In the night of September 17, 1939 vice minister of the USSR foreign affairs, Vladimir Potomkin passed to the Ambassador of the Second Republic of Poland in Moscow, Wacław Grzybowski a note signed by Vyacheslav Molotov, which contained, inter alia, such sentence:

Polish-German war has revealed internal bankruptcy of the Polish state. During ten days of war operations Poland has lost all its industry regions and cultural centers. Warsaw has stopped being the capital of Poland. Polish government has fallen apart and has shown no signs of life. It means that Polish state and its government have, in fact, ceased to exist. In view of this treaties concluded between the USSR and Poland have lost their power.\footnote{Łomianki 2016, LTW, p. 608.}

Almost at the same time the Red Army troops crossed eastern borders of the Second Republic of Poland and started treacherous aggression, called – along with the Soviet practice of inside-out world – “liberation march”. After 20 years of independence, Poland ceased to exist. Wehrmacht met the Red Army to celebrate war brotherhood over a dead body of the Polish Republic.

However, in a description of this sinister event historians make mistake thinking that the Soviet aggression started from the moment of passing the diplomatic note at 3 a.m. to the not understanding a thing Ambassador Grzybowski. This time mistake is – what a trifle – almost 18 years long. Since vicious sticking a Soviet bayonet through the Polish back was a only a consequence of the process which had started banally – from a visit of a Polish renegade, Wiktor Steckiewicz in Rewel during the first snow period of 1921. It was then the Polish intelligence was caught into unbelievably diverging disinformation play by the Soviet counterintelligence which had been stupefying the HQ of Polish Army until April 1927. It had been giving documents produced in a bulk by forgers working in the interdepartmental Disinformation Office, called humorously kriwe zierkało. That was a time of a complete disintegration of Polish intelligence structure. Polish officers had been meeting Soviet provocateurs instead of agents, instead of secret documents they had been providing materials full of lies or half-truth. What is worse, being constantly under surveillance of the adversary, they were an easy recruitment target. They had been falling into the hands of Soviets, trying to supplement their poor officers’ salaries and because of their childish naivety of former cavalrymen, sent by the HQ to the USSR almost without any training for

\footnote{Zmowa. IV rozbiór Polski, A.L. Szcześniak (ed.), Warszawa 1990, p. 135.}
a quick penetration of the highest administration institutions and the Red Army. So that those 20-something spies sent hastily into the bear’s mouth were not too self-confident, decision-makers from the Army skimmed on a budget and caused the lack of money in the Polish intelligence and officers had to pay even for using cars of the Polish diplomatic post with their own money.

When the Soviets got bored with this masquerade and revealed via the next provocateur that agent nets of the Polish intelligence in the east were de facto on the Soviet OGPU payroll, leadership of the Division II, after a time of pretending that nothing wrong had happened, reacted with hysterical exaggeration…, by giving up informants recruitment in the USSR at all. This was the way, as the highest officials of Polish intelligence argued, next traps of Soviet Azefs were to be avoided, and there was a need to focus only on what was real instead of possible documents and forgeries of agents’ documents and reports. Only that Russians effectively limited Polish officers moving around the USSR and this way effectively paralyzed Polish intelligence. In a result the Polish Republic was blinded.

In spite of the huge effort of the whole Polish country, which had been giving (depending on methodology) from ca. 23,5% to 42% of the budget to an enormous army consisting of 30 infantry divisions and 10 cavalry divisions, Poland was vulnerable in the East and unable to predict when and how the possible attack would be carried out. Despite the fact that already since 1925 the Office of Strict Council of War had correctly assumed that Polish defense should be based on efficient intelligence, the Polish Republic – at least in the east – had in practice no intelligence at all.

With only a lack of elementary abilities to recognize adversaries’ intentions (and their allies) can be explained the involvement of The Polish Republic in a war with Germans in the situation when the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement had been signed. Polish intelligence was not able to recognize absolutely clear symptoms of the catastrophe coming from the East.

It was already in 1938 when the French ambassador in Moscow, Robert Coulondre got information that the vice minister of foreign affairs of the USSR, Vladimir Potomkin, promoted the idea of the fourth partition of the Republic of Poland as inevitable. Polish intelligence did not raise the topic, nor settlements between chief commands of France and England for April 1939 that the allies would wait for the final result of Polish-German war, quitting the assistance during a border struggle. And then, when German war machine started to crush Poland, Polish intelligence was not able to notice full tactical alert of the Red Army and concentration of the Soviet troops across the whole border line with the Republic of Poland. Even getting rid of wire fences by the Soviets did not raise any concern of neither in Division II of the HQ of Polish Army, nor in the Border Protection Corps (KOP). It all made Polish Army on the eastern provinces of Poland surprised and were sent – almost without any resistance – to prison camps, and finally to execution spots in Katyń.

A doctoral thesis by Konrad Paduszek entitled Look into Lenin’s brain assists in understanding how did it happen that the above events occurred. Its author shall
meticulously summarize the activities of Polish intelligence in the east during the most important period 1921–1927 from a perspective of the following events. Although the topic has been explored by recognized Polish historians, nevertheless, there was a lack of such detailed paper based on source documents that would give such a precise picture of Division II activities in the east and make it easier to understand how was it possible to paralyze it.

The author describes step by step intelligence nets in the USSR (both in the country as well as outside), refers to officer personnel active on a Soviet line, describes sources of information used by the Polish intelligence in the east, cooperation of the Division II with other intelligence services working against the USSR and finally the results of recognition in the USSR. Each chapter is a sum of current knowledge on the topic and a repetition of the past studies, supplemented by a result of additional and meticulous archive query.

K. Paduszek quotes very liberally archive materials and gives a picture of Polish intelligence in the east, despite the fact that the topic is very extensive. His narrative is very meticulous and based on verified facts. The description is supplemented by tables with results of multiannual detailed queries. Wealth of the presented knowledge demonstrates how hardworking person the author is. He has analyzed thousands of documents and has created a vast evidence-based compendium with clear organizing assumptions. The publication by K. Paduszek allows further analyses and new hypotheses. That is why it is not only a synthesis, but a prolegomena to further studies. We should add that because of its meticulousness and completeness this is a publication that should find its place on a bookshelf of every explorer of intelligence during 20-year of inter-war period. At the same time, in spite of the volume of the book, which equals a volume of a phone book, one can read it with interest in a traditional way but one can also read only chosen chapters and use them in a work.

Although the author, while preparing his work, never exhibited any hard-hitting passion and it was not his goal to change the way Division II officers are remembered, his information are unambiguous in his meaning. They indicate that the Second Republic of Poland did not understand what it had to deal with in the east. Despite the Soviets were demonized in newspapers, in reality many did not realize how powerful their services were and how innovative the waged war was. Decision-makers, who had been sending Polish officers to Moscow or Minsk, had lived in a world of delusions and had not accepted that poorly paid and without any know-how, as far as absolutely unique solutions used by the Soviet services is concerned, Division II had to lose that struggle. Polish officers were able to give instructions to their agents, in which they advised them, in case of being in the USSR, not to hesitate and openly come at ex-comrades from the tsar army because they must kept officer honor and esprit de corps. Polish intelligence officers vouched with honor for their Soviet agents, who – in their opinions – had honor and hated Soviets that much that they could not lie. One of the chiefs of Division II ordered his officers in a written form to verify whether a person suspected of being an OGPU informant by... asking openly
that question. Mister colonel seemed to imagine that a person being asked face to face would not have any other option than to say, truth or at least he would get flushed or would start cleaning his glasses nervously, leaving the officer with a sense of insight. Polish officer personnel, being mentally in the 19th century, did not realize that in the “Soviet paradise”, full of mass graves, concentration camps and secret police execution compounds, all human reactions had stopped and people whose families could be murdered at any time, would do anything what the OGPU operator demanded.

Thanks to the work of Konrad Paduszek one can understand how the September defeat was possible and how was possible the subsequent enslaving of the country by Soviet governors with Polish-sounded names. As professor Sławomir Cenckiewicz wrote in a short description of the work: Józef Piłsudski was supposed to say once that Poland’s play with Bolsheviks was about to look into Lenin’s brain. Unfortunately, the plan of the Marshall of Poland (…) has not been realized.

And this is the value of K. Paduszek’s work, instead of encomium we got a careful description of pros and cons of the pre-war Polish intelligence. And thanks to it we can draw conclusions. Not only in respect to the past.