

ADAM MICHNIK

Born in Warsaw on 17th October 1946, Adam Michnik studied History at university in the Polish capital until he was expelled in 1968 due to his participation in protests. He eventually graduated in 1975 with a distance degree in History from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Imprisoned several times since the 1960s, he was one of the founders of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR movement) and a member of the Solidarity union since its creation in 1980. From 1977 onwards, he worked as an editor for several independent magazines and formed part of the editorial team of the *Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza* (NOWA), one of the most prominent independent publishing houses of the Polish opposition. In the so-called "revolutionary year" of 1989, he became a member of parliament and founded the independent newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, of which he remains editor-in-chief.

Michnik is one of the best known and most prominent defenders of human rights in Poland and is considered one of the key figures in the recovery of democracy in the country, as well as an outstanding journalist. From the pages of *Gazeta Wyborcza* –currently one of the most widely distributed newspapers in Central Europe–, he has always defended dialogue over and above all kinds of divisions between the most diverse cultures, races, ideologies, societies and ethnic groups. He was also a strong advocate for his country's entry into the European Union. Michnik spent six years in prison under the Polish communist regime and was one of the promoters of national reconciliation, taking the Spanish model of the Moncloa Pacts as an example. In 1989, three years after his last stay in prison, he took up political office as a member of Poland's first non-communist lower house.

He is the author of several books on political and historical issues and essays translated into various languages, such as *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (1986), *The Church and the Left* (1992), *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives* (1998) and *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New Eastern Europe* (2011). He has also interviewed a large number of public figures from around the world. His articles have been published in European newspapers and magazines such as *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, *Liberation* and *El País*, and in the American periodicals *The Washington Post* and *The New York Review of Books*. In 2018, he was one of the thirty intellectuals who signed the *Europe in Flames* manifesto on the threat of populism. He is a member of the Reporters Without Borders Emeritus Board. An authority on Russian politics, he has closely followed and commented in different articles on the invasion of Ukraine this year, being highly critical of Vladimir Putin's decisions and acts.

Holder of honorary degrees from several universities, he is Commander of Chile's Order of Bernardo O'Higgins and has received the Officer's Cross of Merit from the Republic of Hungary, the Order of Grand Prince Giedymin of Lithuania, Germany's Grand Cross of Merit, the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise from Ukraine and the French Legion of Honour, among other distinctions. He has likewise received numerous international prizes and awards, including the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award (1986) and the Francisco Cerecedo Award for Journalism (Spain, 1999). In 2000, the International Press Institute (IPI) included Michnik in its list of 50 Press Freedom Heroes. He was conferred with the Goethe Medal from the German institute of the same name in 2011, the Freedom Prize of the Lithuanian Parliament in 2015, the Ortega y Gasset Award from the newspaper *El País* in 2016, the Italian International Primo Levi Award in 2018 and, that same year, the Gilel Storch Award, awarded by Judisk Kultur, the Swedish organization promoting Jewish culture.



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