

INVESTIGATOR PERSECUTED

In June 2017, the writer and journalist Tomasz Piątek also contributing journalist for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, having carried out an extensive journalistic investigation, published a book “Macierewicz and his Secrets”. In this book, he described relations of the national defence minister with the Russian mafia, services and organs of the propaganda. The most frequently mentioned names in this book are: Robert Lusnia, Jacek Kotas and Alfonse D’Amato, which all lead to the name of the Russian gangster – Semion Mogilevich.

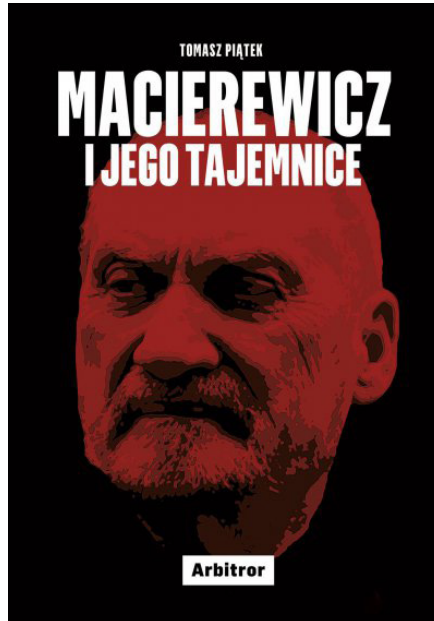
It has been four months since the publication of this book. End of October, RSF and the French channel TV-5-Monde, nominated Tomasz Piątek for the prestige award of Freedom of Press 2017. Since the publication, this journalist has become the object of threats, brutal verbal attacks by the pro-Polish government media, as the award jury states. What problems does this book uncover and why did it not cause political earthquake?

Bestseller

What is the conclusion of your book? asks Piątek, Kami Sikora from the WP portal. Mogilevich is close to Vladimir Putin and Russian (formerly Soviet) military intelligence GRU. People connected with Mogilevich, for years, appeared in Macierewicz’s company and it is difficult to believe that the minister was unaware of this, explains the author. What was presented in the book, is a ‘deal’. What deal? A very consistent, logical deal where the insiders support one another beyond the borders, and for a long time.

160 thousand books have been sold. This book will shake up the PiS government? Enquired WP journalist, but Piątek replied with this question: ‘Imagine, that any minister of the defence in the West, breaks off a long standing agreement for the supply of military helicopters and hands

the contract over to the competitor, with the support of the lobbyist whom he had met couple of days before?’ What would be the reaction from the government? Such minister would have been sacked immediately. This incident happened in June



Tomasz Piątek: *Macierewicz and his Secrets*, Arbitror, 2017

2016. The chief of the Ministry for the Defence is still holding his post. The forthcoming government shake up, as reported by the media, will not affect him.

Antoni reacts

Piątek, however, managed to achieve something. Minister Macierewicz was furious when he found out that the book was published. And because the management of PiS demanded a reaction from the chief of the Defence, Macierewicz filed a report to the National Prosecution. The report formulated accusations to the effect that: the author of the book used violence or threat against a public official with the purpose of perverting public official’s duties and of openly insulting or demeaning the Constitutional Organ of the Republic of Poland. In summary, Piątek may face three years of imprison-

ment. On the 27th June, vice-chief of the Defence, Michał Dworczyk explained the decision of his boss in a press briefing: ‘Piątek’s publication is entirely composed of lies and false accusations’.

Besides this, the book provoked ‘an attack by the PO deputies’. The person in possession of government and military secrets, particularly those relating to Poland’s operations in NATO, should be beyond any suspicion of links with gangsters or agents of foreign intelligence (said the spokesman for the PO party, Jan Grabiec) and Prime Minister Szydło, should at least send the chief of the Defence on leave until he makes an exhaustive explanations in this matter (said Marcin Kierwiński, MP). On the 11th July, the spokeswoman of PK announced, that the report to the Prosecution by Minister Macierewicz will be taken care of by the Department for Military Affairs of PK. ‘If they want to sue Piątek, this means they were disturbed’, said one of the PR experts working for the government.

Death of investigative journalism?

The people in politics have no doubt that a lot more is at stake. Piątek says that much of his book’s contents already appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and yet, Macierewicz had not sued GW. This present accusation by Macierewicz seems to Piątek absurd – fortified by the fact that as he says to *Gazeta*, ‘I am a civilian’. Polish section of Amnesty International sounds an alarm that it is not clear if and what evidence is in the prosecution’s hands in support of the accusations. The organisation does not exclude that the matter is politically motivated in response to Piątek’s work as investigative journalist.

In the light of international obligations, Poland must guarantee journalists, free reporting on public affairs, information to public opinion

and passing of information and ideas in the way free from intimidation, persecution or threats. However, no law guarantees that the results of investigative journalism, will be treated adequately to the weight of their importance. To this end, something has gone wrong in the world. Enough to bring out the case of reporter David Cay Johnston, who after 30 years of investigating the works of business man Donald Trump, in 2016 published a bestseller, "The Making of Donald Trump". In this book, he exposed all scandals and legal troubles of the presidential candidate. In his career, as he admitted, he brought many politicians before justice and even to prison, but he had never been threatened with imprisonment himself.

The president, did not fulfil his threats, but the book did not harm his career. We are at the time of the post truth, propaganda and media muzzling and the indicator of the level of threats of the media is the highest in history, as it is reported by the organisation Reporters Without Frontiers. The state of the freedom of the press, radio and television and the internet, is worsening mainly in the leading democratic countries.

The Offensive

The journalists of the right wing media, seem to read the mind of the chief of the Defence. Publicist Rafał Ziemkiewicz, in June, described Piatek as known for his long lasting heroin addiction which completely messed up his brain. Ziemkiewicz ac-

cuses GW of using the mental condition of Piatek to make him the author of investigation and this way, to indemnify itself for publishing the reports. Bartłomiej Misiewicz, then Macierewicz's co-operand, 'discloses' on Twitter that Tomasz Piatek, who writes lies for GW about the chief of the Defence, since 1997 has been addicted to heroin and alcohol, 'yes, I am an alcoholic and a drug abuser, but thank God, free from addictions for 3 years. It happens that in order to be clean, one must also be honest', answers publicly Tomasz Piatek.

Attempts to discredit Piatek are not very successful, but ideas to damage his publication are plentiful. In August, the daily newspaper "Gazeta Polska" accused him of lacking evidence to support his thesis. Editor-in-chief, Tomasz Sakiewicz in all interviews with the media emphasises that the book is written with very bad intentions in mind and contains a thesis that is completely untrue and which cannot be proven. In the beginning of September, a Polish businessman Robert Szustkowski for a similar reason (and also for being mentioned) files a suit for the protection of personal interests against the author himself and the Arbitor Publishing House. Subsequent attacks on the author take place. "Piatek's political writing is similar to that of Erich von Däniken, where conclusions are often drawn on the basis of individual photographs, and time and space are irrelevant" – states Dominic Smyrgala with disdain in "Do Rzeczy" (a political analyst who in August is promoted to the role of the Head of the Political Cabinet of the Ministry of Defense). In the "Sieć Prawdy" (Network of Truth) Dr. Piotr Gontarczyk proclaims: this is a classic example of graphomania and the works of a crook, sucked out of a dirty finger, which is the basis of ("his". ed.) investigative journalism. The Polonia Christian website accuses Piatek of using the Polish language on a level of a 12-year-old child. Paweł Reszka of "Newsweek" takes the book more seriously. "Although the

MAIN CHARACTERS IN TOMASZ PIĄTEK'S BOOK THAT CONNECT MINISTER MACIEREWICZ TO THE RUSSIAN MAFIA AND SERVICES.

Alfonse Marcello D'Amato – ally of Macierewicz in the US, former senator, lobbyist today, does business with Kremlin. In various ways associated with the Russian Solncewo mafia responsible for financial embezzlement and blackmailing politicians and the GRU (Russian intelligence). Park Strategies, D'Amato's company, signed a consulting contract with the Polish defense company PGZ and in July supported amongst others, the NATO summit in Warsaw. MON (Ministry of Defence) denies any official links between Macierewicz and D'Amato.

Jacek Kotas – in the years 2002-2016 member of the Radius Group, whose owner – businessman Robert Sz. is associated with the Solncewo mafia. When Kotas was the president of the Military Housing Agency, many irregularities in the disposal of real estate took place. In 2007, Macierewicz gave Kotas access to secret documents of the Polish army.

Robert Szustkowski – a Pole with Swiss citizenship, a representative of the Gambia in Russia (he was involved in bringing weapons to this country from Russia), controls the Radius Group, in 1995 a representative of the Montaz-SpecBank in Poland, a financial off-shoot of the Solncewo mafia.

Robert Lusnia (TW "Nonparel") – a longtime political and business associate of Macierewicz, connected to the GRU network in Poland. In 2006, ruled by the Supreme Court to be an SB (Secret Services) employee. Even so, until 2010 Lusnia remains a member of Macierewicz's party (Catholic-Nationalist Movement), also within its Board of Directors.

Edmund Janniger – a collaborator of both Senator D'Amato and Antoni Macierewicz. All three belonged to the same organisation – Friends of Poland, chaired by D'Amato and Macierewicz. After a publication in Gazeta Wyborcza, the organisation's website disappeared from the Internet. Despite his young age (20 years old) he worked for the Ministry of Defense as a "Special Representative for International Communications Strategy". When the matter was publicised, he was sacked in order to return to the Ministry through the back door.

book is overloaded with insignificant detail and by force supports the thesis that Macierewicz is a demon associated with GRU, but turning the discussion on it into mockery would be a mistake. The book contains too many pieces of disturbing information and asks too many relevant questions in order to do so.

Journalists also reach out for conspiracy theories. Wojciech Biedroń in the weekly "Nets of Truth" states that several days after Piatek's book first appeared in bookstores, several influential foreign media publications were full of texts about the alleged pro-russian leanings of Minister Macierewicz. He sees in this a coordinated international information campaign aiming to give a political blow to Poland and its government. Why? Because Poland is now becoming a key country within the eastern flank of NATO, the aim is both: Polish security (in the form of the head of the Ministry of Defense) as well as the cohesion of the North Atlantic Alliance. Similar reflections are featured in "Do Rzeczy" ("To the Point") by Dominik Smyrgała, who

sees in Piatek's methods a similarity to the worst propaganda campaigns carried out in the past by communist services.

Allies

The periodicals refuse to publish Piatek's explanations and rectifications. Therefore, he plans to sue "Do Rzeczy" and its editor Wojciech Wybranowski, "Sieci Prawdy", "Gazeta Polska" and Deputy Minister Michal Dworzczyk to boot. He responds to Reszka in an open letter, in the "Gazeta Wyborcza" claiming that the latter's article is unreliable and contains unauthorized statements. In legal battles he is supported by lawyers, Arbitror and the editorial staff of "Gazeta Wyborcza".

In July, up to ten international journalistic organisations, headed by the RFS, issue a joint appeal to Minister Macierewicz to withdraw from legal action against Tomasz Piątek. According to Steven M. Ellis of IPI, Macierewicz uses his position to stifle any criticism aimed at him. Solidarity with Piatek is also declared by the Journalistic Society. Its chairman – Seweryn Blumsztajn writes in an open letter: the current state

machine is undertaking actions against you – not against your book and the facts or hypotheses contained within. From 22 August in the Polish section of the AI, one can sign a petition to Zbigniew Ziobro – so far (till the end of October) 14 567 people have responded. Mr Macierewicz, by reporting on me to the Prosecutor's Office is indirectly threatening all journalists: Do not dabble in my Russian connections as you may be accused of terrorism or a coup d'etat, you can be dragged before a military prosecutor. This shows that the main purpose of his actions is to intimidate journalists and citizens so they do not deal with the matter. We are faced with the elementary freedom of speech issue here- that is how Piatek commented on the powers that be. He is certain of one thing -the integrity of his investigations.

**Monika Piotrowska-Marchewa
Dorota Wojciechowska-Żuk**

(Sources: tvn24.pl, TVP.info; polska-times.pl, wirtualnemedi.pl; pch24.pl; dorzeczy.pl; wsieciprawdy.pl; gazetapolska.pl; wyborcza.pl; bankier.pl)