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**Soviet CI activities against the Military Attaché
of the Polish Republic in Moscow at the beginning of its functioning
in the early twenties as an exemplification
of the Russian counter-espionage modus operandi**

According to the basic assumptions of the theory of disinformation operations carried out by the counterintelligence, the decisive role is played by taking over of – or at least control – of information channels of the foreign intelligence. It is obvious that maintaining a false or distorted image of reality is impossible in situations, when a disinformation victim has the ability to compare manipulated pieces of information with intelligence coming from sources uncontrolled by the disinformator.

The Soviets invented this rule almost immediately after their defeat in the war against Poland, when the Bolshevik regime realized that the high hopes for the outbreak of the European revolution could not be fulfilled, and the shaky Soviet state, in the catastrophic economic situation, would be defenseless in the face of the joint intervention of white armies, the western powers and neighboring countries (mainly Poland, which might still want to regain pre-partition borders). In this situation, the only way out was strategic disinformation campaign, presenting Russia in such a state that the West would not be interested in any preventive warfare.

The Soviets managed to accomplish this, alluding the West with their alleged weakness and the hope that the fall of Bolshevik power would be brought about by Russians themselves, that is, by the alleged large scale conspiracy involving the Soviet administration, the Red Army and even the secret service officials from the GPU. However – to be able to convey this falsified image to the West and then uphold it without compromising the colossal intrigue – the Soviets had to solve the fundamental problem – the “blinding” of foreign intelligence services, so that Soviet strategic disinformation could not be overturned by reports delivered by western spies.

The mechanism created by the Soviet counterintelligence under the direction of Artur Artuzov was simple and brilliant at the same time. The GPU effectively cut off any possibilities of strategic information gathering, at the same time providing the necessary picture of Soviet reality – due to that avoiding jeopardizing the operation by constant rotation of spies changed by their headquarters unsatisfied with their constant failures. Intelligence services passed the content prepared by the GPU – in this way, the continual flow of information gained by thriving intelligence rings in Russia flowed into the European states. The western powers intelligence had agents almost at all levels of Soviet power, obtaining secret documents. The spy centers were happy with the activities of their intelligence services; the Western governments were happy to be able to shape their policies against Soviet

Russia on the basis of their detailed interviews. The Russians themselves were most satisfied with this stream of information to the West carefully designed to fit their strategic assumptions.

Such *modus operandi* can be traced back to the example of actions against the Polish Military Attaché Mission, which became the target of Soviet counterintelligence since its creation in 1921.

The GPU, initiating in 1921 the counterintelligence game with the II. Division of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces (further II D), which was trying to create an agents network in Soviet Russia from the ground up, had to block or, in the worst case, make it difficult for Polish officers to source alternative information, than received from double agents, even when it clearly differed from the facts¹.

If II. D could have built a viable intelligence net in Soviet Russia, massive-scaled disinformation carried out by the GPU would soon have been detected, as in the long run symptoms of information distortion cannot be hidden, provided the victim has the potential, to compare different sources. On the other hand, the GPU managed to create the continuous flow of information coming from single-source disguised as many sources from the very beginning of the Polish intelligence activity in the Soviet Union. The result was the situation of virtually complete disinformation of the Polish intelligence.

The goal achieved by the GPU exemplifies the case of its actions against the Polish Military attaché in Moscow². The Soviets realized that the intelligence activities against the Soviet Union make sense only if obtained information would be from an organizational center of the bureaucratic and centralized state, where the situation in the province plays no (or small) role in shaping domestic and foreign policy³.

HQ of the II. D. demanded from its officers in Moscow constantly intelligence cover of the Soviet central military and governmental institutions⁴. Considering the territorial size of the Soviet Union and its bureaucratic-party centrality, it was necessary to consider that periphery events and processes as unimportant to the real policy making. So – basically – the spying activity on Russia had to focus on Moscow. For this reason, the GPU initiating counterintelligence game with the II. Division branch in Estonian Revel from the start demanded from the II. D to second its representatives

¹ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1781, Annex 129 to a surveillance sheet of „M” organization.

² See: Eduard Staunic arguments for anti-soviet organizations in Petersburg; Central Military Archives, II.D, signature I.303.4.2090.

³ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Moscow 1921–1939*, Warsaw 2010, p. 214; R. Majzner *Military Attache's Offices of the II Republic of Poland 1919–1945. Structural and logistic aspects of their functioning*, Częstochowa 2014, p. 355–365; R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield of Military Attaché's Offices of the II Republic of Poland by the example of the Moscow post – an outline of the problem*, in: *Counterintelligence of the II Republic of Poland (1914) 1918–1945 (1948)*, vol. II, Z. Nawrocki (ed.), Warsaw 2014, p. 158; AAN, *Military Attaché's Office in Moscow* (further: AWM), signature 8, NDWP, SG, II.D, Number 30437/II.Ew.5 of 30 July 1921; AAN, *Attachés*, signature. A.II.67/1, NDWP, SG, II.D, L. 32294/II.B.W./4 of 10 August 1921.

⁴ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1781, Annex 129 to a surveillance sheet of „M” organization.

in Moscow⁵. GPU planners understood that Polish analysts, even in the face of large amount of intelligence information received *via* Revel, should demand its verification in the center, that is Moscow. For this reason, the GPU made it easier for Poles to achieve it, and, thanks to their contacts with Polish envoys, they could cover their actions from their arrival to Russia.

However, as it was suggested before, II. D had to accept with the relief the opening up possibility of obtaining intelligence from the new sources. To achieve that, the GPU did everything to paralyze the activities of the Polish intelligence in Moscow prior to the initiation of the counterintelligence game⁶.

A key role in the activities in central Russia played a Polish Military Attaché⁷, which – according to the instructions of August 10. 1921 – was to control all the work of agents in Soviet Russia⁸. So he directed and supervised the intelligence units⁹, had financial resources, dividing them among intelligence officers working in the field and controlled all correspondence flowing from the Soviet Russia to the HQ in Warsaw. For this reason, Military Attache was a priority SOI for the GPU.

Lt. Col. Romuald Wolikowski came to Moscow in July 1921. His diplomatic mission, which he formally took over on the 3rd August 1921¹⁰ was located in the building occupied by the Polish Delegation for Repatriation and in no way corresponded to even the most basic safety requirements¹¹. In fact, it consisted of three rooms, one of which was occupied by Lt. Col. R. Wolikowski with his wife, the other – by the crew of the Mission (ie I. and II. officers and a typist¹²), while the latter room served as the office¹³. Conducting intelligence tasks in such conditions was impossible – in the office rooms there were constantly Attaché, two of his officers and a typist¹⁴. In addition, the rooms – according to the adopted since the beginning by the Soviet strategy of harassment of Poles – were of extremely low standard: among other things, due to the discomfort caused by constant sewers failures¹⁵.

Rooms – due to the fault of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador, who did not understand intelligence basic needs – were located on

⁵ R. Majzner, *Military Attache's Offices...*, p. 354; idem, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 157.

⁶ R. Majzner, *Military Attache's Offices...*, p. 354

⁷ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 207.

⁸ A. Peplowski, *Polish Intelligence towards USSR 1921–1939*, Warsaw 1996, p. 81.

⁹ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 158.

¹⁰ See: ibidem, p. 159.

¹¹ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.27, a letter from the Head of Organizational Section of the Ministry of Military Affairs to Division II of the General Staff of 11 August 1921.

¹² Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.27 a Report by col. Wolikowski to the Head of Division II of the General Staff of 24 December 1921.

¹³ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 164.

¹⁴ W. Skóra, *Activities of the Polish consular service in Russia, Ukraine and USSR between 1918 and 1939*, in: *Ukraina. Jewropa. Swit. Miżnarodnyj zbirnik naukowych prac*, Ternopil 2008, pp. 204–205.

¹⁵ See: R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence sheeld...*, pp. 161–162.

the ground floor, making it difficult or even impossible to secure documents that the officers stored in the chancellery¹⁶. In addition, the rooms were insecure to the eavesdropping through chimneys and there were other rooms in the basement occupied by the caretaker and butler (usually entangled in the variety of illegal or dissocial activities)¹⁷. There is also no information indicating that Attache employees thought of any eavesdropping check or installing any anti-eavesdropping equipment¹⁸. Only after moving Attache premises to a new building in 1925, major Tadeusz Kobylański decided to purchase some equipment for that purpose¹⁹. However – as we know from the bill – he paid for that 82 rubles and 61 kopecks²⁰. That means that that the purchase had to be made from a Soviet bidder, that is, with absolute certainty from the company controlled by the GPU²¹. This information is surprising because the instruction for military Attachés, from the 18th January 1921²². Shows that II. D was aware that using companies from the territory of the accreditation country, for example offering safes, was risky, because it should be assumed they closely cooperated with local special services. Since it was assumed that local counterintelligence would have the key to the safes purchased by Polish missions, it is not clear how it was accepted that the anti-eavesdropping equipment could be purchased in Soviet Russia²³.

One of the most surprising factors in analyzing the situation of the Polish Attache Mission is the shockingly low level of understanding of counterintelligence risk. It was not until October 1926 that the head of the II. D, Lt. Col. Ludwik Bociański, suggested that the Attaché in Moscow, Major T. Kobylański should introduce some counterintelligence measures. The correspondence exchange between the two above mentioned gentlemen shows that they hesitated as to burden with the counterintelligence activity a janitor or a butler²⁴. Because exactly these categories of persons were the most embroiled in the black market frauds and ambiguous social contacts, the idea itself (apart from its unsuccessful execution²⁵) pointed to a faint awareness of counter-intelligence risk by the officers of II. Division.

The II. D HQ had high hopes related to the arrival of the first military Attaché in Moscow Lt.-Col. R. Wolikowski to Moscow²⁶. Hoping to step up intelligence

¹⁶ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 206; see: R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, pp. 159–161.

¹⁷ See: W. Skóra, *Activities of the Polish consular service...*, p. 203.

¹⁸ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 206.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ R. Majzner, *System of a cipher communication of Military Attaché's Offices in the II Republic of Poland*, in: *Successes and failures of the Polish intelligence 1918–1945*, R. Majzner (ed.), Częstochowa 2014, pp. 46–47.

²¹ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 163.

²² Ibidem, p. 165.

²³ A. Peplowski, *Polish intelligence towards USSR...*, p. 81.

²⁴ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 207.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 208.

²⁶ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.102. *Assessment of intelligence activity in*

gathering, the instructions given to R. Wolikowski stressed the necessity of the quick *acquisition of original secret documents*²⁷. However, the II. D HW, demanding from Wolikowski full resignation of all non-intelligence activity for the sake of rapid sources recruitment, at the same time did not provide funds to cover even the current, necessary activities²⁸. Due to that, the first few months, Lt. Col. R. Wolikowski limited his activity to – as he put it euphemistically – *the analysis of the press and his own observations*²⁹. In 1922 the II. D HQ increased at the end the Attaché's budget, but – considering the prices in Moscow – it was still too low to carry out proper intelligence activity³⁰. Due to the lack of funds in 1923, R. Wolikowski refused, for example, to buy a mobilization instruction of the Red Army (RKKA)³¹.

From the very beginning of the Attaché's operations in Moscow, the GPU had taken steps, to paralyze its activity and target it into the direction desired by Soviets, by constant flow of double agents contacting the Polish Attaché staff.

Polish officers (like all diplomats) were covered by 24-hour surveillance³². From the description left by W. Michniewicz, the GPU used the observation usually named as “Japanese observation”, that is a target person is accompanied by watchers, who pay no particular attention to whether they might be detected³³. W. Michniewicz describes in his book losing the “tail”, using a mocking tone, suggesting the ease with which Polish diplomats were getting rid of Soviet observers³⁴. The problem lies in the fact that the officers of II. D apparently did not realize that *in fact* the GPU used a highly sophisticated method of observation called «Chinese-box», when the surveillance team consisting of not really hiding themselves watchers, is accompanied by the second (and sometimes third) team, who follows a target-person, when the person is convinced to have detected and lost the “tail”³⁵. Constant observation was accompanied by actions aimed at intimidating members of the Polish mission, which at times were almost burlesque.

For example, on the 4th September 1921, shortly after the arrival of R. Wolikowski to Moscow, a Soviet guard appeared just before the door leading to the premises of Attaché Mission – despite urgent protests of the *Attaché* – the guard was removed only in December 1921.³⁶ It meant not only a violation of extraterritoriality of

Soviet Russia, 29 November 1922.

²⁷ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 208.

²⁸ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1741, a note of 23 February 1923.

²⁹ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, pp. 207–208.

³⁰ W. Michniewicz, *A great Soviet bluff*, Chicago 1991, p. 83.

³¹ Sic: K.N. Morozow, *Sudiebnyj process sojalistow-riewolucjonierow i tiurimnoje protiwostajanie (1922–1926): etika i taktika protiwoborstwa*, Moskwa 2005, pp. 258–361.

³² Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.27, A Report by the Polish Legation in Moscow to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 15 December 1921.

³³ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 161.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 163.

³⁵ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, pp. 226–227.

³⁶ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.27, Account of: Sic J. Pindela-Emisariski of 28 April 1922.

the Mission, but also that the Soviets possessed the keys to the front door³⁷. In the 22nd September 1921 R. Wolikowski was arrested at the railway station, when he wanted to say goodbye to Polish prisoners of war returning to Poland³⁸. This was accompanied by continuous humiliation of the Attache (eg. the lack of consent to his presence in the course of presenting the credentials by the *Charge d’Affaires*, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Polish embassy in Moscow, Tytus Filipowicz) and putting him aside of the diplomatic life of Moscow, among others, by refusal to maintain contact with him by the representatives of the civil and military authorities³⁹.

Wolikowski’s subordinates were put to much more brutal methods of intimidation. For instance, Jan Pindela-Emisarski fell victim to a typical GPU provocation: he was contacted by double agents (named Katulska and Strukov), who – in accordance with the wishes of the headquarters in Warsaw – supplied the *original documents*, but told the Polish officer, to copy them, allegedly fearing that disappearance of originals could be noticed.

In the 22nd April 1922, during a conspiracy meeting in Katulska’s apartment, which (in favor for the GPU investigators wanting material evidence of spy activity by J. Pindela-Emisarski) instructed the young officer to rewrite the documents she had given to him), the Polish intelligence officer was arrested. As a result, the GPU seized J. Pindela-Emisarski along with the secret documentation copied by himself. Despite conclusive evidence, J. Pindela-Emisarski categorically claimed that he *only came to visit*, and his superior, in an equally surprising way in the face of the facts protested against the expulsion of his subordinate⁴⁰.

The case of the secretary of the Mission – Józef Strzelecki (real name Michalak) was played by the GPU even more brutally. Because he had a habit of voluntarily leaving the Mission area in the evenings, in the 22nd September 1921 he got involved in a fight, was beaten up, detained by the police (interestingly, together with his personal notes⁴¹), and at the police station he was beaten with a revolver handle and asked about *actual Mission’s objectives*. He was released only in the 29th September 1921 in a poor health state (he was beaten and had a high fever)⁴². Capt. Michalak-Strzelecki was replaced by Paweł Misiurewicz, who established the intelligence outpost under the code-name “Łarin”, which operated until the 1st April 1923. P. Misiurewicz did not recruit any informants, but sent to Warsaw brochures and press analyses, during his stay in Moscow, at the same time *listening to the radio in Moscow*⁴³, he also took over from R. Wolikowski his agent Boleslaw Kontrym.

It should be noted here that together with P. Misiurewicz, Lieutenant W. Michniewicz was trans-located to Moscow, however, he was not subordinate to lieutenant colonel. R. Wolikowski, but directly to the intelligence outpost under the code name “Wit-

³⁷ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 164.

³⁸ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 210.

³⁹ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1741, a note of (sic!) J. Szczepkowski to Ministry of Military Affairs of 3 April 1923.

⁴⁰ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 212.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

⁴² R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 162.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp. 162, 166.

teg” in Estonia, managed by Capt. W.T. Drymmer. W. Michniewicz for better conspiracy was firstly placed under the cover of the consular department⁴⁴. The importance attached to the headquarters to the mission of W. Michniewicz can be easily assessed due to the fact that, as a link between him and his sources (ie, the GPU agents hidden under the cover of an anti-Bolshevik organization of monarchist character), served an officer Andrzej Lewicki secretly sent from Warsaw under a cover of an escort diplomatic courier⁴⁵.

Psychological pressure on the members of the mission was also exercised by breaking into the Attaché premises and violations of diplomatic correspondence⁴⁶. In all these cases, the traces left by perpetrators were so theatrical, that the II. D officers (pretty correctly) ruled out that the secret information was gained by the GPU, because these activities – in their opinion – were too unprofessional⁴⁷. On the other hand, the fact that the GPU infiltrated the Polish premises so easily had an impact on the psyche of officers, especially because of lacking security measures (for example, Mr Michniewicz’s secret agent documents had to be kept in a cardboard suitcase under the bed).

It must be emphasized that – although lack of full documentary evidence – it can be assumed that it is highly probable that all active members of the Polish Mission were duped by double agents sent by the GPU, who stuffed them with the disinformation, while intimidating Polish officers, in order to discourage their own activity. Such were the strategic assumptions of the entire operation against the Poles, and the conditions created by the GPU practically excluded effective recruitment activities conducted by the Polish side.

At the same time, interestingly, in the actions against military Attaché, the GPU applied an additional *trick* by convincing Polish analysts that the double agents were used by *Chekists* with the short-term goal, ie., to compromise a Polish intelligence officer, in order to expel him from Russia. In this way, the GPU allowed the Polish analysts to re-build a fake *modus operandi* of the GPU. Poles were to come to the conclusion on the basis of subsequent GPU provocations that double agents are used for short term purposes, just to compromise and expel Polish military diplomats – in this way making it easier for the GPU, to handle double agents in a permanent and long-standing contact with the Polish intelligence. R. Wolikowski established several agent contacts – despite the lack of evidence – in view of the operational situation of the Attache, we can blindly assume that at least part of them was either “offered” by the GPU or taken over by the Soviets in the operation course.

We have, in addition to the operational logic of the Soviet operation, also some clues. R. Wolikowski listed several nicknames (?) of his contacts in 1922, among them persons named Kamieniecki, Piątkiewicz, Pietrasov, Szrom, Siemaszko, Mariańska,

⁴⁴ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1803, a Report by col. Wolikowski to the Head of Division II of Border Guard of 1922.

⁴⁵ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, pp. 208–209.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

⁴⁷ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1741, a Note by Division II of Border Guard of 20 January 1923.

Krasowski, Alfred from Mińsk, Artur Krygier, Władysław Nałęcz-Wojciechowski and Bolesław Kontrym⁴⁸. A careful analysis of archival information on them leads to some indications of the truthfulness of the assumption that Poles had been surrounded by provocateurs from the beginning of their mission in Moscow. For example, A. Krygier was sentenced to death by the Soviets for spying for Poland in February 1923, and then – in spite of the Soviet law – the sentence was reduced to 10 years in prison (no data, whether he actually went to prison). This may suggest that he could remain a relationship with the GPU, which either released a false piece of information on his conviction or as a reward for his provocateur's activities reduced a real sentence⁴⁹. W. Wojciechowski-Nałęcz characterized by R. Wolikowski as a *communist mason occultist type with a very indistinct physiognomy*⁵⁰, remaining in close relationships with the members of the Communist Party (RKP(b)). Also in this case, the characteristic given by R. Wolikowski does not give grounds for accepting that W. Nałęcz-Wojciechowski could have any reason. to cooperate with the Polish intelligence, especially as – as we know from military Attaché reports – there were no adequate funds for buying information, so it must be assumed that the emphasis in agent's recruitment was on ideological or national motives. W. Nałęcz-Wojciechowski (if based on the characteristics of R. Wolikowski), however, could not have them.

The most important agent of R. Wolikowski was B. Kontrym, about which he wrote:

*This man for a long time was helpful in obtaining the necessary information about the Red Army and worked with a great courage and dedication to*⁵¹. B. Kontrym made contact with Lt. Col. R. Wolikowski by his brother-in-law Wictor Przeclawski, who arranged a meeting between them in February 1922. (Almost a month after Strzelecki's case)⁵², in the apartment of military Attaché (which is surprising, because the staff of the Polish Mission should have been aware the institution was constantly observed, and therefore the GPU had to have knowledge of people coming in and out of the building⁵³).

During the first interview, B. Kontrym claimed to serve in the same army unit as R. Wolikowski, winning the confidence of military attaché⁵⁴. He declared with the willingness, to cooperate with II. D in exchange for facilitating his repatriation to the country, although the analysis of the fate of the Polish revolutionaries returning to Poland proves that Soviet Russia in no way hindered their repatriation⁵⁵.

As a result of the agreement, B. Kontrym (who was then the high ranking RKKA officer), from February to August 1922, regularly met with R. Wolikowski, providing,

⁴⁸ W. Pasek, *A bold life of Bolesław Kontrym. Biography of a soldier and a policeman 1898–1953*, Warsaw 2006, pp. 63–64.

⁴⁹ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 161.

⁵⁰ W. Pasek, *A bold life of Bolesław Kontrym...*, pp. 63–64.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² W. Pasek, *A bold life of Bolesław Kontrym...*, p. 65.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 67–68.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 61–62.

among others, intelligence on the activities of Soviet spies in the form of extracts of intelligence obtained in the Republic of Poland, the details of the dislocation of the Red Army⁵⁶ and the Academy of General Staff of the RKKA, including the personnel administration and faculty⁵⁷. These materials were intelligence achievements of the outpost “*Larin*” which took over handling of B. Kontrym⁵⁸. For unknown reasons, a military attaché – instead of continuing so promising intelligence activities in Moscow – told B. Kontrym, to research the situation on the Soviet-Turkish border. B. Kontrym rapidly was transferred to the Soviet Border Guard (*Pogranotriad*) in Tiflis. Yet, after three weeks, he returned from the Caucasus (claiming that he had obtained a leave) to Moscow, reported on his situation and asked to facilitate his return to Poland. Lt. Col. R. Wolikowski reluctantly came to the request, but when B. Kontrym at the next meeting hinted that he *had the impression that he was under observation by GPU*, R. Wolikowski told him to hide, and after a few days, gave him several gold rubles and the notification to the Consul of the Republic of Poland in Minsk. Finally, B. Kontrym crossed *the de facto* border without a significant participation of Polish intelligence, using only the consulate stamps on silk, which he presented to Polish border guards⁵⁹.

Both logical assumptions of the disinformation operation carried out by the GPU and Russian archive information prove that B. Kontrym was a Soviet double-agent, but – on the basis of archival records – it is not certain whether he worked for the GPU or military intelligence (*Razwiedupr*). According to the information provided by the Russian Federal archive (*Архивная справка Но. 1626 from 30.08.2005*) between mid-1921 and the end of 1922. B. Kontrym was an agent of the Soviet military intelligence⁶⁰, but his use for disinforming the Polish military Attaché in Moscow, which was overlooked by a Polish renegade Wiktor Witkowski Marczewski – ⁶¹ suggests *that, de facto*, B. Kontrym worked for the GPU.

Apart from the archival information mentioned above also has the logic of the solutions adopted by the Bolsheviks in the widely understood action of cutting off Poles from the real sources (as I have already written, the GPU blocked all Polish officers’ own initiatives while giving them their own sources) corroborates the hypothesis of Kontrym’s agent activity. Also the simple behavior analysis of B. Kontrym activities in Moscow confirms the archival record. It is difficult to believe that the Soviet counterintelligence did not note his regular meetings in the observed 24 hours a day Polish mission, the departure of his family to Poland, and finally the actual desertion from *Pogranotriad* (because he did not return to his unit after the leave⁶². In addition, B. Kontrym after his escape to Poland – as a high ranking Red Army officer (*kombryg*)

⁵⁶ Ibidem, pp. 67–69.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, pp. 69–70.

⁵⁸ *Архивная справка No 1626-u z 30 VIII 2005* – from: W. Pasek, *A bold life of Bolesław Kontrym...*, p. 70–71.

⁵⁹ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 161.

⁶⁰ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, pp. 212–213.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 213.

⁶² M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, pp. 213.

– was neither convicted in absentia for espionage, nor deprived of awards, and in Soviet Russia his brother Constantine was not in any way victimized⁶³.

Throughout the Soviet period, B. Kontrym was mentioned in all Soviet publications as the holder of three Red Banner medals, which would have been excluded if he had been declared a spy. In Soviet military documents, no escape to Poland was reported at all. Instead of annotating the escape, they included the statement that in December 1922 he was in Poland, although the same materials recorded the course of his police career in Poland and his fate during World War II, and eventually his arrest in 1948 and later the death, defined as a *repressions in the Soviet Union*⁶⁴.

This clearly demonstrates that B. Kontrym in 1921–1922 was used as a double agent by the Soviet counter-intelligence in “blinding” Polish intelligence.

On the 12th January 1923, the GPU finally decided to compromise R. Wolikowski. As part of the follow-up of J. Pindela-Emisarski’s case⁶⁵, a Polish member of the Polish Committee on Repatriation in Minsk, Aleksander Mertz was detained by the GPU. *Chekists* seized during the search, among other documents, a letter from R. Wolikowski, in which he wrote openly about the intelligence provided by one of his sources (“Alfred”) and revealed the nature of contacts with B. Kontrym, asking A. Mertz, to facilitate Kontrym’s departure from the Soviet Union⁶⁶. It is interesting that Lt. Col. R. Wolikowski – via – A. Mertz, passed the money for “Alfred” and asked him for help in the case of B. Kontrym (breaking all rules of conspiracy), knowing that A. Mertz was engaged in smuggling people across the border⁶⁷. It should be concluded that R. Wolikowski did not understand that A. Mertz’s illegal activity could be easily used by the GPU, to conduct a provocation against the Polish Mission. It is worth mentioning here that R. Wolikowski – trying to clean himself up in the eyes of the HQ – not only lied in his report, claiming that he had not disclosed the secret content in an unclassified letter, but in addition turned to W. Michniewicz with an openly corrupt proposal⁶⁸: *Wolikowski offered me to steal the compromising him documents on Mertz. He promised me (...) dollars from his own funds, as well as the Mission’s*⁶⁹. The GPU used this situation not only to further compromise Wolikowski, but in addition to that, enlarged the trust of Poles in a double agents net – controlled by the GPU. Copies of the letters seized by the GPU were provided by the Soviet provocateurs to Polish spy E. Czyżewski (outpost under the code name “Czajka”)⁷⁰.

⁶³ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.350, a Note by W. Michniewicz to the Head of Division II of Border Guard of 8 February 1923.

⁶⁴ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 213.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

⁶⁶ R. Majzner, *Military Attaché’s Offices...*, p. 354.

⁶⁷ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 214.

⁶⁸ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1750, a Note by the Ministry Of Military Affairs to cavalry captain P. Próchnicki of 2 July 1923.

⁶⁹ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 214.

⁷⁰ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1759, a Report on the activities of Polish

Consequently, in the 2nd March 1923, Lt. Col. Wolikowski left Moscow and Poles remained convinced that the agents ring in contact with E. Czyżewski possessed extraordinary operational capabilities (for copies of the letters suggested that sources had to have access to the pending at the moment investigations with the highest degree of importance)⁷¹.

Mertz's scandal should have shaken the functioning of the Polish intelligence in Soviet Russia⁷², but the only preventive measures taken by the HQ were the change of code-names of intelligence outposts: "Larin" to "A.5", "Burski" to "U.6", "Witteg" to "J.6" and the withdrawal of the Polish of. P. Misiurewicz. The only solution of some practical importance was the separation of activities of intelligence outposts and the military attaché⁷³.

The military Attaché and his subordinates were though in direct contact with the intelligence officers and were obliged to supervise the whole of their intelligence activities. The collection and rude analysis of the intelligence material and controlling the intelligence work *in the strict sense* was the task of the second helper⁷⁴. That Moscow was aware of those solutions can be inferred from the fact that the Soviets did not want to agree to the arrival of a new II. helper, the S. Próchnicki, after the departure to Poland of P. Misiurewicz. Therefore, Capt S. Próchnicki came to Moscow formally as honorary attache of the Mission⁷⁵.

As always before – the HQ, sending him to Moscow – put forward the demands of *gaining the intelligence control of the central authorities of Soviet Russia*⁷⁶, but at the same time – it seems that the HQ supervisors slowly began to understand the specific nature of the espionage activities in Moscow, as evidenced by the report from 1924: *Given the difficult terrain conditions, you cannot count on the rapid growth of the organizational network*⁷⁷. But S. Próchnicki, who, unlike R. Wolikowski had a fairly large budget (\$ 500 per month, of which \$ 50 went to the reimbursement of car use⁷⁸), repeated the mistakes of his predecessors and already in the first months of stay in Moscow quickly recruited four agents. Thanks to that, he provided the HQ in Warsaw with so much information (including 80 reports of dislocation of Soviet troops, ordnance orders etc.⁷⁹) that his outpost (the code name "R10") became one of the most important sources of information for the II. D HQ⁸⁰. The fact that all sour-

intelligence posts in the east for the second quarter of 1924.

⁷¹ It is worth recalling that major T. Kobylański spent on anti-surveillance security of the Military Attaché Office ca.42 \$.

⁷² Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1839, a list of materials sent by "R.10".

⁷³ M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, p. 215.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 216.

⁷⁵ Central Military Archives, II. D, signature. I.303.4.1750, a Report by major Kobylański to the Head of Division II of the General Staff of 9 July 1924.

⁷⁶ P. Wiczorkiewicz, *Polish agents of the Kremlin*, „Wprost” 2005, no. 51.

⁷⁷ J. Masterman, *British system of double agents 1939–1945*, Warsaw 1973, p. 262.

⁷⁸ Ch. Andrew, O. Gordijewski, Warsaw 1997, p. 87.

⁷⁹ R. Majzner, *Deficiencies in counterintelligence shield...*, p. 159.

⁸⁰ W. Michniewicz, *A great Soviet bluff...*, p. 83.

ces of rtm. S. Próchnicki were – at best – controlled by the GPU⁸¹ we conclude from the fact that already in the 9th August 1924 People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (*Narodnyj komissariat inostrannykh dzieł*) informed the Polish *charge d'affaires* that the activities of S. Próchnicki had been well known to the GPU, but tolerated, not to expose the Soviet diplomatic staff in Poland to repercussions conducted by Poles against the Soviet Embassy (Polpriedstwo)⁸². Since the Warsaw authorities publicized the case of Kazimierz Kobecki accused of spying for the Soviet Union, Moscow decided not to continue doing so and considered Próchnicki *persona non grata*⁸³.

Incidentally, this explanation – although accepted by historians – is unreliable. Interruption by the GPU such a perfectly developing counterintelligence game, to make retaliation against the Poles, is contrary to the elementary logic of counterintelligence, requiring constant balance of operational profits and losses. From this point of view, it cannot be excluded that the thesis of prof. P. Wiczorkiewicz⁸⁴ of recruitment of rtm. S. Próchnicki by Russians, may be true and his expulsion from the Soviet Union could only be a form of granting him plausibility in the eyes of his superiors.

Summarizing the above considerations on the possibility of blocking by the GPU alternative ways of verifying the disinformation fed to Poles, it is worth noting that the *Chekists* used constantly a perfectly thought over *modus operandi*: on the one hand they obstructed all actions of the military Attaché Mission, by the operational cover of unusual intensity, constant psychological pressure and provocations against the Polish officers, on the other hand opened for them the gates to the interesting information of the strategic importance.

The expectations of the Polish HQ forwarded to Polish officers in Moscow were very high and at the same time detached from the realities of the Soviet era. The officers were therefore under the pressure of demands formulated by the HQ, while having very moderate possibilities of their fulfillment.

It should be emphasized that the military Attaché Mission in Moscow acted, in fact, under the full operational control of the Soviet counterintelligence, the intensity of which corresponded to the terms of *a quasi war*. And one must keep in mind that – as a practitioner and counterintelligence theorist, John Masterman wrote – under the full military control of the diplomatic missions and foreigners residing in the territory of a state in control – essentially any spy activity is excluded⁸⁵. You just cannot recruit agents when you are constantly under multi layer control. A spy can – in exceptional cases – obtain the intelligence provided by an agent (using so-called observation dead zones, drop boxes etc.), but no recruitment in such conditions can succeed.

⁸¹ Sic: M. Kruszyński, *Embassy of the Republic of Poland...*, pp. 228–229.

⁸² September 1939 in the eastern frontier land in accounts, compiled by C. Grzelak, Warsaw 1999, pp. 37–38.

⁸³ R. Majzner, *Military Attaché's Offices...*, p. 485.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, p. 114–115.

⁸⁵ R. Wraga, *Trust*, „Kultura” 1949, nr 4/21–5/22, p. 168.

The Polish intelligence officers came to the country under the full control of the Soviets, fully terrorized by the GPU, without having any previous operational assets, no prior espionage experience, in addition they did not receive from the HQ almost any work tools (even as basic as funds in the appropriate height) and stayed under the 24-hour observation.

It is hardly possible that the Polish officers knew the mentioned above Chinese -box method of observation, but a quote from W. Michniewicz is enough, to realize that the conditions described in it made any operating activities barely possible, or – at best – extremely difficult: *Our movements around the city were hampered by the constant observation (...) barely behind the premises door, in the street we noticed the watchers brazenly carrying out their tasks, (...) for getting rid of them, we used a larger group walks. At the busy intersection of streets, scattering in all directions, like crows hearing a shot. The effect was short-lived. Soon, they increased the number of agents who followed us. As many walking persons, as many agents!* Adding to that the functioning in the Polish Mission agents of the GPU in the form of Russian civilian workers, an inappropriate choice of Polish diplomatic staff and, the totally terrorized population and the cult of secrecy in the Soviet Union, lets understand the scale of the problem, Polish officers had to face.

Additionally we should take into account the atmosphere of the NEP, which allowed to earn a lot of money on speculation, what gave the GPU to hand levers in the form of prosecution threats against Poles active on the black market and incomprehensible decisions of the Polish HQ, unwilling to provide enough money, so that espionage outposts could effectively conduct intelligence activities, Additionally in 1921 wages of the military attaché staff were reduced by 50%. All these factors enable to put out a working hypothesis that the representatives of the Polish intelligence service were an easy target for the GPU.

Not necessarily it had to result in direct recruitment of them (although surely such cases occurred), but above all, it produced the atmosphere inducing Polish officers to risk minimization. Any independent action could in fact end up with expulsion from Russia (what would bring about further reduction of the salary, because wages in the Polish army at the beginning of the 20s were extremely low) and with being brutally beaten during the arrest. This situation induced the Polish intelligence staff, to accept even such sources that seemed suspicious, but were used to meet the expectations of Warsaw HQ, without putting themselves at risk. Perhaps the best example of this approach is the report cited above of R. Wolikowski, who described his agent, as a person with a *very indistinct physiognomy*, adding the details of the characteristics that make impossible to find the motivation pushing the agent to having contacts with the Polish spies, that is, to commit a crime threatened in the Soviet Union with the death penalty.

In this situation, the GPU could easily spin out a dual – agent net around Poles, who, unable to effectively work in the reality totally controlled by the GPU, accepted agents-provocateurs offering them the illusion of effective intelligence gathering. As

Capt. Jerzy Niezbrzycki wrote many years after: *There is nothing more fatal for each intelligence agency, as such a situation, when, great and easy opportunities appear out of the blue, offering a golden chance, to achieve extremely valuable intelligence. Then the agency directs the bulk of its efforts and all its energy, to exploit these opportunities. At the same time, it neglects other ways, it ceases being creative.*

Exactly that was achieved by the *Chekists* in the early 20s in Moscow. Polish officers, terrorized, kept under constant surveillance by the GPU, and at the same time under pressure exercised by Warsaw Headquarters demanding quick effects fell victims to the *big and easy opportunities* that offered them double agents provided by the GPU. The GPU planners, produced a simple situation: on the one hand, any activity of the officers of their own could only lead to problems with low probability of obtaining valuable information, on the other hand, accepting the opening of *easy opportunities* gave the opportunity to be highly evaluated by the HQ. It lies in human nature preferring easy ways. GPU knew this perfectly well.

Soviet *modus operandi* – thanks to its simplicity and complexity at the same time – proved to be extremely effective. It must be assumed, therefore, that it has been effectively used and improved to date

Abstract

The author analyses *modus operandi* of the Soviet GPU in terms of disinformation operations carried out against intelligence posts by the example of Polish services located in Soviet Russia in the first half of 1920s. The author has put forward a thesis that Soviet services, thanks to applied operational methods, managed to take a total control over Polish intelligence sources of information. The mechanism of such operations created by Soviets in connection with some mistakes by the II. Division of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces (further II D) cut Polish intelligence from genuine information, and, at the same time, it enabled to get them double agents and control channels of information from the USSR to the West. The author examines some concrete historical cases to prove a thesis about the complexity of the Soviet CI operation carried out to strategic disinformation, and on the basis of such cases he tries to reconstruct the methodology of Soviet services

Keywords: offensive counterintelligence, GPU, II Division of the Polish General Staff, Soviet special services, disinformation, military attache in Moscow, counterintelligence games, double agents.