nothing extraordinary. I needed a lot of persistence to read it till the end. There's a lot of shallow fragments, and "brilliant" metaphors. However, I'm not surprised that the protesters opposed the visual side rather than verbal. It's a typical production focused on shocking with shit and genitalia. Thank you, I'd rather not.

Stanisław Błaszczyna

THE HASSLE OVER GOLGOTA PICNIC

I took pains to acquaint myself with this text, because I wanted to understand what the whole hassle was about – those thousands of people protesting on the streets of Poland. And here is a random citation (García writes about e.g. Christ):

"He ended up on the cross, which he deserves, because every tyrant deserves punishment, or – as they say in my neighbourhood – he who is at fault, must pay for that. They nailed his hands and feet so that he finally shut up. But he kept on talking as if nothing happened. He had been through the Way of the Cross, which was not more painful than the one taken by the mailman – the pointless Way of the Cross, like every life, just like yours. And yours".

This is just one of the clearest citations – I purposefully omit those, which desperately twist, degrade and change Christian ethic, philosophy, and worldview.

If the author of the play sees Christ, the world, and himself in this way – it is his problem, not other people's. Reading the text, I spotted a good metaphor here and there, many attempts to “re-evaluate all values” (it's just that Nietzsche wanted to do that a century and a half ago – so here it is more of some “stirring all the values”). (In addition to that there are also scatological, para-pornographic, and doubtlessly blasphemous pictures shown to the audience by the performers – and which are available e.g. on the Internet).

Generally, I get the feeling as if the author wrote it all in some total decay and schizophrenic depression, with which he would like to infect other people. All in all: yet another instance of splashing about in the nihilistic swamp. From this perspective, the author perceives the world as a one huge cesspool. And thus to the author of *Golgota Picnic*, Mister García, we say thank you, we will pass.

kapitan.kirk

“The cheapness and low standards of contemporary graphomania might be spotted among the symptoms of demise with any reliability. There are fewer and fewer outstanding, respectable scribblers – but more and more common lunatics”.

This is an excerpt from a literary review by Antoni Słonimski from 90 years ago; well, some things are timeless ;-P

q-ku

Yeah, it was interesting, I read it

But what was the point of all those obscenities?

semperrom

Intellectual trash in the worst style, the end of culture! In the age of computers, it is a simple operation on sets seasoned with boorishness... and that's all.

jekas

dreadfully boring

emilly_davisson

OK – but WHY does the author call his character “Christ” instead of “satan”, or “fallen angel” or even “man, who seeks and errs”. This “someone” called in the monologue “Christ” is not Christ, thus the impulsive reaction of some of the Christians is not surprising.

And even though Jesus probably wouldn't mind, in my opinion there is a lot of sacrilege in this “work of art”, also through immersion in kitsch and supposedly shocking “artistic” media like the performers wallowing in a few tons of bread.

Although I suppose that if it were wallowing in fake blood and fake corpses – the “ultra-Catholics” would not be as agitated as they were.

Well, the author has certain opinions on Jesus and the New Testament. And they do not stem from his own reading of the New Testament.

Jerzy Drozdowski

What about “Auschwitz Picnic” – Wyborcza would cite that

Maciej Chizynski

It's just gibberish.

krzysztof213

Today I read the complete text of *Golgota Picnic* in "Gazeta Wyborcza". There is a lot of buzz surrounding this play in social media.

In my opinion the artists had an idea for such a performance. On the other hand this is a controversy for some people. But why ban a performance in a free country. Or maybe seemingly free?

On the other hand I know what the author had in mind. He has just shown the whole sad existence connected with people, the uncovered filth.

I've heard somewhere that there are bad things happening beneath the cross. Observing the world, sadly I can agree.

andrzej.gw2010

A theatrical play can be considered a work of art when the content and form are chosen in such a way that they reinforce each other. Everything has to work perfectly! The content itself does not suggest whether it is a work of art, or maybe that is where the dissonance occurs, so instead of artistic experience – wasted time?

People banning the performance treated fellow citizens like children who could not experience art

Stanisław Wołoszyn

I don't agree with some parts, but these are cultural circumstances. Like e.g. participation in the fall of the wall and in social life, but the view of Christ as a person not partaking in social life made me think.

kap_jeden

The text is quite current, below is a fragment concerning the emotional reaction of the opposition to the publication

of Wprost's surveillance but also reaction of the public to certain sensations by Wikileaks:

"A gulf exists between 'that is how it was said' and 'that is how it was written down'. They want us to believe that what survived in the written form is what was really said and what happened. But secret statistics, available only to the highest ranking members of the ruling class, show something opposite – what was really said is never written down.

By the same token, the transcriptions of phone-tapping by our thuggish public servants. Until they are revealed, the truth will be manipulated.

What I want to say by that is that an accusation is also a lie; it is said that certain issues are being swept under the rug so that we could participate in a hidden truth; no, stop that – they are being swept under the carpet so that we trip over another carpet, a lie under a lie, under another. All those photographs counterfeiting the world and making it smaller are lying as well; a reporter's photograph deliberately omits a whole world, everything that the picture does not show."

I would say that the text is about the fact that if we reject violence, we quite desperately will not be able to find direction, which wouldn't be a negation of spirituality. About the paradox, in fact the Catholic Church should have talks on that... if the church had put some thought into it, they would have found many new followers... they would just have to believe in spirituality themselves, and that is the biggest problem, because hate seeking contradicts spirituality.

Adrian Lubak

Golgota Picnic is a work of art for people who have been gifted with a mind, and not only a brain.

znafca.tematu

THIS is the fragment which the Catholic Church wants to cut out, the rest is ok. – “The prophets, who ordered us to hate the rich, have distracted our attention and it turns out that it is them, who, without moving a finger and in secret, did nothing else but plot to grow rich in order to cross to the other side, to leave us.”

inkwizytorstarszy

“WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THESE PROTESTS?”

Not what is the cause, but with whose money and who provokes them. And who is afraid of losing the income from taking collections.

Paweł Kujawa

I don't understand, Poland has fought for a few hundred years for the abolition of censorship etc. and now they want to introduce it? You're digging a pit for yourself.

gregora61

He perfectly renders the reality of this world. Not necessarily a believer, he knows the Bible better than the Catholic priests and their whole church. He crushes the Church, its rapaciousness and service to Satan. Fully demonstrating the hopelessness of the politicians and religion. The stage design and forms of expressing the reality of this world are debatable, but that's just details. Generally, I liked it.

Opinions of the art community and media after the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic*

From June 20th, when Malta Festival cancelled the play, till the mid-July, the journalists carried on a discussion in the media. We quote a few opinions of the people connected with culture and media:



21 June 2014

**Roman Pawłowski, „Gazeta Wyborcza”
“*Golgota Picnic*” censured**

The cancellation of performances of *Golgota Picnic* at the Malta Festival in Poznań is an attack on a secular country and an attempt at creating in Poland a theocratic state. The decision about cancellation of the play, although justified by concerns about the safety of the audience and the artists, confirms that the church's preventive censorship begins to operate in Poland. During the 25 years which have passed since censorship in Poland was abolished, we have been repeatedly confronted with efforts to suppress artistic liberty and the freedom of speech. Still, never have there been attacks on such a large scale as those against Rodrigo García's play *Golgota Picnic*. (...) Polish fundamentalists drew their knowledge of the “blasphemous” show mainly from the French conservative Catholics, who had tried to block *Golgota Picnic* three years earlier in Paris. In 1988 a group connected with them pelted a French cinema with Molotov cocktails during the screening

of a Scorsese film. As a result, several people suffered serious injuries. I wonder whether Archbishop Gądecki and Mayor Grobelny are aware from whom they draw their example.

This whole campaign surrounding *Golgota Picnic* is evidence of an ideological war intensifying in our country. Catholic fundamentalists try to build in Poland elements of a theocratic state, and also control art in regard to its conformity with their dogma. We saw an example of that last year, when a group of Catholic activists attempted to block the performance of "To Damascus" by Jan Klata in The Old Theatre in Kraków, while other group supported by the politicians associated with PiS destroyed the installation by Jacek Markiewicz - *The Adoration of Christ* in the Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw. In all cases the works in question were presented in closed spaces, where an entrance ticket was needed. The audience and visitors could consciously decide whether they wanted to participate in the event, so it is impossible for someone's religious feelings to be offended.

The ease with which fundamentalists have gained the support of politicians and some media may only partially be explained by upcoming elections. In fact, we face erosion of the Polish secular state. After years of disregard for the separation of church and the state, as well as leniency towards the interference of the hierarchy in education and legislation, this attitude is starting to backfire. Today a group of ultra-Catholics is deciding what may be shown at a theatrical festival, and finds support for their illegal actions from local authorities. Tomorrow, the same group will demand control over the publishing houses, the day after tomorrow over television programming.

The Free Speech Memorial unveiled recently outside the former censorship office on Mysia Street in Warsaw has to be covered again. Shamefully.



22 June 2014

Tomasz Terlikowski, rp.pl
The losers of "Golgota Picnic"

The "artists" of *Golgota Picnic*, as well as the management of the Malta Festival turned out to be the losers after all. As soon as it was known, that the Catholics and God cannot be insulted with impunity, that the Mayor, the Archbishop, a few politicians and thousands of ordinary Catholics are against them and don't plan to yield, to cowardly allow this desecration, they backed out of the show.

And by the way, they accused the Catholics who announced prayers, of attacks (presumably with the use of rosaries) on the "artists", the organisers and of public property damage.

The management of the Festival proved an absolute lack of understanding of the essence of the happening. If they had seriously treated their own declarations of openness to live art, they could have accepted the Catholics' protests as an element of this "work of art". Because if someone can offend the Catholics, defile their holiest values, and mock the most important people, then this person has to expect the offended to respond. The Catholic response should be thus written into the program...

That was probably the "artists'" plan. They wanted to ridicule the "left-footers", laugh at their feelings and convince people that modernity can mock everything. What they did not know was that faith is still going strong in Poland, and Poles (as opposed to the French) are able to unite. Not only hot-blooded youth capable of raising proper shouts, but also politicians with the ability to revoke donations or block other shows.

A brave artist, someone truly wanting to introduce social change through art, would face the criticism. However, the Festival management as well as the blasphemous “artists” turned out to be only seeming nonconformists. They are able to “create” only if it does not threaten their professional standing, money, place in the pantheon, and also when there is no threat of meeting face-to-face with those who are being offended. In this situation the “brave artists” turned out to be common cowards. The scandal in Poznań has shown that once again.



23 June 2014

Lech Raczak, Radio Merkury
A statement

“It is unfounded and premature. This decision violates the basic idea of the Malta Festival which was supposed to be a demonstration of freedom, liberty of beliefs and expression. It was this way for many years. I am afraid Malta is being relegated from the first to the third or even fourth league of world festivals. Poznań, instead of the city of art, becomes the city of oppression. It is a complete failure of Poznań’s image in Poland and abroad. (...) Since the police are capable of effectively separating the fans of Lech Poznań and Legia Warsaw during league matches, they would be capable of also doing that during a theatrical performance. (...) A kind of preventative censorship has been used. It is a more serious issue, because at the same time the right to free expression has been violated. People of my generation gathered 30 years ago outside the Castle, next to the monument. The motorized Reserves of the Citizens’ Militia used truncheons on them, and the people received the blows, so that in today’s Poland there would be freedom of speech and liberty to perform. (...) Today, Festival



23 June 2014

Łukasz Drewniak, teatralny.pl
Spiral notebook 9: The definite end of the “picnics”

7. Truth be told, Malta’s anticlerical billboards and the happenings organised by Palikot and Hartman, received by the Catholic journalists as a propagation of atheism and neo-paganism, have backfired. Ewa Wójciak and her dispute with mayor Grobelny regarding a Facebook post about Pope Francis contributed to that as well. But wait! Merczyński’s festival is not only a victim of increased Catholic and rightist watchfulness, but also of its own image errors. I think the incompetent change of the Festival’s profile contributed to the June protests as well.

The old Malta Festival, this ludic, cheerful international festival, which took over the city for a week, took place in the squares, on the streets, near Lake Malta and in the devastated spaces, did not need an instruction leaflet. The Festival was city-friendly and it was easy to understand its purpose and for whom it was created. During a few editions, it was a festival for everyone: ambitious realisations were performed alongside huge open-air shows, the new independent productions were seen in the repertoires of Poznań theatres. There were huge concerts and plastic installations. Each spectator could create their own schedule. However, ever since Malta has

underwent a facelift and visible over-intellectualisation a few years ago, the crowd and the clerks no longer understood what the festival is about. The shows have left the streets and have been shut behind closed doors, some discussion booths were built on Freedom Square for a handful of curious intellectuals, and someone came up with dreadful monographic slogans: *Idiom: the Excluded*, *Idiom: Latin America*. Yeah, I can imagine ordinary viewers reacting positively to the word “idiom”. What the fuck? – that was one of the mildest opinions. I am not saying the festivals should not be smart. They should. It is just that the crowd to whom the festival has belonged for years has no idea what it is about anymore. Thus it is very easy to manipulate. To make Poznanians believe that the performances include vicious, terrible, harmful things. Such threats and hate would not have occurred if *Golgota Picnic* had come to Poznań in 1998 or 2005. People were going to Malta’s open-air events, they did not care about iconoclasm of some niche performance. They had their games.

Another mistake on the part of the organisers was to divide the audience into concert and theatrical audience. We have been to CocoRosie and Beirut concerts together, but later the audiences of the large rock concerts backed by Malta stopped simultaneously going to Romeo Castellucci, Pippo Del Bono or Luk Perceval plays. By pigeonholing people in a musical space, Malta has lost a natural ally in the “experimental theatre” category. Indeed, the attendance of foreign curators, and directors renowned in Europe brought Malta Festival a little bit closer to the biggest European festivals, but at the same time dissociated it from Polish audiences, local characteristics, the temperature of our public discourse. The management has also lost watchfulness in regard to the symbolic space. If you have a scandalous play in your repertoire, you do not schedule it close to the Poznań June anniversary. Even I know that

close to the anniversaries the patriotic and church forces are becoming more active. Merczyński and his team did not pay attention to that.

The advertising campaign has also done its job. García’s controversial, risque performances were advertised as if they were pop-sensations, theatrical hits everybody needs to watch. Yet *Golgota Picnic* is not a play meant to be performed in a stadium with thousands of people. There was no need to publicise it, rather write about it in an Aesopean language, as if we were living and working under an ideological regime. After all, the events in Kraków in the case of *Kłata* were a warning. Dispute over the blasphemous dimension of García’s work should take place after the show. However, after the fall of theatrical criticism, the buzz surrounds only the premiere of a controversial work, because the journalists are enough to create it. After that there is silence, because apart from the Internet, there is no platform, where people could argue over the work and its significance. If the aim was for as many people as possible to hear about *Golgota Picnic*, then the goal was achieved. I do not suppose that Archbishop Gądecki and his forces, the rightist portals and fans, got their information from French conservative Catholics. They would have to know foreign languages to do that. The opponents of the play found out about it from festival materials, photographs and descriptions. The blasphemous, subversive works were never meant for the masses. They also never belonged to the theatrical mainstream, never and nowhere, rather, they were forbidden rituals for a handful of insiders. Just like *Apocalypsis cum figuris* years ago. And yet primate Wyszyński learned of it and condemned it.

Supposedly, the Facebook page: “Michał Merczyński, the new DJ of the Episcopate of Poland” was immediately created. Sure. Make fun of the director’s problem. It is fun to be

an uncompromising defender of the freedom of speech if it is someone else who will be held responsible for the beaten people and damaged property. I respect Merczyński's concession, just like I understood why Jan Klata stepped back and cancelled the *Non-Divine Comedy* in December. Even if we came together, and three hundred theatre fans appeared outside the Poznań Castle, would we be able to stand our ground against the hooligans and nationalists? A cross made out of cans? Do any of us know how to fight? Would the German fascists support us? Maybe we should have called for them to help us. It only takes three hours to get from Berlin to Poznań. I repeat – I accept the difficult, inconvenient decision to cancel *Golgota Picnic*. Although I understand the arguments in favour of moving the show to another city. To Wrocław? To Rzeszów and Kraków, governed by leftist mayors? Maybe they should have told everyone that the play was cancelled, and play it only for a chosen few? Such things happened, for example in the 80's during The Kraków Theatrical Reminiscences...

Still, this failure of the freedom of speech might be an important lesson for the people of theatre – it is a sign suggesting that the rules need to change. We have to try to outsmart the officials, priests, politicians, rightist journalists. Camouflage risque plays instead of flashing their controversy around. It is not about the fundamentals, but about real money – for premiers, festivals, existence of theatres and theatrical groups. A possibility to clash with society, the church, political parties, as well as a course for provocation, shockingly loose morals, and artistic freedom either have already failed or will fail shortly. Ok, I know, in a sense, we step back into the Polish People's Republic, but at least we tested out a few of the survival strategies then. They will come handy in a while.



23 June 2014

An interview with Lech Raczak (director, 1993–2012 director of Malta Festival) by Marta Kaźmierska, "Gazeta Wyborcza – Poznań"

MARTA KAŹMIERSKA: In contrast to numerous people discussing Rodrigo García's *Golgota Picnic* in the past few days, you have actually seen the play in its entirety.

LECH RACZAK: I have seen the recording. I regret I have not seen it live, video misses the whole emotional side connected with the live actor, as well as some of the semantic nuances.

M.K.: What do you think about it?

L.R.: Do you want an interpretation?

M.K.: Yes, please.

L.R.: In my opinion this performance speaks about the end of our civilisation, a spiritual decay. The play takes place in a kind of a landfill, where there are few tons of McDonald's buns, and where people try to talk about the final issues. They justify and explain why they do not want to take responsibility for the fate of whole societies. They sometimes blame religion and Christ. But we don't believe them. We know that they do not propagate ostentatious invocations, but rather engage in discussions. In theatre, if we want a truth to exist, there has to be someone who attacks it. It is impossible to stage Othello without Yago, or Hamlet without the treacherous step-father. Both sides need to express their opinions – a similar thing happens in this case.

It's a truly brilliant text. There is a kind of an attack on Jesus Christ, but it is not direct. Someone criticises paintings, in

which Jesus has been portrayed throughout the ages. It is possible to have a different opinion on this subject, so it is not a blasphemy, or an offence to religious feelings!

There are also two different, beautiful scenes that I have to talk about. One of them is presented in the form of a film, the main character is Satan landing on Earth. The scenes are filmed in the air, and Satan is an incredibly beautiful woman – a skydiver in a free fall, who pierces through the clouds in the distance, and later appears above the city. The fall lasts eight minutes and it's a truly marvellous scene.

The second scene – from which a part of the title comes from, I suppose – is a piano concert. About half an hour of a famous piece of music by Haydn on the subject of the last words of Christ dying on the cross. A piano is brought onto the landfill, and the pianist – a brilliant one – is completely naked.

This is a beautiful image, which reminds me of medieval painting, where naked people are put on the left or on the right during the Final Judgement. It is the only thing with which stage nudity can be associated. By the way, this nudity is not beautiful at all.

M.K.: Because the pianist is not a young, pretty woman?

L.R.: The pianist is just fat. But Haydn's music in the context of McDonald's buns lying on the floor moves us into an entirely different region. As if a ghost has appeared in the theatre.

I think this play is about the death of spirituality in the 21st century. That is a subject close also to the Catholics. I don't see any blasphemy in that.

However, the play may arouse suspicion that there exists a sense of transcendence beyond the religious institutions. In that case, Archbishop Gądecki's call might be treated as

a fight with a spiritual rival, and not a blasphemy. A competition for souls rather than a battle with sin.

One way or another, the so-called offence to religious feelings has been replaced by the social offence. That's a shame, because I regard *Golgota Picnic* as an outstanding work of art, even though I have never liked Rodrigo García's plays.

M.K.: Why?

L.R.: Because I got the impression that on stage he reaches for provocation too easily. It is possible that by following that lead, one could arrive at the conclusion that this play offends divine values. One would have to be stone deaf and insensitive to all human emotions to claim, after seeing this play, that its aim is to offend anyone.

M.K.: So where did all this uproar surrounding *Golgota Picnic* come from?

L.R.: In my opinion it all started with MP Tadeusz Dziuba, who at the beginning of June spoke in Parliament against the play, and simply lied to his fellow MPs and Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki. He lied to the whole country!

I am certain he had not seen the play when he said *Golgota Picnic* presents Jesus Christ as an embodiment of evil and thus offends Catholics' feelings.

Previously, MP Dziuba also wrote a review of my play *The Smoleńsk Conspiracy*, which he definitely did not see, because half of his review was complete hogwash. He sent it to City Hall, and now he tries to control the course of the grant competition in Poznań.

M.K.: The dates, when *Golgota Picnic* was to be staged, were – as the opponents of the play indicated – dates important to Catholics, because that is when the Most

Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated and there will be a procession through the streets of Poznań. The protesters claim that the choice of dates is a provocation in itself.

L.R.: But over twenty editions of Malta have taken place during that time! And throughout this whole time the Catholics have never had a conflict with the festival. Even when naked people were running around, not only in the Castle, but also on the streets! It has peacefully coexisted for so long. Until MP Dziuba came and stirred things up.

I have to say that even if he would sue me: in the 80's, when I received the blows and was arrested next to the Poznań June monument, MP Dziuba was holed up in the Democratic Party – a party allied with Polish United Workers Party - which was used by Polish Catholics to work their way up and support the Polish People's Republic. It is evident he has done that up until this day.

M.K.: It is hard to blame one person for this whole commotion.

L.R.: I accuse him of the lie that started the storm, and I will not take it back.

M.K.: Do you believe it was possible for dangerous riots, even spilled blood, to occur this Friday in Poznań?

L.R.: I don't. My friends jokingly sent me this alleged Facebook mustering. There are sentences like: "Let's go, this homo-leftism has to be stopped!" I'm searching and there is no basic information: where do they depart from, how do they get to Poznań, when.

If the police calculated on the basis of such calls that 50 thousand people planned on coming to Poznań, I congratulate them on having such a vivid imagination.

M.K.: Maybe the police knew something we did not?

L.R.: It is terrifying that even the journalists knew nothing about the behind-the-scenes of the decisions made. Not to mention the knowledge of ordinary citizens. People say a crisis management board has been created in the City Hall, and it made a decision what to do next. The officials have no right to organise secret meetings, because only the mafia does that.

We are at a festival dedicated to Latin America. Now I have that terrible feeling the festival is being governed exactly like the banana republics in Latin America.

When the police gather in secret without the mayor or officials knowing about that, and there are no minutes from such a meeting, then it is simply illegal. Against the law.

Look at what happens: the festival director Michał Merczyński comes and says: "I decided, because the police claim that there are 50 thousand opponents of the play coming to Poznań". And soon after the police state they were able to protect the show. Who was the one making decisions? And who is lying? We should know these things!

M.K.: We also do not know what was in the emails received by the employees of the Malta Foundation and CC Zamek. It is said there were threats. Apparently an alarm rang in the heads of the organisers, because the official reason for cancelling the show was the safety threat.

L.R.: When we began staging "The Smoleńsk Conspiracy" a few months ago, I also received threats. But you only had to carefully read the rightist Internet forums to see that most of the authors' usernames suggested they were from Mazowsze, Podkarpacie or Podlasie, which meant they did not see the play and they were not going to.

Fear cannot serve as an argument in a democratic country. The police are supposed to identify the criminal who

uses punishable threats. They have the resources, labs are equipped from tax money, they can identify the computers from which the threats are sent and do not need months to do that. Any hacker can do that in a couple of hours.

It is very annoying that an anonymous group of people who commit crime by using threats remains unpunished, because the police do not do their job, and convene secretly with officials and people of culture instead.

M.K.: Did you have any moments when you feared for your own or your actors' safety?

L.R.: If someone writes on a forum of a right-wing newspaper "Who is this Raczak? Someone needs to get him in a dark alley!"; then I am sure they do not know a lot about the world, which will make it difficult for that person to catch me. Especially in a dark alley. It is a simple discharge of a bad mood.

I don't know, maybe I have a tendency to ignore danger. But I also feel we should not sound any unnecessary alarms. If something is truly dangerous, then that is the police's job – to identify and eliminate it.

They could have waited with the cancellation of the play. Try, react at the last minute if the situation required that. After all, we live in an age, when with the use of technology we can pass on information in an instant! If it turned out at 5 p.m. on Friday that the situation is serious, there would still be four hours until the show.

Now mayor Grobelny states, perhaps dreaming of having censor's powers, that *Golgota Picnic* should not be staged at the Malta Festival. And adds, in opposition to all the facts, that the image of the city did not suffer from the introduction of preventative censorship. I will add: in *Wólka Biskupia* and *Licheń* the image might have even improved! Just why,

if he really cares so much about the nationalist and Catholic "target group", did he spend so much money on foreign language advertisement of POZnań (with a bankrupt airport) as a place open to all symptoms of freedom?

The decision to cancel the show was made too hastily. I do not know whether it was made by Michał Merczyński himself, or under the pressure of the police or city officials. Nobody knows that and I am afraid no one ever will.

I am even more sorry about that, because Michał Merczyński has been my friend for over twenty years. Malta Festival exists thanks to his energy. I have been helping him for over twenty years, but from the beginning he was the main figure. It is difficult for me, because now I have to speak against him. I do not understand nor do I agree with his decision. If I had still worked with the festival and came across such a situation, I would have immediately resigned from further cooperation.

M.K.: You created this festival as a result of revelling in the freedom. Theatre shown on the streets of Poznań became at the beginning of the 90's a beautiful pretext to gather after years of censorship in a public place for a reason other than political protest, or a demonstration of power. Did you feel sorry for what happened – also in this context?

L.R.: I understand it similarly. And it very much pains me. One of my friends, a participant of the events with the Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia, told me recently: "Listen, but if we had cancelled all demonstrations just because they would come and beat us, we would still be living behind the Berlin Wall".

Yes, in my opinion, we need to raise the issue of freedom of expression. We cannot give up the play without a fight,

without resistance, a week before the show.

M.K.: Right-wing publicist Tomasz Terlikowski has recently called the people responsible for cancelling the performance “losers”.

L.R.: And he is right. No one is saying to physically fight with the fanatics, but we cannot surrender at the mere mention that the enemy ordered a mobilisation. We at least have to wait until we stand with the enemy eye-to-eye, and escape just then.

M.K.: Perhaps nowadays we are less immune to the threat of violence and physical confrontation?

L.R.: That is for sure. After all, we fought for freedom so that we could be less immune to violence. But we should make use of freedom, and gather whenever need be, once every 25 years, to protect it. Now is the time to do that.

Krystyna Duniec, dwutygodnik.com



24 June 2014

It has been known for centuries that the world is a scene of crime, infringement, perversion and any possible political, social, existential, ethical, and moral abuse. Already centuries ago, Edmund Burke was certain we derived certain pleasure from the sight of true misery and the suffering of others, “because there is no sight we would more eagerly chase than that of the exceptional and great misfortune” (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757). The existential call of Soren Kierkegaard: “avert the difference of distinctness so that you will be able to love a human” (*The Works of Love*) long ago gave way to Freud’s thesis that a human tempts a fellow human to satisfy his aggression, humiliate him, make him suffer, torment or even kill. After the Second World War, the Holocaust, the Gulag Archipelago, and Rwanda, the idea of a ‘fellow human being’ lost its power. It does not come solely from the fact that people are monsters, but also due to the media showing images of cruelty which may fulfil various, as Susan Sontag proved, very different needs, and help to arm oneself against weakness, as well as desensitise. Recently we yet again drastically experienced that when watching Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Act of Killing*. The director presented the story of murderers in the death squads, who admitted they drew their inspiration from gangster action films. They mass murdered communists in Indonesia between 1965-66. The film is a great show about killing, in which former criminals, currently valued citizens running for Parliament, in painstaking detail reconstruct their crimes to the applause of spectators. *The Act of Killing*, as defined by co-producer Werner Herzog, is a bewildering, surrealist and most terrifying documentary

of the decade. Even more horrifying are the words of one of the criminals, who by theatricalising his cruelty and tortures used, as well as having actors and appropriate props at his disposal, says: "I hope this to be a beautiful, family film on mass murder". The question is, how to live in this world, how to deal with the apocalyptic moods and threats, with the horror of totalitarianism, technological and media-related oppression, ethical decay, fanaticism. Some deal with it by protecting the moral and social order, and ancient hierarchies through communal campaigns, for example the Festival of Hope, which took place recently (June 14th-15th, 2014) at the Legia stadium in Warsaw. "When values and authorities fall, when good is being called evil, when there is religiousness without God, when comrade Sputnik is trying to upset the order of the world and reason – writes Lesław Juszczyszyn, pastor of the evangelical church - we, as a society, need strong support and a strong hope to emerge victorious from this trial. When in our country, divided in any way possible, the Church is split, and there is a separation between the Churches, there is no other way of salvation but Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life". For the duration of the festival, the announcements for ecumenical Christian meetings under the slogan "I present to you my Jesus" appeared in the buses. The figure of Jesus, however, happens to be not only a symbol of grace and feeling of existential security, but also terror. The premiere of the first episode of a theatrical serial by Paweł Demirski, directed by Monika Strzępka - *The Curse, Episodes from the Time of Hopelessness* in Imka Theatre, did not meet with outrage. Even though 'blasphemous' was pasted on the website of the serial project (inspired mainly by American television shows, like *House of Cards* or *American Horror Story*) in a fragment of the Book of Revelations

(Ap 9, 17-18): "Come, gather for the great feast of God, to devour the corpses of kings, the corpses of leaders, and the corpses of rulers". Indeed, the first episode, meaningfully titled "Don't mess with Jesus", drowns in blood. Those who survived the hecatomb caused by supernatural forces, in which all the country's politicians have died, are ruled by Jesus who punishes their sins with death. "Compassion and mercy – he says – are some homosexual values. Atheism is not an excuse. The fun is over, it's the Apocalypse". None of the Catholics protested against those plays. No one petitioned against the blasphemy or obscenity. There was no uproar surrounding the *The Act of Killing*, in which the soul of a murdered Chinese man in a striped uniform, on the way to heaven, thanks a soulful "priest", played by one of the Indonesian criminals, for his persecution and death in the name of national purity. Both Oppenheimer's film and Strzępka and Niemirski's play are an expression of, in Susan Sontag's words, "a sequence of events, memories, and also that, what we do, what we forget about – the facts we deny out of fear of shame. We do disgraceful things, but we swear we have never done anything humiliating; we deliberately blot them out of our memory". Those disgraceful doings "come back in the form of a work of art and we do not even realise they are there", or in the form of the masterpieces, the paintings of Giotto, Memling, Van der Veyden or Rubens. The newest play by Rodrigo García, *Golgota Picnic*, is a gallery of painting masterpieces, convincing us that the figure of Jesus tends to be a symbol of an iconography of violence. García wants to prove that Christianity based on a bloody sacrifice inspires aggression, which uses more and more perverse strategies. "He, who dies, will keep their life" is heard in the play, in which Jesus is a "military strategist and social leader". In the space paved with buns from

poisoned hamburgers unfolds a vision of a social Golgota people have created for themselves. Its horror, despite an often grotesque convention, is not softened by the gorgeous piano concert by Haydn - *The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour On the Cross*- performed by a brilliant pianist, and, at the same time, an ordinary, sensitive, helpless, naked man. God in this scene has been abandoned as well. A preview of a play turning Golgota into a picnic, into a ruthless dissection of a contemporary reality, possessed by aggression, technological, mental and political violence, has caused fury in defenders of moral purity. Nobody has seen the play, but a few dozen thousand people have protested, the right-wing parties have made a lot of fuss, PiS has organised a press conference, and a parliamentary group for counteracting the rise of atheism in Poland has come into being. Poznań councillors have protested, terrified by the possibility that the blasphemous play would tarnish the procession to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, as well as the anniversary of Poznań June '56.. The Youth Crusade also protested. It is surprising none of the outraged people tried to close the art gallery, burn ancient and Shakespearean tragedies, full of incest, spilled blood and various perversions. Polish political tradition has always allowed excesses to exist behind closed doors, not in the public space. The show in Imka Theatre has been spared, but the publicity and fame of the international Malta Festival in Poznań, bringing into Poland the most prominent artists of critical art, forced the rightists to examine the threats in the public space. Discussions of García's play in the context of breaking the law, violating the Constitution, and the purity of public cultural institutions, has led to the cancellation of the play. This situation refers us to Polish history, and evokes fear of its current recurrence. One need only refer

to the early 20th century National Democratic address by the Minister of the Interior regarding cancelling the play *The History of Sin* by Stefan Żeromski, directed by Leon Schiller. They wanted to ban it because of the pornography. As pornography, the National Democrats understood the screams of a woman "giving birth" and "clenching her fists" during "labour". Against this "fall of civilisation" protested the Parent Association Union, Academic Association Catholic Nationalist Youth, which threw bottles of caustic substance during the show, National Women Organisation, Catholic Association of Polish Women, Children Sodality, Girl Care Association, Young Women Association, School Motherland, Protection of Women, Women's Work Group, United Association of Female Landowners, Częstochowa Queen League, the Group of Superiors, the Group of Ladies for Progress, H. Paderewska tailor shop, Female Academics Sodality. A delegation tried to convince the Minister of the Interior, Sławoj Składkowski, that the play undermined the rules of morality, a flood of mud has stained public life, and cynicism has forced its way into families, destroying all relationships, traditions, and old customs. Witold Wandurski was offending Catholics and patriots in Słowacki Theatre, because based on Goya's graphic cycle and Grosz's drawings, the theatre had mocked our national heroism in a pacifist grotesque, making the actors shout: "Long live the war! Long live murder and robbery!". The play was also an attack on religion, because patriotic and religious songs were sung by ragged war cripples without heads and legs. Let us not multiply the numerous examples of violating freedom in art. Let us end with a note that after 1989, after the euphoria of freedom, the 21st century has brought an escalation of mental and political censorship often reacting to virtual accusations. For instance, performances by Suka Off were

banned, even though hardly anyone had seen them. Warsaw City Council almost caused a theatre to be closed because of "Sewing Together" directed by Anna Augustynowicz, a play in which a man admitted to having his first ejaculation while reading a book about the Oświęcim concentration camp, where he saw pictures of naked women about to be gassed. Two years ago Artur Pałyga was branded a scandalist for offence to religious feelings in the "Unfinished History", because in the play somebody had hit someone else with the Bible, and a priest was thought to have impregnated a woman. Recently people have been outraged by Jacek Markiewicz's installation in CSW, titled "Adoration". The public was agitated by hooligan excesses during Jan Klata's "To Damascus" in the Old Theatre, not to mention the impunity and violation of freedom of art in the same theatre soon after. The director cancelled the premiere of the Krasieński's "Non-Divine Comedy. The Remains" by Croatian director Oliver Frljic, whom the director had invited personally. The examples of accusations towards art regarding violation of existing order are numerous. There is an abundance of iconoclasts. Although the criteria for ostracism seem random, dependent on publicity or particular political or institutional interests, it is not an accident that there is a rise in the social attention to the so-called moral purity, national spiritual regeneration or hegemony of Catholic instead of democratic values. This is the reminder of an incredibly dangerous pre-war National Democratic heritage. Before the war, senator Władysław Jabłonowski argued that "in a nation its greatest instincts and feelings: love for the country, religious piety, importance of family, readiness to sacrifice, respect for work and social order, awareness of the necessity of discipline and hierarchy in public life, finally patriotism" arouse and

inspire fascism. The National Radical Camp activist Ferdynand Goetel, propagated the need to create in Poland "a new fascist spiritual attitude" so that it would serve well in the modernisation of Poland and its "arming with normal, civilised equipment". Even if we remain cautious to the catastrophic visions of a totalitarian Poland, then modernisation is replaced by the perspective of a civilisational fall foreshadowed by removal of Rodrigo García's play from Malta's program. In a recent discussion in the editor's office of "Political Criticism", regarding East Europe and incidents in Ukraine, Marcie Shore has coined a category of ontological optimism for the revolution on Maidan. Is it possible that this category also includes the political, social, moral and mental situation in Poland?



24 June 2014

Witold Mrozek, wyborcza.pl
Malta against Malta, losers against censorship

After the cancellation of Rodrigo García's *Golgota Piczna*, hundreds of people mobilised. The protest carries on through a bottom-up, spontaneous energy of disagreement, new artists and "civilians" from other cities are joining. What do they actually protest against? – wonders Witold Mrozek in "Gazeta Wyborcza".

The protests in Warsaw, Wałbrzych, Łódź and many more cities take the form of reading excerpts from the "forbidden" play and screenings of the recorded performance. Many more people will become familiar with the works by García – in this abridged, but free of charge

version – than those who would if the shows in Poznań were not cancelled.

However, the organisers of Malta Festival are the owners of the copyright, and in order to show or read *Golgota Picnic*, one has to turn and sign an appropriate document.

It is nice of them to give permission to everyone. However, the protest in defence of the freedom of speech is at the same time a protest against a censor's decision, and somebody made that decision. Michał Merczyński did not only perform an auto-censorship as the director of the festival, he also censured the work of an artist and curator whom he had invited. At the meeting in club-café Zemsta in Poznań, Rodrigo García said he had heard it loud and clear: if he tries to work, he will not be let into the theatre.

If we live in a democracy, the decisions in cultural politics financed from the public purse should be transparent, and someone should be responsible for them. I know in our country these words sound extremely naïve. Though if it is so bad everywhere, why not start with changes in culture?

Sure, the Malta director performed under pressure. Although mayor Grobelny swears Malta Festival was not pressurised into doing anything, anyone who understands the uncertain boundary between culture and local officials knows that the mayors statement was a form of pressure. The local bishop has stood hand in hand with rightist hooligans. Would he forbid the police ensure the safety of the play's audience?

If we live in a democracy and want to continue living here, we cannot cave in to the arguments from behind the pulpit or baseball bat.

Meanwhile, Tomasz Terlikowski mocks and gloats. In "Rzeczpospolita" he writes that the artists and organisers of Malta "turned out to be losers". The Doctor of Philosophy from Fronda apparently adopted the language of those "followers" and "patriots" who fight for their rights with bats. What will the problem be next time?

The artists protest against danger. People of culture like to talk about the community and solidarity. These are nice, anniversary-appropriate words. Sadly, the kind of "solidarity" that dominates is that which allows the Festival to stand, as a partner of the protest, against its own decision – to save the image.

It is a lot harder to find the kind of solidarity which would give an artist the courage to not participate in an event if another artist is being censored during it. The kind of courage would made the director stand solidly with the creators and the audience who have been threatened with violence.



28 June 2014

Joanna Szczepkowska, „Rzeczpospolita”
Golgota and hypocrisy

(...) I have a vision: semidarkness. Sabbath candelabra lights the stage. Pious Jews surround a large table, in the background appears the Wailing Wall. The prayers become louder and louder, their rhythm increasingly forceful. The Jews go into a trance, while the prayer swinging turns into acrobatics. The Jews do cartwheels, tumbles, and finally run up to the wall. That is when a parcel of hogs runs onto the stage. The Jews pull samurai swords from under their gabardines and stab the animals, their blood splattering up to audience. In a prayer frenzy, the Jews take off their gab-

ardines, soak them in blood, and wash the wall; after that they take apart the wall, stone by stone. Pieces of paper with pleas fall from between the stones. The Jews set them on fire, and create a bonfire for the roasting hogs. Hasid women writhe about the stage, one of them gives birth to a boy. The woman sings "Lulujże Jezuniu" in high soprano. A huge cross drives onto the stage, under it is the Star of David. This is how I see it, this is how I feel it. What is the show's significance? Universal, of course. Every religion is opium for people. Religions have to be mixed, plucked from the bounds of tradition and idiotic bans. And I definitely do not wish to offend the Jewish community's religious feelings. Okay, enough. Obviously, I would not want to watch such a play. I would like to see, however, what would happen if such a show was proposed by the Malta Festival to be staged in Poznań. I have no doubt the Jewish community would protest. And with good reason. Perhaps, under the pressure, the show would be cancelled. How would the signatories of the letter to the mayor of the city react? Would they write the same letter? I listened in astonishment, when Seweryn Blumsztajn of "Gazeta Wyborcza" said that the case of *Golgota Picnic* is more important than the tapping scandal, because it violates the principles of democracy and freedom of speech. It is difficult for me not to set forth the arguments used when my text were being removed because of the words "welcome to the club" aimed at father Dariusz Oko. "Wyborcza" wrote: "Ourselves, we would never publish such content. Every editor has the right to their own evaluation of which authors and views should be published, and when the author abuses the freedom of speech to offend people". So that means there is content not published, not because it is dangerous, but because it has the potential to offend others. One more

thing. This concerns all plays which disturb, irritate, and shock the spectator. How is it that in the old, gone, as I understand, theatre, the spectator cried when moved, carelessly laughed out loud when entertained. But how should a disturbed spectator behave? An annoyed one? Defenders of gay pop culture often refer to Shakespearean theatre, when female characters were played by men. Ok, so let us refer to the audience of that times. The audience called the actors names, threw anything they could find on stage. An emotional theatre, and an emotional audience. The hypocrisy of contemporary "subversive" theatre consists in that the artist has the right to insult the spectator, whereas the spectator does not have the right to be offended. The artist may condemn the consumerist world, but to create a show, he requires the best conditions, available thanks to the consumerist world. Why do the signatories of the letter refer to the freedom of speech? Because it always is impressive, and virtually everyone will agree with that. But the cancellation of that show has nothing to do with censorship. Nobody has censored the play, because it has not been admitted into the festival. The play was supposed to evoke strong feelings, and it succeeded, even though neither the protesters, nor the advocates had seen it. Feelings so strong, the hooligans wanted to join in. The decision to cancel the play has stemmed from the fear of bloodshed. It was not only the Bishop who made the decision, but also a 30 thousand person demonstration. The play's director, Rodrigo García, has said: "Our opponents state: if you perform *Golgota Picnic*, there will be bloodshed. In this situation I can only say: go ahead! Let it spill". This is the only sentence devoid of hypocrisy. We just have to know for what the blood will be shed. Let me state that this is a religious war, not a war for the tolerance of art. García openly

hates Catholicism, he says it is “a shelter for all those who are desperate, and do not love life and human beings just the way they are, with all their weaknesses. They do not accept a man and a woman the way they exist.” He is free to say, think, even direct shows about that. If it touches upon religion, it has to be prepared for opposition. I am not an ardent Catholic, but you do not have to be one to see that for years there has not been such disdain and jeering at the Catholics. It does not happen to any other religion. That is where the emotions and protests come from. Because the world is truly emotional. Not only in artistic visions. If there is an action, there will be a reaction.



26 June 2014

Tadeusz Sobolewski, „Gazeta Wyborcza”
Blasphemy? There is no such offence

(...) I am not talking about the artistic value of the performance itself. Maybe it is boring or stupid. We do not really know. We will see. But if there is somebody who can say something about it, it is definitely neither the government nor the church. These institutions have joined forces in a Putin-like alliance in Poznań to protest against this “public outrage”. Isn’t it offensive? I remember a different scandal involving theatre and religion, namely the famous monologue “Jesus Christ Saviour” by Klaus Kinski, delivered by him in 1971 in Berlin in front of 5000 people. The performance turned into a fight (not limited to words) between the artist and the spectators. But the fight was fair and the artist, even though exhausted, won and managed to finish his speech, in which he defended the anticultural Christ. One might say that Kinski was defending the character he

portrayed, while García was attacking him. Maybe, but the paradox of the Christ figure is that it always wins, either as God or as a human being. Even if he is driven out, Christ always returns in an unexpected way. He does not belong to any political party or religion. He is dear to many atheists. Therefore, I do not think that blasphemy against him is even possible. All those Parisian defenders of the *Golgota Picnic* performance were right in saying that “there is no such offence”. It is possible to defile a statue, a flag or a national emblem, but Christ can take it all. He works also through his absence, through negation. He seems to be more present among those who attack Him than those Pharisaic public defenders. I remember the film *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* about the life of the alternative Messiah, in which the crucified sing an optimistic song with sarcasm and Nietzschean irony. There is a serious moment, evangelical even, in this clownish film. The crowd is following Brian, mechanically repeating his words, while he is trying to get rid of them: “- You have misunderstood me! - What should we do then? – You should make your own decisions. The point is that you should never let anybody tell you what to do...”. In *Life of Jesus*, young Hegel’s Jesus says almost identical words. “Until now I have been your mentor and through my presence I have been able to guide you. I’m leaving you for now, but I’m not abandoning you completely. I’m leaving you with a leader that each of you has inside (...). You have become adults who don’t need supervision and you can finally trust yourselves – says Jesus. – The memory of my teachings and my love for you will prompt and sustain the spirit of truth and virtue that people often do not praise just because they do not know him and are unwilling to look for him inside themselves”. I quite rarely hear about this lesson when I go to church in Poland. Instead, a lot is said about holiness,

miracles, and symbols, as well as faith, commandments and obedience. I think that the “stripping of garments” and depriving of holiness does less harm to the figure of Christ than ignoring his teachings. Holiness itself means nothing without them. Religion is just a packaging. The thing is that the hateful defenders of faith against the blasphemers don’t really apply the difficult lessons. Christ who supports another “running away from freedom” is not really himself. This public battle happening in Poland is about freedom, although it is connected with this performance, art, or generally with the role of the Catholic church, its ideologised media and the rebellious priests. It is going to be a long, difficult and dramatic journey that is still ahead of us, however, it does not ignore the West either. Most of its silent participants consist of those who are neither fundamentalists nor atheists, that is, humanistic Christians. Since this fight is already happening, it is important that it has a proper form and is more refined than vulgar. (...)



26 June 2014

Jacek Żakowski, TOK FM
a comment

“The situation surrounding the *Golgota Picnic* performance fully confirms the thesis that Poland is like two soft shock absorbers and, as put by Leszek Miller, a pile of rocks. The fact that the police warn the artists against bandits instead of protecting them proves that the Minister of the Interior shouldn’t perform this function. Sir, I’m ready to forgive you for all those conversations that were recorded illegally in different restaurants in Warsaw, however, I definitely can’t forgive indolence and permission for the bandits to terror-

ize the creators and consumers of culture. This is not something that should take place in a law-bound state. If you don’t do something about the chief of police in Poznań, who turned out to be an incompetent coward by not providing the artists, spectators and participants of the festival with a sense of security, I will lose all the respect I have for you. It’s a serious matter and you have failed”.



27 June 2014

Filip Memches, „Rzeczpospolita”
A curious concern with the rights of blasphemers

I am surprised at Jacek Żakowski’s outrage. In his radio broadcast on TOK FM on Thursday he scolded Barłomiej Sienkiewicz for calling off the *Golgota Picnic* performance during the Malta festival. The blasphemous show was not performed because of the protests of the Catholic community. The organizers of the theatrical event were afraid of riots, so they decided to cancel any provocative actions. Żakowski also revealed what the priorities should be for the Minister of the Interior. This is the relevant quotation: “Sir, I’m ready to forgive you for all those conversations that were recorded illegally in different restaurants in Warsaw, however, I definitely can’t forgive indolence and permission for the bandits to terrorize the creators and consumers of culture.” Trading an act of law for a resignation of an inconvenient politician is a piece of cake for a journalist. According to Żakowski, the more important matter is the lost opportunity for the liberated artists to tease the reactionaries and the threat of a rosary crusade, which was interpreted as an act of banditry. However, as rightly pointed out by Tomasz Terlikowski in his article in “Rzeczpospolita”

that came out on Monday, a person who attacks things that are sacred to others has to take into account that it might cause some violent reactions. And probably this is exactly what they expect. In this sense, the adversaries of the performance turned out to be the allies of its creators. Apart from that, why do we call it artistic bravery if it has to hide from old bigots behind a police cordon? However, it is not Żakowski's concern with the rights of blasphemers that is so curious. His way of thinking clearly reflects the attitude of some members of the elite in our country about, what we call, a common good. Even for left-wing intellectuals who impress with social sensitivity, the most important are the problems of the eccentric idle class. They treat the authorities as means in the fight against a mythical fascism that is allegedly threatening different performances. They do not seem to care that the state is falling apart. Maybe they do not identify with it. After all, belonging in the same class as Catho-Talibans is embarrassing.



29 June 2014

Piotr Voelkel, „Gazeta Wyborcza”

Freedom as wide as a steppe

I am Polish, I am from Poznań. I want to live here and raise my grandchildren. I feel responsible for this city, this country. I know that we have achieved great success, like the bloodless and world renown revolution and 25 years of freedom. We have resourceful businessmen, economic development, investments enabled by European funds, great, talented young people, and start ups that take over Silicon Valley. We travel all over the world, pursue careers in developed markets. More and more people take advantage of

this freedom and treat it as a breeze of fresh air. It is easy to forget that there are people who are surprised by this freedom, lost in it. People for whom this freedom is a threat. They are like birds who have been living for years in a small cage that provided them with a sense of security. And now, of their own volition, they find themselves in a courtyard, surrounded by strangers and unknown dangers. They are looking for shelter, leaders who promise care and protection. They form groups, build absurd alliances that provide a sense of security, search for common challenges, observe a world full of threats and start a fight with everybody they see as an enemy. They take advantage of every occasion to gather together and feel their strength. The cancellation of *Golgota Picnic* was a difficult and painful decision. Our dreams about a great community were humiliated and the pride of Poland and Poles was tested. It was a spectacular manifestation of our internal divisions and a sample of the challenges that lie ahead of us. These divisions provided an opportunity to improve electoral chances and many used that. One can either accept the fight with those who are on the other side. They can provide the means for further motivation and even more reasons to think that freedom is evil, threatening, demoralizing. Or they can treat it as a lesson in humility, a chance to understand what freedom is to us, what the challenges are that come with it, how much we have to do if we do not want to lose it. It is also a chance to see whose business it is to develop this conflict, and who wishes to strengthen their position and improve their electoral chances. We can see how many lost people will leap at the opportunity to be somebody important and needed again, even if just for a moment. Whom can we count on in this care for freedom and how much is there still to be done. How many times we will have to retreat. The strongest win-

ners will not be, but the most flexible will. In this contemplation, nobody who feels responsible for a common future can look for a solution by fueling the conflict, developing new fronts. Neither a civil war nor continuing divisions can be the solution. Aggression is the symptom of helplessness, the result of a fear of freedom, a wide steppe where everything depends only on us. It is also a reaction to the sense of failure, missed opportunities that were taken up by others. I am not talking about a fight, victory, failure. I do not want to defeat anybody. I believe in the advantages of freedom, its unique values and I want to convince others as well. Conflict is not a solution. We should look for a difficult, but common way. Teach, support, help. To work like that, it is sometimes better to sympathize than hate. Let us show those who are lost, what freedom without fear is. We will not emigrate, we will be here together. In conflict, we will waste our potential. Let's look for common challenges and avoid getting involved in a war. It serves only those who want to lock us back in the cage under the pretense of security.



29 June 2014

ks. Andrzej Luter, „Tygodnik Powszechny”
Golgota according to García and its enemies

(...) For a few months it has been possible to follow the accusations made online against the *Golgota Picnic* performance. Groups of religious fundamentalists, right-wing politicians and bandits have come together to jointly demonstrate in support of “patriotic, national and religious” values. The protests against this performance do not really have a solid foundation. Probably none of the protesters have seen García's show. Not knowing the play and, at the

same time, condemning its immoral content is a common practice in Poland. I have seen *Golgota Picnic*. I am not a fan of this kind of theatre, neither for its aesthetic nor artistic value. There is no life in it. However, what we get are ideologically-philosophical tirades delivered by actors. In this amount, they are simply boring. An artist protests against the West, consumerism, neoliberalism, hedonism and capitalism. That is, the whole spectrum of abominations that every modern left-winger despises. Additionally, we get a lack of faith in democracy, pacifism, and nihilism, an extremely pessimistic vision of the contemporary world. What is strange is that many of these “pseudo-values”, so foreign to the ideological left-wing, are also fought for by the fundamentalists on the other side of the barricade. Where is the conflict then? Well, in his show García refers to the Church. According to him, the Church, with its current spiritual state, fits perfectly in this heartless world of the West and is just as responsible. This criticism results probably from the personal experiences of the artist. Young Rodrigo lived through the rule of a right-winged junta and some of the representatives of the Argentinean Church collaborated with the government. In this show, Jesus is a victim of a similar Church, his Word of love is lost and what is left are pictures of suffering that become pop cultural magma that doesn't impress people devouring countless amounts of big macs, flooded with “litres of a black drink.” The reception of the performance depends on sensitivity. An outrage can be caused if one watches the show with fear and uncertainty, because the description of the world that can be found in it might destroy the fragile construction of a person's outlook without faith. Every artist has the right to their own passions and searches. I do not agree with his diagnosis of the modern world. However, the show forces

its viewer to ponder and reflect upon the worldly matters. And that is a lot. After the protests of Lefebrists in France, the bishop of Toulouse said that even though the fear that the performance had caused among some Christians was understandable, those groups that use violence in the name of Christianity are deforming the image of the Church.



29 June 2014

Jan Pospieszalski, „Przewodnik Katolicki”
A successful crusade

The blasphemous show *Golgota Picnic* has been cancelled in Poznań, the protest has turned out to be effective. With mass protests, prayers and petitions, Catholics have said a definite NO to the insults towards their God and faith. (...)

The anatomy of the protest

The information, pictures and video materials provided by the participants of the Crusade had made such an impression that other communities had spontaneously started joining the protest. At the same time, the organizers of the protests quickly realized that signatures would not be enough. Previous experiences with collecting signatures, like with the project of the educational referendum “Help the Children” or an attempt at raising the age of retirement, had proven that this form of protest is ignored by the authorities. Signatures don't help at all. The government has taught us that. - We know that one can collect a million signatures and the government will throw that away – says Andrzej Kołakowski. The participants of the Crusade had decided to act. On one hand, profiles such as Prayer and Action (Modlitwa i Czyn) started to appear in social me-

dia. Stop insulting God! On the other hand, Kołakowski, together with Jarosław Wąsowicz, the priest who works with football fans, started organizing meetings in different towns, motivating people who value God, Honor and patriotism, to pray and passively protest. Because the blasphemous production was to be performed on the 27th of June, which coincided with the celebration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the idea of summoning believers to Poznań was put forward. They were to participate in great numbers in a procession and then, carrying their rosaries, they were to surround the Culture Centre Zamek, where the show was supposed to be performed. The first meeting of the participants of the Crusade and groups of football fans took place in Wrocław at the “You can't lock us all” march, during which different patriotic communities demonstrated in defence of the supporters of Silesia Wrocław who were convicted of hooliganism, because they disturbed a lecture by Zygmunt Bauman. What is also paradoxical is that Michał Merczyński, the director of the Malta Festival, who invited *Golgota Picnic* to Poland, had also invited Zygmunt Bauman both to Poznań and Wrocław.

Freedom of speech is not for everybody

Bauman, a philosopher and sociologist, worked in the post-war period as a major for the criminal organization KBW (Internal Security Corpus) and took part in the fight against the Polish anti-communist underground. He has never apologized for his actions, never denied this part of his life, and he called the statements made by historians about his shameful past “a witch-hunt”. Therefore, even more communities started joining the protest, among them the Patriotic Union “Wierni Polsce” (they organized a demonstration in front of City Hall in Poznań) and the Greater Poland Pa-

triot's Association. They were soon followed by others: the Saint Benedict Foundation, the Congress of Conservative Women, and the President Lech Kaczyński Civic Academic Club, well-known in Poznań. They were joined by councilors and members of parliament from the Law and Justice party and the National Movement. It's difficult to account for everybody who declared their readiness to come to Poznań, because at some point the project gained the dynamics of a snowball. At the same time, articles in the press appeared. First they were only catholic, then right-wing media, and then of course all the post-communist and liberal media decided to join as well. The director of the festival assured the councilors that the show does not offend anybody, denied that the scenes had an anti-Christian character, he also called the protests an attack on the freedom of artistic expression. He showed that the protesters have neither the competence nor the mandate to express their opinion on the subject of modern art. Merczyński defended the performance saying that "the artistic and intellectual value of the performance is based on an in-depth analysis of social-political mechanisms (...) and the director's vision comprises a number of phenomena – consumerism, hedonism and aesthetic indifference".

(...)

The parties involved

The conflict surrounding the performance shows the opposite parties. On one hand, the self-organizing society, Christian and patriotic movements and initiatives; on the other hand, a civil servant who is implementing his ideas by spending public money. The protesters are supported by representatives of the Episcopate and many priests. In the

latter, we have the regular group of celebrities, from Andrzej Wajda to Jerzy Owsiak. The involvement of the media is also important. Merczyński is using the protection and support of the powerful press and television. The Rosary Crusade is supported by the Catholic and right-wing television and press. I think that the proposal submitted by a law firm who works for the leaders of the Crusade had settled the issue. It had invoked the right regulations and because of a well-founded suspicion of a potential attempt at committing a crime, it demanded that public safety be ensured by ordering the organizers of the Malta festival to cancel the performance. The application was received by the Chief of the Poznań Old Town Police Station, the District Prosecution Service and Merczyński. In the announcement that cancelled the performance Merczyński, in a way, admits that it was the application made by the protester's attorney that forced him to call it off.

Who is the aggressor?

The dispute about *Golgota Picnic* is not happening in vacuum. The Catholics in Poland have witnessed a number of blasphemous actions in the past few years. They have fallen victim to acts of aggression caused by hate towards believers or that have violated the law while desperately trying to defend themselves against aggression. Notably, the member of Polish parliament, Witold Tomczak, who 14 years ago damaged an installation in Zachęcie, Warsaw. The installation depicted the Holy Father John Paul II crushed by a meteorite. Till this day, Tomczak is still involved in a trial for allegedly destroying the "work", while apparently this ruined statue has recently been sold for an astronomical sum. The pseudo-artist who disrupted the procession during Corpus Christi in Łódź yet again still goes unpunished. The pros-

ecution has refused to prosecute those who participated in the desecration during the cross affair in Krakowskie Przedmieście. And they had extensive evidence which shows how the left-winged thugs psychologically and physically bullied praying people, where the cross made out of "Lech" beer cans stood or how they were wearing a cross with a crucified teddybear, where the blasphemous scenes that ridiculed the Passion took place. The lack of any reaction from law enforcement authorities to the symbolic and physical aggression against the defenders of the cross was both covered and supported in the mainstream media. A similar situation was that of the blasphemous video installation entitled "Adoration" in the Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw. Zdrojewski, the Minister of Culture, who has authority over the institution, when summoned by the members of parliament from Law and Justice, said that there were no institutional steps he could take, although he realized that had such installations offended the followers of Judaism or Islam, they would have been unacceptable. It's impossible to list all such profanations in an article, however, one should not forget that, also in Poznań, left-winged thugs quite recently made it impossible for priest prof. Paweł Bortkiewicz to give a lecture by acting aggressively. One of them, wearing a dress, jumped on the lecturer's desk. The legal proceedings against the perpetrators have commenced, but they are very sluggish.

The initiators of the protest that is currently happening online are being accused of alleged aggression. Some disgusting, crude words are being used, accompanied also by threats. Merczyński uses a similar rhetoric in his statement. He calls the protest "a spectacle of hatred", writes that the cancellation of the performance was enforced by radical groups that violate the right to freedom of speech while

demanding the introduction of a preventative censorship. He uses an hysterical tone, creating his own version of the story. "A virulent persecution of the festival is accompanied by something that cannot be ignored, that is, a threat of a potential attack on the spectators, actors, our guests and the citizens of Poznań. (...) Our decision was based on a profound humanly concern for the health and life of the spectators, actors, outsiders, CC Zamek staff and our own, that is, of anybody who could find themselves threatened by the crowd of protesters and psycho-fans."

Prayer and action

You have to admit that it is not funny, and all we have is a crowd of "obnoxious protesters" and "pseudo-fans". When asked by me, the organizers of the protests admitted that they took advantage of the proposition made by the groups of football fans who offered to participate in it. The initiators treated them as a defense against the anticipated aggression of the left-wingers and squatters, with whom the police in Poznań had already had unpleasant experiences. We recently witnessed a completely different story. The peaceful "seated" protest of fans and nationalists under the "rainbow" in Zbawiciela square was brutally pacified by prevention units. Young people who were sitting peacefully on the lawn, protesting against the return of the LGBT symbol to the square in front of a church were forcefully taken away, chained and thrown into police cars.

Merczyński seems to have forgotten about that. In his statement, he complains that in a country where we celebrate the 25th anniversary of freedom, freedom of speech and creativity are limited. However, he didn't have this kind of sensitivity to take a stance when left-wingers prevented priest Bortkiewicz from giving a lecture by

jumping on his table or when large fines were imposed on the fans or when some of them were arrested for protesting peacefully against Bauman. What's strange is that this time it is the Catholics that are the winners. Merczyński refuses to recognize the constitutional rights to dignity and protection of the most important symbols. He doesn't acknowledge the legitimacy of the arguments or the legal procedures, since he has already announced that the show will be performed at a different time, in a different place. He is like a brat who has been forbidden from smoking cigarettes in a school toilet, so he brags to friends that he will go and smoke behind the dumpsters anyway. It's a strange stance for a director of the National Audiovisual Institute who was nominated by the culture minister, Bogdan Zdrojewski. The story of this protest shows that when people come together, they are aware of their own rights, and if they act according to the valid regulations, they can do a lot. Of course, just like the organizers of the protest say, the most important are prayers. But we can also see that action is needed. In this case, the beautiful and pastoral stance of Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki was invaluable. It can be clearly seen that nowadays, cooperation is an indispensable condition needed to achieve success. In this Godly matter, two groups and communities that normally avoid each other, stood together in defense of the faith and dignity of Christians. A good example of an alliance formed despite differences was the Law and Justice and nationalist cooperation. Moreover, the fact that the fans of Silesia Wrocław and Lech Poznań stood together is spectacular evidence for renouncing aggression. Hopefully, the Catholics and right-wingers will arrive at correct conclusions.



30 June 2014

Krzysztof Koehler, rp.pl
Why I don't defend Golgota Picnic

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Citizens of Culture, my compatriots.

I am bowing deeply in front of you. People whom I know personally, I send my regards.

About a week ago, your "Letter to the President of the Republic of Poland concerning the cancellation of the *Golgota Picnic* performance by Rodrigo García in Poznań" appeared on Facebook and in other social media.

Freedom of an artist

Today, over a week after the publication of your letter, the dramatic development of the events is substantial. There are probably over 8 thousand signatures below your letter. A public presentation of the performance is happening in theatres all over Poland. It is being accompanied by praying and protesting Catholics. The new culture minister, as quoted by "Gazeta Wyborcza", presents the problem in the following way:

"Something very important is happening. The question of the limits to artistic freedom is returning yet again. Most importantly the autonomy of creators, the right to artistic expression, the freedom of speech and the right of organizers and curators of exhibitions to schedule artistic operations according to their conscience and will, while bearing in mind the existence of proper law."

These words are characteristic. I agree with the minister that something important is happening in Poland, that not only the currently articulated thoughts, but also human actions are dealing with the question of the freedom of artistic expression.

However, at the same time, I can see a distorted perspective in the minister's opinion, typical of the modern discourse of art. The vision of the superiority of the creators and curators' autonomy, presented by the minister, can be presented as a natural right of the audience to resist the values propagated by artists and curators if they violate their well-being.

After all, the freedom of an artist cannot be absolute, limited only by the law. I am repeating such obvious things also as a reminder to you, the culture minister and myself, that the Minister of Culture and National Heritage should not just be a guard who ensures the autonomy of an artist, freedom of speech and the rights of organizers etc. If we saw the responsibilities of a councilor in this one-sided way, we would have to deal with a reduction in the number of their tasks. Moreover, the ministry would turn into a new kind of office for controlling publications and performances, however, working just in the interests of creators and curators.

But the Minister of Culture and National Heritage should not be a spokesperson of the artistically-managerial lobby. I think that their function should involve more, including the social horizon of viewing art.

Gays should not be offended

One of the important aspects of the aforementioned conflict is the stance of "Gazeta Wyborcza". I do not find it strange at all. The media have their own political and cultural program that they follow. And rightfully so. They are doing what they think is right. However, I will use a hackneyed and overused (although true) argument and I will crudely ask: if a work of art was violating the values important for the gay or any other so-called community "discriminated against", would "GW" still defend an artist's freedom so firmly? Would not its readers react with a moral outrage?

At this point, I would like to explain to all my friends and those whom I do not know, who are continuing to send me the noble appeal entitled "Culture must be protected against censorship, ignorance and violence with the same strength that is used to protect the state from enslavement. Sign it!" why I will not sign your letter.

I do not know how many, but probably a lot, maybe even the majority of you who have signed the letter, had not seen *Golgota Picnic* before you put your signature below it, just like the adversaries.

Probably, after having seen the performance, you cannot erase the signature. But please consider it, look inside yourselves, do not hide behind the higher need you felt or social reasons, etc.

I want it to be clear that I want to talk about why, when I got the letter, I stopped myself from signing it.

I am a Christian, which means to me that I dare to try and become Jesus Christ's friend. I am a follower, even if just an incompetent imitator of the paragon that Christ became through his life and death (Do I dare follow the Master till the end? I can see my earthly, human limitations, my weakness clearly all the time. I know I am far from the ideal).

His Holy Persona is extremely dear to me. I think it is the most precious thing in the world. The meaning of Jesus cannot simply be called the taboo or the sacred, no other labels provided by our scientific, theological, related to cultural studies or anthropological terminology fit. Jesus is my Master, Teacher, the person of authority, sanctity, He is a Holy Persona, one of the three. This strange entity is the finest that I experience, that I imagine as a never-ending source of mercy, forgiveness, attraction. This entity that constantly surprises me with his amazing, attractive personality is my best friend. He exposes himself to wounds, blows, violence. The Creator is spat

on, ridiculed, and persecuted on his way to Golgota. People treat him like scum, an outsider. I believe that by succumbing to violence, which is characteristic of humans (oh how well we all know it!), He achieved an absolute re-evaluation. He succumbed to this human cruelty of his own volition in order to balance the enormity of the violence that has been present in our history and in ourselves. It had to be something that would balance our anger. Something unimaginable. Something that would balance our accounts. That is why the Creator gave his life, while tormented by the people whom he willingly wanted to redeem.

Hitler, Stalin, Lenin

To me Golgota, the cross, the suffering, are connected with an absolutely critical moment in human history.

The tormented body of the Savior hanging from the cross is sacred, pristine, clear and deserving of quiet contemplation, and a serious and humble prayer in silence. In Christianity, we call this act an adoration. It is not the time for laughter, the grotesque, deformation or any other such things. Only a respectful prayer is needed.

I do not want to talk to you in an article. You hide your ignorance behind the term "a world-renowned artist (what does it mean, what does it suggest?), your opponents speak of a "scandalizer", "provoker", "nihilist", etc. You can keep exchanging such labels for eternity. But what is the result?

I am sorry for the bluntness of this comparison, but Hitler, Stalin or Lenin were world-renowned criminals, does this fact excuse their behavior? Just saying that somebody is "world-renowned" is an example of an ignorant argument ad verecundiam. After all, one might be a well-known thug.

You defend the freedom of artistic expression, but when I see your names on the list, I cannot help but think that

you must set some barriers, boundaries, limits, to this expression. Freedom, as you all know, is always limited (both in social life and art) by certain natural boundaries. Some things should simply never be done. I think you do not have any doubts about it. After all, you are artists and managers yourselves, Citizens of Culture. Delicacy, respect, an open but unorthodox attitude towards artistic undertakings are yours (and my!) means of understandings of art.

I do not understand why then you put your signatures below this letter. How did you know you were doing the right thing?

Of course, most of you may not feel Christian. You might be against Christianity and Catholicism and see it in the same way as is presented by the director you are protecting, whose comments (those with which I have acquainted myself) are anti-Catholic. However, if there are among you people who call themselves Christians, you should re-consider it. Maybe you are going too far in the name of the freedom of speech by allowing a parody that ironically touches upon and parodies that which is the axis of this world: Golgota, suffering and the core of world history, just to criticize the consumerism characteristic of Western culture (even if we call it a worthy cause). And in some way it attacks your defenseless Master. His Mercy shielded you even before you came into this world and it will be begging for mercy for you at the time of your death, which will come sooner or later.

What would Jesus say

Those of you who do not feel Christian, please, reconsider it once again, and think if you are participating in a good competition by signing the letter. Are you really helping a good cause? For us, Christians, intervening in the Mystery of Salvation, in Golgota, is extremely hurtful and painful.

What kind of Christians would we be if we thoughtlessly accepted defiling Him?

In the readings from the 12th Sunday, Jesus says to his listeners: "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven." (Mt 10, 32-33). It is not a threat. It is a natural interrelation. Think about what He said in the sense of finality. Christianity has always consisted in showing that we are the disciples of Jesus. Why should it be any different now?



30 June 2014

Witold Mrozek, „Gazeta Wyborcza”

To shout down art with exorcisms

From Thursday to Sunday, we witnessed a number of protests in many Polish cities against calling off the allegedly anti-Christian *Golgota Picnic* that was to be performed during the Malta Festival. I took part in a public reading of the play *Golgota Picnic* by Rodrigo García. The text that was chanted in Plac Wolności in Poznań by over two hundred people had already lost its primary artistic meaning, just like the rest of the events during the Malta Festival. What mattered was the act of censorship and the grassroots protest against it. The prayers that the protesters uttered to drown out the reading of *Golgota Picnic* had also lost their religious character. I do not know what the people shouting through the megaphone "Our Father" or "Prayer to St. Michael Archangel" were thinking. However, their words had the same meaning as the noise coming from a red trumpet that belonged to a neatly dressed old lady. They were gestures of violence, a message that said: we won't let you speak. Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, the Chairman of the Episco-

pate, encouraged riots. The Bioshop's Curias gave an order to attack. In Kraków, a crowd blocked the entrance to Stary Teatr. In theatres in Wałbrzych and Łódź, the readings were disrupted by an invasion of aggressive protesters. Struggles ensued in front of Nowy Teatr in Warsaw before a reading in which García himself was to participate. Those who gathered, talking about God and the homeland, physically assaulted the audience, once could hear anti-Semitic insults. Fortunately, such an act of aggression did not take place in Wrocław. Those who were praying in front of the Polish Theatre did not disrupt the screening of *Golgota Picnic*. When Michał Merczyński, the director of Malta Festival, announced the decision to call off the performance, the true right-winged ideologists of the cultural war triumphed. The goal of the cynical stars of the "rebellious" media is simple, the so-called *backlash*, a strategy they imported from their American friends. It consists in convincing as many people as possible that their misfortune is caused by a conspiracy of the "left-winged elites", and the answer to that is a fight against "degenerated art", the rights of the minorities and the right to abortion. They need to intimidate those poor souls with gays, feminists and latte. The others cannot allow for intimidation, because if they make even one hasty step, we end up with an avalanche. For example, under pressure from the Curia and members of the local government, the directors of the Center for Culture in Lublin and Teatr Rozrywki in Chorzów called off the screenings of the performance just to be left alone. The extremists' aggression, and irresponsible and cynical policies of the Bishops should not make us forget that most Catholics in Poland do not have a problem with the freedom of speech. We should build a secular state for everybody, avoid the language of contempt and not cry about millions of dangerous old bigots when the decisions about censorship are made between the Mayor, a Bishop and a director.



30 June 2014

Łukasz Drewniak, teatralny.pl

Kołodotatnik 10: I'm the only gay in the village!

Spiral notebook 10: I'm the only gay in the village!

3. The Citizens of Culture have prepared an open letter to the Polish President Bronisław Komorowski in defense of articles nr 54 and 73 of the Constitution, violated during the protests against Rodrigo García's show that was to be performed in Poland. The letter contained many wise and meaningful words, for example: "Culture must be protected from censorship, ignorance and violence with the same force that is used to protect the state from enslavement. Without free culture, there is no freedom in a country." At this point, over 11,400 people had signed the letter. A beautiful letter, a beautiful gesture. I agree with almost every line of this letter, but I have not signed it. Because it does not make any sense. It is like writing just to be left alone. Wishful thinking. It is just us demanding a reaction from the head of state to these events. We want to get a comment, a statement, support for the gagged artist, but we are painfully aware that there will not be any reaction. There will not be a shouting match between the Mayor and the local authorities to defend the independence and freedom of artists. Nobody from Belweder will wag their finger at the zealous censors, control the right-winged communities, say: "Fans and nationalists, we're coming for you!". The Mayor is more concerned with his re-election and the tape scandal. Nobody will mess with bishops, presidents of cities, tabloids and anonymous Catholic voters. It is not worth starting another front just for a mere 12,000 "outraged" citizens. Let's not forget that he is also a conservative politician. Maybe

he is nice, but he is still conservative. And a zealous Catholic. And he has never denied that. I believe that he identifies with what the opponents of García's show think about the image of it in the media. Reminding him about his obligation to protect the Constitution or telling him that he should be unbiased in this ideological dispute is a waste of social energy. I reiterate that there will not be a firm reaction. The President will not become the arbiter. We can understand that the action with the letter is meant to put a gun to his head, to expose him in front of the left-wing and centrist voters, but it is a lousy calculation. Bronisław Komorowski will not lose anything by staying quiet, left-wing and centrist voters will still vote for him if they have to. Letters like the one by the Citizens of Culture make sense only if there is a glimmer of hope that somebody will sober up. In the meantime, writing to the President because of Golgota Picnic seems to me the same as sending a letter to Jarosław Kaczyński to protest against, for example, the fact that in Stróże in Podkarpacie a bronze statue of Antoni Macierewicz was erected. It does not matter how much the chairman dislikes it, he will not say a word. Because he needs Macierewicz, because Macierewicz is too strong to try and publically scold... I am against beautiful, yet meaningless gestures. They only strengthen the illusion that we have a chance in this war. Unless the letter to the President is, in fact, a letter to Polish citizens. By signing it, we can count ourselves. And that we have!

(...)

5. The list of theatres and institutions supporting the protest, fighting for the freedom of speech, has drawn a new theatrical map of Poland. The thing is that it no longer pre-

sents a division into progressive and preservative stages, exploring and narrow-minded, provincial and metropolitan. Now, it is a crib sheet for future authorities about who does and does not get the money, which director should be changed, who should be inspected. These few days in June have shown who can and who cannot be rebellious and cause a fight. Readings and screenings have taken place in Nowy Teatr in Warsaw, TR Warszawa and in front of Teatr Studio, as well as, in Stary Teatr in Kraków, in Teatr Polski in Bydgoszcz, Polish in Wrocław, Teatr Śląski in Katowice, despite the demonstrations, prayers and booing that accompanied them. They cancelled or lost out with the crowd in Chorzów, Lublin, Szczecin, Wałbrzych and Łódź. Only some institutions have won, that is those whose directors feel strong, because they are supported by the audiences (Glińska, Talarczyk), those of whose directors the right-wingers have such a low opinion that they do not have anything to lose (Klata, Mieszkowski, Łysak) and those whose directors will still make it abroad if things were to go bad in the country (Jarzyna, Warlikowski). The province got a rap over the knuckles. I think that the sympathy protest with Malta and Rodrigo García will do more bad than good. Roman Pawłowski wrote that the fact that the reading took place in Nowy despite the booing and attacks was a great triumph of Polish theatre. I doubt it. Let's look at what happened in the long run. Yes, we have protested and we have shown the black and brown that we would not give up without a fight. The voice of the "angry" has been heard, in the world, country, city. But the second voice has also been heard, and it also has been "angry". We are all defending something. We – the freedom of speech, they – the oppressed religion. Somebody might say that it is a good thing, we finally have an enemy. But both of them

have an enemy. However, there will be more of the latter, those who defend the faith than those who defend the freedom of speech. In the middle, in between the fighting and hateful parties, there will be a passive disinterested mass. In the case of escalation, they are more likely to support the traditionalists than the blasphemers. It suffices they just passively observe what these two groups are doing. Those young people who protested against ACTA will not come out into the streets to defend the freedom of speech and artistic creation. Do not hope that they will understand what they should fight for. And even they will not go against the black... Do you not know why Palikot's Twój Ruch has failed? Not because they sacked Nowicka, nor because they first became left-wing, then turned to liberalism and then got back to being left-wing. Their fall began with the apostasy of the leader, a pointlessly accentuated anticlericalism, hoardings with the news of the Pope's baby. Poles might not like the clergy, but they hate it even more when somebody forces them to publically admit that. And then we have the elections. It is possible that a right-wing coalition or a single right-wing party would win in the next elections for the local governments, and then for the parliament. Theatre, that until now has been associated with moral offenses and experiments on the classics, has become a factory of blasphemies in the eyes of religious and right-wing communities. Nudity, vulgarities, deconstructions of national masterpieces can be forgiven. But anti-Christianity cannot. Anticlericalism has never been the number one topic in Polish theatre, and now a community of people who think that theatre is against religion, the Church, and tradition, has come together. It does not matter if it is true. What matters is that they assume that. How can you fight with that? Well, in the Hungarian way (we make sure that our people are

in the most important places). Or with Kaczyński's method, that is by donating to art that serves the community. Let the destructive one look for a patron on its own. Tomasz Karolak will probably find one, Szczawińska will not. For the time being, until the next elections, provincial theatres should refrain from staging any controversial plays or adding any anti-Christian scenes into a show. Because of that, Jarosław Murawski's "Na Boga!" has no chance of being staged again in a theatre other than the one in Wałbrzych. Those managers who are in it for themselves will try convincing young directors to self-censorship, because nobody needs trouble. Curators will agree, because they need the money. Look under what pretence and how Remigiusz Caban of Teatr Siemaszkowskiej in Rzeszów was fired by order of the voivode of Podkarpacie who comes from the Law and Justice party, and you will know what will happen if the Hungarian option wins. Jan Klata will be the first one to go. There will not be a fight with old bigots, the viewers of Trwam TV, or the listeners of Radio Maryja. Our Catholicism and patriotism will be accounted for by well-organized, elegant, smart, intelligent, and incorruptible, able to skillfully navigate the Internet, right-wing journalists and Christian-nationalist activists... The action organized by the Polonia Christiana webpage consisting in "unmasking" the employees of the Theatre Institute who coordinated the protest, and pointing out their relationship with Political Critique (i.e. the extreme European leftists). This shows which methods will be used in a fight against those who disagree. A similar inspection was conducted by the weekly magazine "Do rzeczy" in the case of high school students who won against professor Legutka. A brave journalist investigated how the heroes are making money or even with whom one of them is sleeping.

6. The number of martyrs among artists in Europe has increased substantially. Directors of Polish theatres have made some decisions that were hazardous for their image and unfortunate for the ethics, although it was probably the right tactic. Due to that, Oliver Frljić from Croatia and Rodrigo García from Spain have been awarded the title of martyrs. They are now telling everybody how badly they were treated in this horrible country, that fascism is coming back to life, how anti-Semitism and censorship are strong there. Frljić and García have the right to such an opinion, they are embittered by the situation, and we deserve it. But their willingness to wear the stigma of martyrdom reminds me of medieval crusades in the north. Instead of fighting with Saracens in the Holy Land and spend the money on voyages overseas, and exposing themselves to the deathly climate of the Levant, poor or simply cautious knights had to fight their neighbors from Lithuania, Poland, Prussia and the Western Slavic people. The Teutonic Order organized all inclusive trips even at the beginning of the XV century. A lot of these "crusaders" were looking for real courage by fighting with the locals. Frljić and García did not do much to show the originals to the Polish audience. If Frljić really wished to deal with the myth of Swinarski, "The Un-Divine Comedy", and Polish anti-Semitism, he would have brought the same project and knocked on the doors of a few other theatres. I know at least three such theatres where it would have been possible for him to continue his work. García and his actors did perform in Warlikowski's Teatr Nowy, they read the play, discussed it and agreed to screenings. However, the performance, that was eventually called off by Merczyński, had been paid for. There must have been a fragment in the contract that said that if the performance is cancelled for reasons beyond the control of the organizers, the theatre company receives 100 percent of its remuneration. Why, then, a truck with the

set design could not go to a different city in Poland, e.g. to Warsaw, Wrocław or to a secret place? If García's show had been performed in a different place, the director would not be such a legend. After all, the message: "They have forbidden my show from being performed in Poland!" was a crucial element. Frjić and García do not have the right to bad-mouth Klata and Merczyński. But are they not the only two beneficiaries of the two arguments that took place in December and June? The appeal of Polish theatre as a place of an artistic martyrdom for foreigners has improved significantly. I think that we will not be able to get rid of foreign production offers, such as: "I'll guarantee a scandal!" We cannot ignore the fact that theatre, or maybe art in general, can never win with any political formation, not to mention with the Church. On that Friday, during a debate entitled "Who needs freedom?" that took place in Plac Wolności in Poznań in place of the staging of *Golgota*, Rodrigo García said that his art always met with an emotional response and objections, wherever he went. According to the director, it does not matter if only one person is protesting or if there are 50 thousand of them, "it's important not to give in". "You cannot threaten the democracy in your country!" This response earned him a round of applause. He bowed and probably made the famous Spanish gesture "No pasaran!". Afterwards, he left Polish bigotry with an honorarium from the curator. Nobody knows if he will ever return. The festival still remains, but for how long? I am not sure if it is forever.



1st July 2014

Marta de Zuniga, kulturaliberalna.pl
A Pyrrhic victory to the Catholics

(...) The boundary between art and politics has never been clear. Art is often engaged, it criticizes, exposes, deconstructs, or at least tries to do that. If it brings up certain social and political problems and takes a stance, even if it is critical, we cannot expect it will not be judged by the same criteria. Let's not forget that modern art frequently depends on public funding, which makes it receptive to ideological, and political decisions.

A word that is free, a word that hurts
The conflict caused by *Golgota Picnic* should be considered a public debate, where religious, social and artistic elements mingle with those connected with politics. The local authorities follow the social moods, which are actually more relevant and easier to define locally than globally. The city mayor, who is hoping to get re-elected in the local authority elections in 2015, might say that the majority of citizens do not want the city to subsidize an event during which religious feelings are offended. He might want to withdraw the grant and he has the right to do so. Although there have been cases that do not confirm this rule, however, the profit from opposing the potential voters would have to be worth it. Otherwise, his image as a politician would suffer. When it comes to *Golgota Picnic*, politicians did not have much to lose.

We can rebel against the mechanism that makes politics a part of the tradition and customs of the locals. The question remains if it could be part of something else? Maybe it could

be connected with human rights, a universal idea of artistic freedom, an objective justice, or an abstractive pluralism in politics? These values play an essential role, but only in the minds and hearts of citizens and politicians who have them and uphold them. These values must have been instilled in them and they are being voluntarily manifested. Such citizens and politicians are mature enough to accept that democracy comes with different outlooks on the world and the will of the majority should not come before the needs of the minority. However, it is very unlikely that even if some members of society acknowledge this pluralism, they would not protest and try to influence a decision that results in spending the taxpayers' money on things that mock the values that they hold close to their hearts. Artists and art definitely need autonomy. In spite of that, we often do not accept a situation in which an author is abusing the freedom of speech by using words to hurt or offend. This raises the question of how much of a strict deconstructor or a ruthless critic an author can be? To what extent is he allowed to judge a political community whose vices he diagnoses in his play? Should an artist feel responsible for a political community? Is he an individualist, an outsider who has the right to form his own ideas? Maybe he has the right to question somebody else's ideas or even feel intellectually or morally superior. Should an artist stand above customs, superstitions? Should he expect the audience to look into his mirror to see their true selves? Finally, would an annoyed spectator, who thinks that the mirror only distorts reality, throw a rotten tomato at the artist? In other words, do both the artist and the spectator deserve freedom?

It is fashionable to be humiliated
The advocates of *Golgota Picnic* argue that the play is a criticism of consumerism and violence which are characteris-

tic of today's world, including Christianity. Why was it such a surprise that a straightforward and not very charming criticism met with the discontent of the criticized majority who think that they are being mocked because of who they are? Open-minded supporters would say that it is all about "a transgression, a deconstruction and a new way of looking at our reality." These words sound nice when spoken by historians of art, but they do not explain to society what the meaning behind the performance is.

Nevertheless, the Catholics have probably noticed by now that there are people among them who care only about kicking up a fuss. These Catholics should bear in mind that ignoring the performance would probably have been a better strategy to limit the play's influence. In Poznań, there were about 400 tickets, which means that about 400 people could see the show. Since this play has now been so widely advertised, its career in our country is only beginning. The problem is that many Catholics think that nowadays it is good to manifest objections to the humiliation one is experiencing. The representatives of other religions would probably also object to having their feelings mocked, were they in a similar situation. It is difficult to find a group that does not feel discriminated against and demands sympathy. Despite that, it is important to keep the proportions and balance reactions. We are in Poland and true persecutions of Christians are taking place somewhere else. For example, in Sudan, Meriam Ibrahim, a 27-year-old Christian who was pregnant, was sentenced to death and lashing for an alleged apostasy. Having given birth to her second child in prison, in dramatic conditions, she was saved by the intervention of international public opinion. In view of this, *Golgota Picnic* seems to be just a minor creation by a Latino-American director who would probably never triumph anywhere else the way he did here.

Talks behind the scenes in the public sphere

Some suggest manipulation by the Catholic clergy who allegedly fueled the passion of some members of the Catholic church. This year's edition of the Malta Festival was accompanied by a lot of negative feelings and there were cases of physical and verbal aggression, maybe not as forceful as in the case of the Independence March, but still reprehensible. However, there is no law that would forbid a social institution, such as the Church, from adopting a stance on things that affect it. These institutions should avoid appealing directly to politicians or using any other obvious forms of exerting pressure or making threats. As long as it addresses its followers, it is safe. After all, most members of the Church know that they are working on their own when it comes to social or political matters. This means that it is not about censorship. It is all about protecting the rights of the members of a particular community, a feature that is so crucial to the Catholics' conscience and to liberal freethinkers. A change towards conservatism in the public sphere is rather difficult to observe in Poland. What we see is a gradually growing awareness of the mechanisms responsible for the functioning of the public sphere, its influences on our lives and a common expectation that this sphere will be improving its standards. Many Poles expect a nice and functional public sphere that accepts pluralism, but at the same time, does not impress with unfair, offensive, vulgar or violence inciting contents. More and more consumers notice the impact of culture, including the adverts, on social consciousness, that is why they react and succeed in their protests (e.g. a fight against sexualizing women in the public sphere led by Your Cause Association). As opposed to the 90s, Poles are more capable of utilizing legal and

political instruments of protest against a lack of respect for their system of values, aesthetics and sense of justice. The Catholics participate in the fight for common goals on equal terms, and it seems that *Golgota Picnic* will become a symbol of their Pyrrhic victory.



1st July 2014

Michał Zadara, krytykapolityczna.pl

We have established our own

On Friday, 22nd of June 2014, the demands of Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, who threatened to spark riots all over Poland, were confirmed by some fan clubs and nationalist organizations, and after the police had declared that they would not be able to ensure security during the performance, the Malta Festival's director decided to call off *Golgota Picnic*, a play by Rodrigo Garcia.

This act of censorship caused a strong reaction. Theatres, community centers, private clubs and art galleries who opposed such a violation of the constitutional right to participate in culture, decided to organize screenings and readings of the play on their own. The action was named. Its success was spectacular and, consequently, the play became more popular, even though it would have achieved a moderate success otherwise. A reactionary alliance of the Church and young men's organizations wanted to censor the play, but their plan backfired. The play that was supposed to be forbidden, was popularized. There were so many events during that week that one could write five or six articles about them. A week earlier, when everything started, we were completely devastated that the Constitution was becoming a dead letter. Now that so many people

have joined to protect it, we feel that we have managed to respond properly, collectively, constructively to the blackmail by the opponents of freedom. It is too early to sum it up and draw conclusions, therefore, there are seven incomplete paragraphs instead of one, coherent article:

1. What are the goals that the local cultural institution wants to pursue? A case study from Lublin.

In Lublin, the directors of the local Center for Culture, Janusz Opryński and Aleksander Szpecht, called off the screening of the play having received a phone call from the curia. In their official statement, the directors stated that they cannot guarantee the spectators' safety and that is why they cancelled the show. Curator Grzegorz Reske organized a projection in a private club. There were one hundred spectators, but nobody came to protest. Nobody. In words: one hundred people. Does this mean that the danger, to which the directors referred, was unlikely or even completely fictional? Maybe the Nazis and football fans from Lublin decided that they have more important enemies than an ultra-sophisticated and ambiguous play?

More importantly, why does an institution that receives funds not only from my, ours, national and Lublin's, but also European coffers do what the Church allows it to do? It is not the Church that finances the Center. It is the state where people with different beliefs live. Do the directors serve the Republic of Poland whose Constitution they are supposed to follow (article 6, equal access to culture) or the Catholic Church whose statutory aims are not convergent or even congruent with the Constitution? I understand that usually the Church does not intervene, because most works of arts that can be seen in the Center are not controversial. I understand that the Church usually does

not intervene in what the Center does. It is important not to give in when it does.

2. The lack of an unambiguous alliance between the football fans and the Church

In Poznań, people read the play by Rodrigo García together. They were not attacked by football fans. Maybe the alliance that made everyone worry is fiction? It seems that fan clubs have their own policies. Each party and each group has been looking for a way to form an alliance with the fans for years. And none of them have succeeded. Probably because the fans are mostly interested in football and any events unrelated to it are not well attended. It is comforting, however, it might happen that one day some party will manage to convince at least one group of fans. I have not heard of a situation in which football hooligans, even the most unrestrained ones from England or the Netherlands, have agreed to serve political or religious causes. I am not saying it is impossible, but it definitely is very difficult.

3. Kuroń's first commandment

I have participated in many protests, but this one was the first to follow Kuroń's commandment not to burn committees, but to establish one's own. The effectiveness of this attitude consists in making the protesters independent of the institutions that have failed. Since the Malta Festival decided not to stage this performance, we organized screenings in different places or even (like in the case of readings) staged them ourselves. We managed to escape this damned circle of complaints and demands to the discredited institutions and authorities. It seems to be the most promising way of handling things in the future.

4. The world of art as a reaction force

The world of art and theatre likes to think that it is disrupting the normal order of the world and that the organization of an elitist festival is a challenge for the conservative forces. But the most elitist, the most experimental and worldly festival humbly surrendered to the authorities, the police, the Church, the city's mayor, after they really needed to fight for something, when the danger that they will be punched in the face appeared. In the face of a real threat of enslavement, the directors of the festival ensured that it would survive and be held next year. I am not blaming them, since they wanted to make it through as a festival. But maybe it is time for those most prestigious festivals and theatres to understand that they are a part of the system and not centers of opposition. This way, the relationship between the artists and the audience could become more honest. And it is easy for me to say that, because I have never had to make such a decision.

5. Magic and violence

I would also like to describe this strange feeling I had when we sat in a group of thirty in the hall of Teatr Nowy in Warsaw. We were listening to a reading of a very poetic text and a piano concert while a whole pack of fundamentalists stood outside, screaming, chanting, praying, thinking that we are taking part in porno. The chasm between the porno playing in their heads and we polite citizens who simply wanted to listen to a play, was comical and impossible to cross. I was convinced that if somebody had told those protesters to sit and listen to the reading, they would not have managed to do so. They would have been too bored! Inside, we were listening to poetry and music, and outside, they were reducing their religion to simple magic (by trying to

influence a common event with a prayer) and their Gospel to violence (they were physically blocking the entrance to the theatre and trying to disrupt the reading of the play).

6. The police's idleness in Łódź

A group of fanatics broke into the theatre in Łódź, where a reading was going on at the time, and physically and acoustically disrupted the cultural event. The police refused to remove the hooligans. Why did they tolerate such behaviour? Consequently, the fanatics said their prayers (they could very well have done that in church, why did they think that a stage in a theatre was the best place for praying?), but the spectators did not see the play they came to watch (they could only do that in a theatre). What is it about fanatics that the police did not kick them out? They did write down their names, but the damage remained and the cultural event did not take place. What is it about those hooligans that the police did not treat them the way they would any other person who disrupts a cultural event?

7. The end of cynicism

The thesis that Poles are politically inactive, that everybody is always happy and asleep and that it is impossible to establish a constructive social movement is absolute fiction. Last week events proved that it is indeed possible. That it is possible to motivate a few hundred people who then organized events that affected thousands. It was probably possible, because nobody wanted to manage this group or lead it. Its goal was clear and the ideology simple. It was all about the freedom of speech. When there are clearly defined aims, it is unnecessary to have leaders, because everybody is still working on the same project. The group mail that was created specifically for this action wanted to

set up a meeting that week to sum up everything. I wrote back that we can meet on any other day, because nobody is indispensable in this action, which is really great.

8. What is it all about?

It is all about not having a single person who can force others, tell them what to listen to, what to read and watch in Poland (the exceptions to this are clearly stated by the law, for example, materials connected with pedophilia and totalitarianism).

Speculations, debates, and discussions about *Golgota Picnic* have appeared in all of the Polish media. The Malta Festival had to defend itself against attacks from the right side of the political scene, at the time it was cancelled, and then it had to defend itself against accusations made by the left side. The Festival was accused of cowardice, making their name by attaching it to the readings that were organized independently (Malta made the play and the video of the performance with subtitles available to others), not trying to move the performance to a different location (Malta did try to move it, but nobody knew that, because the director refused to have the show moved).

Malta tried to publish a statement in "Gazeta Wyborcza" in response to an article by Witold Mrozek, in which the author distorts the facts. The editor of the cultural column tried to change Malta's statement. The negotiations went on for a week. In the meantime, a different article appeared in the press and this time the facts were definitely distorted. In an article for "The International New York Times", which was reprinted in "Gazeta Wyborcza" two days later, Sławomir Sierakowski presented the course of events to defend the thesis that the festival censored itself. The disclaimer that Malta sent to "Gazeta Wyborcza" was also not published.



4 July 2014

Sławomir Sierakowski, *Poland's Culture War Rages On* (reprint of excerpts in "Gazeta Wyborcza", July 5th-6th, 2014)

(...) On June 20th, the organizers of the Malta International Theater Festival, which takes place annually in Poznań and is one of the largest such events in this part of Europe, gave in to a coalition of Catholic fundamentalists and right-wing hooligans and canceled the performance of "Golgota Picnic," after repeated accusations that the play was blasphemous. Instead of upholding the constitutional right to artistic freedom, the Mayor of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny, endorsed the organizers' self-censorship, claiming that "the play threatens Poznań's traditional values and as such is perceived as a provocation."

Catholic censorship, unlike Communist censorship, is characterized by the fact that Catholics themselves do not know what exactly they are censoring. None of the protesters had seen Mr. García's play. Not that it mattered to them. Communists once boasted that they knew the future, and in this sense, Catholics are similar: A work of art must be banned before it corrupts our souls. (...)

Meanwhile, the cowardice of the Malta festival's organizers mobilized leading representatives of Polish culture, among them the artist Wojciech Ziemilski, the museum director Joanna Mytkowska and the theater director Michal Zadara, to call for public performances and readings of the play across the country. The response was huge — the play appeared in 30 cities, in Poland and around Europe.

To compound this "evil," one of the country's largest daily newspapers, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, published the entire text of

the play in its weekend edition, so that every citizen could read it at home.

Still, in Poland, this is the first such victory of culture over art censorship. For the first time, there was a large-scale mobilization of cultural institutions and figures, rather than just open letters or press campaigns. But the ultimate victory for defenders of culture took place during a debate organized by the festival's creators, which was attended by the play's director and Mr. Grobelny, the mayor of Poznań. When the floor was opened for questions, a blond-haired youth stood and asked to speak.

"My name is Tomasz Maciejuk, and I am a nationalist," he said. "I would like to apologize to you for the fact that you were unable to enjoy artistic freedom and perform your play because of a bunch of soccer hooligans. This is a disgrace for our country. I am ashamed of the mayor, who was intimidated by the hooligans and did not fulfill his obligations."

It is unclear whether this brave young nationalist will have anyone to defend him from the hooligans. Ideally, he would have the backing of the city authorities and the festival's organizers. But this is Poland, where the culture war rages on.

„Gazeta Wyborcza” did not allow Malta Festival Poznań to publish the correction on the pages of the newspaper.

Sławomir Sierakowski in his text entitled “Poland’s Culture War Rages” published on July 4, 2014, in The International New York Times and on July 3, 2014 on NYTimes.com presents the facts regarding the cancellation of the performance of *Golgota Picnic* during Malta Festival Poznań 2014 in an imprecise manner and changing the sequence of events.

Sierakowski writes: ‘On June 20, the organizers of the Malta International Theater Festival, which takes place an-

nually in Poznań and is one of the largest such events in this part of Europe, gave in to a coalition of Catholic fundamentalists and right-wing hooligans and canceled the performance of “Golgota Picnic,” after repeated accusations that the play was blasphemous.’

The facts are that Malta Foundation decided to prevent physical confrontation with thousands of protesters – ultra-Catholics and football hooligan gangs. In his statements the Archbishop of Poznań, Stanislaw Gadecki, sanctioned passive and active protests, in effect calling for nationwide riots. The Foundation was left to deal with this on its own and was supported neither by the police nor the city authorities. Therefore, it was the state institutions who failed.

Sierakowski writes: ‘Instead of upholding the constitutional right to artistic freedom, the mayor of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny, endorsed the organizers’ self-censorship, claiming that *the play threatens Poznan’s traditional values and as such is perceived as a provocation.*’

The words quoted by the author were uttered by the mayor in a letter published three days before we decided to cancel the performance. How could the mayor have supported our actions? The letter was one of the reasons for the cancellation of the performance, as the whole moral responsibility for what would happen around *Golgota Picnic*, both in front of the Zamek Culture Centre (the place where the performances were to take place), as well as the open space of the festival club on Wolnosc Square and the streets of Poznań, was explicitly shifted from the law enforcement services to the organizers of Malta Festival.

Sierakowski writes: ‘Meanwhile, the cowardice of the Malta festival’s organizers mobilized leading representatives of Polish culture (...) to call for public performances and readings of the play across the country. (...)

To compound this “evil,” one of the country’s largest daily newspapers, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, published the entire text of the play in its weekend edition, so that every citizen could read it at home.’

Malta Foundation has been and will be continuously defending the artistic and intellectual value of *Golgota Picnic*. We were the ones to bring it to Poland, we defended it in statements and letters written to the Archbishop and the Councilors of Poznań, we were the ones who tried to move the performance to Nowy Teatr in Warsaw (to which the director did not consent), and then on 26th June we staged a special adaptation of *Golgota Picnic* in tight cooperation with Nowy Teatr and in consultation with Rodrigo García. Moreover, Malta remained in contact with the organizers of readings and screenings, immediately obtained copyrights for the emission of the recording from the Spanish producer, as well as consent from García to use the text and publish it in *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Surely, it is more convenient not to mention that, to change the sequence of events and to make Malta a faint-hearted self-censor. It is a simpler scenario, which capitalizes on the ruins of the decision and makes heroes of those who became active only after our month long endeavors (as the decision was taken a month after the first protests) to ensure safe access to art and respect for the freedom of speech were crushed.

In response to the manipulation and reluctance of “*Gazeta Wyborcza*” to let Malta make a statement, the coordinator of the Malta Festival’s program, Katarzyna Tórz, has published an article on e-teatr and on the festival’s website.



8 July 2014

You are not as free as you think*. A polemic with Witold Mrozek around Golgota Picnic

Last week everyone in Poland talked about the play by Rodrigo García, *Golgota Picnic*, and Witold Mrozek discussed this matter several times on wyborcza.pl defending the thesis that the festival performed self-censorship. Let me reassemble the facts which may not be fully known to the readers. The performance of *Golgota Picnic* was planned by Malta Festival Poznań. It was the festival who invited Rodrigo García, an Argentinean artist based for many years in Europe, for cooperation in the “Latin America: Mestizos” Idiom. If we were – as Witold Mrozek calls us – “a well-behaved teenager in an expensive Che Guevara t-shirt”, we wouldn’t have invited this artist to be our curator and choose this play – *Golgota Picnic* – to feature in our program. A pragmatic stance would lead us to a safer, less risky choice. It was not Malta Festival Poznań who censored García’s play. We decided that this piece – due to its artistic value, the Latin-American context from which it stems, and its significant message about the world – is emblematic of García. Therefore, we wanted the festival audience to see it.

Mrozek writes that “if we live in a democracy, cultural policy decisions financed from public funds should be transparent and someone should be responsible for them”. I agree and would argue that our decision about cancelling the performance was fully transparent and responsible. The sole reason behind it, about which we spoke from the beginning and which has not changed, is taking responsibility for the safety of others. This very decision – the hardest we had to take in the history of the festival, both from the point

of view of the program and in the human dimension – was catastrophic in PR terms. It shows, however, that there is something above the dualistic vision of the world dividing people into the ideologist and the religious camp, and that is a threat to human safety. The opponents of the play do not cease to attack, a significant part of the art world repudiates the festival which “compromised itself”, the left-wing speaks of bending the knee.

Mrozek speculates about Malta being under the influence of the authorities. In truth, the decision was taken because of a lack of support from the city authorities and the police. If we were under pressure from above, would we still be hearing public statements of officials after the cancellation of the performance, preaching about what should and shouldn't be a part of the program, and calling on us not to spread unrest through art? Many observers of these events had no problems with serving immediate judgement. But only persons devoid of imagination (also regarding the functioning of the culture industry and knowledge about how a festival is created) or lacking in good will, would consider our decision easy and compromising. In my opinion it was not, as Monika Muskała put it on Wyborcza.pl, “an act of preventative submissiveness”, but a gesture transgressing the egoistic logic of putting one's image first. We wished to bring to light a conflict – of values, political affiliations and contradictory definitions of freedom – in which we reside. Unfortunately, the grass roots initiatives defending García's play made a point of dissociating from Malta, stressing, that the protests have nothing to do with the festival, even though we were defending the same play, and Malta provided every help to the organisers of readings and screenings all over Poland.

The author accuses Malta of duplicity and a lack of solidarity with the artists. However, he fails to notice the fact

– which may be learnt on the Internet site of the festival – that our decision was taken independently and we were honest in relation to the artists. After many hours of debate at night the festival team, the artists taking part in the Idiom program and Rodrigo García himself decided that they will stay on the program, and their opinions about what happened in Poznań were very varied, far from passing on rash judgement. Witold Mrozek does not inform the readers that Malta, with immediate support from Nowy Teatr and Garonne Theatre from Toulouse (co-producer of the performance), attempted to move the whole performance to Warsaw. Because the director did not consent to that, eventually we organised together with Nowy Teatr a special one-off adaptation of *Golgota Picnic* proposed in these circumstances by García – a reading of the text of the play and a performance of Joseph Haydn's Seven Last Words of Christ, which is an important part of the play. The director stayed in Poznań until the end of the festival, held his master class, which ended with an open performance constituting an on-stage comment on the cancellation of *Golgota Picnic*.

I would like to propose that Witold Mrozek and the numerous defenders of the freedom of speech who popped up in recent days to change their rhetoric. In my opinion, it is alarmingly close to that used by the opponents of García's play. Instead of cultivating demagogy, let's focus on the facts and the quality of our exchange. Let's stop turning the people of culture, who are still a minority and still fight for the recognition of this sphere of human activity, into a conflict-ridden group of frenemies, who eagerly wait for the other to stumble and show weakness, so that they can correct them and express indignation. The situation around *Golgota Picnic* should induce careful analysis, which trans-

gresses the horizon of a particular event to reveal the real danger – those who wish to set us against each other, following the old war-time principle of divide and conquer – they want to break the common front in order to weaken it. If this works, we will have less force to stand against fanaticism, aggression and ignorance. What will grow in force are the voices of those who do not want to see society think independently, but rather be indifferent and closed to dialogue and to what art has to offer.

It is disquieting that Mrozek makes Malta the scapegoat and the weakest link, and omits the lack of solidarity in artistic circles before the cancellation of the performance. He does not ponder upon the ethical and political dimension of the situation, in which the art world failed to defend the independence of the festival when it was haunted with threats and published statement after statement. In France the mobilisation of art defenders was immediate. In Poland what overruled was indifference, which developed into a certain kind of Schadenfreude – a strange mixture of surprise, compassion and triumphant satisfaction. Instead of donning the attractive apparel of revolutionaries and romantics, we made an unspectacular gesture of capitulation in the face of terror and manipulation of public opinion employed by the authorities (both secular and clerical). We took the risk, also to undertake auto-reflection over the political role and the function of the festival.

Finally, I wish to comment on the author's deliberations about "grand and expensive prestigious events" and their emancipation potential. I wish to make an appeal: please be closer to art, and move away from conspiracy theories regarding Malta's involvement in the "sticky entanglement of culture and local authorities". I propose to focus on theatre itself, to open up to what it has to say about the world.

Malta abounds with artists who approach it critically. I am under the impression that Mrozek did not wonder why this year's Latin American Idiom did not exude samba, the World Cup and Latin American capitalism, but rather it took on issues such as economic inequality, subjects excluded from the social system, the drug policy in Columbia or social problems in Mexico. I want to believe that this lack of reflection on the festival's program is a mistake of omission, not a deliberate distortion of the truth, which is not a trait of quality journalism.

I would advise Witold Mrozek to enjoy some close contact with art, especially when not often in Poland we get the chance to see a vast presentation of what is most important and vibrant in modern performance arts in Europe (and in case of Malta Idiom – also beyond). I don't know what the definition of a radical festival is according to Witold Mrozek and why he sees a contradiction between culinary workshops on Wolności Square and "radical art". Maybe he is bothered by the affirmative spirit of Malta? The fact that we propose a varied program comprising several hundred projects which perceive culture and culture participation very broadly? Maybe it is a problem that during a big three week festival we make room for both intellectual discussions, difficult experiences requiring the audience to be open to experiment – and also – for fun? Maybe Witold Mrozek does not like the fact that we do not mortify ourselves, we do not spin a yarn of resentment about how to demolish the establishment (only to then take its place) and about how to build a credible radical image? We have too much to do to waste time on that.

Radicalism is not about pretending to be someone else, not about following fashions and meeting the expectations of others. The audience of Malta is one of the most atten-

tive and open I know. They can find equal sense and cognitive satisfaction in an experimental trash happening by Luis Garay, an aesthetically sublimated performance by modern dance legend Anna Teresa de Keersmaeker, a shared breakfast on Wolności Square and a nighttime concert of the vicious girls from the Argentinean social activist band Actíud Maria Marta. It may be that this spectrum reaches beyond the imagination of Witold Mrozek, maybe for him there were not enough ideological bottlenecks aiming to make a politicizing chin-wag out of culture.

*A quotation from an interview with Rolf Abderhalden, the founder of Mapa Teatro from Columbia.

Katarzyna Tórz

Program Coordinator Malta Festival Poznań



July 13, 2014

Marcin Kościelniak, "Tygodnik Powszechny"
A Theatrical Test of Responsibility

Despite Fr. Draguła's downplaying of the matter and his chastisement of the arts community, in "Tygodnik Powszechny", for their alleged fear of criticism, it was the threat of riots that was the real issue, and not "protests" or "demonstrations" by opponents of the play. It wasn't about the prospect of exchanging views as part of an inclusive and democratic project, but rather the threat of violence on the part of the protesters. When the organizers made the decision to cancel the play, it was because they feared violence, and not peaceful demonstrations.

The spectre of real violence expressed in public statements and threats addressed to the artists, the organizers,

and potential spectators was described by Poznań's chief of police in his June 16 request to the mayor to "change the date and location of the performance due to a significant threat to public safety." Despite securing football matches in every large city twice a week with dozens of vehicles and hundreds of officers so that hooligans can let off steam in a controlled environment, the police were unwilling to protect a theatrical event from those same football hooligans.

The process culminated in the cancellation of the performance. It can be said that the force behind this turn of events was an alliance of "religious fundamentalist groups, right-wing politicians, and football hooligans." But if we are to remain true to the facts and convey the gravity of the situation, we must say that the cause was an unprecedented informal alliance between Church officials, the government, and football hooligans, as unpleasant and uncomfortable that may sound.

Perseverance

Let's look at the other side of the issue. On June 27, in the local Kraków insert to the "Gazeta Wyborcza" daily, Stary Theater director Jan Klata asked "members of the so-called theater community" where they were "in November when attempts were made to shut down *To Damascus*," adding: "You remained passive and ignored the threat. Now, in June, you reap the passivity and inaction that you have sown." These claims require correction and commentary.

Correction: the community was not at all passive in the face of attempts to shut down *To Damascus*. As a member of the community, I myself wrote in "Tygodnik Powszechny" (47/2013) in defence of the play and the director of Stary Theater.

If anyone tossed a pebble onto the June landslide, it was Klata himself, who canceled the premiere of Oliver

Frlić's *Un-Divine Comedy* in November 2013. Although his arguments were artistic in nature – arguments he continues to bring up, writing that Frlić's play had nothing to do with Krasiński's *Un-Divine Comedy* – they can hardly be taken seriously in an era in which there is no such thing as a faithful staging of a piece and there exists no metric by which that faithfulness could be measured, a fact Klata knows all too well, as he himself has had to defend his work against allegations of unfaithfulness on numerous occasions (such as the discussions that took place after the performance of *To Damascus*). It seems more likely that Klata was simply scared into backing down after several weeks of a growing media campaign aimed at the yet-unfinished play and against him as the director of the theater, and decided to call off the premiere.

Let me make myself clear: Michał Merczyński, the director of the Malta Festival, should not have canceled *Golgota Picnic*. The government and the police must be required to uphold the constitutional right to the freedom of artistic expression – fiercely, unambiguously, and from start to finish.

The director of a prestigious institution cannot bow under pressure, nor can he submit to the threat of violence. He must defend his position firmly. To serve as the head of one of the greatest international festivals in Europe is more than just a prestigious job – it's a responsible position. The director of the Malta Festival set an example. Let's hope others don't follow it. After all, it is not inconceivable that the "defenders of values," emboldened by their success, will continue this crusade, attacking works of art that they cannot even be bothered to examine.

Picnic at the theater

In mid-June Malta Festival representatives asked me to review the play, offering to show me a recording of the

performance. As I was convinced that to participate in a discussion about a play that no one had had the chance to see would be a repetition of the absurd practices of *Golgota Picnic* protesters, I turned down their offer, and encouraged the organizers to drum up the support of the community with the help of a protest letter. I consider it an extraordinarily harmful practice to discuss a play that no one has seen. In contrast to Fr. Draguła, I believe that the title itself is insufficient grounds on which to judge a work of art and its content. Perhaps this applies particularly to the theater, which by its very nature is a multi-layered and multi-threaded medium that often appears misleadingly unambiguous. I share the opinion expressed by Fr. Luter, according to whom "all artists have the right to their own rapture and exploration," even though some may take offense at it.

The letter titled *In Defense of the Freedom of Speech*, published two days later by the organizers of the Malta Festival, was signed by a broad and international swath of the arts community. Shortly afterwards, the cancellation of the play was announced. The news landed like a bombshell and came as a great surprise.

On June 28 a screening of *Golgota Picnic* was held at Kraków's Nowy Theater as part of the nationwide project known as "Golgota Picnic: Do it Yourself". A large group of people gathered in front of the theater for a prayer led by a priest. The play was secured by the police, who confidently and professionally enabled spectators to enter the venue. Unlike in Warsaw, one of many Polish cities that held similar screenings, the event at Nowy Theater in Krakow was free from any scuffles. Those who wanted to protest protested, and those who wanted to view viewed. That's how it's supposed to work. (...)



September 29th, 2014

Piotr Voelkel, poznan.gazeta.pl

A fragment of an interview *A tall building exists so that there is more space for pavements and parks*

JAKUB ŁUKASZEWSKI: During a different festival, Malta, a controversial show *Golgota Picnic* was cancelled, because right-wing and religious communities, as well as the local authorities, protested against it. Was it the right decision?

PIOTR VOELKEL: In this case, I am mostly disappointed with the decision of the director, Rodrigo García. Not everybody knows that the director refused to have the complete performance posted online, which is surprising, because the video included Polish subtitles. 200 spectators would have turned into 200,000 viewers. That would have been a victory of reason and intellect over the dull aggression of the crowd. This way, those people who have not seen the performance, but are still making such a fuss about it, would actually see that this is not the way to handle conflicts. It actually backfired, because they made the show even more popular. He also did not give permission to a screening in Warsaw where everything was ready. Apparently, this chaos was more important than the actual play.



September 2014

Jerzy Limon, *Not just Shakespeare*, an interview with professor Jerzy Limon, the director of the Shakespeare Theatre in Gdańsk by Piotr Wyszomirski, "Teatr" nr 9/2014 (an interview from 1st July 2014)

PIOTR WYSZOMIRSKI: If the Shakespeare Theatre was opened, would you have agreed to show *Golgota Picnic*?

JERZY LIMON: I don't know. I haven't seen the show. I would only like to say that I understand why Michał Merczyński, the director of the Malta festival, made such a decision. He had been warned by the police about a possible threat. If he had ignored it, and the riots had started, he would have been held responsible. Art and theatre have been mocking big-city men, authorities, clergy, patriarchy and the family for years, so it should not come as a surprise that somebody might protest. Let me remind you that when a poster that said "No pedaling" ("Zakaz pedałowania"; in Polish *pedał* means *gay* – przyp. tłum.) was hung in Teatr Wybrzeże there was a great scandal. People demanded that the poster be removed. It should not be like that, that one person can and somebody else can't do something. That political correctness is holy and critics should stay away, but this is freedom of artistic expression so anyone can do whatever they want with it. 'A total freedom' is rubbish that originated on the Internet. But that's for another discussion. I would like to add that I support censorship and a few years ago I participated in a session "Fiut a sprawa polska", which was organized by Sfinks in Sopot. I read my paper entitled "Pochwała cenzury", which met with a negative reaction by both the artistic and religious communities.

P.W.: It's very interesting. Elaborate please...

J.L.: Let me just say that censorship is a metaphor's muse. And literality kills art.

Reading of the play at the Freedom Square in
Poznań during „Golgota Picnic – do it yourself”.
Photo: Marcin Oliva Soto



— ANALYSIS

Wojciech Brzozowski

In the shade of the code. "Golgota Picnic" debate from the point of view of a lawyer

Wiesław Godzic

*"Golgota Picnic" in the media
– no hope for a compromise*

Wojciech Brzozowski

— IN THE SHADE OF THE CODE. *GOLGOTA PICNIC* DEBATE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A LAWYER

The debate over the limits of artistic freedom is a never ending story and, as such in all these kinds of stories, some issues and motifs reappear with an inevitable regularity. One of these issues is the accusation of offending somebody's religious feelings – for some a handy tool to use against haughty artists, while others consider it a gag to put on art that escapes secure clichés. This accusation also had to emerge, as it did, in relation to the attempts to present the play *Golgota Picnic* in Poland.

Reading the Penal Code

According to Article 196 of the Penal Code (further: PC) from 1997: “whoever offends the religious feelings of others through public insult of an object of a religious cult or a place of religious ceremonies is punishable by a fine, personal restraint or up to a two-year prison term”.

This regulation come from the section called *Crimes against freedom of conscience and religion*, which also includes other

types of criminal proceedings – ones that usually cause much lower emotions and are therefore probably less known to the public. I mean primarily religious discrimination, so limiting the rights of an individual because of his or her religious denomination, or the lack of it (Article 194 of PC); secondly – intentional disturbance of a publicly performed religious ceremony of an officially registered church or religious association and intentional disturbance of a wake, burial or funeral ceremony (Article 195, §1-2 of PC).

What are the existing consequences from Article 196 in the Penal Code? Bear with me for one paragraph of legal jargon. The perpetrator's action must consist of offending religious feelings through a public insult of an object of a religious cult or a place of religious ceremonies. Insulting – communicating one's aversion and contempt by using humiliating or satirical means of expression (including non-verbal) and it must have a public character. It can be considered as such when the perpetrator acts in a way that allows him or her to reach an undefined group of people. It is a so called "common law offence", which means that anyone who fulfils the general conditions to bear criminal responsibility can become a perpetrator. It is also an offence with criminal consequences, which means that it can only be punishable if there are some specific third parties that actually felt offended. The form of the verbs "offending" and "insult" used in the regulation indicate that the offence regulated by Article 196 of the PC can only be perpetrated deliberately, though not only with direct intent: i.e. when the perpetrator plans to commit an offence – he or she is aware of its characteristics and is willing to commit it; but also conceivable intent: i.e. when the perpetrator acknowledges the possibility of committing an offence and accepts it (see: the verdict of the Supreme Court from 29 October

2012, no: I KZP 12/12). The offence regulated by Article 196 of PC is punishable by a fine, personal restraint or up to a two-year prison term. It is therefore – to use legal code terminology – an offence, not a crime (Article 7 § 1–3 of PC). It is subject to public prosecution.

Let's note that there is no consensus among lawyers on how to understand the expression "object of religious cult". There is no doubt that some material objects used in cult acts should be included, such as: a rosary, crucifix or liturgical vessels, as well as some phrases and gestures that convey ritual meaning. Questions appear when it comes to the possibility that sacred persons who are worshipped could also be proclaimed "objects of religious cult". At first glance this seems logical, that since the protection is given to material objects of religious value, it should even more apply to supernatural beings, which are, in the eyes of the followers, the reason for making religious cult gestures. Yet, if we assume that God is protected by law as equally as material objects, wouldn't we reintroduce into Polish law the crime of blasphemy, which was once intentionally "lost" when the pre-war code was rewritten? The debate is on and the problems that appear induce a state of legal confusion when it comes to penalisation practice. In other words: even after reading that regulation, it is still unclear what is allowed and what is forbidden, which should never happen in the case of a legal code.

Police statistics prove that it is Article 196 of the PC, more than any other Article from that section, that is commonly used for legal protection of religious beliefs. Last year legal proceedings were initiated in 4 cases of religious discrimination (Article 194 PC), in 11 cases of intentionally disturbing acts described by both paragraphs of Article 195 of PC and in as many as 56 cases of offending religious feel-

ings. A similar ratio has been observed ever since the new Penal Code came into effect (see: <http://statystyka.policja.pl/st/kodeks-karny/przestepstwa-przeciwko-5>).

As was already mentioned, the opinions about criminalisation of offending religious feelings are radically different – for some it is the last resort in the battle against demoralisation, a certain trick up their sleeves; while others describe it as a Middle Ages relict, an anachronistic gag that is used to restrain human creativity. In fact, the whole issue is a bit more complicated.

Criminal Law in the service of religion – in the past and today

It is commonly known that Criminal Law has regulated the relation between an individual and religion for centuries. Still, it would be wrong not to notice the fundamental changes that have happened in that field.

First of all, let's note that modern legislators do not criminalise so called "religious crimes", as it used to be before the Age of Enlightenment, which introduced revolutionary changes into the Criminal Law. Prior to those changes, legal systems used a category of "religious crimes" which included heresy, apostasy, blasphemy and sacrilege. These categories still exist today, however they are only punishable by Canon Law, not by state law. In Canon Law the punishment is usually connected with limited access to sacraments and can nowadays only be imposed on a follower who is a voluntary member of a religious community and allowed to freely leave this community. This punishment can only be imposed by the Church authorities, never by the state. A pre-Enlightenment legislator was not bothered by this kind of subtle difference and wilfully replaced Church authorities in the battle against the enemies of faith. The law

protected the reverence of sacred persons and the absoluteness of the dogmas; the harmfulness of blasphemy was interpreted from a theological point of view, not in relation to its social consequences.

As a matter of fact it wasn't until the verge of the XIX and XX centuries, when the criminal reflection came down to earth. The object of protection has changed: it is no longer the dignity of supernatural beings, but instead values derived from the material world. Still, it took some time before the concept of offending religious feelings prevailed – at first the criminalisation of blasphemy was justified by the importance of public order. It was believed that the audacious questioning of religious dogmas could lead to chaos and conflicts on religious grounds. It wasn't until a later period, when development of the human rights doctrine influenced the legislators enough to notice that Criminal Law intervention in freedom of speech can be, in the case of attacks on religious beliefs, justified by the freedom of others. This brought an entirely new perspective – we no longer discuss blasphemy, but offending religious feelings or beliefs. The change can be also observed at the language level if we compare modern clauses about offending religious feelings and Article 172 of the Penal Code from 1932, which starts with a sinister phrase: "Those, who publicly blaspheme against God (...)".

The current regulation that forbids offending religious feelings can be interpreted in the wider context of the mutual relation between the state and the Church. It is enough to say that a democratic country, which – according to Article 25 § 2 of the Polish Constitution – remains neutral in cases concerning religious, moral or philosophical beliefs, is not competent to answer theological questions and wouldn't even try to comment on God's disposition. It is

also believed that when the authorities grant an individual a right or liberty, they become responsible for ensuring that this right is respected. Otherwise the regulations would be nothing more than empty declarations. This opinion also applies to religious freedom. As the Constitutional Tribunal pointed out: “Religious beliefs are especially protected by law, because of their particular character. They are directly connected with freedom of conscience and religion, which are values protected by the Constitution” (CT opinion from 7 June 1994, no. K17/93). Even though this opinion was presented prior to the current Constitution coming into effect, the clause that guarantees freedom of conscience and religion – actually in a broader range, as not only to citizens but to “everyone” – is still of constitutional importance (see: Article 53 § 1–2 of the Polish Constitution from 1997). This liberty is also protected by several acts of international law, e.g. by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Legal protection of religious feelings versus freedom of speech

The main point of the debate is however that religious freedom is neither the only, nor the most important liberty protected by the Constitution and International Law. The limits of exercising this freedom have to be negotiated by other rights and liberties, not to mention the religious freedom of other people. It is easy to notice how religious freedom usually conflicts with freedom of speech – in political, commercial or artistic field – which is exactly the case of *Golgota Picnic*.

It may seem the easiest to inquire whether the law, especially the Constitution, provides some kind of hierarchy to

the liberties – from the most to the least important? Maybe they could somehow be prioritized, put in order, so the less important would be subject to the crucial ones?

Unfortunately, there is no “top 5” liberties. Intuitively we feel that there is space for some hierarchy – since it is hard to imagine that, for instance, in the case of a conflict between the right to be free from torture (Article 40 of the Polish Constitution) and the right to a safe and healthy workplace (Article 66, § 1 of the Polish Constitution), any sane person would give priority to the latter. Still, the rules of our culture are unyielding. Every case has to be considered separately (*a casu ad casum*) and be subject to the proportionality principle, so one liberty can be limited for the sake of the other only if it is necessary and only to the required extent. As Article 31, § 3 of the Constitution states: “Any limitations to Constitutional rights and liberties can only be enacted by a democratic country if they are necessary either to protect national safety or public order, or for environmental protection, health or public morals, or to allow the rights and liberties of others. These limitations cannot violate the essence of the rights and liberties.”

In other words, artistic freedom is not absolute. It can be limited e.g. for the sake of rights and liberties of the others, including the religious freedom of others and this rule has to be respected.

At the same time, neither is religious freedom absolute. It is also subject to limitations for the sake of the rights and liberties of others, including the freedom of artistic expression and participation in culture (Article 73 of the Constitution). And this rule also has to be respected.

How can this paradox be solved? It is necessary to work out some criteria. In fact: not even work out, but rather discover, assimilate and put into practice, since they have al-

ready been created and are being used quite widely. I am talking about the opinions of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasburg. Reading their verdicts should help to determine how Article 196 of the PC could be used to work for both sides of the dispute.

First, the followers have to come to terms with the fact that in a pluralistic society nobody can demand freedom from encountering other beliefs and lifestyles; freedom from confronting other points of view, even those who provocatively question the most sacred and important truths of one's religion. In other words, the regulation concerning offending religious feelings cannot be used to silence ideological adversaries.

Secondly, the religion's opponents have to remember that even though the allowed range of critique is essentially unlimited in terms of content, it is not when in terms of form. If a statement, even an artistic one, does not in any way contribute to the debate and does not serve as an exchange of opinions, but is simply a unproductive way to humiliate religious people, then it does not deserve to be protected by the law. The question about when a provocation goes too far and becomes nothing more than an insult appears to be complicated, but in fact it is not. Reading the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights from 29 September 1994 in the case of *Otto-Preminger-Institut versus Austria* (complaint no: 13470/87), which is available online, provides us with some ideas on how to solve this problem. The controversies in that case concerned the film *Das Liebeskonzil*, directed by Werner Schroeter. Not to get too deep into details, the film portrayed God as a decrepit old man, who makes out with the devil and calls him a friend, and Jesus as an intellectually disabled mommy's boy, who in one of the scenes tries to kiss and caress Maria's breasts

(point 20-22 of the verdict). Compared to that, *Golgota Picnic* does not cross the borders of provocation at all.

Thirdly, a critique of religion cannot become a smoke-screen to cover calls for violent acts that are motivated by someone's religious denomination or lack of it. In other words, "debate" on religion ends at the point when hate speech starts.

It could be said that most of all, what we need to use in Article 196 is common sense. But it is often the lack of common sense that results in the case being brought to court in the first place – and in those cases it is right to reach for standards worked out by a mature democracy.

Can the police refrain from protecting public order?

There is one more thing that should be commented on separately – namely the role of the police, who allegedly recommended the organizers to "change the date and location of the performance for the sake of public safety".

The police are not a private security company which can refuse to sign a contract if the task is beyond their means. It is an institution of public trust and its crucial tasks are "protecting the health and safety of people and possessions against unlawful attacks" and "protecting public safety and order, including ensuring peace in public places and on means of public transport or traffic and water bodies dedicated to public use" (Article 1, § 2, point 1 and 2 of the Police Act from 6 April 1990; Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland 2011, no 287/1678, revised).

The Act did not provide an option for the forces of law to declare helplessness. What is more, it clearly states that in the case where Police forces are insufficient – although it is highly questionable if that was the problem in the *Golgota Picnic* case – it is possible to engage officers of the Military

Police (Article 18a of the Act) or Border Guards (Article 18b of the Act) and, in extreme cases, also Polish military forces (Article 18 of the Act).

In this context we should recall the cases from a few years before, which have already been put behind, when the authorities of several cities banned unpopular assemblies, such as the Warsaw Equality March (*Warsaw's Pride*), explaining that they were unable to ensure safety. The argument was convenient, as it allowed the authorities to keep their hands clean: the politicians wouldn't allow an assembly, didn't have to reveal their true motivations and even had the chance to express their concern about the safety of its participants. It allowed them to dispose of their inconvenient commitments to their citizens. The similarities between those cases and the current one are obvious.

The opinions included in the verdict given shortly after those events by the Constitutional Tribunal (on 18 January 2006, no: K21/05) obviously concern the freedom of assemblies, but they are also worth knowing in the context of the events that happened on Malta Festival Poznań 2014. Let's hear from the Tribunal: "The possibility of a counter demonstration that can possibly be violent or joined by aggressive extremists, cannot result in depriving others of their rights, even if there is reasonable suspicion that the public gathering will be a threat to public order as a result of actions that are beyond the organizers control and while the authorities refrain from taking effective actions to ensure that the right to assemble is not violated (...). The public organs are responsible for protecting groups that organize demonstrations and their participants, since only by doing this can they actually ensure the freedom of assembly, regardless of how controversial the opinions presented are (within the limitations of the law, which can ban

promoting certain ideas, such as racism or fascism). (...) The authorities are obliged to find effective means to be able to protect any reported assembly in the case its freedom is endangered by the actions of other members of society. The Constitutional Tribunal confirms the opinion that all participants of a demonstration have the right to manifest their views without their physical safety being threatened by their opponents. It is the authorities responsibility to protect anyone who exercises his or her rights within the limits of the law. An inadequate reaction from their side would, on the other hand, result in a situation where the freedom of assembly would depend on the reaction of its opponents, which would encourage them into aggressive public actions".

It has been over eight years since this verdict was made public. We can only ask ourselves if its addressees have completed the assignment given to them by the Tribunal.

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— GOLGOTA PICNIC IN THE MEDIA – NO HOPE FOR A COMPROMISE

My particular interest in this essay will be the media reports concerning the controversial theatrical event *Golgota Picnic*, its contexts and social reception. The performance was supposed to be presented during Malta Festival Poznań in June 2014 but it ended up being cancelled by the organizers of the festival. As a result of the widespread discussion concerning its meanings, the controversies around public readings of the play following its cancellation and the animated exchange of opinions in the intersection of religion, ideology, politics and reflection on artistic freedom, *Golgota Picnic* was proclaimed “the most notorious” event in 250 years of public theatre in Poland.

Indeed, it resounded loudly in the media – media monitoring prior to the cancellation of the performance resulted in 3294 records concerning Malta Festival Poznań 2014, which included over 3000 records concerning *Golgota Picnic*. After the performance was called off in the middle of June 2014, the volume of media reports concerning it visibly

slowed down. In my research I focused on the information published from the beginning of June until the middle of July 2014. I also had at my disposal opinions shared by Internet users, who commented on the crucial events, although I will not refer to them because of the huge number and rather large diversity.

Before proceeding to the more detailed part, I would like to emphasise the following medial characteristics of that event: Analysis of the various web portals, newspapers and magazines, television and radio broadcasts and selected blogs, clearly indicates the victory of the Internet. The press was indeed important – both national and local Poznań publications. But alongside it – together with it, were the Internet portals, usually those that express strong political beliefs. The issue was also discussed on radio stations: public, local and national radio. When it comes to television – probably because of the silly season – there wasn't much interesting intellectual activity in the field. For TV stations it was simply one more event that could be illustrated with an image of aggressive bigots, a statement from the Festival spokesman and an expert comment (I want to note here the interesting opening discussion in the TV show *Po przecinku* on TVP Info on June 13th, with Katarzyna Piekarska and Andrzej Jaworski as guests).

- The victory of the Internet lay in the fact that the most important public debate took place not in a TV studio, but outside it, in the Festival's centre, from where it was transmitted to the Internet. The host of the debate, Jacek Żakowski, may be a media figure, but the style of the debate was much more similar to a casual panel than an inflated entertainment, characteristic of a TV show.
- The detailed part of this essay focuses on the aspects of

media statements concerning the event, which I found to be the most important. What disqualified any form of dialogue was the strongly ideological rhetoric used in the debate. Each of the sides was convinced that it was 100% right – this is not surprising. Additionally, neither of them considered the other to be an equal, and expressed that belief by using offensive names and epithets.

Let me just emphasise that in legal terms “nothing has happened” – the planned performance was cancelled by the organizers of the festival themselves. It is hard to talk about censorship in this case, since an institution that would actually be able to control opinions – as it used to be back in the days – no longer exists today. The discourse pointing out the organizers’ self-censorship seems too personal to be used for any kind of generalization. The goal of those who opposed this cultural phenomenon was to restore the *status quo*: so that this new thing would cease to exist, so it would be erased, because – as the protesters believed – the previous state of affairs was right. The outside-born performance appeared and disturbed the peace and order. Therefore, for the opponents of the performance, the punishment for it (which included: pressure and blackmail, calls for physical violence) either should never come to existence, or it was just a vague idea on the horizon.

There is one more reason that explains why we should start a debate about the events that could be called “Around the *Golgota Picnic* performance on Malta Festival Poznań”. I am thinking about a didactical reflection which comes to light especially when we ask how a socially controversial event can be used to build a community of meanings or to find a consensus on creating certain limitations.

I want to emphasise here that my goal is not to judge which side of the debate was right. I am exclusively inter-

ested in identifying and naming the way in which both sides were presented in the media. The question I will try to answer will therefore be “What kind of image emerged from this situation?”, not “What did the situation look like?”. It is a question about the rhetorical strategies used by both sides; about the ability to sketch an image of the things which are obvious but still need to be proven. First of all – one aspect that many people that participated in the debate have unfortunately disregarded: – what we witnessed, was a semiotic battle for the spectrum of such notions as “freedom of artistic expression”, “autonomy” and “relations between religious, aesthetic and artistic values”.

It should therefore be obvious that I am not interested in the legal aspects of this case – not just because a legal interpretation is usually very distant from one provided by cultural studies. Still, I observe that this aspect was very rarely mentioned and mostly ignored. There was hardly any reliable comment from a lawyer who would state if the crime in that case was blasphemy or was it offending religious feelings; what were, if any, the unquestionable characteristics of that crime?; to what extent is the notion of offending someone’s religious feelings in conflict with the constitutional right to free speech? The discourse concerning this performance in Poland usually lacked this legal point of view: it was dominated by strong emotions and personal beliefs that couldn’t be supported with any sources. The strategy of confinement, chosen by the conservative side, seems bizarre: when they finally provided a fragmentary legal opinion, it was provided by a judge of an... ecclesiastical court, who probably didn’t know that according to Polish law, the opinions of his institution cannot influence a legal verdict concerning the actions of secular citizens.

As a consequence, the most important aspect of my analysis turned out to be the rhetoric of media messages. The first thing I have to note as an analytic is that it was a conflict between two sides which were highly asymmetrical. On the right side (RS) we have to list: the Catholic Church (bishops, hierarchy), dioceses' representatives, Catholic Youth Association of Poznań Archdiocese, followers of Unum Principium Association, All-Polish Youth, Gazeta Polska Club, the Rosary Crusade, The Committee Against Cults and Violence, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość Parliamentary Club, and football hooligans groups. All these groups have – to a different extent of course – supported the demands to not allow any form of presenting the performance. On the left side (LS) – apart from the organizers – there was no support in any institutionalised form: it wasn't until the performance had already been cancelled that some circles began to get organised: the Open Academy, Citizens of Culture social movement, groups connected with certain theatres – still, they did not establish any kind of structure (with the exception of Warsaw's Theatre Institute).

An article by Jan Bodakowski (*Leftist hatred for Catholic money*, "Najwyższy Czas", p.XII | 12 June 2014) names an impressive number of people, cultural institutions and media which, according to the author, were involved in promoting the performance. Nevertheless, the power of influence from a student's club, even from the best university, still couldn't be compared to the power of a big parliamentary club or the episcopate. In that sense one could claim that, paradoxically, the protests of strong institutions and well-organised groups helped to awaken and strengthen the weak and dissolved public sphere, which then demanded the staging of the performance.

It also has to be noted that the whole event existed in a limited spectrum, from the point of view of the "media and moral panic". Several years ago – in March 2001 – when TVN broadcast the first episodes of the *Big Brother* reality show, numerous institutions and groups expressed their outrage. The opponents claimed that the show would destroy the values shared by members of Polish society. What is interesting, the toughest arguments took place 6 weeks before the first episode was aired and they weakened notably during the first month of broadcast. A few months later the hysterical reaction of the pedagogic institutions gave room to the media studies scholars opinion that instead of a doubtful decay, we should have spoken merely about a change of standards in audio-visual records.

The right side: emotions on the verge of hysteria, confinement/exclusion

This approach is well characterised by the press titles, which often included key-words (or rather pass-key words) with a strong emotional load. For example: *The blasphemous play, They will mock Jesus with public money, Scandalous performance in Poznań, protest!*, *"Golgota Picnic" is a civilisation of death or Showing "Golgota Picnic" deprives Catholics of their dignity*. Let's not discuss the artistic value of the performance. Let's simply state: "this is a civilisation of death". In other words: "disgusting homosexual pornography".

The performance (which the RS journalists had not seen) is "disgusting", but at the same time (or maybe thanks to that) "it adds to the on-going approach of our decision-makers, which stretches from allowing profanation to embracing Satanists. If Polish Catholics won't start massive protests, they will prove themselves unworthy of being called Poles or Catholics" (www.pch24.pl | 30 May 2014). There-

fore the lack of artistic value is associated with current political problems (decision-makers) and is tied to blackmail (no dignity, if they don't protest).

The consequence of such an emotional approach by the RS is their disregard for sources: the critics don't want to and don't have to see the performance, they merely rely on the opinions of others, who usually also haven't seen it. On the contrary, the LS consistently broadened the context of this event, including an interview with the director. The endeavours of the RS to discard the performance (consistently described in Radio Maryja as a pseudo-performance, pseudo-art) were based on a refusal to take a rational position in the debate. The LS introduced an ironical distance by using quotes from the opponents' media messages. For example *PiS deputies outraged by the performance because of "religious feelings"*, *Pseudo-art portrays Jesus as an egoist* (www.kultura.gazeta.pl | 6 June 2014 | Piotr Markiewicz). The interview with the director was described as; *"Wyborcza" promoting the blasphemous director!* (www.pch24.pl | 6 June 2014). This strategy was used by the LS in the media, e.g. when they created the tile: *PiS deputies want to ban the "blasphemous performance" at Malta Festival Poznań. It is full of mockery of Christ* (www.natemat.pl | 7 June 2014 | Michał Gąsior). Therefore the RS says "blasphemy" without quotation marks, and the LS adds them to create a negation without the necessity of using a negative structure.

Some RS Members called for creating RAK, a Radical Catholic Action (*Radykalna Akcja Katolicka*), an "informal group that would provide an immediate reaction to a disturbing phenomena". (www.fronda.pl | 23 June 2014). It also included elements of warnings and blackmail: "If the Mayor

of Bydgoszcz doesn't ban *Golgota Picnic*, he can't expect to be re-elected" (www.fronda.pl | 24 June 2014).

A few of the RS texts are original language-wise, though still strongly hypocritical. The portal www.wpolityce.pl | 25 June 2014 asked: *"Golgota Picnic spreads in consecutive cities – what new ways will the leftists come up with to gag our freedom under a freedom banner?"*. The rhetorical construction is neat, though it does not take the discussion about freedom of artistic expression and participation in culture any bit further than it was.

When reading the texts of the RS one should always ask if what they present is a manipulation or simply a lack of precision? When www.radiomaryja.pl | 25 June 2014 claims that "The Minister of Culture excuses offending religious feelings" it is lying – no such conclusion was to be found in Małgorzata Omilanowska's statement.

The RS often used a strategy of reversing the values' vectors, e.g.: a "famous sportsman" criticizes the artists, while in reality (besides the fact that the "players" play in different leagues) the sportsman turns out to be a really dim star in comparison with the ones he criticizes: "A famous sportsman against the blasphemous performance. He criticizes Krystyna Janda and Andrzej Chyra for supporting the profanity" (www.wpolityce.pl | 26 June 2014).

A strongly manipulative approach can also be observed in Fronda news about the activity of the Open Academy. The title carries a negative judgement of the popularity of this initiative: *A few UAM scholars demand a "secular state"* (www.fronda.pl | 14 July 2014). Even though the next sentence informs that over 300 people signed the Academy statement, what does it matter if the "few" stays in the title and the text repeatedly mentions nine scholars.

The performance has also provoked some intellectually challenging theological opinions, far from Christian theology, such as “Freedom has its limits, it is limited by the good, it only exist for the good, freedom does not exist for evil” (abp Stanisław Gądecki *Freedom only exist for the good, not evil!*, www.deon.pl | 28 June 2014). These are merely slogans, propositions for discussion, which should establish what – and for whom – is good and what is evil.

The RS media were definitely confrontation-oriented: in a brutal and sometimes rude way. I have already provided many examples of brutal opinions, but there are also such extreme statements as calling the Director of the National Audiovisual Institute “A snot-nose who was forbidden to smoke in a school toilet, so now he brags to his friends he will go behind a rubbish dump and smoke anyway” (*A successful crusade*, „Przewodnik Katolicki”, p. 16 | 29 June 2014 | Jan Pospieszalski); a discrediting phrase aimed at the journalist “some Roman Pawłowski roared in Wyborcza” (*The rage of the righteous*, „Gość Niedzielny” p. 39 | 29 June 2014); or flashing an offensive and untrue title *Krystyna Janda on the list of shame* (www.fronda.pl | 29 June 2014). My surprise derives from the fact that all these examples are taken from the media that call themselves Catholic.

The left side: let’s talk about art, or, it is not what you think it is

The main effort of the LS was to convince their opponents of several conclusions at the same time. Therefore they emphasised that Rodrigo García’s play could indeed be controversial and cause protests – since an immanent part of the artwork structure is its protest against the world it portrays. The message in the performance is different to what it seems: it is consumptionism that is being criti-

cized, not Catholicism, and Jesus is more of a pop-culture icon than a subject of a religious cult. They argued that: “I don’t question anyone’s right to protest, a democratic state provides the space to express various beliefs, especially as *Golgota Picnic* is not a fairy tale for good kids. It is a radical unpleasant play about Western society which is engaged in consumption and has lost contact with any values” (*This isn’t Iran*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” p. 14 | 5 June 2014 | Roman Pawłowski).

What seems characteristic for the RS strategy is rejecting any attempts to mitigate the conflict, and their use of sarcasm and mean irony. The opinion and appeal quoted above, conciliatory in its message, was answered in the following way in an article entitled *The blasphemy we’re not allowed to object to* published by the portal wpolityce.pl: “Today the limits of protest are determined by Roman Pawłowski. The publicist from Czerska writes: <<I understand that for followers this may be blasphemy. They have right to express their discontent>>. We are very grateful to this journalist for kindly allowing us to express our discontent. We ask for more details: which forms would be allowed and for which we would be condemned on <<Gazeta>> pages. Any suggestion on how wide we are allowed to open our mouths would also be very welcome. From Pawłowski’s words we conclude he is not a follower himself”.

The dominant emotion in their approach is hysteria, combined with a refusal to touch upon any taboos – or any topic that was made taboo. Let’s just mention that Jesus (apart from his religious meanings or even against them) is the topic of several funny or iconoclastic (meaning: not in accordance with the doctrine, made outside of the Church and without its permission) works of art and satirical portrayals (e.g. Monty Python).

The open letters by the Archbishop and the answers by Malta Festival Director clearly indicate the contradictory strategies of LS and RS. Bishop Stanisław Gądecki (RS) states: "Christ is portrayed in the performance as a degenerate, an egoist, responsible for all the world's evil", Director Merczyński (LS) claims that: "The main theme of the performance is the condition of European society, immersed in consumptionism and spiritual emptiness". The bishop: "This performance is commonly considered an exceptionally vulgar project. It portrays Christ as a degenerate, an egoist, responsible for all of the world's evil. The performance is full of lustful scenes and Christ is addressed with numerous vulgarisms". On the other side, Mr Merczyński: "(...) the circles which initiated the protests do not want to hear any substantial arguments and continue to violate the right of other citizens to participate in an artistic event for which they have already bought tickets, which can only mean they consider it worthy of their attention". (*Malta Festival Director responds to the Archbishop's letter: the protests against "Golgota Picnic" violate the Constitution*, www.poznan.gazeta.pl | 16.06.2014 | „Gazeta Poznań”). This is not the way to talk: it's a series of monologues that bring no chance of creating a dialogue.

The group characterized by their unsophisticated, not even slightly considerate, opinions was joined by PiS deputies who wrote to Prime Minister Tusk: "a pseudo-art, full of obscene and ostentatious pornography, constantly mocking Christ and his crucifixion". "Nasz Dziennik" makes up for their previous mistake of ignoring the sources and in a formal motion for preventing a crime it lists "proof" that determine the performance as pornographic, brutal and presenting sexual acts. It also mentions the words spoken by the actor who plays Jesus. All these elements should be

subjects of a subtle academic analysis, which would take into account the difference between the metaphorical portrayed world and the familiar metonymical one. Thanks to this approach, the actor, who plays a villain, doesn't have to fear aggression once the performance is over. Unfortunately, most of the RS authors did not remain cautious and could not notice the aspect of "performing". The LS tried to focus on the discussion on artistic and aesthetic values and the lack of understanding of a modern art work. (*Poland has never experienced this kind of war over theatre. Victory of Polish intolerance— „Głos Wielkopolski" p. 8 | 21 June 2014 | Stefan Drajewski*). As it can be noticed – this strategy failed.

A frail and empty middle ground

The middle ground in the discussion – which was not necessarily the same as the neutral position – was occupied by the "Rzeczpospolita" newspaper and the tabloids, however their motivations were different. "Rzeczpospolita" couldn't assimilate the liberal point of view because it would contradict with their programme policy, but also because that position had already been taken by its rival magazine.

In these circumstances the opinions (and titles) were usually ambiguous, creating an intellectual tension open to discussion, though still discarding the idea of the performance being a work of art. "How many souls can *Golgota Picnic* heal?" (www.rp.pl | 8 June 2014) asks Jakub Pacan and shares his verdict "A provocation can be a form of artistic expression (...) the authors of *Golgota Picnic* have apparently decided that primitive obscenity is enough to make the show go on and gave up on any serious attempt to be original. The ease with which they impose stereotypes on the audience is humiliating".

“Rzeczpospolita” is a paper capable of introducing some healthy ferment sometimes: its columnists represent extreme points of view. A piece by Joanna Szczepkowska made the issue come to a head – not always in the most thoughtful way – when asking about the hypothetical reaction of the elites if it were the Judaist religious feelings that would be offended (see: *Golgota and hypocrisy*, 28 June 2014, see also texts by Jacek Cieślak, Filip Memches and others). Several times it seemed as if the editors of this paper were standing in the middle of the scene and – like in a joke about an interpreter who would stay serious even when the diplomats, who didn’t know the language of the other side, would laugh at his interpretation – they try to keep their super-professional reserve when approaching a complex phenomenon. Still, it is not that easy to change after just one event: the columns by Magierowski and Memches, clearly supporting the RS, dominated the debate. It can be noticed as a beginning of a new strategy based on a reasonable distance, in contrast to the need to support one of the sides – even more so after “Wyborcza” did that, clearly supporting the staging of the performance, which was treated as exercising the right to free speech. So far “Rzeczpospolita” has used the strategy of describing the issue from one eye and then the other, although, I’m afraid, not seen with both eyes at the same time.

In the case of the tabloids things look different: they did not take sides, to avoid risking losing readership. Even though they tended to drift to the left side, this time they were too afraid to take a radical stand on either of the sides. Therefore instead of such imaginable titles as *The bishops are gagging us* we were politely informed that *The controversial Gulgota Picnic will be presented throughout Poland* (www.fakt.pl | 24 June 2014) or that *This play is offensive to*

Catholics! („Fakt” p. 11 | 28 June 2014). A really poor job for a tabloid.

On the other hand the opinion: “It is shameful, pornographic and offensive, as it mocks the crucifixion of Jesus” had to be balanced with “This is how Rodrigo García’s play *Golgota Picnic* is described by its opponents, who made it their point of honour to ban showing the performance anywhere in Poland”. None of the expressions used were close to the strongest in the tabloids’ world, especially since they did not express their own views, but only quoted the “opponents” of the performance. The tabloids were clearly confused and careful – it seems a religious and aesthetic war is coming, and one can only lose on it.

The voices of the clergymen who interpreted the event differently than their superiors were very rare. It was e.g. Dominican Tomasz Dostatni (*I saw “Golgota Picnic”. I didn’t find it scandalous.*, www.poznan.gazeta.pl | 20 June 2014) who claimed that artists “often call for provocation, including blasphemy. One can recall the rule, that an artist is allowed more”.

Who fought whom in the media?

The aspect of a media fight was rarely mentioned in the debate. Media employees demonstrated little awareness of their own role in the whole case. By this I mean that in a major part nobody expected publicist activity to change anything: the cards were on a table, each side guarded its position, and one of the sides didn’t even want to talk. Instead, we could observe how PS accused public media of not being interested enough in the topic and, most of all, of not taking “the only decent side” while being funded from public money. For example: “Radio dla Ciebie promoted the scandalous performance and invited the audience for a de-

bate discussing how the Church inhibits the development of Poland. All these paid from our taxes". The RS lead with an open attack "The media join the absurd buzz about the scandalous performance *Golgota Picnic*. Not just TVN24 and TOK FM, which for the last days had been given high priority to this issue, but now also public media support the cause."

One can risk a statement that the RS is using media in a way that is very different from their usual role in a modern world, which is setting frames for dialogue and interacting with the participants. In the RS view the media would work as banners on which you can put your slogans that cannot be changed or modified in any way. In addition, the RS does not even pretend to be interested in discussion – since calling the other side a supporter of "disgusting homosexual pornography" is no opening for discussion, but the opposite – a very effective way to close it. (see: Tomasz Terlikowski "It's disgusting homosexual pornography", www.telewizjarepublika.pl | 27 June 2014).

What is more, the supporters of this incredibly anti-dialogue (in effect: anti-democratic) point of view also question the debate proposed and successfully conducted by the LS, claiming that: "It is really astounding that only two weeks after the biggest swindle since 1989, the editors of public media make a theatrical performance and the alleged inhibitory role of the Church the most important event in socio-political life. It is nice that not all the guests are declared supporters of this view, but does our tax money really have to be spent on introducing such absurd claims into a public discourse?" (www.wpolityce.pl | 27 June 2014). It is disgusting to read the argument used against Nergal: "Christian fascism in its pure form – this is how Adam Nergal Darski commented on protests against public readings

of *Golgota Picnic*. He wasn't so haughty when he was arrested in Russia!" (www.wpolityce.pl | 30 June 2014).

To this list of calumnies we have to add slander targeted at whole institutions, which would sound strangely familiar to those who remember the past times: "What exactly is this Warsaw Theatre Institute which organizes public readings and screenings of *Golgota Picnic*? Who is behind the new attack on our Lord Jesus?" (www.pch24.pl | 29 June 2014).

It is though worth pointing out that there were some voices that could work as ferment for the debate to be led in the future (or surely possible in the future) between supporters and opponents of the staging of *Golgota Picnic*, that would approach issues of aesthetic and religious sensitivity in a serious manner. These are usually longer statements made by the readers – but also persons well known in cultural circles – who share their doubts concerning the performance as such, its form and content, not the fact that it was presented to the public (for example *Why I will not defend "Golgota Picnic"* www.rp.pl | 30 June 2014 | Krzysztof Koehler or *We are facing a serious dilemma. Poland is taking its freedom exam. „Polska"* p. 17 | 30 June 2014 | Jerzy Sosnowski).

It seems that those who predict a cultural war in contemporary Poland may be quite right. What is more: this phrase is used to describe deep (and sometimes tragic) divisions in society based on personal beliefs, religion and the practical aspect of morality. A war of that kind – ruthless with disregard for the other side's arguments – cannot lead to dialogue. In a landslide of radical statements it is easy to miss the voice of the new Minister of Culture, Małgorzata Omilanowska, who – when asked by a journalist what would be the goal of a future expert panel addressing ar-

tistic freedom – smiled and answered that the goal was a dialogue in itself.

As we chase the hard-facts (which seems to be the favourite word of all political technocrats), we tend to forget how valuable the chance is to meet our opponents face to face. It is possible and advisable to give up on the most radical representatives from both sides. Still, the others should listen, give their opinions and leave space for a retort – just as the masters of rhetoric recommended. The Festival team organised a meeting like this and it was (in spite of the LS being over-represented) a good prelude to a broader debate that could have been led in the public media. It never happened: the RS gained a pyrrhic victory by preventing the performance from happening, while the LS surrendered to a well-organised group of the self-righteous, or simply those exercising mindless power. The failure in Poland lies in the fact that the space between the two camps emptied: the number of those who consider that reflecting on public issues is an unreal dream or an unexplainable demand, is constantly increasing. Including the concept of “offending someone’s religious feelings” in the debate should not silence those who do not share this idea. It is a concept recognized by law and therefore a case for the court, who can only examine it after the act – so after the performance would be allowed to happen. It seems that in this case the conservative right-wing media had chosen a rhetoric which made any compromise impossible: any attempt to discuss the taboo was brutally rejected. Quite often even the idea of a dialogue, which is a basic way to reach a consensus, was immediately discarded. They failed to notice that the taboo is growing weaker and we still have

no chance to work out the right language to describe and interpret the complex and delicate issues concerning the place of religion in a modern secular state (which, out of political correctness, should probably be called “irreligious” instead of “secular”).

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Published by Fundacja Malta 2014

MALTA FUNDACJA
ul. Ratajczaka 44
61-728 Poznań, Poland

ISBN: 978-83-938429-3-3

www.malta-festival.pl