

Doctoral student - Paweł Bielicki

Dissertation title – The Middle East from the perspective of Polish politicians and publicists in exile in London in 1945-1956.

Dissertation supervisor - Prof. Tadeusz Wolsza, PhD

Summary

Subject and objective of the study

The basic objective of the scientific evaluation of the opinions of Polish elites in exile regarding the role of the Middle East in 1945-1956, which has not been explored previously, will be to show that Polish postwar politicians in exile, contrary to popular opinions, expressed keen interest in not only the situation in Poland under the communist yoke, but also in other parts of the globe. One of such areas was the Middle East. Just after the end of World War II, the “Polish London” noticed that every strengthening of the Soviet Union in the international arena and weakening of the Western influences there would result in deterioration of the situation in Poland and other countries behind the Iron Curtain, pushed into the Soviet sphere of influence. Therefore, some of the closely observed topics included the events in Persia, when in 1946, the United States of America and Great Britain led to withdrawal of the Soviet forces, stationing in that country since 1941, and in Egypt, where after the military coup in 1952 and the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal in 1954, the power was taken over by the prime minister and later president of the country - Gamal Abdel Nasser, who in the face of the insufficient Western support in reforming his country, established relations with Moscow. Another objective of the study will be to present opinions and very accurate assessments of activity of various key foreign policy players, presented by the main actors of political and journalistic discussions taking place in exile, who in a very competent, comprehensive and reliable way analyzed the genesis and course of the far-reaching consequences in the Middle East. Another purpose of the dissertation is evaluation of the attempt, advocated by the Polish elites in exiles, to find the place of Poland and Polish communities in the West and in the country, surrounded by the geopolitical strategy of the world’s superpowers during the first decade of the postwar period, balancing their state interests.

Description of research methods

An analysis of written sources, which I used to develop my dissertation, constituted the main research method; it consisted in organization and specified interpretation of contents featured in them. Reviewing of the contents of documents and press reports described in this study, which topics were important for the periodicals released in that period and place,

constitutes an extensive and thematically diverse source of the study. The internal layout of the dissertation specifies the key criterion, which acceptance is legitimized by the coherence of the described subject. The dissertation consists of three thematic chapters, which feature a determinant indicating a wide range of activities undertaken by the Polish citizens living in exile. According to the assumption, it should highlight the interdisciplinarity of topics considered as objects of interest for the Polish politicians in exile.

The source database, used in the dissertation, can be divided into three groups. The first one applies to the documents collected in London. It includes records that come from the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland in exile, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of National Defense, the National Council, the Act of the Polish Embassy to the Holy See, the “Reduta” Eastern Institute, the Organizational Council of Poles from Abroad (Światpol), the Polish National Council in Exile in Palestine, 1941-1950, the Ministry of Information and Documentation, the Civilian Chancellery and Military Office of the President of the Republic of Poland, the Provisional Council of National Unity and private personal collections of Polish activists living in exile. Some of the records of the Polish Library in London include lectures given by sovietologist Ryszard Wraga and a speech made by Kazimierz Sosnkowski. Other sources used in the study include documentation in the collection of the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust, containing the correspondence of Adam Ciołkosz. In addition, archive searches were conducted in the Józef Piłsudski Institute in London, utilizing for the purpose of research the private collection of Gen. Sosnkowski. Another significant source used in the study was the Archive of New Records containing Hoover Archives and the Register of the Stanisław Mikołajczyk Papers. A significant contribution to the dissertation was made by numerous publications represented primarily by periodicals published in exile, where publicists and politicians featured their comments regarding the situation in the Middle East in the scope of politics, economy and social affairs. The third group of sources presented in the dissertation is the source literature, which is represented by contemporary researchers involved in migration issues.

Conclusions of studies

In final conclusions, it was reasonable to refer to several issues. Considering the lasting impact of the agreements of the Yalta Conference on the division of Europe to the capitalist and communist blocks, moving Poland to the Soviet sphere of influence, any activities of politicians, publicists and other activists in exile, frequently not understanding the significance of the Middle East in global policy, referred to describing the fate of Poland and

Poles in the country and abroad that was initiated by the course and result of the war that had just ended. All of them warned the Western countries to avoid making in relation to the Middle East similar mistakes as toward Eastern Europe in 1943 - 1945. Politicians in exile realized that the Western expansionary colonization of this area serves as a perfect field of expansion for the Soviet Union along with a possibility of weakening the continental powers – the United States of America, Great Britain and – to a lesser extent - Turkey. It was also rightly emphasized – although insufficiently – that the destiny of Poland and East-Central Europe depends on the result of activities in the Middle East. In the beginning of the 1950s, the Polish politicians in exile became more convinced of the progressing fall of the existing colonial system and the increasing role of the Middle East in the future international processes. Politicians and publicists of the “Polish London” noticed the liberating potential of the Middle East countries and their desire to play a more independent role at the stage of bilateral and multilateral political and economic relations between states. Despite several different opinions, a belief that was prevalent in London was that dominance of the Western presence in the Arab countries, despite certain economic and political benefits, cannot produce any good results in the long term, but only contribute to intensification of propaganda activities of the Soviet Union, which taking advantage of bad economic and social conditions in the Middle East countries, was spreading there its political ideas, replacing with them the Western influence. We should remember that since Stalin’s death until 1956, the dominating feeling in the Polish émigré community was skepticism regarding an imminent outbreak of a new world war, which was consolidated after the Polish October and the Suez Crisis. Due to this reason, Polish émigré communities became convinced that that the Middle East would become a decisive place of important military events in the future, particularly in the face of the active presence of the USSR in the Arab world. Representatives of the Polish government and publicists in exile realized too late that the purpose of activities of the West in the Middle East is only to promote their own political interests, primarily economic, and protection of this region against Soviet communism. This dissertation addresses the subject that was not previously of particular interest to native researchers and will contribute to further, more extensive studies in the field of activity of the Polish postwar politicians in exile.