

Marek Świerczek

**The internal sources of the defeat
of the Second Department of Polish General Staff
in the confrontation with the State Political Directorate
under the People's Commissariat of interior affairs
of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
during the disinformation operation of the Soviet counterintelligence
known as the “MOCR-Trust affair”**

It remains an open question, as it came to be that **Department II of Polish General Staff** (further DII) came into contact with an organization managed by the KRO GPU¹ in 1921 which lasted for almost six years. And when the truth came to light, DII, instead of looking for explanations and remedies, in fact resigned of intelligence activity in the east, replacing it with the observation method, the weaknesses of which were well known to many espionage officers² and an ineffective activity of radio monitoring and analysis of Soviet media – which were under full censorship control – so practically worthless for intelligence analysis and still offering Russians the possibility of disinformation.

In fact, the involvement of Polish intelligence into a disinformation operation conducted by the Soviet counterintelligence should not be considered in the category of tactical failure, but rather strategic defeat. For the first years of our intelligence operations in Soviet Russia, they were “transparent” to the Chekists and Polish spies were misinformed by Soviet agents-provocateurs. And when DII understood its mistake, it first gave up the recruitment of agents in Russia to avoid provocations, and then, when it turned out that the observation method was not enough, it failed to recover. At the end of the day, Poland in the East was “blind”, what became sadly clear on September 17, 1939, when Poland was attacked by the USSR, which according to the leadership of DII – was not only to remain neutral, but even to provide material support in case of the war with Germany.

Given the extent of the Polish intelligence failure in the years 1921–1927 (and their consequences in the following years), it is not enough to describe the operation, it is also necessary to formulate hypotheses answering the fundamental question about the **reasons for** such a serious failure of the Polish intelligence. To explain the causes that brought about this intelligence defeat in the secret war with the Soviet services, first of all, we need to realize their **multiplicity and complexity**.

¹ Soviet counterintelligence GPU. Trust Operation was carried out by the Soviet counterintelligence in spite of organizational changes, i.e. by VCheKa, GPU and OGPU. There is only one term used in the text to make things easier.

² W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki*, Chicago 1991, pp. 268–269.

There was not one key element or event that would become the cornerstone of the process of submission to the Soviet disinformation by the Polish intelligence service. Even remembering that formally the beginning of cooperation with the organization MOCR³ Trust (established by the VChK/GPU), and at the same time the initiation of the great disinformation operation, was contact of the Trust's missionaries with Cpt. Wiktor Tomir Drymmer, who headed the intelligence post in Reval, it must not be forgotten that this was just a single event, which – in different circumstances, and with other personnel and organizational solutions – would not have to lead to intelligence losses at the strategic level and could have ended at the level of penetration of Reval intelligence post.

Contact established by Cpt. W.T. Drymmer and subsequently taken over by the DII HQ and sending Polish officers as the Trust's liaisons in Moscow, which in turn led to the Trust's monopoly of the Polish reconnaissance in the east, were the result of a combination of many factors that caused the DII to fall victim to the Soviet disinformation.

One can risk a statement that, considering the multiplicity and complexity of the reasons behind this cooperation, DII was the ideal object of such activities. Even if there had not been contact in the Reval with Soviet emissaries, it is very likely that sooner or later the Polish intelligence (as well as services of other limitrophic states) had to get involved in this type of situation. It was only a matter of time.

Trying to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to distinguish the main factors behind the multiannual activities of Polish intelligence, which consistently facilitated the GPU activities from 1921 to 1927, without practically undertaking any verification or offensive operations that could provide insight into the nature of operations conducted by the Soviet counterintelligence and intelligence. Providing that the list does not have to be complete, the following groups of factors can be distinguished that affected the level of readiness for self-deception in Polish intelligence structures.

I. Internal factors

1. Psychological factors, occurring universally (a participating lie, the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, which makes it difficult or impossible to recognize a lie, especially in its co-participation version, group thinking syndrome, usually based on uncritical reproduction of superiors' sentences⁴).

2. Factors generated by the organization of Division II (the authoritarianism and conformism of a military institution⁵) based on the order and transmission information in the "top-down" structure, basically excluding the reverse direction of information flow (especially critical one) and object-oriented feedback; group

³ The Monarchic Union of Central Russia (note ed.).

⁴ T.H. Bagley, *Wojny szpiegów*, Poznań 2014, p. 281.

⁵ G. Bailey, *The Conspirators*, London 1961, p. 66.

interests of a large institution of military bureaucracy, phenomenon of a participating lie; lack of team work, promotion depending on personal success, voluntary decisions of superiors, whose favor—acquired in a variety of ways—played a key role in the careers of intelligence officers; the relationship between the intelligence success, measured by the number and quality of information obtained by the agent for the career of his desk officers⁶; the degree of identification of officers with the service (in the vulgar version the tension between ethos and careerism⁷); a combination of organizational and psycho-social factors generating deficiencies in the professionalism of at least some of the officers⁸; adopted organizational model, character of interpersonal relations, capacity of promotion channels, etc.⁹; the level of responsibility and courage of the civilian executives who in the situation of symptoms of infiltration and disinformation must choose between decisive actions that must cause serious repercussions from society and government and silence over the scandal combined with hiding uncomfortable facts).

II. External factors

The internal policy of the government towards the army till 1926 drastically increasing—due to financial cuts and pauperization of the officers-counterintelligence risk level in the Polish Army and a close relationship between disinformation and infiltration of the deceived service (agents of influence, “moles”).¹⁰

I will try to elaborate upon the first group of reasons, i.e. “internal factors”, which affected the failure of the Polish intelligence in war against Soviet counterintelligence.

Ad I.1. Psychological factors

- **The phenomenon of participating lies** is common and has been known to mankind for centuries. It is a situation, when a victim of a lie *does not pay attention to mistakes made by the deceiver, interpreting the ambiguous behavior as much positively as possible for a liar*¹¹. Such phenomena can be observed in all areas of social life. People often want to believe in false information when they have their own, usually hidden motives, and detecting a lie could have negative consequences (mainly in the psychological dimension) for a deceived person. On the level of everyday life, we

⁶ See: J. Masterman, *Brytyjski system podwójnych agentów 1939-1945*, Warszawa 1973, p. 42.

⁷ T.H. Bagley, *Wojny szpiegów...*, p. 139.

⁸ See: M. Romeyko, *Przed i po maju*, Warszawa 1985, p. 512.

⁹ It can be said that well-paid, well-managed institutions that maintain open promotion paths for talented and dedicated officers are usually much less susceptible to infiltration than poorly managed organizations, in which cliques and groups with access effectively block the promotion paths, putting aside all who may threaten the advancements of the chosen ones.

¹⁰ See M. Romeyko, *Przed i po maju...*, p. 160.

¹¹ P. Ekman, *Kłamstwo i jego wykrywanie w biznesie, polityce, małżeństwie*, Warszawa 1997, p. 22.

deal with this type of participation, for example, when we accept someone's excuses, not wanting to break the relationship for reasons more or less trivial, or when a betrayed husband prefers not to notice evident symptoms of betrayal of a spouse¹² or when someone's lies correspond to previously accepted assumptions of the deceived person.

In special services, this phenomenon occurs very often: ambiguity of information, multiplicity of often conflicting data and difficult verification process favor the acceptance of situations when an officer (or the whole organization) *de facto* facilitates deceiving himself (and his organization), because it is in the group interest, allowing the deceived officer to fulfill his tasks and guaranteeing him a career.

The co-founder of the British system of double agents, J. Masterman, analyzed this phenomenon very carefully.¹³ On the other hand, perhaps the most synthetic characteristic of the co-participant's lie is Bagley's quotation from the Abwehr officer Herman Baun¹⁴ who, after the war, was interrogated by Americans, he:

(...) was aware that every one of his informers on the Soviet territory was controlled by the Soviet counterintelligence. Because he was unable to get better results, and because the German Supreme Command (OKH) liked his reports, questioning them would be a political suicide for him. That's why he preferred to pretend that everything was fine.¹⁵

In short, in the special services, a situation can easily arise when it is much better to believe in agent's lies than to discredit him, undermining his enunciations. Accepting disinformation (especially in areas badly recognized so far) guarantees rewards, rapid promotion and recognition of the management, which, in turn, is interested in quick intelligence success, not tedious procedures that check agent's loyalty and credibility of information. In every intelligence institution in which the individual's success is linked to his personal information contribution, i.e. the more agents and information, the more praises and promotions), being at the same time detached from the interests of the team or the entire service, there is a huge scope for the phenomenon of a participating lie.

It can be deduced from the documents of Division II that most officers, more or less involved in the Trust scandal, avoided any activities that could shake their confidence in the Soviet agents and the information they brought.

For years of stay in Warsaw of an evident OGPU agent, Yury Artamonov, no one in the entire Division II had come to an idea of even briefly checking what the young Russian really was doing and from where he got funds for a sumptuous life.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ J. Masterman, *Brytyjski system podwójnych...*

¹⁴ See: http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1705143/CIA%20AND%20NAZI%20WAR%20CRIM.%20AND%20COL.%20CHAP.%201-10,%20DRAFT%20WORKING%20PAPER_0010.pdf.

¹⁵ T.H. Bagley, *Wojny szpiegów...*, p. 139.

Explanations of Cpt. W.T. Drymmer and Edward Czyżewski's reports show that Division II was aware that there was a Pole appearing in the so called Trust Board known as Kijakowski (in fact Viktor Steckiewicz), but there is no information in the preserved materials that DII tried to identify this character and to collect any information about him, despite the fact that Steckiewicz, as Kosinski, supervised the Soviet spy-rings in all *Pribaltica* and often stayed in Helsingfors¹⁶, where the Polish Military Attaché was active. Even after unsuccessful recruitment of Bohdan Jarociński by W. Steckiewicz, no one in Warsaw tried to determine, who he really was, what he had done before, where he really stayed, and who he met (or could have met), although a comparison of Kijakowski and Steckiewicz's descriptions would allow Polish analysts notice that it was the same person.¹⁷

Explanations of Aleksander Niedziński clearly show that – while being in Moscow, he had the opportunity even partially to verify the enunciations of Trust members – instead he relied entirely on their intelligence.

During the long years, when Polish officers met with the agent of the Soviet counterintelligence Eduard Opperput, no one even tried to get any information about him, although materials on this subject had to be stored in the archives of Division II, because E. Opperput as Paweł Seljeninow came into contact with Polish intelligence in 1921, during an operation against Boris Sawinkow. In 1921, E. Opperput had contact with Józef Beck and Colonel Stanisław Dowoyno-Sołłohub, in the company of which he carried out negotiations with the British military mission.¹⁸ DII, in addition, issued him a passport under the name Paweł Iwanowicz Spektorskij – and therefore his real name (because in contact with B. Sawinkow he was to reveal how he was really called), and appearance¹⁹ should be known to Polish intelligence officers. It should be added that the recognizing E. Opperput was not difficult. In 1927, in Finland, immediately after Opperput's escape from the USSR, former officer of B. Sawinkow, a certain Aleksandr K. Rudin did it and then published under the pseudonym A. Karin an article on this topic in a Riga newspaper "Sevodnya"²⁰.

Simplifying the issue, DII officers effectively avoided all activities that could potentially jeopardize the credibility of their informants, even the most basic ones, such as making detailed checks in files, which had to fall within the scope of their official duties. It should be remembered that the "legend" created by GPU agents was not perfect and generated questions for which there was no good answer for example – the question asked by the gen. Yevgeny Klimowicz during a meeting with a representative

¹⁶ E. Opperput's letter to „Sevodnya” newspaper of 17 May 1927.

¹⁷ What's worse he introduced himself to B. Jarociński with his real name, revealing his past, and yet no one considered it appropriate to carry out more extensive searches on him that would reveal his participation in the organization "M".

¹⁸ P. Seljaninow, *Narodnyj sojuz zaszczuty Rodiny i swobody. Wospominanija*, Berlin 1922, p. 66.

¹⁹ See: A. Baczyńska, *Historia dowodu osobistego w Polsce*, <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/historia-dowodu-osobistego-w-polsce/sd95s>.

²⁰ Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe (CAW), Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.2090, „NORD”, intelligence post letter.

of the Board of the Trust, gen. Nikolai Potapov (...) as he manages to travel for so long in Europe, being an officer of the active service of the Red Army²¹. The problem was that almost no one asked such questions on the Polish side.

- **Cognitive dissonance** is defined as a state of tension that occurs when a person has two cognitive elements (ideas, attitudes, beliefs, opinions) that are psychologically incompatible with each other.²² If the cognitive elements mentioned above are found in dissonance (i.e. they are incompatible with each other), there is a sense of discomfort that motivates the individual to reduce it, because one of the basic human characteristics is the belief that life makes sense, and accepting two conflicting ideas deletes the assumed *a priori* logic of existence.²³ The more someone is involved in some action resulting from the accepted belief, the greater the resistance to information that threatens this view.²⁴ The reduction of dissonance results from the process of distorting, discrediting and selecting of information, thanks to which one's own convictions are protected. This is a process that has been tested in both laboratory conditions²⁵ as well as on historical examples, the most famous of which are analyzes of Jewish population behavior during the *Shoah*, who, despite more and more information about the genocide taking place, consistently tried to discredit the threat.²⁶

The activities of Division II, after contacting the Trust and signing agreements with monarchists (first by the DII intelligence post in Reval and then by the HQ in Warsaw), had all the features of the classical reduction of cognitive dissonance. From 1921 to 1927 – not counting the so-called W. Michniewicz's report – there are no traces in the archives indicating that anyone from DII had seriously considered the possibility that the MOCR-Trust representatives could be GPU agents.

Throughout his stay, Y. Artamonov in Warsaw was not checked. No one has ever wondered where he gets his money for a good life from, although this is a question that is crucial for any person who is in constant contact with the intelligence service, especially if this person is a foreigner from a country considered as the main opponent. The same situation took place in DII posts in Moscow: no one was struck by the thought that Opperput regularly visited Polish diplomatic mission and – despite this – did not become the object of interest of the GPU, although the implications of this fact were so obvious that informant of W. Michniewicz, Colonel W. Drobyszewski automatically recognized this as symptoms of a GPU provocation, and the Polish liaison officer with the Trust, Władysław Michniewicz, after a conversation with Colonel W. Drobyszewski, also discovered this obvious truth and was so impressed with it that, without any solid evidence, beyond the sense of the obvious lie in the face

²¹ This case illustrates well that the legend of GPU agents had “holes” that were relatively easy to spot and – using the capabilities of the intelligence organization – to verify suspicions.

²² E. Aronson, *Człowiek – istota społeczna*, Warsaw 1987, p. 134.

²³ Ibidem, p. 134.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 137.

²⁵ Ibidem, pp. 134–190.

²⁶ Ibidem, pp. 147–148.

of the Soviet realities, he went to Warsaw with a report on the subject. It should be noted here that the fact of writing a report on the Trust by W. Michniewicz should be considered highly probable – despite the lack of the document in archives – for four reasons:

1. In 1923, Michniewicz had indeed suffered harassment from the leadership of DII, as a result of which he went to the line service in the regiment in Rivne, although there was no indication in his previous career that he deserved such a penalty.
2. The source of information (i.e. Col. W. Drobyszewski) existed.
3. About his report from 1923, a deputy head of the “East” Department in 1922–1923, Władysław Kowalewski wrote in the letter.²⁷
4. W.T. Drymmer’s article from 1965 is not a direct confirmation.²⁸ However, the course of events given by him corresponds roughly to the version presented by W. Michniewicz, which may mean that this story was known to Drymmer. We also know that Cpt. W.T. Drymmer did not report his suspicions about the Trust in 1923. In his written explanations regarding the scandals of the organization “M” from 1927, he did not mention a word about such an event, although he acted under pressure as an external service officer accused by E. Opperput of cooperation with the GPU. It may result from the fact that he attributed others merit to himself, which, it seems, corresponded to his psychological profile. This probably means that Michniewicz’s report was known to him, so it can be assumed that the report existed and could be discussed in the environment of the officers of the DII and W. Michniewicz did not lie in his memories.

The course of discussing the contents of the report with Michniewicz’s superior Cpt. M. Talikowski fully complies with the assumptions of cognitive dissonance theory:

(...) Drobyszewski scares us with GPU, probably out of fear, he sits like a mouse under a broom. In Warsaw – Talikowski argued – we have comprehensive sources and wide possibilities of their control. We have contacts with General Klimovich and Kutepov who have their own agents network in the Soviet Union. We have a MOCR delegate here, Captain Artamonov, not only a brilliant guard officer whom you know from Reval, but a groomed and intelligent man. He is of the best opinion on Trust and announces the imminent arrival to Warsaw of a special mission from Moscow for political-military negotiations at the highest level! Levels to which you do not grow up, constantly communicating with Kasatkin, both in the role of postmen.²⁹

From the memoirs of W. Michniewicz it is clear that the head of the “East” Department used all known strategies, to reduce cognitive dissonance: he ridiculed

²⁷ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, pp. 135–136.

²⁸ W.T. Drymmer, *Trust, „Kultura”* 1965, No 11.

²⁹ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, p. 132.

and underestimated the thesis of Colonel W. Drobyszewski, he relied on (non-existent *de facto*) opportunities to verify Trust information from independent sources, and finally, when W. Michniewicz did not stop talking about the case, he got rid of him, assuring himself a psychological comfort by eliminating the source of unpleasant information. Behavior of Cpt. M. Talikowski³⁰ also points out to reducing dissonance in the situation of emotional involvement, namely, the decisive removal of the source of information contrary to the adopted position. M. Talikowski, it seems, was an active co-victim of the Soviet lie. Accepting Soviet disinformation was beneficial for him: it favored his career (despite bad opinions of the management about his intelligence and abilities), what gave him the money needed to finish his villa and allowed him to play the role of the *wizard of espionage* among snobbish aristocrats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who, in the hope of regaining property in the east, were eager to hear information about the impending break-down of the Soviet state.³¹

Another example illustrating the effect of cognitive dissonance among DII officers involved in cooperation with the Trust are explanations of A. Niedziński. For example, an extremely characteristic description of the GPU's apparent failure, when in the autumn 1925 Trust agents provided the Poles with false information about the alleged maneuvers of Soviet troops:

Fortunately, however, our intelligence has noticed this inspiration; I therefore demanded a categorical explanation and a thorough examination of this case. I exactly remember this conversation with members of "M" – Fiodorov, Potapov, Denisov and Kasatkin, upon whom my statement that the documents were inspired by the GPU made a strong impression (...). It was not difficult to refute this assumption, because this document was provided simultaneously by 3 sources: from R7 / I, from post "Bałt" and, if I am not mistaken, from the "Szperacz" (...) it should be noted that the "Szperacz" received this document from an agent as inspired one by the GPU. After this statement, there was nothing else to left for them, but, to say, after some time that indeed their man in Kiev came across a GPU agent from whom he acquired the document. I was, therefore, informed that they had one organizational link with them, and that unfortunate intelligence officer was shot. I reported at the right time about the above, being of the opinion that such an accident is possible under the conditions of conspiratorial work.³²

It is not difficult to notice that the Polish side ignored the extremely clear symptoms of being a victim of disinformation. The motives for which the GPU transferred the same document to a few intelligence units of DII at the same time – as if making sure that the Polish side will surely understand – adding in one instance the information that it was inspired – is unclear. It should be presumed that the Soviets had a sense of full

³⁰ Who fired W. Michniewicz from the military intelligence.

³¹ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, p. 100.

³² CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, the annex 130 to *Arkusz obserwacyjny org. „M”*.

control over the Division II and, perhaps, they wanted to check the verification procedures used by Poles in a situation of obvious disinformation. If this hypothesis is correct, it should be emphasized that Division II did not use ANY methods of verification, apart from telling GPU agents not only the information that the document is false, but also the knowledge of how the Polish intelligence came to such beliefs.

The same situation took place in the case of a mobilization document provided by the Trust, which was questioned by Polish analysts. A. Niedziński described the matter in the following way:

Speaking in this matter with the organization [MOCR] I informed them on the accusations that had been made to the above document and I pointed out that they were inspired by the source providing them with the above document. For my part, however, I could not reconcile myself with the idea that the organization "M" was exposed to the GPU, coming to this conclusion on the basis of the known GPU work systems, and a whole range of data arguing with the impossibility of similar supposition.

Explaining, why he was not persuaded by the arguments of the Polish analysts, he added: (...) *the institution did not have and could not have a test, using only logical arguments stemming from the knowledge of the area and based on moral conviction.*

In order to fully grasp the stupidity of the above sentence, one should realize that the Soviet document was falsified extremely ineptly, because it suggested that mobilization plans in the event of war with Poland predicted an attack from the south, from Ukraine – which was inconsistent with all previous general staff plans anticipating the dislocation of troops by the so-called Smolensk Gate. This was absolutely unrealistic due to the lack of a dense network of rail and road connections.³³ Thus, the “moral conviction” evoked by A. Niedziński was, in fact, an iron logic that excluded this direction of dislocation.

Symptoms of continuous reduction of dissonance can be observed in the behavior of the Polish officers both in the initial stages of operations and after the self-disclosure of the Trust, when it was no longer possible to maintain the illusion that the Polish intelligence in the east had a powerful and influential organization providing a wealth of intelligence information.

One can see them on the example of the Lt. Col. L. Bociański’s reaction to the revelations of E. Opperput³⁴ and finally in the course of the so-called Bociański’s commission, in which strictly political motifs overlapped with multi-level denials generated by the reduction of cognitive dissonance.

• **Group thinking syndrome** – (...) *group thinking refers to the decline of psychic efficiency, realism and moral judgment caused by intra-group pressure.*³⁵

³³ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, p. 248.

³⁴ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.2090, a letter from 25th May 1927.

³⁵ W. Domachowski, S. Kowalik, J. Miluska, *Z zagadnień psychologii społecznej*, Warszawa

When such a phenomenon occurs, the following defects of the information flow process in the group take place: limiting the discussion, to consider a limited number of alternatives, avoiding re-analysis of the original solutions, neglecting the solutions rejected at the beginning, resigning from external expertise that can evaluate alternative ways of acting, accepting only facts and assessing the adopted direction and ignoring the influence of negative factors on the expected results.³⁶ An important factor in the occurrence of group thinking syndrome is a group cohesion (*esprit de corps*), isolation from qualified associates and experts, and preference given by the management (group leader) of a specific solution.³⁷

Based on the research of Irving L. Janis on this subject, the following symptoms of group thinking can be distinguished³⁸ in the activities of DII during Trust operation:

1. **An illusion of omnipotence and invincibility that creates an optimistic conviction of success and daring to take risks.** This symptom can be seen in the behavior of almost all officers of DII, both from HQ (which formulated extremely bold expectations of operational gains in relation to intelligence centers in the east, ignoring the realities), as well as officers of the external service (who notoriously violated the basic principles of conspiracy of intelligence work³⁹).
2. **Collective defensive rationalization of the adopted solutions** (i.e. the process of cognitive dissonance discussed already by the group involved in the defense of the adopted assumptions).
3. **Stereotypical image of the opponent as too bad to enter into agreements with him or too stupid to thwart any, even risky plans.** This symptom corresponds with the omniscience of omnipotence discussed above. Polish officers, which I tried to show by examples, with astonishing consequence underestimated the opponent, resulting in a disincentive of behaviors such as making illegal interests with GPU agents, ignoring the obvious symptoms suggesting links of acquired sources with Soviet counterintelligence, or even lack of any security of the Polish premises.
4. **Direct emphasis on each member of the group, who presents strong arguments against any of the group stereotypes or illusions.** I think the best illustration of this symptom was the case of Lieutenant W. Michniewicz, who, as a result of writing a report on the Trust putting the organization in an uncertain light (though deprived of a factual base that could realistically threaten to unmask monarchists), was disciplined and removed from the Division II.
5. **Unquestionable faith in the innate morality of one's own group.** This symptom was most visible in the Lt. Col. L. Bociański's report, who – without examining the credibility of E. Opperput's testimony accusing DII officers of treason –

1984, p. 123.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 121.

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 123–124.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Like ignoring the risk of spy penetration by officers of the Polish military mission.

at the beginning of talks with Finnish officers, declared full confidence in his officers, which certainly affected the subsequent findings of the commission, which found no guilty party, what blocked drastic measures that could have cleaned up the Polish intelligence of the supposed Soviet spy-rings.

6. **Blocking the processes of evaluation and verification of assumptions resulting in self-censorship of deviations from group solutions.** As I have already mentioned, from the article by W. Drymmer (and from the letter of W. Kowalewski quoted by W. Michniewicz) it seems that the case of W. Michniewicz's report was known among the members of DII, however, there are no traces in the documents proving that any of the officers formulated in writing doubts about the Trust. From the preserved documentation, it appears that until 1927, Division II had no suspicions Trust's "monarchists". So, even if the officers repeated themselves in the form of whispered gossip, the history of the report by W. Michniewicz, they presented a line in line with the expectations of the management convinced of having an excellent source on the highest levels of Soviet power.
7. **The illusion of unanimity stemming from self-censorship.** If we assume that Polish officers censored their own conclusions in the materials of the case, each person having access to them, had to believe that **everyone** having to deal with the matter evaluated it positively. Such conclusions were then forwarded to the next desk officers dealing with the case (an example of that are explanations of Capt. A. Niedziński) what completed the illusion of unanimity ratings accepted as a basis for further contacts with the Trust.
8. The final symptom of the syndrome of group thinking is establishing group **guardians of correct thought**, to protect against a tributary of information that could destroy the group's complacency with the adopted decisions. In my opinion, this role was fulfilled mainly by M. Talikowski, who, if you believe Michniewicz, went so far as to damage or hide his report.⁴⁰

Ad. I.2. Structural factors

- Military organization with its rigid hierarchy and subordination levels, based on the undisputed execution of orders, of course attracts people with a predisposition to authoritarian attitudes, who are then amplified and shaped. Authoritarian personality⁴¹ is understood as a group of features, which include mainly: the recognition of conventional values, intolerance of weakness in ourselves and in others, a strong tendency to punish, suspicion, but above all an extraordinary respect for authority and the stiffness of cognitive, or low susceptibility to change one's views.⁴²

⁴⁰ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, pp. 132, 137.

⁴¹ E. Aronson, *Człowiek – istota społeczna...*, pp. 248–251. See: T.W. Adorno, *Osobowość autorytarna*, Warszawa 2010.

⁴² E. Aronson, *Człowiek – istota społeczna...*, p. 249.

This type of personality combines in itself two types of conformism: **giving in** (individual behavior is motivated by a desire to obtain a reward or avoid punishment) and **identification** (behavior and beliefs are shaped by the desire of the individual to become more like a person recognized as a model⁴³). In creating a young officer it plays a huge role, because both enforce specific behaviors and beliefs (at least presented to the public), as well as the imitation of older and positioned higher in the hierarchy superiors. DII, as a part of the Polish Army, at least to some extent, reflected the personality trends described above. This affected all aspects of its activities, including intelligence operations.

As an example, one can quote memories of the officers involved in the cooperation with the Trust, who – while dealing with even the most absurd decisions of superiors – succumbed to their orders, even when they had a firm conviction that they were right. In his memoirs, W. Michniewicz openly writes that after the rejection of his report by Capt. M. Talikowski he took no steps, to notify other superiors. Of course, he rationalized his behavior years later, writing that [...] *there was no point in going for a complaint to a higher level – as to whom? For blinded by parliamentary politics Bajer, ignorant intelligence officer?*⁴⁴, but one must explicitly tell say that W. Michniewicz did nothing, probably because he was afraid of further persecution (which occurred despite of it), and realized that his superiors showed solidarity in bullying recalcitrant subordinates.⁴⁵

W.T. Drymmer's memories about his alleged unmasking the Trust reveal the same degree of powerlessness against arbitrariness of superiors:

After returning to Warsaw once again I informed my superiors that we were blind tool in the hands of the Soviets. I was backed up by two officers: (...) whose task was to study the quality and accuracy of our intelligence received by the message. Despite of our reservations – my talented officer Werner was dismissed and another took over his post, also a brave officer, but unfortunately inexperienced, Major Niedziński.⁴⁶

W.T. Drymmer's article, like memories of W. Michniewicz shows conformist subservience to superiors of people who declared to have known **about taking place before their eyes the Soviet secret police's operation threatening Polish interests**. At the same time – an important detail – none of their contemporaries questioned their behavior. Filling commands of superiors was higher in the hierarchy of values than interests of the service and the state itself.

An identical situation is found in another document on cooperation with the Trust, this time prepared by Lt. T. Werner, whom Lieutenant Colonel I. Boerner ordered to contact his aide, J. Szczepkowski with E. Kasatkina-Opperput:

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 57.

⁴⁴ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, p. 132.

⁴⁵ F. Kusiak, *Życie codzienne oficerów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1992, p. 258.

⁴⁶ W.T. Drymmer, *Trust...*, p. 99.

Because this order I found to be inconsistent with the instructions and directives (...) I delayed the execution of it. After a long time I was called to the colonel, who in a very concrete form ordered me within 2 days to get in touch Szczepkowski with the organization "M". Unable to resist as the clear command (...) the next day I went to see Szczepkowski car at the appointed place, where he was waiting for us and got into the car of magician (Opperput). In the car Szczepkowski told him that under the directives he has with him he demanded that the "beard" to come in the coming days to the Attache premises. At first I tried to resist (...) nolens volens I agreed. It took place on Saturday, February 2. The "magician" asked him to meet him in order to go to Attache premises on November 5, 1924, but he did not show up for a tryst. I suspected he would try to avoid a meeting. The same evening the Colonel asked me, if his order had been carried out, I reported to him that the agent did not turn up, so that the Colonel declared that he only saw my ill will and categorically demanded a tryst. The next day I communicated with the "Magician" and we agreed that he would go to Attache premises with me, 8.2, which was also brought to fruition. In Attache premises, he talked to Szczepkowski about 4 hours almost exclusively about the internal political situation in Russia. That same evening (...) I wanted to be present while Lt. Szczepkowski reported to Colonel about the conference. After having listened to the report, Boerner told Szczepkowski to write on the basis of information obtained a report on political situation (...) Since I have found to be clearly not desirable, to contact my people with any of Polish officers, in particular, the adjutant of Colonel in a place so discredited as Attache building (...) and taking into account the services that gives us "M" as a source of intelligence, I find Szczepkowski's meetings with their people, especially during the current political repressions as extremely undesirable – increasing the chances of disclosure, I am asking of instructions in this regard for the future.⁴⁷

This fragment is determined uniquely by the conformity to higher rank officers in a situation of unclear subordination chain. T. Werner, although was aware of the fact that the order of Lieutenant Colonel I. Boerner was given contrary to the most elementary principles of intelligence work what could lead to unmasking the whole organization "M" effectively cooperating (as he thought) with Polish intelligence, after a short hesitations did it and only having done this, demanded from his superior tips in the event of such situations in the future.

Authoritarianism of Polish military intelligence organization could be noticed in thoughtless acceptance of superiors views by intelligence officers. As an example, let's take a piece of explanations of A. Niedziński from 1927:

⁴⁷ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, a letter No 015/24 14.02 1924.

In this place I must emphasize that both the instructions received by me from the Department of Intelligence, as also from the post R7 excluded any distrust as to the very existence of the organization [Trust] as a new man in espionage, I gained the strong conviction that the organization was based on the ideological ground. My faith apparently was based on the basis of the results of the intelligence⁴⁸ work in the form of documents and information and the result of observations resulting from the correspondence control on “M”.

The sentences above show that A. Niedziński, coming to Moscow, **had already formed an opinion on Trust, which he drew entirely from his superiors**, because who else from the Department of Intelligence and R7 post could enter it into the secrets of the tasks allocated to him? No wonder, therefore, that in the rest of his explanation, he described the Trust consisted only of professionalism and commitment to its tasks. The officer sent to Moscow without any experience and very limited intelligence level, took for granted what his superiors had told him, and later – acting on the basis of this pattern – became a zealous, though probably unwitting, accomplice of the GPU.

Summing up, we have to come to the obvious conclusion: as in all authoritarian institutions, in DII information and opinions went from the top of the hierarchy down, and any attempt to formulate opinions contrary to the already formed opinions of superiors met with rejection and ridiculing the authors.

- Hierarchically built intelligence organization, in which the supreme driving force of human behavior is the desire for vertical promotion (because in institutions with a strictly respected hierarchy that guarantees high salary and prestige) at the moment when the disinformation operation takes place, especially when it is accompanied by infiltration by the enemy, shows a natural tendency to persistently fail to see the problem. As J. Masterman writes, describing his own experiences of deceiving the Abwehr during World War II:

The mere fact that we were constantly reviewing so many different, detailed information, made it seem obvious to us that sending a message must burn the agent. In reality, however, this case looked different and for many reasons. First of all, the first instance to which the agent sent information was his superior, who in turn passed it to the higher superiors, very often without a detailed examination of them. Even if the errors or misinformation contained in the information consisted of mutual contradictions, it is unlikely that the higher superiors will have such accurate information that these errors and contradictions can be noticed. It may even happen that the right source of information will not be replaced, as the agent's direct agent will want to preserve its prestige, especially if, in addition to real agents, he still has his fictional agents. If even the higher

⁴⁸ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, the annex 130 to *Arkusz obserwacyjny org. „M”*.

authorities make some suspicions, then this direct supervisor of the agent will do everything because of his prestige and personal benefits to defend his informant.⁴⁹

To put it a little easier: in the hierarchical intelligence institution, obtained agent's information gives benefits to the entire chain of superiors supervising the agent and his desk officer, and if the information corresponds to the assumptions of governing politicians, even to the highest posts of the organization. In turn, the detection that the piece of information was incorrect or false (especially when it has already been given to higher superiors) discredits the same chain of intermediaries, putting in a bad light their professionalism and common sense, and this might compromise the main purpose of their activities in the institution hierarchical, i.e. a career. An additional element mentioned by Mr. Masterman is the natural tendency of intelligence institutions, to avoid scandal at all costs, because it would result in the possibility of an audit from the outside, due to the phenomenon of simulating work and extort money from the budget on operating with fictitious sources. There was this phenomenon in all services, although in varying degrees. It is difficult to determine what was the percentage of "dead souls" in DII, but – for comparison – General Szlachcic defined their number in the communist Security Service on 30%, and wrote that the entire industry was created, to extort money, which dragged on colleagues and family members⁵⁰. In Division II the phenomenon occurred with certainty, as evidenced by the indictment of Major J. Sosnowski, which clearly showed that he used a fictitious agency, to increase the pool of money received from the center.⁵¹

Also, one should not forget about the financial practices of officers involved in the black market contraband, what was at least tolerated by their superiors. All this meant that almost any level of this structure there was a strong will, to prevent the scandal which might lead to in-depth, prosecutorial control of intelligence activities and ultimately to break the careers of many.⁵²

Consequently, there was no real motivation on the part of DII, to reliably verify the information obtained from the Trust. Even in a situation already described obviously forged mobilization document, despite the obvious symptoms of misinformation, was not rejected, instead DII demanded some additional information, even though Polish analysts proved the logical assumptions were nonsense. And when, in April 1927 truth of the Trust was disclosed, DII first for a long time deluded themselves that this is

⁴⁹ J. Masterman, *Brytyjski system podwójnych...*, pp. 56–57.

⁵⁰ J.S. Mac, *Przesłuchanie supergliny*, Warszawa 1990, p. 33.

⁵¹ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie (AIPN), sygn. BU 01480/331; K. Graczyk, *Sprawa majora Jerzego Sosnowskiego w świetle niemieckich i polskich akt procesowych*, Katowice 2015, not published master thesis, US, pp. 239–250. See: H. Ćwiek, *Rotmistrz Sosnowski. As wywiadu Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Kraków 2011; Ł. Ulatowski, *Berlińska placówka wywiadowcza „In.3” (1926–1934). Oddział II i działalność majora Jerzego Sosnowskiego w Niemczech*, Warszawa 2016; P. Kołakowski, A. Krzak, *Sprawa majora Jerzego Sosnowskiego w świetle dokumentów analitycznych Oddziału II SGWP i zeznań Franza Heinricha Pfeifera*, Warszawa 2015.

⁵² Compare CIA activities towards Y. Nosenko.

only a partial failure of the essentially really existing organization “M”, then it began to disavow E. Opperput’s disclosures, but only in the part relating to Soviet agents in the Polish General Staff⁵³, while trying to figure out whether ambiguous role of DII might be noticed in the West.⁵⁴ In the final step – using the so-called. Bociański’s committee – they covered up the matter, blurring responsibility and the possibility of blocking sanitation measures.

- J. Masterman as a key element in the success of disinformation operations conducted by MI5 against the Abwehr held **dominance of personal interests over common interests among the German intelligence officers**. He wrote as follows:

Almost always, when the Germans committed a fundamental error, it turned out that this was due to personal motives of some employee of the Abwehr. He made money and he gained prestige through his agent, thanks to him he could safely live in a neutral port, so he could not and did not want to objectively and fairly evaluate the agent and his work.⁵⁵

J. Masterman practical observation applies also, unfortunately, in full to the Division II. Headquarters sent officers to Soviet Russia, having been completely detached from the realities in Russia, without any ideas, on how to conduct intelligence activities there. As a result, the officers were trapped: they pursued unrealistic tasks given by the Headquarters, surrounded by 24-hour surveillance and by informants of the GPU located in the diplomatic premises of Poland, probably constantly overheard and usually deprived of even such obvious tools of labor, as the money in the right amounts. Counterintelligence control conducted by the GPU was driven up to the level usually associated with countries at war, and this meant that the effectiveness of Polish officers had to be extremely low.⁵⁶ Thus, Polish scouts were in an extremely difficult situation: on the one hand the real possibilities of intelligence activity were dim, on the other hand, they were bombarded with demands of Warsaw and their failure could have dire consequences for their careers. What was important – the officers going to the intelligence posts, *in fact*, were in a less favorable position than regular officers of the army. Espionage service offered few promotion chances, additionally they were forced to resign from such relative stability of a garrison life.

Thus, it must be said openly that **the interest of the service was in a logical contradiction to the interests of the intelligence posts officers**. Instead of full cooperation with the HQ, there was evident divergence of interests. The HQ demanded fulfillment of unrealistic expectations, while refusing to give enough funds to fulfill these tasks and the officers had to do everything, to remain in the posts, with intelligence success or at least avoiding serious failures. It must be remembered that the intelligence

⁵³ Obvious symptoms of the cognitive dissonance.

⁵⁴ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.2090, a letter No 518/I/C from 26th May 1927.

⁵⁵ J. Masterman, *Brytyjski system podwójnych...*, p. 262.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, pp. 236–264.

work abroad meant not only interruption of a career in the military, but also the need to settle property issues in the country. In this situation, the return meant not only a loss of diplomatic diets, but also a number of problems with the re-adaptation. For this reason, as you assume, the GPU provocateurs were sent on fertile ground, because the bad organization of the work of Polish intelligence officers generated a situation where careful analysis *bona fides* of any agent was **not in the interest of the Polish intelligence officer**, who, at the same time activated the dissonance reduction process described above, convincing himself that – even if the agent seems suspicious, he has honest intentions or, in the worst case scenario, one might control him using other sources. Polish intelligence officers, in order to fulfill expectations of the HQ, had to obtain agents, although at the same time full control of the Soviet counterintelligence effectively hindered them to do this, at the same time endangering the risk of detention, beating and sending back to the country. Therefore, there was a psychological readiness to be opportunistic, to accept any agent, who might be the evidence for the HQ, that the officer works and is effective. Such hidden motivation can be widely observed for instance in the characteristic of the agent recruited by R.W. Wolikowski, named Nałęcz-Wojciechowski (*communist mason, occultist type with a very indistinct physiognomy*). Even with the best intentions an agent of such parameters could be believed to have appropriate *bona fides*, and yet he was listed among the members of agents ring exploited by the Polish military attaché.

DII did not establish any mechanism that could objectivize assessment of agents rings cooperating with the post officers, outside rankings provided by analysts in the HQ. This in turn, at some stage of the disinformation operation conducted by the GPU had achieved such a level of saturation with the manipulated information that comparing the newly acquired products of *Krivoe Zerkalo*⁵⁷ to the already existing resources (assuming that the GPU was able to control the internal consistency of misinformation products as effectively as it was done by MI5 during World War II) was not able to detect misinformation, because comparing false information designed so as to fit the previously transferred false intelligence.⁵⁸ The only way to capture the process of misinformation was paying no attention to whether the information fits into their existing knowledge, as it was in a mobilization document described earlier, when Polish HQ pointed out to its contradiction with the existing logistics facilities necessary for the transport of troops. It must therefore be concluded that the Polish analysts were able to draw the correct conclusions, but – according to the rules of deduction – with false premises, they had to obtain false results.

It should be added that among officers dealing with the Trust during the operation there was constant fight for prestige⁵⁹, the officers were so focused on themselves that they preferred compromising service rather than themselves. This can be noticed in the correspondence of such a good officer as T. Werner, who wrote:

⁵⁷ The interdepartmental Disinformation Office, called humorously “kriwe zierkał”.

⁵⁸ G. Bailey, *The Conspirators*, London 1961, pp. 12–13.

⁵⁹ Compare the demands of Col. Boerner.

I have to report that one of the representatives of the “M” expressed surprise that I did not write to Warsaw on passport for Denisov, to wriggle out of silly situation in which I involuntarily found myself, I said that the statement on the passport was sent to the cipher clerk and it was probably wrongly encrypted.⁶⁰

Summarizing the above, it is as J. Masterman put it: **DII – by the lack of teamwork and close connection between the career of an officer and success gained by his agents without implementing careful validation and continuous verification of bone fides of his agents rings, created the organizational framework suitable for success of the Soviet disinformation.**

- Element *sine qua non* of all these factors is relatively low level of professionalism of DII officers, what made possible the occurrence of all of the above mentioned negative phenomena. At the beginning of the 1920s its reasons were obvious: Polish intelligence was created by absolute amateurs from POW youth, whose sabotage and intelligence activities were devoid of any logistics and training⁶¹ and Polish legions officers, whose only experience came down to conducting military reconnaissance and counter intelligence consisting of capturing army defectors and *suspicious men*.⁶² What was the level of the preparation of intelligence personnel is clearly visible from the memories of W.T. Drymmer, which showed that the Polish information service was organized *ad hoc*, and the role of educators of the new intelligence officers was entrusted to former officers of discredited Austro-Hungarian army, which organization, *modus operandi* and operating assets were fully known to the Russians, thanks to the treachery of Colonel Alfred Redl. In addition, Gen. J. Rybak, who led the training, **never alone was not a trained intelligence officer** and the secrets of the work in HK Stelle he learned intuitively. Moreover, his activities against Russia was known to the Russian agent named above – Colonel Redl.⁶³ In addition, if you believe the description of W.T. Drymmer⁶⁴, the same training was carried out in a ridiculous way:

Gen. Rybak in a Polish-Austrian dialect, where he mingled Polish, Czech and German words, gave us professional advice and explained the role of the information officer [...]. My head remained in chaos, I remembered only the words: “szyf, Dancyg, and-but”. All this was rather amusing than interesting.⁶⁵

This situation, of course, should not be surprising: DII was built from the ground up *ad hoc*, without any reliance on major achievements and the experience. The problem, however, was not the fact that the first generation of intelligence officers

⁶⁰ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.03.4.1781, a letter No 019/24 from 1st February 1924.

⁶¹ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, pp. 12–13.

⁶² J. Rybak, *Pamiętniki generała Rybaka*, Warszawa 1954, p. 102.

⁶³ Ibidem, pp. 15–17.

⁶⁴ Gen. Rybak admitted himself not to have any professional training.

⁶⁵ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, Warszawa–Kraków 2014, p. 84.

were selected from uneducated and unexperienced people, but that later on this generation – supporting each other within the fellow ring, described by W.T. Drymmer as *sitwa* – became the management of DII, imposing their ideas about how one should conduct an intelligence work and decided on the choice of the candidates to the service, their professional training, promotions, etc. That brought about such curiosities of the military bureaucracy, as for example, issuing IDs to the secret agents and giving them the second copy of the contract on cooperation with intelligence service⁶⁶ and a document titled *Rules of conducting intelligence service*⁶⁷, questionnaires used during interrogations⁶⁸ of fugitives and bidders, thanks to whom intelligence queries were brought to official inquiries, as well as the relatively low placement of Polish intelligence residents in diplomatic missions, which made very difficult the cooperation with diplomatic staff. What's worse, the above-mentioned elements also had to be added to the generally low level of military skills of the intelligence staff.⁶⁹

The main problem of DII was not only the professional ignorance of the officers, but also a glaring lack of recognition of the actual situation in Soviet Russia. This resulted in the use of such forms of espionage activity, such as the emphasis on white intelligence⁷⁰ relying on time-consuming reading of the Soviet press and specialist publications, which due to the widespread censorship and common press misinformation – although, sometimes allowed to draw some conclusions – but could not produce results commensurating to the organizational effort needed to acquire and analyze materials⁷¹; the use by the intelligence letters written with secret inks, what – one should think -was the result of a misunderstanding that in Soviet Russia **all the** letters abroad were opened and checked⁷²; or use of so called maneuvering agents who were crossing the border to collect information on the relations in the Soviet Union and so bizarre ideas as recruitment of agents in the railway stations toilets, who were to eavesdrop Soviet railway workers.⁷³

From the point of view of the intelligence system structure, DII was characterized by three major defects, which had repercussions on its functioning:

- 1) described above establishing intelligence agency from scratch, without the basic *know-how*, with un-selected people and, because of their rapid war promotions, occupation of their leadership positions in the information service;

⁶⁶ K. Danielewicz, *Formy i metody pracy operacyjnej wywiadu polskiego w latach 1921–1939 na przykładzie Lwowskiej Ekspozycji nr 5 Oddziału II sztabu Generalnego (Głównego)*, in: *Wywiad wojskowy II Rzeczypospolitej*, P. Kołakowski, A. Pepłoński (red.), Kraków 2011, p. 305.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, p. 308.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 292.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, p. 283.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 288.

⁷¹ For instance, CIA was not capable of foreseeing the decline of the USSR.

⁷² Even in years 1945–1990, the postal channel was the best source of intelligence for the communist service in Poland.

⁷³ K. Danielewicz, *Formy i metody pracy operacyjnej...*, p. 288.

- 2) a placing of the intelligence in the army, which contributed to a specific negative selection of the officers wanted by the service, resulting from the fact that the intelligence officers were usually overlooked in promotions and decorations and the head of Division II did not have the freedom of choice of candidates and its staff needs were met in second place⁷⁴;
- 3) a constant underfunding of the DII⁷⁵, which suffered from constant money problems, despite the fact that its size – especially in comparison with the services of the Soviet Russia – was almost of grotesque character.

As a result, as K. Danielewicz writes, the Polish intelligence suffered from a constant shortage of talented, intelligent and dedicated to the service officers⁷⁶ who, while on intelligence posts in Russia faced in addition financial problems, lack of office space and constant surveillance by the Soviet counter-espionage.

During the operation Trust, a lack of even elementary professionalism was constantly observable. Perhaps the clearest evidence of a complete lack of knowledge about the realities of Soviet Russia are memories of W. Michniewicz, who – yet not wanting to ridicule himself – completely discredited himself as an intelligence officer, of which must be concluded that he wrote the truth, even decades after not realizing his mistakes. He, along with the other officers of DII did not see anything wrong in it, to send Trust's reports with the Polish encoded with the Polish cipher, so the Soviet decryption did not have any problems with breaking the Polish codes⁷⁷, and letters of recommendation to the generals of the Academy of the General Staff of the Red Army he held hidden... in a suitcase under his bed. This does not exhaust the list of mistakes made by him. One can look through the contents of his report from 1923 on Trust, to grasp the enormity of ignorance of Polish officers. Quoting a conversation with his informant, Colonel W. Drobyszewski, Michniewicz did not give any substantial information which might unmask the Trust. The entire contents of the report consisted only of opinions of his informant, which *dazzled the Polish officer*:

The conspirators remain in constant communication with foreign countries, and in Moscow and the provinces massively recruit members? They are in government positions and provide intelligence materials? They easily go abroad and come back safely, like going to a picnic in suburban Sokolniki? With today's terror? (...) Only idiots can believe it! This is an overt provocation of the GPU (...). It's a terrible humbug, it is a great stupidity on your part, believe in such nonsense! Every ex-tsarist officer, let alone our generals in positions at the General Staff Academy, must be kept under surveillance (...). The intelligence documents are certainly falsified, bait

⁷⁴ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1144, Col. Glabisz's financial control report from 16th February 1932.

⁷⁵ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, a letter No 024/24 from 18th March 1924.

⁷⁶ K. Danielewicz, *Formy i metody pracy operacyjnej...*, p. 318.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 295.

for suckers! (...) Kasatkin goes to the Polish consulate, how to the public bar? And Yakushev – the conspirator flaunts like a journeyman Chicherin? Only the blind does not see that the whole “organization” is a GPU tool!⁷⁸

Just think for a moment about this sentence, to understand that the Polish intelligence officer issues a clear assessment of the effectiveness of his own professional preparation. The text shows that he did not understand that both Polish officers and the covers used by them were constantly under GPU surveillance; he did not understand that every Russian who came to the Polish embassy or consulate became the object of operational interest of the GPU, he did not seem to understand the scale of constant surveillance and terror that effectively blocked contacts between Soviet citizens and foreign diplomatic missions⁷⁹. This may mean that the Polish intelligence at the beginning of the 1920s had a limited diagnosis of the Soviet realities or that it completely disregarded these realities.

Overview of the archival materials of DII on the cooperation with the Trust is unfortunately also an illustration of the above. They show the actual level of professionalism and disregard for the basic principles of a conspiracy by the Polish officers both at the posts and the HQ.

We know from both memories W. Michniewicz and Sergey Wojciechowski, that the meetings with the delegations of alleged monarchists coming to Warsaw for discussions with the leadership of DII took place in Warsaw's trendy restaurants. Moreover, S. Wojciechowski says that to the intelligence *rendez-vous* Capt. M. Talikowski came in regular uniform.⁸⁰ The same captain. M. Talikowski, informing Y. Artamonov about the date of transfer of the Trust's agents through the so called window, left an open note about this matter to Artamonov's Russian wife. As I have already mentioned, the activity of Y. Artamonov in Warsaw did not meet with any interest of DII, despite the fact that the young aristocrat had lots of money without having no permanent work. Polish counterintelligence was not even interested in him, when he started recruiting Polish ministerial officials to the Warsaw Trust post named ZJARMO⁸¹. When in 1927 – most likely, to increase information chaos ruling among Polish officers – S. Wojciechowski (yet another agent of the OGPU) and a certain Andro provided information that Mr. Artamonov probably was in 1918 a VChK agent, receiving this information to M. Freyman with disarming candor wrote in the report that he resigned of the protocol, because both Russian gentlemen had reserved discretion.⁸² In the archive there are no signs of any attempts, to verify this information by Polish intelligence.

Another example of the inconceivable naiveté of the DII management are two preserved documents from 1927:

⁷⁸ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, pp. 128–130.

⁷⁹ Although T. Werner obviously noticed the problem.

⁸⁰ S. Wojciechowski, *Triest. Wospominanija*, London (Canada) 1974, p. 34.

⁸¹ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, p. 114.

⁸² CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.2090, report to Major J. Grudziński from 1st July 1927 (annex 183).

Alexandrovich [Y. Artamonov] reported that in the Afghan Legation in Moscow operates one of the sisters Straszkiewicz, which by 1921 was met and contacted by Fedorov and Kolesnikov. To find out whether the recent arrests apply to the Straszkiewiczs and to explore, whether they are at the service of the GPU, Alexandrovich gave me a letter to Varvara Nikolaevna Straszkiewicz asking for discreet delivering it to her and receiving an answer on the spot.

I want this letter to be sent to Moscow and to be established:

- 1) whether VS works at the Afghan embassy,
- 2) whether she would want to give a written or oral answer to this letter too the bearer,
- 3) in the case of her refusal to inform our military attaché about the work of the agents of the GPU in the Afghan embassy.⁸³

Attached is the letter written by Mr Artamonov to Mme Straszkiewicz allegedly clerk at Afghan embassy (...). I am expecting an answer, whether Straszkiewicz works at the embassy, if not, when she was released and under what circumstances.⁸⁴

The above note and its result in a form of a cipher text to Moscow are extraordinary examples of naivety of Lt.-Col. T. Schaetzel. It is enough, to read the instructions given by him to his subordinates, to understand the situation. The head of the Polish intelligence received from a Russian suspected of having ties to the GPU information, which evidently had only bolster the confidence of Poles to Y. Artamonov (because he still provided them with operational information), and makes his subordinates pass a note to Artamonov's aunt which is supposed to be the agent of the GPU in Moscow. Head of the Division II apparently did not see the absurdity of commands given by himself, according to which the Polish intelligence officer was supposed to deliver a letter to the GPU agent from a relative unseen by her for over 10 years, including a request for information as to whether she actually works for the GPU. Aside from the absurdity of the idea that the active agent of the GPU had to admit to an unknown man claiming to be a Polish diplomat that actually she executes the orders of the Soviet counterintelligence, it should be noted that Lieutenant Colonel T. Schaetzel's command was not only stupid, but in addition absolutely insignificant for the Polish intelligence, which instead of checking whether Y. Artamonov is an agent working for the GPU in Warsaw, had to perform a ridiculous operation, contacting with Artamonov's aunt in Moscow, to determine whether or not she is a spy at the local Afghan embassy. In addition, no one noticed that the information about Y. Artamonov's aunt Straszkiewicz was supposed to give some credibility to the version promoted by the GPU from the beginning about the Trust, according to which the GPU operation in Reval was

⁸³ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.2090, a document titled PRO DOMO.

⁸⁴ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.2090, a letter for the military attaché in Moscow (no other references) from June 1927.

a coincidence cleverly deployed by W. Steckiewicz, not a planned performance for expatriates and western intelligence, what dismissed suspicions towards first actors of the affair, i.e. Y. Artamonov and V. Shchelgachev.

Sending to Finland Col. Bocianski for questioning Opperput, although he knew neither the language nor the Soviet realities, as well as dispatching with him Capt M. Talikowski, who was responsible for the whole affair and was interested in sweeping all this under the carpet, do not exhaust the list of mistakes made by the Division II. As it is apparent from archival materials, Capt. M. Talikowski, sending his own agents to Soviet Russia, asked Trust agents for help in their journey and providing them documents and arranging in Russia funds needed to start a business.⁸⁵ This means that he broke the most basic rule of intelligence work prohibiting informing agents about other agents operating on the same territory. From the same source we know that DII under the direction of Capt. M. Talikowski – was engaged in some type of economic cooperation with the Trust, leading negotiations with one of the Polish ministries called in documents *Ministerstwo Gosudarstwiennych Imuszczeń*.⁸⁶ That was yet another basic error of involving Polish officers in unclear business ties with their agents (as it turned out in the future – double agents), which always creates a risk for the officers.

Not only headquarters behaved in so outrageously unprofessional manner. The DII Office in Vilnius hosted with honors a delegate allegedly from so called Eurasia, A. Denisov, who, thanks to parties with the Office chief W. Sekonda⁸⁷ was able to not only conduct a reconnaissance of Polish institutions, but also to establish relations with the DII Office beyond the control of the DII center in Warsaw.⁸⁸

In Moscow, disregarding the previously described total immersion of Polish officers in the GPU agents net, resulting in total control over their activities, there were also bizarre cases, such as the destruction of letters sent by the Trust via Polish diplomatic mail due to the use by Polish clerks bad chemical reagents in an attempt, to open them secretly, what revealed to the GPU that Poles controlled Trust's correspondence.⁸⁹ The ridicule of that action consisted from the fact that during the visit of Lt. Tadeusz Werner in Warsaw, Cpt. T. Rybotycki ordered him to open the Trust's correspondence, to demonstrate to other officers how it should be actually done.⁹⁰ Whereby, T. Werner, who normally used a bone as a tool for smoothing the wrinkled by the chemicals paper, could no do that, because of... lacking bone⁹¹. It says a lot about the technical level of the Polish intelligence and the recklessness of its management.

⁸⁵ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, a text in Russian without any references.

⁸⁶ Ibidem.

⁸⁷ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, p. 165.

⁸⁸ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, a text in Russian without any references.

⁸⁹ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, a letter from the intelligence post „R.7/I” to Referat Centralnej Agentury, l. dz. 013/24 from 6th February 1924.

⁹⁰ Ibidem.

⁹¹ Ibidem.

Another example of an almost comic character was providing by the Polish scout, (probably Edward Czyżewski) his agent in Russia with a wrongly written phone contact number. Whereby the collaborator of the Polish intelligence rang with the agreed password to a private apartment in Moscow. Then, the agent waited in vain for the appearance of a Polish officer in the place and time given to him as a backup, in the absence establish telephone communications. No one appeared, so distraught Russian agent, unable to call a meeting with the Poles other, simply went to the Polish embassy.⁹²

Of course, the above examples can be regarded as anecdotal, but they show serious system errors committed during creating and managing the Polish intelligence. The officers, at least at the beginning of the 1920s, had essentially no theoretical knowledge and little practice. The experience was gained either during the war (and therefore fundamentally different from a normal operations conducted in a peaceful period), or during the live operations carried out in Russia.

The problem was that the Polish intelligence in the East from the very beginning was controlled by the Soviet counterintelligence, flooding it with agents-provocateurs. Thus, the Polish officers, learning the job during their missions and transforming their experience in the spy's *know-how*, from the beginning were systematically deceived. In such conditions it was impossible, to create an efficient structure of intelligence – in fact there was no real experience, which could become the groundwork for the development of effective operational instructions. You can figuratively say that DII in their operations in the East since the very beginning based his knowledge and professional experience on the illusions provided by the Soviet double-agents system.⁹³

Moreover, neither in the operation, nor in 1927, when it became clear that – as S. Mayer wrote – *there was nothing secret in the Polish secret service*⁹⁴, DII took no remedial action aimed at changing personnel and adopting a set of new operational solutions.

The lack of professionalism of the Polish staff described above was the result of erroneous system solutions. Polish military intelligence, although extremely small, was the beginning of the 1920s, poorly funded, ill-trained, headed by politicized management, and ruled by relations characteristic for community and not institution-type groups, that is – somewhat vulgarizing the issue – by an informal network of good-old-boys system (called by W.T. Drymmer *sitwa*) That obviously affected the quality of the staff selection. The DII's operational activities clearly show the impact of these factors. W. Michniewicz's report was compromised not only by the indication of its inadequacy, but at the same time it was presented as a possible intrigue of officers who were supporters of Józef Piłsudski.⁹⁵ In turn, the selection of officers sent to the eastern facility was excellent illustration of the thesis of the absence of any objective procedures

⁹² CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I.303.4.1781, a report in Russian language, without any references.

⁹³ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, pp. 124–125.

⁹⁴ A. Krzak, „Czerwoni Azefowie”. Afera „MOCR-TRUST” 1922–1927, Warszawa 2010, p. 157.

⁹⁵ W. Michniewicz, *Wielki bluff sowiecki...*, p. 132.

used for the selection of candidates for such positions. DII appointed as liaisons with the Trust in Moscow very young people, who were sent there without any professional experience, some of which (like Capt A. Niedziński) were characterized by intellect and personality traits disqualifying them as intelligence officers. The only criterion of the selection was the favor of decision-makers, who appointed candidates for the posts. W. Michniewicz was chosen to a post in Moscow, because he knew (and probably was a friend) Capt W.T. Drymmer, who also sent there his another colleague from the Polish legions (E. Czyżewski) as W. Michniewicz's deputy.⁹⁶ In turn, his successors as liaisons with MOCR-Trust owed their posts to the personal decisions of Capt M. Talikowski, however, according to the documents, (...) *they were subject to his requests to take the posts*⁹⁷. It follows that at least in relation to this operation carried out by the DII, no objective procedures were applied in Polish intelligence that could select a suitable candidate for any substantive position, apart from personal acquaintances. In the same way, the military attaché deputy in Reval was Capt W.T. Drymmer, although he had just left the army declaring hatred towards relations prevailing there and had no idea about the intelligence work.

As it has already been mentioned – to carry out the interrogation of E. Opperput in 1927, L. Bociański was appointed, although he did not know a word in Russian.⁹⁸ It seems that personnel decisions were not only based on full voluntarism of decision-makers, but in addition, apart from the most obvious requirements of the role. No one could expect that Lt. Col. L. Bociański would be able to conduct the interrogation of the Russian agent without at least some language skills⁹⁹ and having no idea about the situation in the USSR. It demonstrates the real decision-making mechanisms in Division II of the Polish Armed Forces and lack of good management and motivation of personnel promotions and openness of career paths for talented and hard-working officers.

From the analysis of the archive material on the Trust operation, a picture emerges of the Polish intelligence governed by informal relationships that could even outweigh the elementary common sense, as it was during appointing A. Niedziński to the post of the Head of Department "East", despite the fact that he was well known to the Russians for years having led him by the nose and having him under pressure due to the arrest of his mistress in Moscow. Voluntarism, described by W.T. Drymmera *sitwa*, unclear promotion criteria, which after all in a situation of low pay officers was the only way to stabilize their financial situation and ignoring the objective requirements assigned to management roles not only disrupted the functioning of the Polish intelligence, but also significantly facilitated the Soviet penetration, generating interpersonal tension among officers chosen for rapid career paths (eg. Drymmer W.) and the rest, which in the course of their service was overlooked

⁹⁶ W.T. Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce...*, p. 107.

⁹⁷ CAW, Oddział II, sygn. I. 303.4.1781, T. Werner's letter to W.T. Drymmer, l.dz. 08/24 from 24th January 1924.

⁹⁸ Of course, it should be noted that the hering was conducted by Łaniewski.

⁹⁹ Although he could communicate with the Finnish officers, who spoke German.

in promotions not only in posts, but also in ranks.¹⁰⁰ It had to affect the officers' attitudes towards the service and the superiors and to have a negative impact on recruitment, because young officers realized that the regular army units offered a better chance of being noticed by and promoted than the ruled with unclear principles information service.

So called Bociański's committee is a good example of lacking good management and civil courage. In 1927, the committee did not – although in the face of such a large degree of possible Soviet infiltration it was absolutely necessary – carry out personnel purges in DII. Despite the statements of people in charge of the Division II suggesting that they were aware of the seriousness of the situation after the Trust affair, they did not exchange the personnel involved in the operation, to stop described by A. Niedzińskiego "engagement" of the Polish intelligence into Soviet counter-intelligence. The structure of the DII, its staff, activity forms and methods of operational work, cover institutions and prevailing mentality had been thoroughly researched by the GPU in years before 1927. Doing nothing, to change this situation, only facilitated the further penetration, offering to Polish officers self-limitation of their activity.

Possible motivations of the officers responsible for those decisions were the result of their emotions and beliefs, probably understandable and noble¹⁰¹, but at the same time they were extremely harmful and – given the seriousness of the threat – really petty. Indeed, if Bociański's committee had decided to carry out the purge and accepted its possible consequences in the form of a probable compromise of Division II, it could at least partially save the Polish intelligence on the USSR¹⁰² but it would ultimately destroy their own careers.

End

Summing up, one has once again to emphasize that the above described causes were complex and worked synergistically to enhance each other. Group-thinking, stemming from personal interests participating lie along with its consequences in terms commissioning processes of cognitive dissonance-reduction were both the result and the cause of the system errors occurring in the Polish intelligence. It must be stressed at this point that the internal causes, briefly outlined above, only facilitated external factors. Because DII was the object of constant interest of Soviet Russia, a situation when the military intelligence became a victim of the psycho-social processes that effectively hampered its functioning, facilitating the aggressive action of the Soviets was an unacceptable mistake. Internal factors were like the weakness of the body, which then usually falls victim to the disease, although in normal conditions it can defend itself.

¹⁰⁰ A. Wszendyrówny, *System doboru kadr do Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego Wojska Polskiego w latach 1929–1939*, „Rocznik Archiwalno-Historyczny Centralnego Archiwum Wojskowego” 2009, No 2, p. 129.

¹⁰¹ Naturally, it should be emphasized that decision was influenced by many other factors.

¹⁰² Though it should be noted that receiving any intelligence documents from the USSR quickly became impossible due to extremely difficult conditions of spy-work.

Since 1925 Polish strategic thought was founded on the assumption that a war on two fronts was inevitable, and the only remedy was to have the efficient intelligence and the army based upon maneuvering possibilities combined with high firepower.¹⁰³ But most of the decisions made by the Polish government and the army acted contrary to those, how legitimate, assumptions: the army was technologically retarded, and therefore less mobile, the Soviet invasion on 17 September 1939 was a total surprise, because the government had been convinced that the Soviet Union at worst be neutral, and DII – which was to be the key to efficient army and policy – mired in the problems described above, which effectively blocked its intelligence abilities in the USSR. As Stanislaw Mackiewicz put it, years after the first world war was a time of preparation for the next, inevitable war. Unfortunately, as so often in the history of Poland, this we were unable to use well.

Abstract

The article elaborates upon causes staying behind the involvement of the Division II of the Polish Army in the cooperation with the so called MOCR-Trust, i.e. a provocative organization established and managed by the Soviet counterintelligence. The author puts forward the hypothesis that there was no one reason for the above-mentioned intelligence failure, but a conglomerate of synergistically acting causes. The author divides these causes into two groups: external ones to the Division II, to which he includes political conditions and activities of Soviet spy-rings in the Polish Army and internal ones, which he groups into psycho-social causes resulting from cognitive processes and human interactions and structural causes, related to the functioning of the Division II as an hierarchical organization. Describing and explaining the second group of causes, the author reaches for explanations to the achievements of social and organization psychology, combined with a thorough historical research.

Keywords: Division II SG of the Polish Army, disinformation operation, Trust, OGPU, social and cognitive psychology, organization psychology, history of special services, disinformation theory.

¹⁰³ P. Stawecki, *Polityka wojskowa Polski 1921–1926*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 82–93.