

Marek Świerczek

T.K. Gładkow, *Artur Artuzow*¹

The notion of „genius” is usually associated with science and art. There are areas, in which human intellect can lift its spirits based on the stereotype. However, sometimes such terms are extended to other non-creation related areas, like war or criminality. The terms like “military genius” or “criminal genius” shall sometimes be applied. They are accepted and do not offend linguistic purism.

Gładkow’s book fits into the above semantic deliberations. The book tells a story of a true genius, devoted to the service of the criminal system, that eventually killed him after using him and his work. The man’s name is Artur Artuzov. In the beginning of the 1920s he created the basis for what has been and still is a challenge for the free world – a mechanism of the strategic disinformation carried out by Russian special services.

Artuzov was not even of Russian origin. He was a Swiss citizen, his surname at birth was Frautschi after his father, the cheese maker, and his name was Christian after his grandfather. He got in Russia due to his father, who – like many other nationals of western Europe - wanted to make a fortune in the fast growing Romanovs’ empire. Young Christian studied at the St. Petersburg Polytechnic but his interests went far beyond mechanics and chemistry. He wrote poems, dealt with literature, music, foreign languages and, above all, theatre, which resulted some time later in incorporation of some theatrics in Soviet counterintelligence activities. It was probably that got him closer to the chief of the OGPU, Vyacheslav Menzhinsky in the future, who published his works. Additionally, young Frautschi, like the whole Russian intelligentsia, was adopting ideas shaking the basis of the empire up. After 1905 the Russian intelligentsia, as S. Cat wrote, turned to hate their own country. New ideas started to come from the West. The spiritism was developing, mystical movements and Masonry took place of the former attachment to the Orthodox Church. The Masonry together with bourgeoisie and generals aimed at rebuilding the then country under Tsar Nikolai II, who combined - in a typical Russian way - depressing incompetence with a holy belief that his power over millions of people was given him by the God, and therefore he could not share it with anyone. This set of ideas dizzied Russian intelligentsia which combined the Slavic idealism with an almost Mongol mentality of rulers of that Euro-Asiatic empire. Consequently, numerous revolutionary movements developed, and – defied the European logic – claiming he necessity of eradicating parasitic classes, were, at the same time, supported by at least part of those classes passing lots of money for terrorist activities. This was the way to bring down the hated monarchy. The blinded and thoughtless tsar hit back with repression and extended police apparatus. It resulted in interpenetration of the security and revolutionary

¹ T.K. Gładkow, *Artur Artuzow*. Moskwa 2008, Mołodaja Gwardia, 477 s.

organizations infiltrating each other with double agents. At the same time, the circles of no political activity, noticed Stolypin's reforms and rapid pace of development, which, in the end, had to lead to social and political changes in Russia. One can assume that this balance of power shaped by the corrupt and ruled by the Rasputin tsarist court, the bourgeoisie full of the West, the intelligentsia discussing in Masonic circles and aggressive revolutionary organizations could last checking each other.

Yet, the tsar's foolishness got in the way. Encouraged by ambitious generals he got the totally unprepared Russia in war with central states. The imperial army defeat coincided with a typical for Russian folk contempt for rulers' weaknesses as well as with an active propaganda of the opposition composed of utopia-believers revolutionaries, parochial Masons and the bourgeoisie dreaming of a plutocracy based on the western model. The February Revolution broke out despite the fact that the Russian army was withdrawing in no panic, the economy managed to supply military troops with food and equipment and Russia was the only struggling country with no ration cards. In a paroxysm of failure and for fear of insurrection in the empire – Nikolai II gave up his throne. The festival of the political freedom started. It led to the dismantlement of the state machinery ending in a military coup, grandly called the October Revolution. The seizure of power by the Bolsheviks was not the end of the story. Russia plunged into the economic chaos, civil war, mass terror and constant failure.

This brief historical background is necessary to understand what exactly is this T. Gladkov's story really about? In his work the Russian author creates the picture of Artuzov as taken directly from the stories about Felix Dzerzhinsky in a way typical for writers and researchers linked to Lubyanka. At the picture Artuzov is a noble figure. He is modest, dedicated to the cause of the revolution, giving up the privileges, having nothing to do with Cheka crimes, a real counterintelligence genius.

This is nonsense. Artuzov was recommended for the service in the counterintelligence structures by a pre-war revolutionary, Mikhail Kedrov and like him was extremely cruel and barbaric without human feeling. The Russian historian leaves the facts unsaid or distorts them. By describing next counterrevolutionary organizations by agents provocateurs sent by Artuzov, he does not mention the fate of their members, shot after turning them beaten out of the Cheka torture chambers. He does not mention extorting confessions by torture, psychopathic interrogation methods, like locking a prisoner in a cellar full of decomposing bodies or waterboarding. No mention of "removing one's gloves", i.e. peeling man's skin from captives' palms after pouring their hands with boiling water. No mention of arrests of family members and threats of death in case of no cooperation, no mention of crushing shin bones between railway tracks, squeezing heads in a vice and throwing the convicted into a blast furnace. He was just a Soviet genius of counterintelligence, having – in accordance with the "Iron Felix" rule – clean hands, a cool head and a warm heart...

However, without the propaganda pretentiousness and the ordinary disinformation, Gladkov's book allows us to understand more or less the Artuzov phenomenon.

We got to realise that the Soviet Russia, apart from mass graves, state terror, the system of concentration camps and a lie as the tool of politics, had one undeniable achievement, i.e. an ordinary human lie and duplicity were transformed into a method of the state organs work. Thanks to Artuzov, Soviets discovered that it was not necessary to exterminate opponents, much better was to deceive them. Basically, because of Artuzov, Soviet special services discovered the mass defiance and the strategic disinformation as basic tools for secret services.

Although Artuzov and his kind sent hundreds of people to a brutal death, he differed from them in intelligence. Additionally, he was extremely happy because he was supervised by other intellectually gifted psychopaths of Polish origin², i.e. Felix Dzerzhinsky and Vyacheslav Menzhinsky.

And it is due to Artuzov that the systematic and mass provocation was included in the Soviet services methodology, as well as indiscriminate use of double agents, setting up alleged underground organizations or taking control of existing organizations, long lasting and sophisticated counterintelligence operations with opponents not to take advantage of their gullibility once, but to deceive them systematically for as long as possible. Artuzov and his followers refined the method. First operations of this kind, like bringing to the Soviet Russia a Soviet enemy, Boris Savinkov, were relatively short, ca. few months' time. In the form of the developed operation "Trust" they had been lasting between 1921 and 1927. The last known operation of this kind had been run in Cuba against the CIA for over the last 25 years!

Artuzov was behind taking over basic assumptions of the best tsarist criminologist, colonel Arkadiy Koshko. According to him infiltration of hostile organizations and environments should be performed by people coming from them, in all aspects similar to their victims and being able to win their trust. Artuzov took also advantage of the lessons learned from the Jewno Azef case by the Okhrana, which showed that double agents are usually an effective weapon if fully controlled. The Cheka and then the GPU gave Artuzov control tools unavailable to services of civilized countries. He could send out his agents provocateurs planting them to foreign intelligence services and underground organizations because of the collective responsibility, they were always committed to the Soviet authorities. The same authorities which gave themselves the right to punish for disloyalty not only the agents but their families and friends as well. Using such gruesome methods, Artuzov was an eminently intelligent person with a fanatical belief in the communism. Always when tortures and fear failed, he reached for other methods like brainwashing applicable by modern sects. Victims of such "soft" methods of influence became, *inter alia*, members of the Polish Military Organisation (POW), who were caught by the Cheka while on spying mission in the Soviet Russia. Thanks to the ideological input by Artuzov, they became communist fanatics combating their own state. The whole range of Polish renegades changed their positions, including Wiktor Steckiewicz, Ignacy Dobrzyński, Wiktor Marczewski,

² In case of Menzhinsky it has not been definitely confirmed.

Juna Przepilińska, Irena Zatorska, Karol Czyłlok, Maria Nawrocka-Niedźwiałowska... All of them followed Artuzov blindly like children followed the Rat-Catcher of Hamelin. It was not only that they betrayed Poland but encouraging others to the betrayal. Like a tumour on a tissue that spreads metastasis or vampire victims biting their prizes.

Avoiding mass executions in his Lubyanka stories, Gladkov is pleased to focus on the second, brighter side of Artuzov. He describes his operations resembling theatrical performances. Provoking organisations were used to attract foreign services and the Russian opposition: „the Doggies”, „the Liberal Democrats”, „the Monarchic Organisation of the Central Russia” called the Trust... And their victims, usually intelligent and experienced people who were deceived by Artuzov’s stories. A former terrorist and Bolsheviks’ enemy, Boris Savinkov, was deceived first and then was made to do public penance. In the end he was thrown through one of the Lubyanka windows. Fighting with the Soviets, Yurko Tyutyunnyk, was also „persuaded” to cooperate with the Bolsheviks and was executed by a firing squad at the end. Sidney Reilly, a British spy, was besotted by Artuzov to such extent that he did not understand what was going on with him until the very end. He was also shot in the back of his head. Western intelligence services were deceived regularly and on a massive scale. Artuzov reported to the Politburo that 95% of information collected by foreign spies were products of the disinformation office, established by Artuzov himself. Gladkov continues with Artuzov’s set of activities until eventually – reluctantly and scantily - describes unavoidable end of that Bolsheviks’ loyal servant. Artuzov died like his victims, without knowing what was going on and why he was murdered by the system, to which he had devoted himself so much. Charged with treason, tortured and shot in the back of his head, Artuzov was not the only one. His workmates, Polish renegades died the same way. This was the way the Soviets expressed their gratitude for the loyal service, beating with strings, crushing genitals and sending their families to lagers. Artuzov, like tens or hundreds of thousands of others, giving their lives to the destructive golem, could not understand that the new system had to dispose of them because the mix of cruelty and intellectual panache was just unacceptable for it. For new generations of the NKVD members, the bourgeois intelligentsia the worldliness of the Leninist guards was a pure betrayal of the proletarian home country. Getting rid of them made the career for Soviet villages upstarts easier because they were unable to compete with the multilingual and knowing Europe first generations of the Cheka members other way.

Luckily for Europe or even for the whole world, final chapter of Christian Frautschi’s life was only a reminiscence of the special services created by him. The core of the Soviet services survived and developed but after killing its best workers off, it had never regained its initial panache and invention. No one could charm their victims with sharpness and ideology. Out of two elements of the Artuzov’s system, i.e. cruelty and intelligence, only cruelty left.