

LET'S NOT BE AFRAID OF FREEDOM

DECODER: We will start unusually: is there anything that scares you in people?

AGNIESZKA HOLLAND: Yes. The potential of evil which humanity has in itself (the Catholic religion explains it with original sin, Cain and Abel, etc.), other mythologies personalize it differently) and which can manifest always and everywhere, and when there is some kind of permission from above, it grows and can get big and lead to hatred, aggression, wars. The history of the 20th century showed that there is no nation, race, class that would be resistant to such a possibility. I am afraid that now we are entering a period when consent to evil is realistically possible.

There is such a famous photo where you stand in front of the row of policemen. What kind of feeling is it?

I thought about these policemen: what do they feel? What do they think? Do they look at me like an enemy, or do they reluctantly carry out their duties? This situation was not extreme, "Citizens of the Republic of Poland", or other resistance groups often face really dramatic choices - I am thinking here about the situation of Gabriela Lazarek drawing a banner with a quote from Lech Kaczyń-



Photo: Jacek Poremba

ski about the rule of law in a crowd of PiS followers in the Cathedral or a group of women punched and kicked by neonazis during Independence March. Also, my verbal courage is, so far, cheaper than the courage of the judges who protest against breaking the Constitution.

The authoritarianism born in Poland has strong support from a large part of society. Why do not people who are supporting dictatorships see their human costs?

I do not know why history, even recently, does not teach us anything. The vaccine of totalitarianism of the 20th century, the Holocaust, ceased to work. Modernity puts us in front of many changes and threats, populists give illusive answers to these threats, and they say they have simple recipes: building walls, excluding foreigners, others. They support tribal community, strong, authoritarian power. Medicines are more toxic than illness and always lead one way: dictatorships, wars, and misery. But people are afraid of freedom if it becomes difficult, they run away from it and give power to the fraudsters and fanatics.

Recently, you said in the European Parliament that "the scare of World War II is no longer working." Are we condemned to the return of nationalism and anti-Semitism?

I am afraid that this is the next stage that awaits us. May it not be as bloody as it was last time. And that the rulers, societies and elites will find the right time to face the challenges of modernity thoroughly and honestly.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Prague Spring. How do you assess this uprising from today's perspective as an active participant in these events?

I see it as the moment when the real disassembly of the communist system began, even in the eyes of its Western supporters. The Prague Spring was so peaceful, so ludic, and

so beautiful, that crushing it with tanks was a like a rape. But for me the next stage was equally instructive: twenty years of "normalization" - a period of lying, conformism, breaking the spine. I hope that we Poles are not waiting for a similar "smuta". Certain symptoms of social conformity are already well visible.

PiS, the ruling party, ostentatiously breaks the Constitution and the principles of Democracy, but nevertheless enjoys unwavering support. Is this society "not grown up" by choosing "a Good Change" or is it the fault of the previous elite?

Somehow I do not really want to analyze once again the degree of guilt from today's opposition or society. We all contributed to this by abandoning, laziness, selfishness, thoughtlessness, forgetting about brotherhood and lack of imagination, and through our blindness to the symptoms of growing anger. But responsible for the systematic coup d'état and the dismantling of democracy, the rule of law and the power of Poland in the EU there is PiS and personally Jarosław Kaczyński, who wrote the script of these changes. We now see that the crisis of liberal democracy is global and we cannot solve it only by winning next elections. It is necessary to disarm the structural causes of this "current escape from freedom" in many parts of the world. Let's read Erich Fromm again!

In every era, culture reacts differently to political and social changes. How do you assess today's response of the artists at the time of the breakthrough?

For now it's timid. I am waiting for much stronger statements: in films, literature, theater ... Theater and visual arts seem to be best kept on the pulse, but it still does not answer the scale of questions that stand before us.