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CHALLENGING THE REALITY – JAMES MACCRACKEN AS A LECTURER AT THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY (1946–1948)¹

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James MacCracken, Jagiellonian University, English Department, The Kosciuszko Foundation, Steven Mizwa

My opening encounter with the Polish academic world came when the first student I met said to me: “Thank God you have come. We need help so desperately”. And when I met the professor who headed the English department at the University, he made the same remark. Then he added: “I have five hundred students enrolling in the English Department and I was just about to give an examination to omit those who were least qualified. Now that you have come to help us, we can accept them all”. And if there had not been the endless rewards for my time and effort that were still later to follow, that single remark would have been sufficient recompense for my efforts (MacCracken 1948: 3).

The above quotation illustrates the miserable situation of English studies in Poland right after the end of the Second World War. The willingness of the Poles to learn English grew significantly during the war compared with before 1939. Among the reasons was the fact that they placed their hopes to regain independence in the Western allies, not the Soviet Union. A lot of families had relatives and friends who had stayed in Great Britain or the USA after the war

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with no intention to return. Many people, in defiance of the brutal Sovietization of Poland, remembered that London was home to the Polish government in exile. The very tense political situation among the allies after the defeat of the Nazi Germany and the division of the world into spheres of influence placed Poland on the side of the Communist countries. On the other hand, with the increased significance of the USA as a superpower, at least in the first years, a change of the situation was expected as a result of a new conflict, this time between the victors. That might have accounted for the popularity English – not Russian – enjoyed; the latter was identified with the changes in Poland and the speedy Communization. Since French and German had traditionally been the second language of choice among the Polish elites and educated communities, it would have been intriguing to speculate why this swift and rather forward looking change to English took place. Of course, the question, how many of those who signalled their interest in English achieved any degree of competence in that language, it is an open issue. Nevertheless, the numbers of students of English studies in post-1945 Poland grew significantly in all Polish universities. The problem was, however, that Poland lacked specialists in English and people with a sufficient command of the language. Hence the enthusiasm MacCracken's arrival met with, which he recalled so fondly after returning to the USA.

The aim of this article is to take a look at the two years of James MacCracken's work at the Jagiellonian University in the academic years 1946/1947 and 1947/1948. I would like to answer the questions: why were they crucial for English studies in Krakow and how did both sides (individual students and professors as well as the MacCracken himself) contribute from this short period. Last but not least, referring to the main title: why was MacCracken's being in Krakow a form of challenging the reality in the post-War Poland.

The main source I used are the letters he had used to send from Poland to the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York – of course, combined with other archive materials which have survived in Poland and the USA. MacCracken's letters alone are a valuable source not used by researchers to date. They have been very well preserved in the Archive of the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York. Obviously, they show Poland, Cracow, the University, and particularly its English Department, through the eyes of a person from the outside – a young idealist, who, led by the example of his own father – Henry Noble MacCracken, president of the Board of the Kosciuszko Foundation (Daniels 1994) – wanted to be one of the ambassadors of the Polish-American intellectual collaboration. What is more, perhaps through coming to Poland young MacCracken tried to confront his father's tales with his own experience; he might also have wanted

to face a challenge. In this paper I am interested in the image of the university environment as seen in MacCracken's letters. What intrigued, interested and scared him in the country so different ideologically from the USA that Poland was in the late 1940s? On the other hand, it will be interesting to find out why, although MacCracken had planned to spend only one academic year in Cracow, he decided to stay a year longer. Perhaps the early Communist Poland was not as alien and dangerous for the foreigners, as we sometimes tend to think.

The English studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow after the war

In 1945 the staffing situation at the Jagiellonian University, just like at other Polish universities, was far from satisfactory (Dybiec 2000: 184–191). The fact that many scholars had died during the war, left Cracow or indeed Poland, the huge destruction of lecture rooms and the equipment and the lack of space all were only too common. The English studies in Cracow were by no means an exception compared with other faculties (AUJ WHm 71, WHm 72, WHm 73, S III 76). The lack of teaching resources needs to be addressed in the context of the wholesale German theft of university resources. What is more, the German authorities arrested the majority of university of professors who were then sent to concentration camps where many perished. So the starting point of this article is surely the trauma of the loss of the intellectual community of Krakow. Academics from Wilno and Lwów were then directed to Krakow and sought employment in the newly opened university.

When, after resuming the classes, it seemed that the situation was about to stabilize, on 1 June 1945 Professor Roman Dyboski, the creator and head of the English Department died suddenly of a heart attack. For a while he was substituted by Doctor Juliusz Krzyżanowski, a former secondary school teacher. However, the latter moved to the University of Wrocław in November 1945 to establish English studies there (Mroczkowski 1964: 343–344; Mazur 2011: 13–14). In the autumn 1945 the mainstay of the English Department in Cracow was Maria Laskowska². As she wrote in her first post-war letter to Steven Mizwa in the autumn of 1945,

² According to a list of 22 Oct 1945 the English Department included: Doctor Juliusz Krzyżanowski holding the post of a professor, Maria Laskowska – senior assistant, and volunteer assistants: Helena Bilińska, Ludwik Oswald Chlamtatsch, Andrzej Iżycki (librarian), Grzegorz Sinko, Marta Słupińska, Maria Buyno, Jan Stanisławski, Przemysław Mroczkowski, Maria Stablewska. The janitor was Stanisław Brud. Bilińska after a few months left for the USA, and Chlamtatsch moved to Wrocław. Maria Buyno gave up work on 1 March 1946. That is why in his letter of 24 February 1946 Professor Tarnawski suggested assigning Claire Grece-Dąbrowska to the Department of English studies. Dąbrowska had been involved in clandestine English classes during the German occupation. See: AUJ, WHm70.

“At the present moment we have no professor, no competent assistants, no books, and no furniture” (KF XXII.35 [1]). There were attempts to recruit Professor Władysław Tarnawski who had arrived from Lviv, the only surviving prewar Polish professor of English. He did start lectures in November 1946, but he was a sickly elderly man and he did not possess his predecessor’s organizational or oratorical skills. However, he enjoyed a great respect among academics as the prewar founder of the English studies in Lviv, and also Poland’s best specialist in and translator of Shakespeare (Kleczkowski 1948: 28; Puđełocki 2004, 2005).

Though Tarnawski became the official head of the English studies, it was not he who was their driving spirit. Besides Maria Laskowska it was Doctor Krystyna Nedelković née Michalik, Professor Dyboski’s prewar assistant, who returned in 1945 from forced emigration to Yugoslavia. In the letter of 17 January 1946 she wrote to Steven Mizwa, executive director of the Kosciuszko Foundation, her long-term acquaintance, about the difficult situation of the English studies at the Jagiellonian University:

[...] I didn’t find Prof. Dyboski any more. No need to tell you that this has been one of the greatest personal losses to me, to all of us, who knew him and had the privilege of working with him. His place is taken now by Prof. Tarnawski, formerly of Lwów, but the English Department will never forget our Prof. Dyboski. The English Department has now ten times as many students as in 1939, and so the teaching staff is correspondingly larger. I am second lecturer, the first is Mr. Stanisławski, whom you remember perhaps. Miss Laskowska is the most efficient assistant we ever had, we also have some students assistants and a librarian. Everybody is doing his or her best, in spite of all sorts of difficulties. But we have no books, that is our greatest handicap at present (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [2]).

Apart from Laskowska and Nedelković the teaching staff was small. A man of great authority was Jan Stanisławski – the best author of Polish-English dictionaries, who had taught English at the Jagiellonian University since 1928³. Another teacher was the Polish count, translator, collector, diplomat and poet Franciszek Ksawery Pusłowski⁴; later the staff was joined by Claire Grece-Dąbrowska, an Englishwoman, graduate of the University of Durham. Until Professor Tarnawski arrived, the one officially in charge of the English Department was Professor Adam Kleczkowski⁵. In the academic year 1945/46 the so-called auxiliary staff of the English Department were: 1) junior lecturers: K. Nedelković, J. Stanisławski, 2) senior lecturer – M. Laskowska, 3) junior assistant – K. Nedelković, 4) volunteer

³ More about Stanisławski in: Podhajecka 2016: 337–340.

⁴ More about Pusłowski in: Lednicki 1967: 114–142.

⁵ More about him in: AUJ, S II 619.

lecturers: Marta Ślupieńska, Przemysław Mroczkowski, Maria Stablewska, Maria Buyno, Claire Grece-Dąbrowska, and librarians Andrzej Iżycki and Grzegorz Sinko (AUJ, WHm70)⁶. The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities Professor Jan Dąbrowski wrote on 18 February 1946, backing up Mroczkowski's application for a grant abroad to the Polish Ministry of Education: "We are currently experiencing an acute shortage of educated Anglicists, especially professors of English studies. Education of academics in that field is then a very urgent matter (AUJ, WHm70)"⁷.

Mroczkowski, who was doing his PhD under Professor Tarnawski's supervision, was employed at the university only from October 1945 until March 1946. At the same time he was a lecturer at the Mining Academy in Cracow and a teacher at the local secondary schools. Subsequently he went to London and later, thanks to the support of the Kosciuszko Foundation, to the American University of Notre Dame, Indiana (KFA, KF XXXII.32; KFML, 1947, Vol. 1, No. 5. P. 2)⁷.

Quite apart from staffing problems, also the teaching conditions left a lot to be desired. The English and Romance languages departments were both located at 8, Piłsudskiego (since 1948 Manifestu Lipcowego) Street on the second floor. They housed only one lecture hall, a reading-room, a library, a storeroom with a studio and a junior staff room (AUJ, AWHm70, S III 76). The problems were reported to Steven Mizwa, Professor Dyboski's longtime friend, and not without reason. The Kosciuszko Foundation had significantly contributed to supporting the English Department and the whole University in the interwar period. Founded in 1925 the Foundation was instrumental in Polish-American exchange programs for scholars and graduates, as well as with aid for the Poles during WW2 (Dopierała 1992; Pudłocki 2014). It was therefore expected that Mizwa would find an American willing to join the Cracow staff, and obtain the necessary funds for books indispensable to conduct high-standard classes. The problem of the lack of specialist literature continued for years and could not be solved by the Foundation alone. It required a much closer collaboration of many institutions, though the Foundation's contribution to the support of Polish universities was enormous (Sroka 2016; Kntuh 2006). Apart from regular shipments of books for the library of the English Department of the University in Cracow, Mizwa decided to back up the department also with American staff. To that end he chose James MacCracken (Pudłocki 2018).

⁶ Sinko was a son of well-known Professor Tadeusz Sinko and later an outstanding professor and theatrologist.

⁷ For his correspondence from the stay in the USA see e. g.: AKUL, A 293.

Preparations for going to Poland

It was not until 23 April that Steven Mizwa answered Doctor Nedelković's letter of 17 January. It was not ill will or negligence on his part. Letters between Poland and the USA could travel a month or even longer at that time. The long time they took was constantly complained about in the correspondence. The executive director of the Kosciuszko Foundation was not surprised with the words of his old friend. He already knew about the department's plight from the letters of Maria Laskowska and also from Helena Bilińska, the Foundation's former grantee, who was then working for the Polish Embassy in Washington (Bilińska 1947). He did have a candidate who was perfectly suitable for solving, at least partly, the understaffing problem. What is more, he emphasized that the candidate agreed to go and work in Poland for free. 2/3 of the cost of living was covered for him by the Foundation, and the remaining 1/3 by his own family (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [44]).

James Inouye MacCracken was a foster son of Henry Noble MacCracken, a long-standing president of the Kosciuszko Foundation, who in September 1946 had just graduated from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut (College of Liberal Arts). He was born on 24 September 1922. He was the son of a Japanese biochemist James Inouye employed at Columbia University and a cousin of Professor Henry Noble MacCracken. Both his parents had died early. The boy was adopted by the MacCrackens (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [44]).

The Americans realized that MacCracken was going to a country completely different than the USA. They knew Poland was politically and militarily controlled by the Soviet Union and Communism was antagonistic towards capitalism, which manifested itself in the constant tension between both blocs of countries. A letter to the young American read:

[...] remember that you will represent America and a Foundation which, before the war, had a good reputation in Poland. The good impression you leave behind will be a credit to both – America and the Foundation. Poland is not what it used to be; you will be watched, perhaps even followed. Keep your eyes and ears open, and your mouth – well, use it discreetly (*Professor James*, 1948: 1).

Could young MacCracken know something else about the staffing in Cracow? Probably mainly what Mizwa told him. The longtime friend of his father's was very amicably disposed towards James whom he had known since his childhood, but he also knew the situation in Poland from the New York perspective. Helena Bilińska from the Polish Embassy in Washington wrote to Henry Noble MacCracken on 27 June 1946 describing the potential of the English Department

in Cracow as follows: “The Department of English has crowds of students, and only young lecturers and assistants to do the teaching; prof. Władysław Tarnawski, the successor of prof. Dyboski at that University is in rather poor health” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [1]). The father must have told his son about it. It is known that James knew Maria Laskowska from her studies at Vassar College. He was a teenager when she attended the college headed by his father (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [6]; Pudłocki 2014: 131–133). That was, however, still not enough information for a young man who in a sense was starting the adventure of his life in a completely unfamiliar, unknown country.

The first year in Cracow – challenges and hardships

The number of candidates for the English studies at the Jagiellonian University was ten times as big as before the war, which forced the authorities to enlarge the number of academic staff (Perkowska 2001). At the meeting of the Faculty of Humanities on 3 July 1946 the professors: Dean Jan Dąbrowski, Władysław Tarnawski, Mieczysław Małecki and Adam Kleczkowski decided to accept as full-time lecturers of English Jan Stanisławski and Doctor Krystyna Michalik. Additionally it was postulated that students should be able to attend classes of French, Italian, Russian and German (AUJ, WHm90). The matter was urgent, as the number of hours of foreign language instruction was incomparably small compared with the demand, and the teachers earned very little. Moreover, the students had not had a chance to learn foreign languages during the war, so their command of them was very poor. The only exceptions were German and Russian.

No wonder then that the successful completion of all the formalities making MacCracken’s arrival possible, made the Cracow Anglicists happy. Doctor Nedelković wrote about that to Steven Mizwa as follows: “I spoke about it with Professor Tarnawski and he warmly invites this young American to come here and be a help in creating a link between college educated youth of the US and the students of our University” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [3])⁸.

⁸ The fact that MacCracken trying to go to Poland was known not only in the Kościuszko Foundation. “Vassar Chronicle”, the official magazine of the Vassar College, informed the college community about the rector’s son going abroad in the following words: „JamesMacCracken, twenty-four year old son of Dr. and Mrs. Henry Noble MacCracken, has accepted the position of Associate Professor of English at the University of Cracow in Poland. He will teach advanced students of English, emphasizing grammar, pronunciation, and creative writing. Mr. MacCracken became interested in this work when he heard that young graduate students were needed at the Polish University to teach English. He applied to the Polish Consulate and the Polish-Kosciuszko Foundation in New York City, where he obtained the position. The Polish government is offering twelve scholarships, six to the United States and six to Great Britain, in connection with the teaching work. He will be paid 3000 zlotys a month,

MacCracken's beginnings in Cracow were very successful. On 9 October 1946 he arrived in Gdynia by ship. Then he came to Cracow via Warsaw by train. In the Hotel Francuski, where the American consulate resided, he got in touch with his new colleagues.

After the first four days spent at the hotel, thanks to the help from M. Laskowska, MacCracken met his Polish host family, who provided him with full board in return for English lessons for their children. He lived at 1/11 Basztowa Street at Maria Skrzypanowa's apartment (IPN BU 01208/141/D). In early November 1946 he got a flatmate, George Szudy, the head of the Catholic Polish Relief Mission for the Cracow area. MacCracken spoke in a very positive way both about Szudy's work and his character (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [9]; Lukas 2009). MacCracken did not hide his initial enthusiasm about living in Cracow:

My interview with Professor Tarnawski was successful to an alarming degree. [...] My schedule calls for two lectures a week in the largest lecture room of the University – seating several hundred – on American literature. That title is the only restriction of the type of lecture that I am to present. The planning and material of the course have been left to my discretion. It is something from a wonderfully fantastic dream. Yet I quake when I think of standing in the same lecture room as men like Copernicus have and talking to so many people, many of whose sole ideas about American literature will come from my words. It is a great privilege and an even greater responsibility (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [7]).

The head of the English Department at the Jagiellonian University in his letter to the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities on 16 October 1946 suggested the following teaching load for the young American: 2 hours of lectures on American Literature and 10 hours of Practical English in each term. He suggested a salary of a full-time lecturer, as the American did not have any money to support himself. The Kosciuszko Foundation had covered the cost of his trip but, as it turned out, only that. Tarnawski justified his request quoting the large number of students at the English Department (448) and the need to employ extra specialists (AUJ, WHm 90). In order to be able to support himself since 24 October MacCracken gave private English lessons. He charged 150 zlotys but as he said, if he had charged 250 zlotys, he would still have had clients. There were a lot of people

which is equal to about \$30 in American money. He plans to either live and teach at the Y.M.C.A. or live in a private home and tutor two sons. The son of Vassar's former president says that he does not intend to make a career of teaching, but feels that a year of teaching abroad will be a valuable experience. He plans to be a writer. A graduate of Arlington High School and Wesleyan College, he was discharged from two years of service in the U.S. Army last December. He sailed last Tuesday from New York on the Jutlandia for Copenhagen and will go by train to Cracow" (*Dr. MacCracken's Son* 1946: 3).

who wanted to take advantage of his presence in Cracow. Persuaded to do so, he taught English in the Cracow branch of the YMCA and increased the amount of private tuition. He would joke that because of the work pressure he was not able to get up for breakfast every morning, to the great regret of his landlady (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [10]).

MacCracken made it clear that he was given a royal welcome in Cracow. He was constantly being invited out in the evenings by the academic staff and students. As he wrote in a letter to Mizwa, “They were so interested in hearing an American accent and being able to practise their English that I could not refuse them” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [7]). Also in subsequent letters he confirmed that he was treated extremely friendly by the Poles, especially by M. Laskowska and K. Michalik-Nedelković. Assistance was something he really needed because although he knew a lot of Polish words and was even praised for his pronunciation, initially his Polish was not good enough to do even simple shopping (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [10]).

MacCracken delivered his first lecture at the University on 24 October 1946. He wrote about his impressions to Mizwa in the following way:

Chistine Michalik made a little introductory speech for me and presented me to my first lecture. Professor Tarnawski had an engagement and came and made a very elaborate apology to me this morning – a very nice gesture and a nice man – but Christine did an excellent job – that left me quite blushing. She and Maryśka Laskowska were both there – in addition to some six or eight English teachers from about Cracow – and I was very nervous at first – but then forgot about it in the desire to give them information (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [8]).

He informed Mizwa that his conversation classes met with such a positive response that instead of three groups twice a week, the students were divided into six groups who had classes with him every week. He was flattered that the teachers and students alike admired his pronunciation but he pointed out: “I do not know what I shall be able to teach in only twenty meetings for each of the six conversational groups, but I shall emphasize pronunciation – the same as I plan to do in my private lessons” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [8]). “Professor James”, as he used to be called by his students, taught in Collegium Maius, in the room used years before by Professor Dyboski, and, as Maria Laskowska wrote, his classes were tremendously popular among the students (KF XXXII.35 [2]).

Laskowska’s words were confirmed by Krystyna Michalik-Nedelković in her letter of 26 November 1946. She emphasized that he was very excited about his many duties. But he prepared for his classes conscientiously and was a paragon of hard work. She referred to him as Jimmy. The young American with his directness

and outgoing character must have been for the Cracow academics a nice change from the omnipresent atmosphere of suspicion typical of Poland at the time. “Of course, I need hardly say that we greatly appreciate his willingness to help us, his most amiable temper and perfect good humor, his wonderful patience amidst strange surroundings and strange people, not to mention his quick intelligence and teaching abilities (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [4]). Later Doctor Nedelković thanked Mizwa for having chosen MacCracken and also for the regular shipment of books for their library⁹. Similar motifs repeat in Maria Laskowska’s letters, where MacCracken is called “an absolute gem” (KF XXXII.35 [2]).

MacCracken was very surprised that teachers of English in Cracow “speak English with a very distinct accent” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [9]). The only exceptions were those who made up the staff of the English Department at the University. Still, they all conducted their classes only in Polish. That was a rule in the foreign language teaching system at that time: what was emphasized was not phonetics but the role of grammar structures. The only person who held her classes in English apart from MacCracken was Claire Grece-Dąbrowska.

[She] is an Englishwoman who married here and manages to teach in addition to taking care of a home and her two children – and me. Mrs Dombrowska¹⁰ and I are the only two who give lectures in English. [...] The result is that many of numerous English teachers in Krakow attend Mrs. Dumbrowska’s lectures and mine. Mrs. Dumbrowska doesn’t really lecture though – she teaches seminar groups in English literature (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [9]).

Although nobody doubted the need to employ extra teachers, securing the financial means for the support of the young American was a problem. On 10 February 1947 Maria Laskowska wrote to the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities that since MacCracken had come to Cracow, he worked four months at the university for free. Her request was backed up by the department tutor, Professor Kleczkowski (AUJ, WHm 70)¹¹. Finances were an important part of the reality, especially in a country which was trying to recover from war damage and struggling with destitution. MacCracken had it easier anyway, thanks to the money and parcels from home and the income from private tuitions and lessons given at the YMCA. Eventually in March 1947 he was paid 8000 zlotys for each month he had worked (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [16]).

MacCracken needed regular income not only because of the high cost of living in post-war Poland. As early as November 1946 he was invited by Professor

⁹ See the reprint of the letter of 1 Aug 1947 in: KFML 1947, No. 1 (11). P. 2.

¹⁰ MacCracken misspelled her surname several times in the letter.

¹¹ The problems with paying the salary to MacCracken were also mentioned by Maria Laskowska – see KF XXXII.35 [3].

Juliusz Krzyżanowski to give lectures on literature at the University of Wrocław. However, it was not until 13–15 February 1947 that he could go there (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [10]). He would later return to Wrocław – between 12–13 May 1947 he delivered lectures on American literature again; he also tried to have the English studies in Wrocław incorporated into the exchange program of the Kosciuszko Foundation (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [21, 22]; UWA, sign. 138).

At that time the young bachelor led quite a busy social life. Judging by fragments of his letters to S. Mizwa, he must have had a very good time in Cracow and was often invited out by his new Polish friends. On 2 March 1947 he wrote: “My best friends are an artist, an author, and the young Polish assistant editor of >>Głos Anglii<<, the British paper printed in Polish here” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [14]). A few months later he wrote that one of the successes of his stay in Poland was establishing very good relations with the whole editorial team of the periodical (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [22]). He made friends particularly with Jacek Woźniakowski, later professor of the Catholic University of Lublin and mayor of Cracow. MacCracken recommended Woźniakowski for the Foundation grant for the year 1948/49, describing him as follows:

A young fellow of about 28 or 29 who is Polish subeditor for the Polish language British paper, “Głos Anglii” here. A graduate of the history of art department, he speaks English excellently. One of the outstanding young Polish intellectuals I know, he is a promising writer, critic, and editor. His education has reached about the limit it can go here and a year for advanced study would be of the greatest value. Very intelligent and personable, he has impressed all who have met him. An excellent example of Polish culture. [...] Here is a young leader with every sign of promise who would be perfect for Kosciuszko Foundation (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [25]).

Apart from successes and nice moments, MacCracken’s stay in Cracow abounded in challenges and hardships. On 4 December 1946 the Polish secret police arrested Professor Władysław Tarnawski, who was active in pro-independence underground movement as deputy head of the Eastern Lands Committee. At first it was expected that the old professor would be released, but in October 1947 those hopes were shattered. Eventually Tarnawski was sentenced to 10 years and died in a prison in the Mokotów district of Warsaw (Pudłocki 2005, 2015; Kulińska 2018). The absence of a department head and the significant increase in the number of students led to turbulences. As it turned out, there were even issues with Professor Kleczkowski, reappointed as the temporary tutor of the department. In his letter of 1 June 1947 MacCracken wrote to Mizwa that Kleczkowski apparently yelled at Laskowska one day, accusing her of not only

“stealing” students from the German studies department but also of poor academic results of her own department (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [22]). MacCracken was indignant at that behavior. He wrote:

She has done an amazing job this year with very little to work with, then to be told she has failed completely in the most impolite tones (as though he were addressing a mad dog) is a little too much. I regretted my Polish was not good enough for me to go the Dean or rector (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [22]).

Professor Kleczkowski did have a point, however. It was clear that in the first years after the war, due to understaffing, the department focused on reconstructing the teaching potential and on education, neglecting academic research in the process. Kleczkowski encouraged the Anglicists to do research e. g. at the Polish Academy of Learning, but a majority of them were educators.

An equally serious problem was the shortage of books. The Kosciuszko Foundation did send them regularly, but it was still too little compared with the demand. Seeing how difficult the access to literature was, MacCracken did his best to opt for sending books to Poland. That was a recurring motif in his letters to Mizwa. MacCracken also stressed that the situation of English studies in Toruń and Wrocław was even worse and asked the Foundation not to forget about them, either. He did not only seek books for the English Department; on 3 March 1947 he promised to send Mizwa a list of publications Laskowska was going to get from university doctors, economists and psychologists (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [11, 14, 20, 29]).

On his way to Poland MacCracken had met Edward Baumiller, an industrialist and one of the leaders of the Polish community in Detroit. He was a representative of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Poland (Kujtkowski 1947: 4, 12). When Baumiller came to Cracow in October, MacCracken asked him for help (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [5]). He hoped Baumiller would support the Foundation in the regular shipments of books. He was right; Baumiller asked right away for a list of the most urgently needed titles, which MacCracken then prepared with the help of Professor Tarnawski and M. Laskowska (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [11]). The support from Detroit, Ann Arbor, Washington and Poughkeepsie reached Cracow in late spring (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [13, 15, 22])¹². MacCracken’s involvement in obtaining

¹² In Vassar College a special action was carried out among the academics. Its outcome was an article titled *Books Requested For Polish Relief*, which read: “Do you have any books that you are not using? The scarcity of books in Poland seriously curtails education, reports James MacCracken, lecturer in American Literature at the University of Krakow. This situation is grave and the enthusiasm for learning real, between March 31 and April 19 you may help this condition by giving books of all

books for Polish universities was mentioned in their letters by Maria Laskowska and Przemysław Mroczkowski, who also needed them for the English studies being opened at the time at the Catholic University of Lublin (KF XXXII.32 [1]; KF XXXII.35 [2, 4, 5]; AKUL, V.3.6.1.).

MacCracken realized that the majority of the useful reading matter would reach Poland too late for himself to use it. He thought, however, that after he left they would come useful to new grantees to come to Cracow (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [10]). Perhaps that was why he allocated some of the money from Edward Baumiller for making shelves for the English Department library. The room was not only small but lacking in basic equipment. Thanks to using private means, already in the middle of December 1946 the situation with books visibly improved (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [11]).

Besides the attempts to get the necessary books MacCracken also tried to help individual persons. He asked Mizwa for assistance for his student, Janina Lutosławska, the daughter of Professor Wincenty Lutosławski, who had received a grant to Smith College but had problems getting a passport and money for the trip to the USA (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [10]). Thanks to the financial support from Baumiller on Santa Claus Day MacCracken could support 12 students with 1500 zlotys each and buy small gifts for his colleagues. It was even enough to employ a secretary for a few hours a week. So far the whole administrative work had been done by M. Laskowska, overwhelmed by “the innumerable affairs of the hundreds of students” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [11])¹³.

The selection of candidates for the Kosciuszko Foundation grants

Apart from his teaching and organizational work in Cracow, MacCracken would advise Mizwa on the choice of the right candidates for the Kosciuszko Foundation grants in the USA. In April 1947 he suggested Alfred Reszkiewicz in the first place and Apolonia Twarduś in the second place (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [20]). He particularly emphasized Reszkiewicz’s intellect, hard work and organizational skills. In his letter of 27 March 1947 he described him as follows:

varieties in English. All such gifts must be placed in the cart outside of the Cooperative Bookshop. Also, contributions can be made towards a fund for the purchase of books, the money to be given to Miss Harriet Pearce in the Bookshop. This project is being sponsored by the Poughkeepsie branch of the American Association of University Women. The need is vital, and cooperation will be greatly appreciated. It is hoped that the Vassar Community will rally to this call for help from Polish students (see: “Vassar Chronicle” 1947, Vol. 4, No. 25 from 29 March. P. 4).

¹³ The same matters, the support for Lutosławska and financial aid for the students were reported to Mizwa by Maria Laskowska – see KF XXXII.35 [2].

Mr. Reszkiewicz was the acting head of the English Circle of Students at the university for the last two trimesters, taking over the presidential duties by popular decision after the elected head went to America to study at Smith. [...] During a voluntary lecture series, that the various advanced students gave about their specialties in the study of English, Mr. Reszkiewicz presented four hours of lectures on the roots of Old English. My greatest difficulty throughout was to keep my mouth from failing open in complete wonder and amazement at the excellence of his lecture – a lecture that could have been offered at my university in Connecticut without hesitation and would have proved of the greatest benefit to the students body. Lecturing in a foreign language, about what seemed another foreign language, Mr. Reszkiewicz so organized and presented his difficult material that every student felt he had fully comprehend what had been said for the four hours. I considered the lecture far superior to hundreds I have heard on various subjects in college (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [16]).

Despite his great recognition of Reszkiewicz's merits MacCracken insisted on the candidacy of Maria Laskowska. He thought she ought to receive the grant to Bryn Mawr College to complete her PhD dissertation. That choice would be beneficial mostly for the English Department at the Jagiellonian University. However, Laskowska had her doubts, thinking perhaps it was better to offer the trip to a student, as she had already been a grantee of the Kosciuszko Foundation (Puđłocki 2014: 131–133). MacCracken thought otherwise:

A year devoted to study would be magnificent for her. So despite Maryśka's potential comments to the contrary, everyone here in Eng[lish] Dep[artment] is desirous of seeing her go. She knows what questions the students ask most and she knows what the shortcomings are of the personal training and of the teachers lacks, so she is the perfect person. Her work this year has been a terrific strain on her, though her cheery and warm personality would allow no one a hint. Constantly bubbling over with smiles and energy, she is the directing force behind our entire department, encouraging, guiding, and always giving unselfishly – the latter almost to a vice. [...] You know how wonderful it has been for me to be able to work with her – and for all of us who have come into close working contact with her. She is the beacon light, literally, around which the activities of the dep[artment] center (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [19]).

What MacCracken wrote about M. Laskowska proves his deep respect but also his liking for her. Moreover, he stressed that her great diligence and devotion to the department was widely recognized¹⁴. He must have realized that post-War Polish conditions were far from being conducive to do any kind of research, so scholarship to the US was a great opportunity to any gifted person, especially taken into consideration the lamentable level of local education. What is more,

¹⁴ The scholarship for M. Laskowska was a recurrent issue. Even in the letter of 18 Jan 1948 Mizwa informed her that there was a chance for her to go to Bryn Mawr College. Eventually Laskowska was able to go to the USA again only much later, in 1960. (see KF XXXII.35 [6, 7]).

his personal engagement to help Reszkiewicz and Laskowska proves that he understood at least a bit about the lives and traumas which the students had recently experienced. Being spied upon he didn't know that the piece of advice he gave to Wiktor Kab, American student of Polish descent who in 1947 came to study Slavic languages to Krakow, would be immediately repeated to the Secret Service. MacCracken expressed his surprise at Kab's coming and suggested the young fellow should leave Poland as soon as possible due to the political situation and persecutions of the intellectuals (IPN, IPN BU 01208/141/D).

For the Kosciuszko Foundation grant MacCracken also recommended Maria Filippi from the University of Wrocław, with a view to enhancing the potential of the English studies there. As he wrote, "Filippi and two other girls are the present staff. The professor is studying in Scotland" (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [19]). Due to Professor Krzyżanowski's having left for Scotland the students of English in Wrocław did not have any lectures for a year. That is why MacCracken suggested sending to Wrocław one of the Kosciuszko Foundation 1947/1948 grantees in order to at least partly fill the gap (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [23]). He emphasized the uneven distribution of foreigners at university English departments in Poland – several of them in Warsaw and none in Toruń and Łódź. He suggested trying to give equal opportunity to the academic centers through the distribution of grants (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [19]). We can infer from his letters that MacCracken was very knowledgeable about the situation of English studies in different Polish cities. He often wrote about issues he had become aware of in Wrocław, Lublin or Warsaw (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [27]).

Eventually the grants for the year 1947/48 were given to, among others, Maria Olga Filippi¹⁵ (to the University of Chicago) and Alfred Reszkiewicz (who would later become professor at the Warsaw University) (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [41]). After a lot of difficulty trying to get passports, when MacCracken had to intervene personally in Warsaw, they both set off with a many-month delay; in the Communist Poland perturbations with the authorities, especially if one wanted to go to the USA, often took months, with no guarantee of success. Filippi left Gdynia by ship on 5 January 1948, only thanks to the extra money MacCracken had lent her (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [36]). Reszkiewicz went to the University of Notre Dame in Indiana half a year later (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27]; KFML 1948, Vol. 3, No. 1 (21). P. 4)¹⁶. In 1947 Reszkiewicz

¹⁵ About her see more: UWO, sign. 138, Filippi Mary.

¹⁶ At the University of Notre Dame he obtained MA degree for a thesis on Old English graphophonemics. On return to Poland he also got his MA degree at the Jagiellonian University (1949). Thanks to Professor Jerzy Kuryłowicz he was employed as an assistant lecturer in the department of English philology, where he worked until 1952, i.e. until the closing of the English studies at the Jagiellonian University.

was, however, still a student struggling to make ends meet, working as a volunteer librarian in the college to boot. No wonder then that he was scared of the cost of his stay in the USA, even though it was largely covered by the Kosciuszko Foundation. MacCracken, who saw his great potential, supported him with his own money so that the Pole would not back out (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [11]). All the time he spoke of Reszkiewicz with utmost appreciation, emphasizing particularly his devotion to the cause of improving the functioning of the library in the English Department (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [37]).

The visits in Warsaw were for MacCracken also an opportunity to meet Walter Schwinn from the US Embassy. They were in permanent contact sharing information about scholarship program (IPN BU 01208/141/D). Schwinn joined the Department of State in 1946 and in the same year was assigned to the US Embassy in Warsaw as First Secretary and Public Affairs Officer. In 1949, he returned to the Department in Washington to become a Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. At the same time he was one of the best American experts on Communist propaganda (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [25, 29, 30]; W.P. Dizzard 2004: 49–50).

Each success of MacCracken's confirmed that despite the political and ideological differences between the USA and Poland the work on the exchange of academic staff and students ought to be continued. That is why the Kosciuszko Foundation tried to inform the Poles in the USA about the successes in selecting the candidates. It was done by means of "The Kosciuszko Foundation Monthly News Letter", publishing fragments of MacCracken's correspondence (KFML, 1947, Vol. 1, No. 5. P. 3–5, No. 1 (11). P. 1–2, No. 3 (13). P. 2, 4; Reszkiewicz 1947: 2, 4, 1948, 4). But not only that. For example, in December 1946 the Polish daily "Nowy Świat" published in New York described the work of the particular grantees. The most space was devoted to MacCracken. It was stressed that he enjoyed enormous popularity as the teacher of English, "because everybody was learning English" ("Nowy Świat" 1946: 7). The article showed above all the grave lack of professionals to work in Poland and the necessity to support Polish intellectuals.

The second year of work at the Jagiellonian University

After nearly a year spent in Cracow, on 1 June 1947, MacCracken wrote half jokingly to Mizwa he was so tired that he felt a "dreadful need for a vacation to include a month's sleep" (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [22])¹⁷. However, he played it up a bit. The work at the Jagiellonian University absorbed MacCracken so much that in the letter of 3 March 1947 he shared a new idea with Mizwa: he wanted to

¹⁷ MacCracken spent a short vacation in Paris at the end of August and beginning of September 1947 (see KFA, J. MacCracken Files [27]).

stay one more year and conduct classes in Cracow (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [14]). On 15 March 1947 the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities of the Jagiellonian University, Professor Jan Dąbrowski, asked the Ministry of Education in Warsaw, on behalf of the management of the English Department to extend MacCracken's courses for the academic year 1947/1948 (AUJ, WHm 91). A month later MacCracken informed S. Mizwa that his papers were in the Ministry of Education in Warsaw waiting for reexamination (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [20]).

He was proud of the effects of his work: his involvement was so much appreciated that some of his students got a chance to specialize in American studies as part of general English studies.

A greater recognition of my work came in June 1947 than either of my students or I had dared to hope for. The professorial staff of the university, upon special petition from the English Seminar, granted students of English the right to major in American Literature. This recognition of American Literature as a field worthy of specialization was the first such acknowledgement of our culture in the history of the Polish University system (MacCracken 1948: 3).

MacCracken was very happy. Yet he needed extra assistance that could allow for increasing the teaching offer. On 9 September he wrote to Mizwa: "I have established a program in American lit[erature] in Kraków such as no Polish University has ever presented before" (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [28]). He said that he was able to collect a group of 26 students interested in writing their MA theses on American literature. Nevertheless, he also shared his doubts about not being able to meet that challenge. He believed at that time there was no room for a failure or mediocrity. So he asked for help in the person of Ellen Galvin, a graduate of Vassar College. He hoped she would conduct classes on American Poetry and Modern American Writing (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [19, 23, 28]). Her candidacy was accepted by the Polish government but without financial support her arrival was impossible. Meanwhile, the demand for the specialization opened by MacCracken was so large that it exceeded all his expectations. He realized, however, that without the right people and professional literature it would not last long. He emphasized the support for the idea from his Polish colleagues, i.e. Laskowska, Grzebieniowski and Michalik. He even offered 100 dollars of his own funds only to hasten Galvin's arrival (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [27]).

It is worth stressing that Professor Tarnawski's arrest caused an enormous gap in the staff. Indeed, in June 1947 Doctor Tadeusz Grzebieniowski completed his postdoctoral thesis but half a year later, in November, his new degree had still not been officially approved and Grzebieniowski did not receive a full-time tenure at the Jagiellonian University. In the academic year 1947/1948, 384 students

enrolled at the English Department (including 64 first-year students). In the administrative matters Professor Tarnawski was substituted by Professor Adam Kleczkowski from the German Department, but besides him there were only four permanent employees: M. Laskowska (senior lecturer), M. Słupińska (junior lecturer) and J. Stanisławski and K. Nedelković (assistant lecturers). Przemysław Mroczkowski, after his stay abroad and completion of his PhD dissertation, received a post at the Catholic University of Lublin (AKUL, A 293)¹⁸.

In the academic year 1947/1948 MacCracken held the following classes: with Year Two – The Development of American Civilization (2 hours a week), with Year Three – American Literature (2 hours a week) and The Development of American Civilization (2 hours a week), with Year Four – Creative Writing (2 hours a week). A new employee was Irena Rachton – a grantee of the Polish Ministry of Education. Claire Grece-Dąbrowska, Franciszek Ksawery Pusłowski and Maria Stablewska, educated in England but only at the secondary school level (AUJ, WHm70), worked as freelancers. There were continued attempts to secure the tenure for Doctor Grzebieniowski, because, as it was put:

The present situation in the English Department, which has not had a professor since 1946, is disastrous. The students attend courses and classes but they don't have lectures – apart from the lectures on American literature – and they have no academic guidance (AUJ, WHm70).

Irena Rachton from the University of California was in Cracow from the late January 1947. She helped out the academic teachers in the English Department but mostly she studied Polish literature and art (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [13]). She was not of much use, though. The way MacCracken wrote about her was not very flattering: “Rachton is here for a second year, to the dismay of Maryśka [Laskowska – T.P.] and me. She will be handling six hours of conversation classes for the coming year” (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [27]).

On 11 October 1947 MacCracken wrote to Mizwa about the problems which the English studies in Cracow faced at the beginning of the new academic year:

¹⁸ Steven Mizwa informed the members and sponsors of the Kościuszko Foundation about Mroczkowski defending his PhD thesis. In an oblique manner He mentioned that Mroczkowski's supervisor had been sentenced to prison: “Our informant failed to state at which University Mr. Mroczkowski presented himself for the examinations and who examined him. The fact is that there are very few English scholars in Poland left qualified to examine candidates for a Ph.D. degree. The most competent would have been Professor Władysław Tarnawski, head of the English Department at the Jagiellonian University of Cracow, but recently we read in the papers that he was given a forced vacation for a period of five or ten years”. KFML 1947, No. 4 (14). P. 4. Tarnawski's sentence was also mentioned by, among others, the New York “Nowy Świat” (1947, Vol. 50, No. 287 from 15 October. P. 1).

Thanks to inefficiency of planning et al, plus no professor, we have been having a pretty rough time of it. The head of the German Department is still acting head of our department and his actions are such that it makes me hope fervently that he is not considered a representative of the finer type of intellectual or an example of a good professor. Professor Tarnawski's trial has just been concluded and he has been given five years plus loss of all property and citizenship rights for being an officer in a political party when he was in Wilno¹⁹ that was scheming to overthrow the government. Professor Grzebieniewski of Łódź will be unable to come to us this year as our professor because he can't find an apartment and because the new policy of assigning professors where there is a need for them by the Ministry of Education has gone into effect and keeps him at Łódź. Grzebieniewski was also refused a passport for travel to England (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [31]).

The letter proves that the staffing problems were immense: the sentencing of Professor Tarnawski, the continual squabbles with Professor Kleczkowski, and above all, the lack of regulations about who was going to take over the charge of the English studies. MacCracken was also aware of the ubiquity of the Communist Party in academic life and the hardships of the political system in Poland (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [32]).

Meanwhile, the autumn of 1947 brought along new problems. The ruling party started to introduce new laws prohibiting state institutions to obtain any support from abroad without a special permission. Of course the new regulations were first and foremost aimed at the support from the West. In the case of university, the ban could include books regularly shipped by the Kosciuszko Foundation. And James MacCracken was all the time involved in the whole practice (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [34]). Mizwa thanked him for advice and support. As he said in the letter of 15 January 1948, "We shall just keep on sending books (some clothing also) unless we hear to the contrary, officially" (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [37]). Moreover, MacCracken all the time advised Mizwa about employing Americans willing to teach in Poland. He suggested Margaret Munnerlyn should be sent to Wrocław and the Princeton graduate, William Scott, to Lublin, in order to help Mroczkowski. MacCracken himself was often invited to come to Wrocław with his lectures but being overwhelmed with his own work, he would postpone his visits (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [35]). The situation in Cracow was very hard and MacCracken, even though he was happy with the students' interest in his classes, would press Mizwa already in December to start thinking of someone to succeed him as the lecturer on American literature.

Still no professor here. There is a good interest in American Literature started here which it would be nice to keep up – second year students are quite as interested as

¹⁹ It should be: Lwów.

the third and fourth year ones. My advanced seminars have been granted full seminar credit – on a par with a professor's seminar in doing research problems in the field. And over a half a dozen have started to write their Master's degrees in American Literature for their degree (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [36]).

The requests to appoint a successor repeated in later correspondence (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [37]).

Although MacCracken did not continue collaboration with the circle of the Wrocław Anglicists, he spent a few days in January 1948 helping Przemysław Mroczkowski in his academic teaching at the Catholic University of Lublin. As he wrote:

He started with virtually nothing. There are twenty six students there, five or six of them is the third year, having transferred from other departments. An Englishmen there from the British Council, Jago by name is an excellent help, but is no ball of fire (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [38]).

His visit to Lublin had some additional response. On returning to Cracow MacCracken applied to the Ministry of Education for permission to lecture also in Lublin, to help Mroczkowski out. He was granted permission to conduct classes in the history of American literature at the Catholic University of Lublin in the third term. MacCracken managed to squeeze these hours into two days a month (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [40]; AKUL, A 223).

MacCracken's attempts to obtain support for the particular English departments at different Polish universities were all the more commendable because in the second year of his stay in Poland the American lived largely off private lessons and on credit. In his letter of 17 March 1948 he wrote to Mizwa that he was about 10 000 zlotys in the red, as the Ministry had not paid either him or Claire Grece-Dąbrowska for their work, despite repeated reminders from the Faculty of Humanities (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [39]). Mizwa, a very practical man, sent MacCracken 100 dollars right away. The American paid off the most urgent debts. At that time he had a few Americans from Poland staying at his place for Easter. His host family agreed to lend him the apartment and among other people MacCracken invited Walter Schwinn (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [40]).

Conclusion

After his lectures and the summer examination session ended, MacCracken said goodbye to Poland on 2 July 1948. Eleven days later he was back in New York. He came by MS Batory and "did bring a young academic groom in the person

of Alfred Reszkiewicz” (KFML 1948, Vol. 3, No. 1 (21). P. 4). The latter did not get his passport until late October 1947 and therefore could not use the grant in the academic year 1947/1948 (KFA, J. MacCracken Files [32, 33]. Reszkiewicz, having spent six weeks at Yale University as a participant of the Summer Course for Foreign Students (28 July–8 September²⁰) could start his studies at the University of Notre Dame. In Cracow MacCracken was replaced by Ellen Galvin (AUJ, WHm70). As Maria Laskowska wrote in the letter to S. Mizwa on 8 April 1948:

I do not know what we should do without your help and without Jimmy MacCracken, who the course of two years has done real wonders. In fact young as he is, he has taken the professor’s place, encouraging the students to study, inspiring them and providing them with the material they need. The graduates of 1948 will surely know more about American literature than anybody else in Poland, professors and specialists included²¹.

A few months later, on 17 September 1948, during the opening of the cultural program for 1948/1949 in the Kosciuszko Foundation office, the young lecturer talked about his impressions from Poland (*A good start*, 1948: 2). He had left behind the results of two years of hard work in a country so different from his homeland. During the meeting and also in the ongoing correspondence, MacCracken made it clear that the time had been special for him, also socially. We can infer from his letters that – with a few exceptions – he valued the Poles he had met very highly. The Secret Service though stressed in the reports that he MacCracken was “hostile to the present regime” (IPN, IPN BU 01208/141/D). Above all, however, he did not only start the first in Poland program of teaching American literature but also helped his colleagues to survive the first difficult years of Communism. It was then challenging the reality, which was noticed by the Secret Service. Admittedly, it was not a period of valuable academic research for the English studies in Cracow. In the face of understaffing and the terrible conditions for holding lectures and classes, the more important thing was to launch and then normalize a regular teaching process. James MacCracken himself did not carry out academic research in Cracow, either. His stay there was aimed at something different – enhancing the faculty potential of Professor Roman Dyboski’s legacy. And the fact that besides the teaching he also got involved in obtaining material and organizational aid, not only for the Cracow university, puts him in the most favorable light.

²⁰ Mizwa suggested already in his letter of 15 March 1948 that Reszkiewicz come to the USA with MacCracken and take part in the Yale Summer School; he pledged to cover the cost from the Kościuszko Foundation funds. KFA, J. MacCracken Files [43].

²¹ Reprinted in: KFML 1948, Vol. 2, No. 10 (20). P. 3.

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Tomasz Pudłocki

CHALLENGING THE REALITY – JAMES MACCRACKEN AS A LECTURER AT THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY (1946–1948)

(summary)

The aim of this article is to take a look at the two years of James MacCracken’s work at the Jagiellonian University in the academic years 1946/1947 and 1947/1948. I would like to answer the questions: why were they crucial for English studies in Krakow and how did both sides (individual students and professors as well as the MacCracken himself) contribute from this short period. Last but not least, referring to the main title: why was MacCracken’s being in Krakow a form of challenging the reality in the post-War Poland. The main source I used are the letters he had used to send from Poland to the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York – of course, combined with other archive materials which have survived in Poland and the USA.

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