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Andrzej Krzak, *Red Azefs. „MOCR-Trust” Affair 1922–1927*¹

Disinformation as a phenomenon in the political science area started to have a stunning career in the 1960s when the West realized that the Soviet Union had been using deception as a tool to gain strategic political goals on a vast scale.

Western think-tanks and special services owed this discovery mainly to Anatoliy Golitsyn, defector from the other side of the Iron Curtain. With help of the CIA he managed to escape from the KGB residency in Helsinki to the United States. Already under his initial intelligence interrogations it became clear that the intelligence Golitsyn had provided was not a routine and dull knowledge of an average KGB officer who could sell only names of their officemates and a few details from covert operations abroad carried out by the Soviet KGB. In fact Golitsyn gave Americans the key to understand the USSR information and intelligence strategy. He described “disinformation” as a tool used constantly and on each possible level of activity by Soviet special services, propaganda centers and party-political centers.

Revelations by Golitsyn were greatly and quickly appreciated by James Jesus Angleton, CIA counter-intelligence director, who - together with a group of most trusted officers, put into operational practice theoretical assumptions emerging from Golitsyn information. The faith in accuracy of information from the defector from the “Evil Empire” enhanced the appearance in the West of a next KGB defector, Yuri Nosenko, who – exactly just like Golitsyn had predicted – discredited his information. It was a direct proof for Angleton that something that at the beginning seemed to be a paranoid theory, in reality was a handy tool not only to understand the enemy but also to predict their future steps. Angleton’s team put a lot of effort to use this tool: apart from a very extensive search for a mole inside the CIA, 1227 days of interrogations of Nosenko and creating monstrous records of inconsistencies in his statements, the team got back to history and discovered that Golitsyn’s revelations were nothing new. Studying Soviet disinformation, the CIA revealed – to their astonishment – that it was the same shock the West had got 30 years earlier when surprised public opinion in the West had realized that Soviet services had been deceiving almost all European intelligence services and additionally Japan for six years.

In 1927 alike as in 1961 Western spies felt like people who had been swindled by cheaters at the flea market: ridiculed and furious but also helpless and with no money. The Trust affair could allow Western analysts to reconstruct Soviet modus operandi. Theoretically, someone who was deceived should learn a lesson from this. And yet CIA officers realized that Golitsyn revealed secrets that should have been known

¹ Warsaw 2010, WCEO, p. 197

for a long time and remembered by the West. Somehow, Western democracies forgot the lesson from Trust and they were lead around by the nose by the professional manipulators from Lubyanka. This was the reason why the CIA started to analyze the affair from more than 30 years back to link historic themes with Golitsyn's explanations. The world recalled that the Soviets had made the West believe that USSR was saturated with omni-conspiracy of counter-revolutionaries, hiding behind masks of red generals, members of the Politburo and even members of the Soviet GPU. You just had to wait a while that this hidden structure would solidify, get weapons and money from the West and the red plague would disappear, eliminated by officers and clerks allegiant to the tsar.

Media wrote about the Trust and disinformation in the 1960s. There were books and articles, thrilled public kept saying again and again the theory about a desert of mirrors, secret services reality in which the right and wrong were only a matter of perspective. Nevertheless, apart from this media hype, nobody in reality investigated the Trust affair. Americans, enchanted by good sounding slogans, kept repeating only trite words, without going into further historic details and citing each other. Interesting that in the time of higher interest in the Soviet disinformation and the Trust, former Polish officers of the Division II dealing with the affair tried to talk about this, but they either took part in wire fraud like the then CIA consultant, former head of the „East” Section of the Division II Jerzy Niezbrzycki, or they were ignored or laughed at like Władysław Michniewicz. This way, Polish voice in the discussion, although should be carefully listened because Poles had the first hand knowledge, went unanswered.

Polish plot in the Trust affair emerged only in professor Krzak article who drafted in 2010 a sketch of Soviet operation from before 80 years. Thanks to archive materials he managed to reconstruct main actors of that play and its main plots. Professor Krzak was probably the first to show how important role in the affair Poles had played. On both sides of the line. Professor Krzak presents in his book the power of betrayal that struck the young then Poland. One of the authors of the operation was Polish renegade, Wiktor Steckiewicz who had sold, together with other renegades, the whole intelligence net of the Polish Military Organization (POW) in Ukraine to Soviets, making Poland blind in the east. Steckiewicz activities were supervised by another even more dangerous renegade, Feliks Dzierżyński. His helpmates were other traitors helping the Soviet empire to knock their own homeland down with an astonishing willingness. Former members of Legions, colleagues of the POW command, Wiktor Witkowski-Marczewski, Leopold Czyłlok and many, many more who eagerly served Soviet masters in an unintelligible act of apostasy from Polishness.

On the other side, A. Krzak presents in his book a galaxy of Polish intelligence officers who were toyed with by Bolsheviks. He describes contact points between Division II and the Trust in Moscow: Tadeusz Werner, Władysław Michniewicz, Edward Czyżewski, Aleksander Niedziński and their supervisors: Wiktor Tomir Drymmer, Michał Talikowski, Tadeusz Kobylański, Ignacy Boerner, Romuald Wolikowski, Michał Bajer. The whole galaxy of figures who fell into a Soviet trap from different reasons. Probably the most interesting part of the book is a description of what happened in

Polish intelligence service after they had discovered that all that they had got from the Soviet Russia was in fact disinformation. A. Krzak cites documents that paint a worrying picture of people who wanted to keep this affair in secret at all costs and particularly the fact that they took part in it. Instead of investigation procedures, preventive arrests – superficial actions. Setting up committees, bureaucratic procedures, production of documents obfuscating the case, looking for convenient explanations and last but not least a clear assignment of liability to Ignacy Matuszewski, a man who in fact was not in the structure of intelligence anymore and could not defend himself but because of his friendship with Marshall Piłsudski could be an obstacle in one's career. It was a convenient end of the case for all who were directly involved and responsible. No consequences and no really deep reform of the Polish intelligence. A. Krzak thinks straight that the activities of Division II after the Trust deconspiracy were a kind of aberration. He gives an example of Aleksander Nidziński being appointed a head of the „East” Section, an officer who was the most involved one in Trust case. Additionally, he was compromised by having a mistress in Moscow who was arrested by the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU).

The book by A.Krzak is a remarkably valuable contribution to research into the Trust case. One may regret only that the author chose an outreach form instead of scientific monograph, but it also should be assumed that in history area looking for the true is a step by step process.

To conclude, one sad ascertainment: currently the West is amazed after some manipulation affairs by Russian services happen once again. Exactly the same as in 1927 and 1961 the world is thrilled by media reports on elections manipulations by the Russian Foreign Intelligence in the USA, a slow partition of Ukraine and is (as usual) very unpleasantly surprised by the Russian authorities policy changes including such spectacular as Crimea annexation. And probably after some time, as was many times in the past, the analysts will repeat after W. Churchill that „Russia is like a puzzle shrouded in a mystery with an enigma inside” and they will forget once more. Like people who are deceived by the commercials promising being young and attractive.

Untill next time.