

STANISŁAW ŻERKO  
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## THE SOVIET THREAT IN STANISŁAW CAT-MACKIEWICZ'S JOURNALISTIC WRITINGS DURING WORLD WAR II

Stanisław Mackiewicz, known as Cat-Mackiewicz – the pseudonym<sup>1</sup> he assumed in the 1920s – is still recognised as one of the most prominent Polish political journalists and historical essayists. He also wrote about literary history, and was particularly well known as a specialist in and admirer of Russian literature. He was a prolific writer. He wrote “21 books, 55 pamphlets, and over 300 papers which were a page or column long.”<sup>2</sup> His recently published *Selected Writings*, edited by Jan Sadkiewicz, already comprise 19 volumes, and more are to be published. Mackiewicz’s writings have not ceased to be of great interest, and younger readers are enthusiastic when they discover them, which is to be expected. One of the youngest reviewers of Mackiewicz’s *Selected Writings* wrote: “I do not hesitate to call Stanisław Mackiewicz the most outstanding Polish journalist of the last century.”<sup>3</sup>

Mackiewicz was a conservative, a monarchist, a supporter of Piłsudski and a leading Polish Germanophile, and a writer and journalist with an extraordinarily colourful personality. His biography by Jerzy Jaruzelski<sup>4</sup> is an excellent account of the above. Between World Wars I and II the *Słowo* [Word] daily was published in Vilnius, and Cat-Mackiewicz was its editor-in-chief. Various aspects of his and his colleagues’ political writings published there are also analysed in his biography. *Słowo* was not a provincial daily, but was available and read in all major Polish cities. The articles published provoked strong polemics. It was also known in the USSR, mainly because it was fiercely attacked in the Soviet press.

<sup>1</sup> His pseudonym Cat was a reference to Rudyard Kipling’s short story *The Cat that Walked by Himself*.

<sup>2</sup> J. Jaruzelski, *Cat*, in: S. Cat-Mackiewicz, *Teksty* [Texts], selected and edited by J. Jaruzelski, Warsaw 1990, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> M. Fudryna, *Michał Strogow i emigracja polska*, <http://www.fronda.pl/a/michal-strogow-i-emigracja-polska,27716.html>.

<sup>4</sup> J. Jaruzelski, *Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz 1896-1966. Wilno – Londyn – Warszawa*, Warsaw 1987; in 1994 a slightly extended version was published, free of the effects of censorship and self-censorship. Earlier, Jaruzelski’s three excellent essays were published under the title *Mackiewicz i konserwatyści. Szkice do biografii*, Warsaw 1976.

Mackiewicz was born in Saint Petersburg in 1896. (Six years later his brother Józef – who would become a well-known novelist – was born.) He was active in underground groups (*Pet*, *Zet*, and in 1916–1917 the Polish Military Organisation). He fought in the Polish–Soviet War. Already in 1917, he wrote for the *Czas* [Time] daily of Cracow conservatives. In 1922 he was among the founders of *Słowo*, which was informally the voice of the Vilnius conservatives and monarchists known as “wisents”. In August 1922 he was appointed its editor-in-chief, a post he would hold until the dramatic September of 1939.

As a conservative activist, he sat on the boards of several minor monarchist organisations. In 1926, he strongly supported Piłsudski and his coup d'état.<sup>5</sup> He was very active in winning the support of conservatives for the Polish Sanation movement. In fact, Marshal Piłsudski held a meeting with the conservatives at Niasvizh Castle, a residence of the Radziwiłł family (now in Belarus), on 25 October 1926, only five months after the May coup. In 1928–1935 Mackiewicz sat in the Sejm (Poland's parliament), representing the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government. He was active on the committee which drafted the April Constitution of 1935.

In the interwar period, Mackiewicz, next to Władysław Studnicki, was the leading proponent of Polish–German cooperation. He propagated his views in *Słowo*. After Piłsudski's death, Mackiewicz increasingly criticised the Polish government and opposed Józef Beck's foreign policy. In March 1939, six months before the outbreak of World War II, Prime Minister Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski even had Mackiewicz detained in the Bereza Kartuska prison for a short time, which later (during Mackiewicz's wartime and post-war emigration) enabled him to pose as one who had opposed the Sanation.

In October 1939 Mackiewicz fled Poland via Kaunas (Lithuania) and Tallinn and went to France, where for several months he published the *Słowo* weekly. In June 1940, when France was defeated by Germany, he tried to persuade President Władysław Raczkiewicz to begin negotiations with the Germans as Marshal Pétain had (Libourne, 16 June 1940). Shortly after, he reached London via Spain and Portugal. In 1940–1941 he was a member of the Polish National Council there, which served as a Polish parliament in exile. In Britain, Mackiewicz was one of the most outspoken opponents of the policies of Władysław Sikorski's and Stanisław Mikołajczyk's governments.

When the war ended, Mackiewicz stayed in London. In 1946–1950 he published the *Lwów i Wilno* [Lvov and Vilnius] weekly. He wrote his first books on literature and history (*Dostojewski* in 1947 and *Stanisław August* in 1953). His articles were also published in the *Wiadomości* journal. In 1955, readers of that journal judged him to be “the most cherished writer” of the émigré community. In 1951–1954 he was deputy chairman of the National Council. In 1954–1955 he served as prime minister (and concurrently minister of foreign affairs) of the Polish government-in-exile.

<sup>5</sup> In his article titled *Panie Marszałku* [Mr. Marshal] (*Słowo*, 17 May 1926) Mackiewicz wrote: “For the strong authority, strong and life-giving authority in power we are ready to pay with tens of corpses if Poland needs such a tribute, but you, Marshal, give us this strong authority!”



As his living conditions continued to deteriorate, while in London he contacted the security services of the People's Republic of Poland and corresponded with the then prominent Jerzy Putrament regarding the terms of his return to Poland.<sup>6</sup>

He returned to Poland in June 1956. For a short while he lectured on the history of Russian literature at Warsaw University. His articles were published in the Catholic press subsidised by the PAX Association (*Słowo Powszechne, Kierunki*). He also wrote several books on history. His contacts with the security services continued for several more years.

In 1964, however, he signed the List 34, a short protest against censorship signed by 34 writers and intellectuals, and for a while publication of his texts was banned. In the same year, he began writing for *Kultura*, a leading Polish-émigré literary-political magazine based in Paris, using the pseudonym Gaston de Cerizay. Once the security services identified him with de Cerizay, an investigation was launched, and he was accused of defamation of the People's Republic of Poland. He did not stand trial, however, and he died in February 1966.<sup>7</sup>

Mackiewicz's books have been widely read and discussed, and his writings have been recognised to be of importance to the history of Polish literature. He is viewed as an outstanding journalist and essayist of his times. Even today, many readers' perception of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939) is influenced by Mackiewicz's *Historia Polski od 11 listopada 1918 r. do 17 września 1939 r.* [History of Poland from 11 November 1918 to 17 September 1939], published in London in 1941. This publication is actually a popular pamphlet, not attempting to be an objective synthesis. This applies especially to Mackiewicz's very one-sided and unfair interpretation of Józef Beck's policy.<sup>8</sup>

Cat-Mackiewicz's articles on current affairs have evoked less interest. Historians of Polish political thought have almost exclusively analysed his journalistic writings from the interwar period (usually together with texts by other authors published in *Słowo*<sup>9</sup>), including his pro-German ideas on Polish foreign

<sup>6</sup> K. Tarka, „Bankrut” i „kapitulant” czy „wybitny publicysta”? O powrocie S. Mackiewicza do Polski, in: idem, *Mackiewicz i inni. Wywiad PRL wobec emigrantów*, Łomianki 2007, pp. 67-88.

<sup>7</sup> On the interesting Warsaw period in Cat's biography see: M. Furdyna, M. Rodzik, *Upadki i wzloty*. W Sieci 4-10 January 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Mackiewicz wrote about Beck and his politics both in his *History of Poland* and in his 1942 book *O jedenastej – powiada aktor – sztuka jest skończona. Polityka Józefa Becka* [At eleven, says the actor, the play is over. The politics of Józef Beck], London 1942 (reprint: Kraków 2012). In 1964, Jerzy Giedroyc's Literary Institute in Paris published: S. Mackiewicz, *Polityka Becka* [Beck's politics], Paris 1964 (reprint: Kraków 2009). This is a much edited version of the 1942 book. Primarily it lacks “anti-Soviet” comments. See: S. Żerko, *Książka rozczarowań i pasji*, in: S. Cat-Mackiewicz, *O jedenastej – powiada aktor – sztuka jest skończona. Polityka Józefa Becka*, Kraków 2012, pp. 297-317.

<sup>9</sup> In particular: J. Osica, *Politycy anachronizmu. Konserwatyści wileńskiej grupy „Słowa” 1922-1928*, Warsaw 1982; J. Gzella, *Między Sowietami a Niemcami. Koncepcje polskiej polityki zagranicznej konserwatystów wileńskich zgrupowanych wokół „Słowa” (1922-1939)*, Toruń 2011; J. Sadkiewicz, „Ci, którzy przekonani nie umieją”. *Idea porozumienia polsko-niemieckiego w publicystyce Władysława Studnickiego i wileńskiego „Słowa” (do 1939)*, Kraków 2012.

policy.<sup>10</sup> Cat's commentaries on current issues during the Second World War have been little discussed.<sup>11</sup> Readers are informed merely that Cat attacked Sikorski and Mikołajczyk mainly for their attempts to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union. Even Jerzy Jaruzelski devoted very little space to this topic in his biography of Mackiewicz.

Between January and June 1940, Mackiewicz published 21 issues of the *Słowo* weekly. They were mostly devoted to disputing historical aspects of decisions being taken, and as such were not influential. In the autumn of 1940 Cat started to write the above-mentioned *Historia Polski* [History of Poland], and shortly afterwards a book on Beck's policies. At the same time he sought support for the publication of another journal. He was not successful, as the Polish government in London did not grant him supplies of paper. In this situation he decided to publish pamphlets, paying for them out of his own pocket, which was quite exceptional. He published three pamphlets in October–December 1941, seven in 1942, six in 1943, fourteen in 1944 and twelve in 1945, including one in English. By 1956, he had published 53 pamphlets. Their contents have not previously been analysed. This is not surprising as they were hardly available even in libraries, both abroad and in Poland. Only after their republishing as part of Mackiewicz's *Selected Writings*, edited by Jan Sadkiewicz, have the contents of these apparently entirely forgotten texts become accessible to a wider readership.

At the time the first of the pamphlets appeared, Mackiewicz was already one of the best-known critics of Sikorski's policies. This reason was the Sikorski–Maisy Agreement of 30 July 1941. As a declared anti-communist, Mackiewicz remained faithful to his belief that the Soviet Union represented a deadly threat to Poland, Europe and Western civilisation in general.

In mid-1940, the attitude of the Polish authorities to the USSR was one of the causes (though not the most significant one) of a serious governmental crisis which led to Sikorski being dismissed from the office of prime minister by President Raczkiewicz on July 18. This attempt to lessen the role of Sikorski, inspired by pro-Piłsudski circles, was not successful however. On the following day Raczkiewicz felt compelled to reappoint Sikorski as prime minister. The relations between Sikorski's supporters and the post-Sanation circles (including Raczkiewicz, minister of foreign affairs August Zaleski, and General Kazimierz Sosnowski, who was appointed to succeed Raczkiewicz as president) remained tense.

The next crisis occurred a few months after Germany attacked the USSR (22 June 1941). On that day Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that the UK would support the USSR, and on 12 July he signed an alliance agreement with the USSR. At the same time, and with no British pressure, Sikorski held talks with the Soviet ambassador to the United Kingdom, Ivan Maisky. From the very beginning Sikorski argued

<sup>10</sup> S. Żerko, *Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz wobec stosunków polsko-niemieckich (do 1939 r.)*, in: A. Czubiński (ed.), *Polacy i Niemcy. Dziesięć wieków sąsiedztwa. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Januszowi Pajewskiemu*, Poznań 1987, pp. 371-388.

<sup>11</sup> Mackiewicz's recently reprinted pamphlets were reviewed by, for example, A. Augustyniak, *Człowiek, który widział najczarniej*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 8 April 2015, weekly supplement *Ale Historia*, pp. 12-13.



for maintaining the *status quo* regarding Poland's eastern border, which was strongly opposed by the USSR. Eventually Sikorski was forced to approve the formula Maisky presented, in which the USSR merely acknowledged that "the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 which referred to territorial changes in Poland are no longer valid."<sup>12</sup>

The Sikorski-Maisky Agreement contained solutions which from the Polish perspective were beneficial. Of great importance was the very recognition by the USSR of the existence of the Polish state and its government. This led to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. The agreement also foresaw the creation of a Polish army on the territory of the USSR. An additional protocol foresaw the granting of an "amnesty" to all Polish citizens detained in the USSR. The argument that thanks to the Sikorski-Maisky Agreement the situation of hundreds of thousands of Poles changed fundamentally is still raised even today in historiography and historical journalism. It is also argued that, had the agreement referred to respecting the border established in the Treaty of Riga of 1921, there would have been no guarantee that Moscow would actually respect such terms. Among the numerous opinions that have been expressed about the Agreement of 30 July 1941, we may quote the words of one prominent expatriate historian: "[the agreement] did not warrant Poland's integrity nor its independence."<sup>13</sup> In the summer of 1941 the course and outcomes of Polish-Soviet negotiations caused a rift in émigré circles. It was disputed what Sikorski's objectives were. It would be a gross simplification to say that all who decided to resign from their functions (which happened five days before the Agreement was actually signed) were strongly opposed to the Agreement. For example, Sosnkowski, Zaleski and minister Marian Seyda hesitated before breaking with Sikorski.<sup>14</sup> Not only well-known personages, but also diverse groups like the National Party (*Stronnictwo Narodowe*) and some politicians from the Polish Socialist Party, left the governing coalition to protest against Sikorski's not pushing the Kremlin to declare that the Polish-Soviet border of 1921 would not be challenged. President Raczkiewicz expressed his serious reservations about Sikorski's policies. However, he decided not to step down and merely refused to put his signature to the Agreement.

At that time Cat-Mackiewicz had no place to publish his commentaries on current political developments.<sup>15</sup> In the summer of 1941 he was also busy writing his book-cum-pamphlet on Beck's policies, which to an extent was an appendix to his *History of Poland* published a few months earlier.<sup>16</sup> He published some short texts,

<sup>12</sup> J. Tebinka (ed.), *Polskie dokumenty dyplomatyczne 1941*, Warsaw 2013, document 203.

<sup>13</sup> P. Wandycz, *Polska w dziejach świata: natchnienie czy źródło kłopotów?* in: idem, *Z dziejów dyplomacji*, London 1988, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> This is emphasised by P. Wiczorkiewicz, *Historia polityczna Polski 1935-1945*, Warsaw 2006, p. 233.

<sup>15</sup> He recapitulated his attitude to the Sikorski-Maisky Agreement in his book published in London in 1945. I refer to a later edition: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Lata nadziei. 17 września 1939 r. – 5 lipca 1945 r.*, Warsaw 1990, chapter *Pakt z 30 lipca 1941 r.* (pp. 107-118).

<sup>16</sup> In the book published in 1942, the date of the completion of his book on Beck is given: 23 August 1941, i.e. the second anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; S. Żerko, *Książka rozczarowań...*, p. 300.

polemics and reviews in *Wiadomości Polskie, Polityczne i Literackie* [Polish Political and Literary News].<sup>17</sup> Furthermore he had to face the Court of Honour at the National Council (chaired by General Lucjan Żeligowski). Mackiewicz was accused over his far-reaching relations with Germans and the Libourne incident mentioned earlier. Since the first National Council was dissolved on 1 September 1941, the Court did not hand down a verdict. Nonetheless, many witnesses were heard and it was clear that Mackiewicz had not had illegal contacts with Germans.<sup>18</sup>

As *Wiadomości Polskie* did not want to aggravate the government, it refused to publish Cat's political articles. Mackiewicz applied to the Ministry of Information and Documentation for paper supplies to publish his weekly, but was refused. Nevertheless, in October 1941 he published the first of his pamphlets. Each of them contained several articles. On the first page of his first pamphlet titled *Październik 1941* [October 1941] he wrote: "This publication [series] which I launch is to repeat documents, settle facts and pronounce independent judgements on them, resisting bellows and trumpets [playing] hymns of praise on command."<sup>19</sup> Today we know that the person who felt most offended by what Mackiewicz wrote was deputy prime minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk.<sup>20</sup>

In the first article in that pamphlet Mackiewicz debated the Sikorski–Maisy Agreement. Cat wrote: "I judge the Polish–Soviet Agreement of July 30 to be a mistake, a national and stately defeat" and added: "It is the policy which stems from this agreement that I would like to fight."<sup>21</sup> He reproached Sikorski mostly for his departure from the stance taken by the prime minister in his speech of 23 June. Sikorski then made Polish–Soviet cooperation dependent on Moscow's adherence "to the terms of the treaty signed in Riga"<sup>22</sup>, and thus on recognition of the border agreed there. This condition had now been abandoned.

Mackiewicz underlined that Stalin "for six years before the outbreak of the war carried on politics aimed at causing a war among European countries." From September 1939 the Kremlin's policies "aimed at prolonging this war"; however, Stalin's calculations failed when the Soviet Union was attacked by Hitler on 22 June 1941.<sup>23</sup> In Cat's opinion, when by *fait accompli* the USSR became "an ally of our ally" (the UK), Stalin could no longer "keep thousands and hundreds of thousands of our citizens imprisoned, keep our officers and soldiers in detention camps, populate its deserts with

<sup>17</sup> Among others his polemics with critical comments on his *History of Poland*, 10 August 1941 (reprint: S. Cat-Mackiewicz, *Teksty...*, pp. 390-399).

<sup>18</sup> J. Jaruzelski, *Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz...*, 2nd edition., p. 222ff. Dymarski, however, wrote that "the Court delivered the ruling and the punishment was that Mackiewicz was judged not to be worthy to be a member of the National Council." M. Dymarski, *Stosunki wewnętrzne wśród polskiego wychodźstwa politycznego i wojskowego we Francji i w Wielkiej Brytanii 1939-1945*, Wrocław 1999, p. 125.

<sup>19</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Październik 1941... Fakty i dokumenty*, London [1941], after: S. Cat-Mackiewicz, *Trzylecie. Broszury emigracyjne 1941-1942*, Kraków 2014, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> M. Dymarski, *Stosunki wewnętrzne...*, p. 191.

<sup>21</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Październik 1941...*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Sprawa polska w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Zbiór dokumentów*, Warsaw 1965, p. 218.

<sup>23</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Październik 1941...*, pp. 8-9.



our women and children deported from Poland.”<sup>24</sup> The Poles would have been freed even without the Agreement, because of the Soviet–British alliance. Mackiewicz argued that there was no rush to sign the Agreement: “I think the later we had signed the Agreement, the better terms we could have been offered.”<sup>25</sup> He rightly observed that the statement about the German–Soviet agreements of August and September 1939 being void were no concession on the part of Moscow, since they had been annulled automatically once the Reich attacked the USSR on 22 June 1941.

Cat also criticised the recital in which the government of Poland declared that Poland was not a party to any agreement aimed against the USSR with any third state. He criticised the lack of symmetry, as the USSR made no such declaration. He thus underlined that the war opened a door to create “a federation of states between Germany and Russia, threatened by Germany and threatened by Russia.” At the same time he considered highly likely “the concept of adjoining all other eastern European states to red Russia as vassal and totally loyal states like Outer Mongolia is today to the Soviet Union.”<sup>26</sup>

Mackiewicz appreciated the freeing of a host of Polish prisoners and deported citizens; he also saw the benefits of a Polish army existing in the USSR and subordinated to the Polish government-in-exile in London. At the same time he criticised the operational subordination of that army to Soviet command, and the term “amnesty” used in reference to Polish citizens being released. Above all, however, he feared that the Sikorski–Maisyky Agreement would lead to Poland’s losing its eastern provinces.

There is no Pole who would agree to give Vilnius and Lvov to the Soviets or even to question the belonging of Vilnius and Lvov to Poland for the price of opening doors to Polish prisoners and POWs, just as there is no Pole who would consent to question the Polishness of Poznań, Cracow and Warsaw to free Polish prisoners from German concentration camps. Thus the freeing of Poles cannot be the goal of our policy towards the Soviets. Unquestionably our goal is to regain territorial integrity both in the east and in the west.”<sup>27</sup>

He went on to write even more emphatically:

We think that if for a moment we considered that the Polish–Soviet agreement gives our eastern lands to Russia, we would lose the right to demand from our soldiers any military sacrifices. We have the right to demand from our soldiers to sacrifice their lives to regain Polish lands for Poland, but we have no right to demand that they sacrifice their lives to regain those lands for... Russia.<sup>28</sup>

He also protested against the presentation of the Sikorski–Maisyky Agreement as a success.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

The agreement is close to a defeat and our government keeps trumpeting that it is perfect, salutary, wonderful and thus makes out the elementary decency, the discontinuation of a crime, that is the Soviets' releasing our citizens, to be some extraordinary concession to Poland, some gift of the Soviets to Poland. [...] Not only the signing of the agreement of 30 July 1941, but its continuous advertising as our triumph, goes against Poland's *raison d'état*.<sup>29</sup>

He also advised Sikorski to reduce his praise of Russians who stood up to the German aggressor. "Great and heroic nations do not hurt the defenceless. Are not too many compliments paid in the light of what is happening to the Polish nation in Russia?"<sup>30</sup> And he underlined that "apparently two million of our compatriots and fellow citizens have been deported from our country." He recalled that: "In Russia our fellow citizens have been beaten, abused, shot dead, mutilated. To our representatives come crippled persons who have lost their health for ever; children have been taken away from their parents and deported somewhere else."<sup>31</sup> He wrote that the Soviets stood for "a totalitarianism worse than Hitler's." He emphasised that "we want victory over Hitler to expel the Germans from Poland, to regain Poland for ourselves and not for the Bolsheviki, and certainly not to give our territories to the Bolsheviki, which would surely happen if victorious Bolshevik armies reached Berlin."<sup>32</sup> He underlined that he supported a federation (created under the aegis of Poland) of states "situated between Germany and Russia and threatened by the imperialistic goals of those two powers."<sup>33</sup>

A month later Mackiewicz gave a reminder that the conditions of hundreds of thousands of Poles in the USSR had not yet been improved. He argued that in some cases their situation had actually worsened. He noted that lists of Polish citizens were not made accessible by the Soviet authorities and that many Poles were imprisoned on charges of spying for Germany. He wrote about refusals to release judges and prosecutors and, finally, that "It has been noted that 7500 Polish officers taken prisoner are missing. It is not known whether they have been handed over to the Germans, have been executed, have died, or live hidden in a prison nobody knows about." He mentioned Ostashkov, where there had been "a camp of thousands of Polish policemen and gendarmes. What has happened to them, nobody knows. None of those prisoners has joined the Polish army. Every trace of them is gone."<sup>34</sup> Already at that time he argued that "our priority concern should be to get our divisions out of Soviet Russia and adjoin them to English forces", because otherwise Polish troops sent to the frontline would be quickly wiped out by the Germans.<sup>35</sup>

In January 1942 Mackiewicz wrote:

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Listopad 1941. Fakty i dokumenty*, London 1941, reprint: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Trzylecie...*, p. 77.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 117.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 131.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 145.



We must keep our eyes wide open to the threat that if the Soviets are victorious, say in the case Soviet armies reach Zbąszyń [Bentschen in German], there will be a threat that Poland will be adjoined to the Soviet Union as one of its Republics. This threat is downright tragic because we should keep in mind that although in the war with Germany we collaborate with a group of powerful allies, I doubt if America, Canada, Australia would offer active military support to retrieve Poland from Soviets victorious over Germany.<sup>36</sup>

He emphasised that “Soviet policy does not respect its signatures or undertakings”<sup>37</sup> and warned against making any agreements with the USSR: “We cannot trust the Soviets. They have broken too many promises made to us.”<sup>38</sup> At the same time he complained that whilst much was written about German crimes in occupied Poland, “the tragedy of Poles in Soviet Russia is – for reasons I do not understand – withheld”<sup>39</sup> and contrary to what the Polish “official press” wrote, there was no change in the situation of the Polish population in the USSR and tens of thousands were still kept in Soviet prisons. The Soviet authorities “impede contacts of the Polish embassy with the Polish population”, “they do not allow consuls and delegates to act.”<sup>40</sup> He accused Sikorski of hiding from the public the fact that the USSR was not actually going to give back to Poland its lands taken after 12 September 1939. In Cat’s opinion, the government of the Polish Republic should “show to England, the Soviets and the world that Poland will not allow Vilnius and Lvov to be torn out of Poland at any price.”<sup>41</sup>

Mackiewicz painted with words the horror of the situation, arguing that “every victory of the Soviets has two faces for us. One is happy as it brings the moment of victory over the Germans closer. The other is full of worries about what we will do if Russia occupies our lands.”<sup>42</sup> He wrote this in early 1942, when the German armies were advancing far into the Soviet Union. He added that “it is necessary to mobilise the Polish public in England to demonstrate that we will defend Vilnius and Lvov in exactly the same way in which we defended Pomerania and Silesia”, and “in any case, we cannot calmly take note [of the Russian thesis] that the adjoining of Polish lands to Russia was an outcome of the people’s freely expressed opinion.” That is why “already today [it is necessary] to appeal to the conscience and sense of loyalty of the English nation.” Poles have won public support in Great Britain and should benefit from it, he wrote. He asked: “We were the first ones in this war, we lost everything in it [...] Are we to lose half of our country instead of getting a reward?”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>36</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Styczeń 1942. Fakty i dokumenty*, London [1942], reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Trzyściecie...*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 200.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 203.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 210.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 212.

<sup>41</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Cała prawda*, London [1942], reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Trzyściecie...*, p. 241.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 243.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 248.

Long had Mackiewicz accused Sikorski of “hiding from the public both in exile and in Poland the truth about the Soviets’ attitude to us. The Soviets demand from Poland half of our territory and the Polish government hide this demand from Polish society, misleading even the most experienced political and social activists.”<sup>44</sup> In his pamphlets he gave numerous examples. His categorical opinion was that “the issue of our borders is in no way to be disputed” and “Poland may only be bigger, not smaller than when it sacrificed itself for the good of Europe and mankind.”<sup>45</sup> He advocated that General Sikorski’s stance should be equally firm, but in Cat’s opinion, Sikorski weaved too much in this matter, against the Polish *raison d’état*. He judged Sikorski’s proposal to suspend discussion on the Polish eastern border until Germany was defeated as irresponsible. He argued that “From England and Russia, Poland should get all guarantees of the inviolability of Polish borders by the Soviets now, in the heat of the battle, and not later when the Soviets occupy Warsaw. Then it surely will be too late.”<sup>46</sup>

Cat-Mackiewicz explained Stalin’s war objectives. He wrote that before the war, the goal of the USSR’s policy was to cause a war to break out. And in 1939 the USSR had provoked the war’s outbreak by signing a treaty with Hitler.

For almost two years Stalin’s neutrality policy was friendly to Germany. Stalin wanted to prolong the war, “to see the moment when the weapons of the fighting parties would chip while his weapons remain ready and unused. Then, depending on the situation, he would either open the door for a European revolution or dictate peace terms to other parties as the only power strong enough to do that.”<sup>47</sup> In Mackiewicz’s opinion, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, Stalin “did not change his policy but adapted it to the new situation” and continued “his specific Soviet politics.” Should the Reich be defeated, “Stalin will seek to proclaim the communist system in Berlin and create one communist German–Soviet bloc.” This would “not only wipe out Polish ambitions to win independence but also [mean] a great threat to England and to America.”<sup>48</sup> Mackiewicz expressed this opinion in March 1942 while commenting on Stalin’s Order No. 55, issued on the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Red Army. This contained the statement that the opponent of the USSR was not the German nation but Hitler’s regime.

The title of Mackiewicz’s next pamphlet published in 1942 said it all: *In Black Ink*. Mackiewicz reported on a series of bad news from the USSR, adding, however, that “We have no doubt that General Sikorski will do everything in his power to defend Poland’s borders [...] to protect Lvov and Vilnius. In doing so he will be supported by the whole Polish nation, including the opposition.”<sup>49</sup> But a few pages later he fiercely

<sup>44</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Lwów i Wilno*, London [1942], reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Trzylicie...*, p. 287.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 291.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 295.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 314.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 315.

<sup>49</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Czarnym atramentem*, London [1942], reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Trzylicie...*, p. 322.



criticised Sikorski's awkward pronouncement on the issue of the eastern border when Sikorski visited the United States. Mackiewicz again criticised the official propaganda which belittled the fact that "Poles suffer a real ordeal in Soviet Russia."<sup>50</sup> He also thought that not much work was being done on British public opinion. "Should Vilnius and Lvov – the eyes and spirit of Poland – indeed not be part of Poland as a result of victory in the war, our injury would match no other in history. I believe in the English nation, that honesty and honourable conduct will prevail in its public's opinion. I believe much can be achieved by presenting the truth [to the English]."<sup>51</sup> In Mackiewicz's opinion, the Polish Ministry of Propaganda was apprehensive to act. It "avoids difficulties and like an ostrich buries its head in the sand."<sup>52</sup> Apprehensively he noted that "the opinion, catastrophic for us, that the Polish-Soviet border should be delineated by the Soviets and Poland at a future peace conference is reaching authoritative English elites."<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to the official stance of the Polish government, Mackiewicz was critical of the signing on 26 May 1942 of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty establishing a military and political alliance between the two parties. (It replaced the Anglo-Soviet Agreement of 12 July 1941.) In the treaty Mackiewicz saw a further strengthening of Russia's role. He valued the military importance of the USSR to the war against Germany, but noted that "the defeat of Germany is not the goal but a means" because "the goal is a good peace" and "for Poles there will be no good peace without securing the integrity of our borders."<sup>54</sup>

In 1942 Mackiewicz strived to publish his next pamphlet titled *Sprawa Arleta* [Arlet's case] in which he wrote about Polish officers "missing" in the USSR, but the pamphlet was confiscated by the British authorities. Cat's first pamphlet of 1943, later called by Tadeusz Katelbach "the year of bad omens"<sup>55</sup>, was titled *Kryzys rządu* [Government in crisis]<sup>56</sup>. He expressly wrote that Sikorski's government tried to hide from the public the unyielding stance of the Kremlin that "western Ukraine and western Belarus" belonged to the USSR. This was clearly stated in the Soviet note of 16 January 1943 in which all people inhabiting those lands in early November 1939 were recognised to be Soviet citizens. Cat underlined that "we are in a very difficult situation" and added: "it would be simply natural if the government which signed the July agreement and was unable to cause it to be properly worded, and which today faces the obvious bankruptcy of its entire policy, finally resigned." He argued that

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 345.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 347.

<sup>52</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Cel najbliższy*, London [1942], reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Trzyściecie...*, p. 376.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 379.

<sup>54</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, London [1942], reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Trzyściecie...*, p. 398.

<sup>55</sup> The title of Katelbach's book (Paris 1959). It was published in Poland in 2005.

<sup>56</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Kryzys Rządu*, London [1943], reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Albo - albo. Broszury emigracyjne 1943-1944*, Kraków 2014, pp. 7-44.

such a decision would be more than a holding of the government to account; it would "make the right impression on America and England."<sup>57</sup> Cat accused the government of doing the opposite: it hid how dramatic the situation was so that the cabinet could survive.

The discovery of mass graves in Katyn, and Moscow's breaking of diplomatic relations with Poland, were among the most significant events in Polish-Soviet relations during World War II. Cat wrote about them in a pamphlet published in May 1943.<sup>58</sup> He recalled that he had written earlier about the fate of prisoners in Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobilsk. Indeed, in his article published in the summer of 1942 in the United States by *Nowy Świat* [New World], he had expressed his assumption that Polish officers detained in Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobilsk's camps were dead, probably murdered by the Soviet authorities. Mackiewicz accused Sikorski's government of hiding rumours about the possible fate of the missing officers from the public for the sake of the cohesion of the anti-Hitler coalition. He blamed the Polish government for raising the issue of the missing Polish officers only after their massacre was revealed by the Germans and not earlier. He also wrote about the concealment of the issue of recent arrests of delegates of the Polish embassy and other Polish citizens in the USSR. The Polish government addressed questions about Katyn to the International Red Cross. Mackiewicz judged this to be an exceptionally awkward move, at the same time making accusations that were farfetched and detached from reality: "Our government is composed of extremely pro-Soviet elements, the most pro-Soviet that can be found anywhere in Polish society."<sup>59</sup> He also drew attention to texts in the British press in which the thesis that after the war Poland would lie within the Soviet sphere of influence began to be put forward.

Nevertheless, we must control our nerves. England is fighting to maintain the superiority of its nation, to preserve its traditional politics. So far, England has not tolerated any hegemon in Europe, it knocked down anyone who tried to establish his hegemony. Russia with its *Anschluss* of Poland would become a European hegemon. Of course, in England there are decadent politicians who are ready to give up historical aspiration, but we are counting on England in England, on an English England.<sup>60</sup>

Cat was a staunch opponent of Sikorski. Nonetheless, after the 1943 Gibraltar B-24 crash, he wrote a very sympathetic article in his memory.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15. "The principle that in the case of failure the government resigns has been a tradition of every normal society", Mackiewicz added (*ibidem*, p. 16). Cf. M. Dymarski, *Stosunki wewnętrzne...*, pp. 260-261.

<sup>58</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Dymy Smoleńska*, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Albo - albo. Broszury emigracyjne 1943-1944...*, pp. 80-115.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 91.

<sup>61</sup> This article appeared as the first in the pamphlet of August 1943. S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Po zgonie śp. Gen. Sikorskiego i upadku Mussoliniego*, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Albo - albo. Broszury emigracyjne 1943-1944...*, pp. 116-168.



He opposed the new government of Stanisław Mikołajczyk from its very beginning. "The government symbolised by Mr. Mikołajczyk is not able to meet the tasks it has to deal with. Considering the hierarchy of our needs, the need for this government to resign comes first."<sup>62</sup> In the following year, in his pamphlets, Mackiewicz's accusations against Mikołajczyk were much more profound.

His texts were increasingly pessimistic. In October 1943 he wrote: "Every day makes it clear that the dispute with Russia is not about territories but about the very Independence of Poland."<sup>63</sup> In the same pamphlet he demanded that Mikołajczyk step down. "The worse is the situation, the more we should care that he who represents our nation in the world arena has genuine talent, authority and knowledge."<sup>64</sup> He added that the new government should be as wide a national coalition as possible, including a Ukrainian activist as deputy prime minister.

Writing about Soviet expansion in Europe, he identified its three objectives. Moscow's goal was not only to annex some territories, including the Baltic states, half of Poland, parts of Romania and Hungary (Mackiewicz seems now to have forgotten about Finland) and "to create of these countries in central Europe a pro-Soviet system, binding these states with Russia with bilateral agreements and blocking them from establishing their own federation." This system would be supplemented by an alliance of the USSR with a post-Nazi Germany.<sup>65</sup>

He was uneasy about the Moscow Conference (October–November 1943). In point 6 of the conference declaration he saw a possibility that the Red Army moving westwards would occupy the lands of the Polish Republic. "Should the conjecture that the conference has given Russia the right to occupy Poland be confirmed, the results of the Moscow conference will be comparable to the results of the 1939 defensive campaign in Poland. That September was our military defeat, the Moscow conference would be our political defeat."<sup>66</sup> He warned against threats of temporary occupation too, as then provocations could take place, which – as he wrote with bitter irony – "will **force**, simply **force** the Soviet authorities to recognise a soviet republic in Warsaw which will be politically bound to the centre in Moscow."<sup>67</sup> Thus for Poland "the only option to get out [in one piece] from this war" is that the Germans would be defeated by the Anglo-Saxons "so quickly that entry into Poland by Soviet armies would not be necessary."<sup>68</sup>

At the same time, Cat still criticised the Polish government for its adherence to the principle that "the settling of Polish matters can be postponed until after the war,"

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 168.

<sup>63</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Z ziemi włoskiej*, London 1943, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Albo - albo. Broszury emigracyjne 1943-1944...*, p. 171.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 179.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 208.

<sup>66</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Albo - albo. Po konferencji moskiewskiej*, London 1943, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Albo - albo. Broszury emigracyjne 1943-1944...*, p. 241.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 242. Bold type after the original.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 245.

“[Since] the Soviets entered the war as an ally, and especially since they started winning in an unexpected and glorious way, the situation has changed drastically.”<sup>69</sup> He underlined that “Soviet armies are approaching the Polish borders, and it is this, not decisions taken at a [future peace] conference, that will determine the effectiveness of decisions about our fate.”<sup>70</sup> He explained the title of his pamphlet *Albo-albo* [Either or] as follows.

Either this war will end with Germany defeated by England and America **before** Soviet armies occupy the territory of the Polish Republic – in which case we can count on regaining our independence. Or the war will end too late for us, which means after Soviet armies enter our territory and the Soviets occupy Poland as a whole or its parts – in which case one cannot expect the victorious Soviet armies to kindly give up [our lands] for our sake. This will be... the end. This truth is brutal and terrifying, but only silly children wave their hands and scream to ward off the truth. The plan of Polish policy needs to be based on that truth. We should do everything to save Poland's Independence, and we will not do that by deceiving ourselves.<sup>71</sup>

He wrote the above in November 1943, before the Big Three met in Tehran<sup>72</sup>, in his last pamphlet of “the year of bad omens”.

In early 1944 the Red Army, for the second time in the war, crossed Poland's eastern border. Mackiewicz commented on this as follows: “For us it is highly important that Soviets crossed our border on September 17 [1939] and January 4 [1944], both times with the intention to adjoin our lands to Russia. Then and today, they have not hidden their intentions.”<sup>73</sup> He repeated again and again that supposedly the issue of Poland's eastern border could have been settled in July 1941 instead of putting it off until later.

What, then, should the Polish government-in-exile do, according to the former editor-in-chief of *Ślowo*? The advice he offered was not realistic: “appeal to the opinion of the English nation”, intensify propaganda in the United States making use of the presidential campaign there, get the sympathy of European countries, and finally move part of the government to Poland. He also argued that the Polish government should clearly underline that “we cannot cooperate with the Soviets until we learn whether they consent to the liberation of Poland, or whether their aim is a new occupation.” According to Mackiewicz the government of Poland did not understand that the Soviet policy was a threat “not only [to] Poland's integrity but also her independence.”<sup>74</sup> Prime Minister Mikołajczyk, according to Mackiewicz, “tries [...] to bamboozle in a naïve way the public not only in exile but also in Poland” denying that Poland was to

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 247.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 248.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 271. Bold type after the original.

<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Mackiewicz hardly mentioned the Tehran Conference in his writings.

<sup>73</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *4 stycznia 1944 r.*, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Albo - albo. Broszury emigracyjne 1943-1944...*, p. 277.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 281.



lie in the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>75</sup> "Once Soviet armies occupy Poland, they will not leave it. Pacts, promises, treaties? We know something about all of these, just as the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians do."<sup>76</sup> He was also convinced that, though the West would demand that the Kremlin respect Poland's sovereignty, it would be futile. "Will America and England declare war on the Soviets to free Warsaw? I warn you now, they will not."<sup>77</sup>

He blamed Mikołajczyk for the fact that he "still believes that it is possible to cooperate with Soviet Russia [...], that the Soviets may stop at the Curzon line and leave the rest of Poland in peace."<sup>78</sup> In a pamphlet published in February 1944 he explained: "Who will be naïve enough to think that the Soviets, will invite the Polish government from London to govern from there? As a Wilnianin [citizen of Vilnius] I can hardly write calmly about an agreement which will give my motherland to the Russian state. But being a Wilnianin I say: even if you sell us, you will get no profit from this sale."<sup>79</sup> He was of the opinion that Russia's plans included making Poland (truncated in the east) its vassal. "[...] demanding the Oder border line apparently for Poland, Russia demands it for itself, because Russia knows that in such a geopolitical situation Poland will not be and cannot be a sovereign state."<sup>80</sup> Mackiewicz considered hopes that "Soviet Russia, once its armies take our lands, would wish to withdraw them without making Poland soviet" to be groundless fantasies. The realism Mikołajczyk's government propagated was for Cat "romantic if not a fantasy."<sup>81</sup>

So far it might seem that Mackiewicz continued to hope for a sympathetic stance on the part of the Anglo-Saxons. However, Churchill's speech of 22 February 1944 dispelled all illusions. The British prime minister made it publicly clear that he basically supported the territorial demands of the USSR regarding Polish lands. Mackiewicz emphasised that Poland, which had fought against Germany, was to give up half of its territory, while the territorial demands against Finland were much more moderate, even though Finland had fought on the side of Germany. Moreover, it was not to be expected that even Germany would have to give 50% of its territory to its neighbours. Poland, on the other hand, was not only to be forced to give up 50% of its territory, but it would also be subordinated to the Soviet Union. "[...] this is Russia's plan with the Oder border and Poland constituting a component part of the political Soviet whole. [...] In this plan there is no place for an independent Poland."<sup>82</sup> This is why he argued that the Polish government should step down to manifest its objection to the Allies' stance. In fact he added that the government should resign also because it did not enjoy any authority.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 287.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 289.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 290.

<sup>78</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Wilno*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie! Broszury emigracyjne 1944*, Kraków 2014, p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nowogródek*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>81</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Pińsk*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 57.

<sup>82</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *19 marca*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 76.

In his pamphlet of March 1944 he wrote: "We are interested in one and crucial issue: whether we can count on Great Britain and America that they **will prevent** Russia from taking Poland and establishing its permanent government there."<sup>83</sup> He was pessimistic. He did not think that this was the end of Britain's concessions to the USSR. "It shall rather be expected that there will be more concessions along this line as the Soviet offensive progresses, including recognition of a Polish Tito."<sup>84</sup> In his next pamphlet, published a month later, he warned against hoping that the Western powers would risk a war against the USSR for Poland's sake. Again he strongly criticised Mikołajczyk: "All his ideas are but a hope to reach agreement with Russia, but the good will of both parties is necessary and Russia clearly does not want to reach such an agreement; its goal is to create a Polish 17<sup>th</sup> Soviet republic, with no political autonomy."<sup>85</sup>

Mikołajczyk and General Sosnkowski were in conflict, and Mackiewicz obviously supported Sosnkowski, who before the war had been a close associate of Piłsudski. In his pamphlet of May 1944, Cat wrote: "as long as Sosnkowski heads the military, there is no question of Poland becoming an addition to Russia and losing its political independence. And that is why today the role of Sosnkowski is as crucial as the battle of Monte Cassino." Then in a more elevated style he wrote: "Today the issue is whether we will recreate the Targowica Confederation [1792], whether we agree to the 17<sup>th</sup> Soviet republic of Poland or whether we fight for our independence."<sup>86</sup> In the pamphlet published in June 1944, he relentlessly attacked Mikołajczyk's statement published in the *Manchester Guardian* in early June, which clearly indicated that Poland was seeking discussion with Moscow concerning a new Polish eastern border. This, according to Cat, was "an announcement of putting Polish land on sale."<sup>87</sup> This pamphlet also contained his short but daring sketch titled *Polska w polityce globalnej* [Poland in global politics] which ended with the despairing words: "This [political] downturn is the worst; Poland's cause has reached a total impasse. In God's mercy we trust that this situation will change and that some new, yet unpredictable, option will be available for Poland, and that the heroism of the Polish soldier and his brotherhood in arms with the English and Americans will open for Poland a way leading to life and not to death."<sup>88</sup>

His pamphlet published in September 1944 contained texts written when Prime Minister Mikołajczyk paid a visit to Moscow, during the Warsaw Uprising. In Moscow, on September 9, the head of the Polish government spoke about "the liberation of Polish lands" at a time when in the Majdanek camp [the NKVD retained the ready-

<sup>83</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Wielkanoc 1944*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 125; bold type after the original.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 126.

<sup>85</sup> Here, exceptionally, Mackiewicz uses the adjective *radziecka* for "Soviet", rather than the more derogatory *sowiecka*; S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Przed Majem*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 184.

<sup>86</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Sosnkowski*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 287.

<sup>87</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Czekamy*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 321.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 340.



made facility as a prison], Mackiewicz observed, already 2500 soldiers of the *Armia Krajowa* [the Home Army resistance] were imprisoned and Polish officers in Vilnius were arrested who “maybe are already in Kozelsk or will be transported to Smolensk.” From the Vilnius region, “in freight and cattle cars”, thousands of Poles were being moved to the east. “The cleansing of Poland of the Polish element, which began in 1939, continues.”<sup>89</sup> Paraphrasing Admiral Nelson's words, he wrote: “Our defeat is so huge that the word defeat is absolutely inadequate. Never, never ever has the Polish nation faced such a horrific national tragedy.”<sup>90</sup> Mackiewicz kept analysing and commenting upon the politics and propaganda of the Kremlin and called members of the PKWN [Polish Committee of National Liberation] in Lublin “Soviet agents”. With a sense of powerlessness, he once again pointed out that even the allies of Germany would await a better fate (in terms of territorial losses) than Poland.<sup>91</sup>

He fiercely criticised Mikołajczyk (“a catastrophic persona in Poland's history”<sup>92</sup>) for his talks with the PKWN in Moscow, but not for his visit to Moscow itself. He explained that this visit was needed as Poland was suffering

the most horrible defeat the Polish nation ever experienced in its history. This needs to be understood and we need to seek rescue. At this moment there is no other policy and cannot be. Everything else is not policy but stupid phrases stupefying our nation. But seeking rescue does not mean to actively assist the Soviets in their liquidation of Poland's freedom as Mr. Mikołajczyk did in Moscow.<sup>93</sup>

In Cat's opinion, Mikołajczyk's engagement in discussion with members of the PKWN (at the former Polish embassy building now occupied by the PKWN, and only as a guest) was his indirect acknowledgement that there was also another Polish government. Furthermore, this was paving the way for other countries to recognise the PKWN, and simply the Sovietisation of the Polish Republic, since the Kremlin could argue: “Poland does exist, it will be strong, it will even be given German territories, but its government will be ‘democratic’ and ‘befriended with Soviet Russia’.” What is more, “in Warsaw a Bierut or another [member of] the NKWD will perform his administrative duties and it will not be of any significance if the seal he uses will be one with the hammer and sickle or the white eagle with or without a crown.”<sup>94</sup> Thus the conclusion is that Stalin agreed to Mikołajczyk's visit only to “set the machinery of the Committee of National Liberation [PKWN] in motion in the international arena.”<sup>95</sup> At the same time the Kremlin “wants it to appear to others that both Poles in exile and those in Poland are Poles and they are only quarrelling about the Constitution, that there is merely a dispute between those two Polish camps.”<sup>96</sup>

<sup>89</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Rozkaz*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 352.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 354.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 357.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 358.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 358-359.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 360-361.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 362.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 371.

For Cat, the Polish cause was lost. "The reality is black, the future even blacker" he wrote in October 1944<sup>97</sup> and recalled the warnings he had been publishing in his pamphlets for the past two years. He had no more illusions about the British policy. "In this system there is no other place for Poland but within the Russian political system."<sup>98</sup> He adhered to his opinion that giving up the eastern Polish provinces to Russia "will not save the rest of Poland. On the contrary, it will speed up its agony. This will not be the amputation of hands and legs to keep the body alive, but the cutting of this body into two halves after which death is unavoidable." The more so as "neither in Moscow nor here in London does anyone offer any guarantees of our independence in exchange for acceptance of the partition of Poland."<sup>99</sup> He also pointed out what kind of order the NKWD had begun introducing in Poland.<sup>100</sup>

With reluctance he wrote about the plans to move Poland to the west (referring to a "motherland on wheels"<sup>101</sup>). He argued that the granting to Poland of lands in the west and north would bind Poland with the USSR more strongly.

Poles – having received huge German territories for which Germans will obviously reach out as soon as they recover from their defeat – will have to go to Moscow to ask for help as they will not be able to defend these territories alone. Acceptance of these territories means voluntary incapacitation, a voluntary consent to be Russia's vassal state for many centuries to come.<sup>102</sup>

This would be the end of the Polish–Russian conflict, which had begun in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and never ended, and as Mackiewicz wrote: "in Europe there is no other example of an antagonism so long-lasting and fierce."<sup>103</sup>

Cat-Mackiewicz welcomed the government led by Tomasz Arciszewski: "the first Polish government-in-exile in London we do not have to be ashamed of"<sup>104</sup>, even though the new prime minister was a socialist. At the time, indeed, Mackiewicz considered an agreement with the Kremlin possible. Immediately he added: "But today we are told: sign your consent to Poland's partition and you will remain under Soviet occupation with no guarantees given by anyone. This is neither a proposal nor an agreement, and can only be called the reading of our death sentence. Those who are sentenced to death are not, however, required to sign the sentence themselves."<sup>105</sup> In the new situation "the Oder [the new western border of Poland] is but a formula

<sup>97</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Październik 1944*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 410.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 414.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 424.

<sup>100</sup> "Vilnius troops of the Home Army helped Soviet armies to gain control over Vilnius from the Germans. Nevertheless, they were arrested and, deported, and their current fate is not known." *Ibidem*, p. 426.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 428.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 430.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 433.

<sup>104</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nowy rząd*, London 1944, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Łady Makbet myje ręce. Broszury emigracyjne 1944-1946*, Kraków 2014, p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.



for Russia to swallow up Poland and **at this moment** it cannot be anything else."<sup>106</sup> The efforts of former prime minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk, who was fully determined to seek an agreement with Moscow and the Polish communists, Mackiewicz called treacherous.<sup>107</sup> With bitter irony he reconstructed the Kremlin's expectations towards the Poles: "relinquish your Vilnius and Navahroudak provinces and parts of Białystok, Polesie, Volyn, Tarnopol and Stanisławów provinces; recognise the PKWN and then the Oder will be adjoined to the 17<sup>th</sup> Soviet republic."<sup>108</sup>

In his pamphlet published in February 1945, Cat compared the German Nazis to the Bolsheviks, underlining that in terms of their policies on Poland, the Bolsheviks had a greater potential. As much as "the German occupation united the nation" and "there were not betrayers and traitors in our society in the time of the Germans", the situation looked totally different in the case of the Soviet aggressor. "Part [of society] will undoubtedly be disoriented by Soviet agents like Bierut."<sup>109</sup> Mikołajczyk was willing to join the government dominated by communists, and Mackiewicz judged his calculations to be "hyper naïve"<sup>110</sup>; he spared Mikołajczyk no harsh words.<sup>111</sup>

The Yalta Conference was seen by Mackiewicz as a judicial sentence, and the title of his next pamphlet left no doubt: *Niewola krymska* [Crimean enslavement].<sup>112</sup> The communiqué issued after the conference of the three leaders was, according to Cat, "a consent of Great Britain and the United States to annihilate Poland's independence and these two countries' cooperation in the process of Poland's annexation by Russia."<sup>113</sup> In the case of Great Britain it meant the abandonment of its Polish ally. Then the establishment of a new government in Poland would only be "a legalisation of Russia's partition of Poland by Poles."<sup>114</sup> Mackiewicz had no doubt that: "the Polish cause [...] has touched the bottom of the greatest disaster we have ever experienced in our history"<sup>115</sup>, because the Yalta Conference "simply means Poland's incorporation into Russia."<sup>116</sup> In his pamphlet published immediately before the Reich signed the Act of Unconditional Surrender, he was able to refer to reports about a group of leaders of the Polish Underground State having been arrested by the NKVD (the Russian secret police). He did not exclude the worst: "maybe [...] we will hear on the radio the voice of Mr. Jankowski or Mr. Pużak accusing themselves of having been Gestapo

<sup>106</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Jedźmy: nikt nie woła*, London 1945, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Lady Makbet myje ręce...*, p. 41 (bold type after the original). This pamphlet was published in January 1945.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>109</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Mikołaj, Mikołaj Mikołajewicz, Mikołajczyk*, London 1945, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Lady Makbet myje ręce...*, p. 64 and 65.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>111</sup> "If our government worked in a situation normal for an independent country, it would surely charge Mikołajczyk with High Treason." *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>112</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Niewola krymska*, London 1945, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Lady Makbet myje ręce...*, pp. 83-113.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 96.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 110.

spies the whole time. Because it is not true that there might be a man whose body would be immune to the modern ways of annihilating one's nervous resilience used in the torture halls of Lefortovo and Sukhanovka prisons."<sup>117</sup>

Reading Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz's journalistic writings from 1941–1945 gives one a feeling of bitterness. In the conditions of the Second World War, when relations between the great powers were decisive, the Polish cause was in a position from which there was no way out. Mackiewicz, who considered himself to be a painfully sober realist, and wrote articles which were generally pessimistic, for a long time refused to accept this. Some of his criticism, especially that against General Sikorski and the Polish–Soviet Agreement of 30 July 1941, sounds as unconvincing today as it did when it was published. A reader familiar with Cat's frantically anti-British post-war journalism will be surprised for how long he somewhat naïvely counted on the loyal stance of London towards its Polish ally.

But Mackiewicz, who posed as an advocate of *Realpolitik*, was also a man of emotions, and one with a strong attachment to the Polish eastern lands, primarily the Vilnius region which was his homeland. To understand the strength of this attachment, one should carefully read two excerpts from his pamphlets. In the autumn of 1944 he wrote: "We, the natives of the lands given up, fulfilled all our duties to the Polish state in the past, from the battle of Grunwald [Tannenberg] to Monte Cassino. We have given Poland more than she has given us. [...] If today we are a concession to Moscow, a trade deal for other territorial acquisitions, then we respond saying: treason and traitors."<sup>118</sup> The second quotation, from 1943, explains why he considered Poland's "eastern lands" to be "our motherland".

We, Poles from the eastern lands, adjoined our country to Poland in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. We shared its fortunes and misfortunes. For generations we fought for Poland's unity, we prayed for its unity and we loved all of Poland. But today we will not let anybody divide Poland into some better and worse lands, more and less profitable, to save some, sacrifice others, and exchange some! To the mass of people, our land is an object of worship, love and attachment and not goods to be exchanged. We are not nomads. We have obligations to this country from the Dźwina [Daugava] River to the Carpathian mountains and not to any other country!<sup>119</sup>

These words can be seen as the 'key' to Mackiewicz,<sup>120</sup> explaining the intentions behind his writings during the Second World War.

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<sup>117</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), "*Świstek papieru*", London 1945, reprint in: S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Lady Makbet myje ręce...*, p. 131.

<sup>118</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *Nie!...*, p. 435.

<sup>119</sup> S. Mackiewicz (Cat), *4 stycznia 1944 r....*, pp. 278-279.

<sup>120</sup> *Klucz do Piłsudskiego* [The key to Piłsudski] is the title of one of S. Mackiewicz's books (London 1943).



## ABSTRACT

*Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz was among the best known Polish political journalists. A conservative, monarchist and supporter of Józef Piłsudski, in the interwar period he sided with a small group of advocates of cooperation with Germany against the Soviet Union. During the Second World War he fiercely criticised the governments of Władysław Sikorski and Stanisław Mikołajczyk, especially their policy towards the USSR, accusing them of gullibility and underestimation of the Soviet threat, though he also initially deluded himself that an unyielding policy on the issue of Poland's eastern border could be successful. Over time the tone of his journalism became explicitly pessimistic. Mackiewicz posed as a realist, but he was largely guided by emotions, particularly by his attachment to his homeland, areas which the USSR demanded from Poland.*