

## **Working methods of the Russian secret services in the light of the Oleg Kulinich case**

### **Abstract**

The author analyses the case of the detention of Ukrainian Security Service officer Oleg Kulinich on suspicion of espionage for the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. On the basis of the analysis of the tasks posed to this Russian agent, he concludes that the modus operandi of Russian counterintelligence is diametrically opposed to the methods of Western services. The main difference is the shifting of the centre of gravity of operational activities from reconnaissance-information work to attempts at agentic seizure of control over enemy institutions, mainly civilian and military special services, and the realisation of intelligence infiltration by people with the same habitus as recruitment candidates. Drawing on the achievements of cognitive psychology and research in recent history, the author demonstrates that the Russian services have been using and refining these methods for more than 100 years.

### **Keywords**

FSB, SBU, VChK, GPU, offensive counterintelligence, disorganisation, infiltration, Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

On 16 July 2022, the Security Service of Ukraine arrested its own officer, Colonel Oleg Kulinich<sup>1</sup>, who headed the Crimean branch of the SBU<sup>2</sup> from October 2020 to March 2022<sup>3</sup>. Kulinich was accused of cooperating with Russian special services. The State Bureau of Investigation (Ukrainian: Державне бюро розслідувань, SBI), which investigated his case, revealed that among the evidence of treason were recordings of Kulinich's conversations with Volodymyr Sivkovich - his superintendent on behalf of the 5th Service of the Federal Security Service<sup>4</sup>, and computer metadata proving that Kulinich blocked the transmission to the SBU headquarters in Kiev of an agent's report warning of an attack by Russian Federation (RF) forces stationed in Crimea just hours before the start of the operation on the night of 24 February 2022<sup>5</sup>.

Kulinich's detention came as a shock to the Ukrainian security sector, as the officer had been appointed to lead the Crimean SBU by President Volodymyr Zelensky. In order to promote Kulinich, the president removed Evgeny Netuzhilov from his post - despite the previous successes of the unit he was heading - and sent him to a remote outpost in Chernihiv, far from Crimea<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, Kulinich was a close associate and friend of the head of the SBU Ivan Bakanov<sup>7</sup>, whom Zelenski entrusted with the leadership of this service in 2019<sup>8</sup> (Bakanov and Zelenski were linked by a long-standing friendship, common interests and

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<sup>1</sup> ДБР та СБУ затримали співробітника Служби безпеки України, який працював на спецслужби РФ та передавав їм таємні дані, Державне бюро розслідувань, 16 VII 2022, <https://dbr.gov.ua/news/dbr-ta-sbu-zatrimali-spivrobitnika-sluzhbi-bezpeki-ukraini-yakij-pracyuvav-na-specsluzhbi-rf-ta-peredavav-im-taemni-dani> [accessed: 1 VI 2023].

<sup>2</sup> Following the annexation of the peninsula by the Russian Federation in 2014, the Crimean branch of the SBU operated from the territory of the Kherson region.

<sup>3</sup> Указ Президента України №91/2022, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/912022-41481> [accessed: 10 VII 2023].

<sup>4</sup> FSB division responsible for intelligence activities in the post-Soviet area, mainly in Ukraine.

<sup>5</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ. Чего не хватает в деле Кулинич-Сивковича*, Центр журналистских расследований, 26 IV 2023, <https://investigator.org.ua/investigations/253973/> [accessed: 20 VII 2023]; А. Мазуренко, *Бывший начальник СБУ в Крыму и заместитель секретаря СНБО способствовали вторжению РФ*, Украинская Правда, 23 VII 2022, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2022/07/23/7359762/> [accessed: 20 VII 2023]; *Спустя полгода после ареста СБУ-шника, курировавшего Крым, ему официально вменили потерю Херсонщины*, 5 IV 2023, <https://dzen.ru/a/ZC1w30iFDTx-UcQV> [accessed: 20 VII 2023].

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Указ Президента України №316/2019, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3162019-27181> [accessed: 12 VII 2023]. See also: В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

political activities<sup>9</sup>). As a result of the Kulinich affair, Bakanov lost his post (but was exonerated without investigation on suspicion of treason), and investigations were opened against more than 650 SBU officers<sup>10</sup> on suspicion of collaboration with the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (Russian: Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации, FSB)<sup>11</sup>. Interestingly, the SBI reported as early as April 2022 on the investigation of Kulinich, who, despite losing his post, remained in the service and, moreover, became a special task officer to the head of the SBU (!)<sup>12</sup>. He served in this capacity until his arrest, although an official letter alleging treason against him appeared on the website of the Office of the Attorney General in June<sup>13</sup>. Even more interestingly, Kulinich, despite having been out of the service for years and working in the civilian sector, was given a position in the SBU without a security clearance and without submitting a personal security questionnaire<sup>14</sup>. In addition, as of June 2020, the SBU had the testimony of Russian agent Igor Kolesnikov, which showed that Kulinich was in constant contact with Russian agents<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, no one was interested in the fact that Kulinich served in the Federal Counterintelligence Service (later renamed FSB) until 1992, which means he must have had Russian citizenship at the time. Moreover, he owed his career to his friendship with identified Russian agent Andriy Derkacz<sup>16</sup>. This one, according to the US State Department, had been performing tasks for the Russian Federation since 2010, including the creation of diversionary units for the activities of the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (Russian: Главное управление Генерального штаба Вооружённых

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<sup>9</sup> М. Жарговська, «Зеленський – людина з великої літери. Може, навіть усі літери в цьому слові – з великої літери». Керівник штабу Зеленського Іван Баканов про стратегію кампанії, зустрічі з олігархами і канал «1+1», Бабель, 25 III 2019, <https://babel.ua/texts/27627-zelenskiy-lyudina-z-velikoji-literi-mozhe-navit-vsi-bukvi-v-comu-slovi-z-velikoji-literi-kerivnik-shtabu-zelenskogo-ivan-bakanov-pro-strategiyu-kampaniji-zustrichah-z-oligarhami-i-vidnosinah-z-1-1> [accessed: 12 VII 2023]; К. Скоркин, *Зеленский и люди в погонах. Что означают громкие отставки украинских силовиков*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 21 VII 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/87549> [accessed: 12 VII 2023].

<sup>10</sup> К. Скоркин, *Зеленский и люди в погонах...*

<sup>11</sup> However, neither Bakanov nor the SBU's head of counterintelligence, Alexander Poklada, were investigated. See: В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> In September 2020, the US State Department officially recognised Derkacz as an FSB agent. From: *Деркач Андрій Леонідович*, ПолітХаб, <https://www.chesno.org/politician/105/> [accessed: 19 VII 2023].

сил Российской Федерации, GU)<sup>17</sup> in Ukraine<sup>18</sup>. Kulinich was also repeatedly accused of corruption and financial embezzlement<sup>19</sup> during his time in the civil administration<sup>20</sup>. The fact that the Crimean SBU virtually ceased to function under his rule was also not cause for concern, as he effectively paralysed its activities by moving its headquarters from Kherson, close to Crimea, to Kiev without preparing facilities for officers. In addition, he directed the service's activities towards topics unrelated to Crimea and led to a 60% reduction in the number of officers<sup>21</sup>. Kulinich presented the abolition of the unit in Kiev as a necessary reform of the territorial and operational structure<sup>22</sup>, and apparently this explanation was accepted at SBU headquarters.

The investigation launched after Kulinich's arrest omitted threads of Ukrainian politicians<sup>23</sup> and high-ranking SBU officers<sup>24</sup> evidently linked to him. The investigation also failed to address the question of who was actually responsible for pulling Kulinich into the SBU and bringing him into Bakanov's immediate entourage<sup>25</sup> in violation of all vetting procedures. Bakanov, although it was through him that Kulinich carried out the tasks set by the FSB<sup>26</sup>, was removed from the circle of suspects and does not even appear as a witness in the case, despite being proven to have travelled to the US in 2019 with money from a de facto lobbying firm owned by Sivkovich<sup>27</sup>. It has long been reported in Ukrainian newspapers that he is an acquaintance of Putin's from his service in the KGB<sup>28</sup>. For

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<sup>17</sup> Former Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces (Russian: Главное разведывательное управление Генерального штаба Вооружённых сил Российской Федерации, GRU RF).

<sup>18</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Kulinich, among others, held senior positions at Energoatom and Goskomziem. His position at the latter company allowed him to machinate the sale of state land into private hands.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> See: *Координировал шпионскую деятельность в интересах ФСБ: экс-секретарю СНБО Сивковичу сообщили о подозрении*, Прямий, 23 VII 2022, <https://prm.ua/ru/koordiniroval-shpyonskiyu-deyatelnost-v-ynteresakh-fsb-ks-sekretariu-snbo-syvkovychu-soobshchily-o-podozrenyy/> [accessed: 20 VII 2023].

<sup>24</sup> The investigation focused on the threads of SBU officers who co-operated with the FSB in areas occupied by the armed forces of the Russian Federation. See: К. Скоркин, *Зеленский и люди в погонах...*

<sup>25</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>26</sup> С. Кошкіна, *Судьба Макея. И украинских предателей*, Житомир online, [https://zhitomir-online.com/top\\_news/136748-sudba-makeya-y-ukraynskykh-predateley.html](https://zhitomir-online.com/top_news/136748-sudba-makeya-y-ukraynskykh-predateley.html) [accessed: 16 VII 2023].

<sup>27</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>28</sup> *Who is Mr Sivkovich?*, Live Journal, <https://v-n-zb.livejournal.com/386298.html> [accessed: 16 VII 2023].

the Ukrainian investigators, Bakanov's links with Derkacz on religious-ideological grounds were not an aggravating circumstance either<sup>29</sup>. The Ukrainian authorities even tried to present Kulinich's detention as a serious warning to Russian agents in the Ukrainian administration<sup>30</sup>, resulting from the professional infiltration of the FSB by the SBU<sup>31</sup>. As it seems, these investigations served the presidential administration to take full control of the force sector, which was entrusted to Andriy Yermak (despite accusations of cooperation with the Russian Federation raised against him in the media)<sup>32</sup>.

This case is interesting not because of the betrayal of a well-ranked Ukrainian service officer, but because of the *modus operandi* of the Russian service. It has been reconstructed in the article on the basis of an analysis of information gathered by the Ukrainian SBI.

## Methods used by the FSB during operations in Ukraine

The *Notification of suspicion* (Ukrainian: Повідомлення про підозру<sup>33</sup>) published on 22 July 2022 by the SBI regarding Sivkovich makes it possible to reproduce the characteristic *modus operandi* of the Russian FSB, which distinguishes the Russian service from Western secret services. Its main elements boil down to the following:

1. Conducting recruitment and reconnaissance activities with the help of people belonging ethnically, mentally and linguistically to the infiltrated group, usually with a branched network of acquaintances among the candidates to be recruited<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>30</sup> Ю. Зиненко, *Дело Кулиничка является сигналом всем предателям, что их найдут и накажут – экс-нардеп Украины*, Гордон, 5 IV 2023, <https://gordonua.com/news/politics/delo-kulinicha-yavlyatsya-signalom-vsem-predatelyam-chto-ih-naydut-i-nakazhut-eks-nardep-ukrainy-1658110.html> [accessed: 22 VI 2023].

<sup>31</sup> *Работал на “кротоферму”*: СБУ обнародовала новые детали госизмены экс-главы спецслужбы в Крыму, Фокус, 5 IV 2023, <https://focus.ua/ukraine/558953-rabotal-na-krotofermu-sbu-obnarodovala-novye-detali-gosizmeny-eks-glavy-specsluzhby-v-krymu> [accessed: 22 VI 2023].

<sup>32</sup> К. Скоркин, *Зеленский и люди в погонах...*

<sup>33</sup> *Повідомлення про підозру*, Державне бюро розслідувань, [https://old.gb.gov.ua/ua/file\\_downloader.html?\\_m=fslib&\\_t=fsfile&\\_c=download&file\\_id=220014](https://old.gb.gov.ua/ua/file_downloader.html?_m=fslib&_t=fsfile&_c=download&file_id=220014) [accessed: 22 VI 2023].

<sup>34</sup> See: А. Каташинская, *СБУ: Кремль хотел поставить у власти предателей из ОПЗЖ и Партии регионов*, КР.УА, 19 VI 2022, <https://kr.ua/politics/a652006-sbu-posle-okkupatsii-kreml-khotel-postavit-u-vlasti-predatelej-iz-opzzh-i-partii-rehionov> [accessed: 22 VI 2023].

2. Facilitating recruitment processes by means of political organisations of legends (screens)<sup>35</sup> to pose as internal-political, rather than espionage, reconnaissance activity.
3. The aim in intelligence activities is not to collect and process information about the adversary, but to create a situation. This creation consists of:
  - a) attempts to take control of enemy institutions (mainly civilian and military intelligence and counterintelligence),
  - b) damaging activities, i.e. the disorganisation of the opponent's civilian and military institutions through agents of influence in order to block its offensive capabilities and impede its defensive and countermeasures.

### Recruitment activities carried out with the help of community members

It is clear from the notification published by the SBI<sup>36</sup> that Kulinich was neither recruited by FSB officers nor maintained direct intelligence communication with them. Both the recruitment and the conduct of Kulinich were carried out by Ukrainian nationals who have been on the territory of the Russian Federation since 2014<sup>37</sup>. The Security Service of Ukraine obtained, among other things, evidence of an ongoing spy contact<sup>38</sup> between Kulinich and Sivkovich, who, according to the SBI investigation materials, recruited and guided Kulinich, acting on behalf of the FSB.

Volodymyr Sivkovich<sup>39</sup> (born 1960) served in the republican Ukrainian KGB from 1982 to 1992<sup>40</sup>. After the collapse of the USSR, like many other officers of the service, he embarked on a career in business. In the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century, he was chairman of Kiev joint stock companies Авиаккомпания Вита and М. Ф. С. At the same time, he served as chairman

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<sup>35</sup> A 'legend organisation' in Russian terminology or a 'screen organisation' in Anglo-Saxon terminology is an organisation (e.g. a company, foundation, social organisation, party) used for espionage activities in a country, by means of which it is not only simpler to reach its citizens, but also a much greater margin of 'deniability' is gained. In the event of unmasking, it is much easier to conceal the espionage activity of a foreign state than in the case of diplomatic representatives of that state.

<sup>36</sup> *Повідомлення про підозру...*

<sup>37</sup> М. Кучерявец, *Екс-глава СБУ в Криму Кулинич предстанет перед судом*, РБК – Україна, 3 VII 2023, <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/eks-golova-sbu-krimu-kulinich-postane-pered-1688371813.html> [accessed: 22 VII 2023].

<sup>38</sup> This is to include elements such as: conspiring between the two sides of a communication, accepting tasks and reporting on their completion, and passing on information that is a state or official secret.

<sup>39</sup> Biographical information from: *Биография Владимира Сивковича*, 14 XII 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20191029103200/https://ria.ru/20131214/984107701.html> [accessed: 12 VII 2023].

<sup>40</sup> See: *Екс-вице-премьеру Сивковичу объявили подозрение в сотрудничестве с ФСБ*, Еспресо, 23 VII 2022, <https://ru.espresso.tv/eks-vitse-premeru-sivkovichu-obyavili-podozrenie-v-sotrudnichestve-s-fsb> [accessed: 12 VII 2023].

of the supervisory board at the company Международный Медиа Центр – СТБ. In 1998, he entered politics and became an aide to President Leonid Kuchma. Subsequently, he was a member of the Ukrainian parliament (Verkhovna Rada, Ukrainian: Верховна Рада) of the 4th, 5th and 6th terms (i.e. from 2000 to 2010). As a parliamentarian, he served, inter alia, as Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Economic Security and Activity of the Defence-Industrial Complex (Ukrainian: Підкомітет з питань економічної безпеки та діяльності оборонно-промислового комплексу) and deputy chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on National Security and Defence (Ukrainian: Комітет Верховної Ради України з питань національної безпеки та оборони). In 2010, he served as deputy prime minister for several months before becoming deputy chairman of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine (Ukrainian: Рада Національної Безпеки і Оборони України). In December 2013, he was stripped of this position following an accusation of overstepping his authority during the dispersal of Euromaidan protesters on 30 November 2013. After Viktor Yanukovich lost power, he left for Russia. In January 2022, Sivkovich was placed on the US Treasury Department's sanctions list as a person responsible for implementing the Russian Federation's subversive and destabilising activities against Ukraine<sup>41</sup>.

Kulinich's intelligence service was therefore the responsibility of a Ukrainian who had previously held important state positions, on top of having a past in the Ukrainian structures of the Russian secret services. It is very likely that Sivkovich reached Kulinich through a private acquaintance with him from before his escape to the Russian Federation in 2014. In this way, the Russian special services overcame the candidate's resistance to cooperate. This is because it was not offered by an intelligence officer of a foreign country, but primarily by a man of the same nationality, coming from the same background, probably privately acquainted for many years.

Sivkovich, as a resident agent<sup>42</sup>, did not interfere in the activities of Kulinicz, who, for his part, recruited associates in an identical manner from among his friends and colleagues. In fact, it could be argued that the recruitment activities in this case were similar to Amway-type multi-level marketing solutions<sup>43</sup>, whereby participants are incentivised with financial benefits to recruit more salesmen. In the case of both

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<sup>41</sup> *Russian Harmful Foreign Activities Designations*, Office of Foreign Assets Control, 20 I 2022, <https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20220120> [accessed: 5 VII 2023].

<sup>42</sup> Resident agent (Russian: *агент групповод*) – agent, who handles his own ring of sub-agents.

<sup>43</sup> See: B.A. Sypniewska, *Marketing wielopoziomowy – szansa czy zagrożenie?* (Eng. Multi-level marketing - opportunity or threat?), *“Zeszyty Naukowe PWSZ w Płocku. Nauki Ekonomiczne”* 2013, vol. 17, pp. 54–73.

Sivkovich and Kulinich, recruitment was limited to their circles of acquaintances and trusted associates, from which the most susceptible individuals were selected, e.g. because of their corrupt pasts, pro-Russian sympathies or disappointed ambitions for promotion<sup>44</sup>. At the same time, it is possible that - at least at the lower levels of the network created in this way - information linking the organisation under construction with the Russian special services did not appear. This was possible as a result of the application of yet another method allowing the true nature of the activities carried out and their true beneficiary to be masked.

### Creating a legend organisation as a way of facilitating recruitment processes

In his contacts with Kulinich, Sivkovich did not act as an FSB agent, but as the leader of a political organisation in opposition to the Ukrainian government, with a programme contrary to the political line of the ruling group, but (ostensibly) directed towards the welfare of Ukraine. This organisation was established in Moscow around 2019, on the initiative of Yanukovych camp politicians in exile in the Russian Federation. It was given the name of Political Bureau (Russian: Политический Офис, ПБ). The initiators of its foundation and its leaders were Sivkovich and Andriy Kluyev, who, like the former, was a deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of the fourth, fifth and sixth terms. In addition, he served several times as deputy prime minister between 2003 and 2012, as secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine between 2012 and 2014, and led the Yanukovych administration in January 2014 and tried to overcome the political crisis caused by the popular protests. During this time, several assassination attempts were made against him, and once he was even wounded by a shot from an automatic weapon<sup>45</sup>. According to Russian sources, Kluyev is permanently based in Donetsk (however, there is no information that he is part of the leadership of the former Donetsk People's Republic<sup>46</sup>). In 2016, he testified before a Moscow court that was hearing a case brought by former Verkhovna Rada deputy Volodymyr Olehnik, who demanded that Yanukovych's removal from power be officially recognised as a coup by force. In his testimony, Kluyev maintained that the Euromaidan protesters and militiamen were shot at by citizens of Georgia and the Baltic states, not Ukrainian

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<sup>44</sup> See: А. Мазуренко, *Бывший начальник СБУ в Крыму...; Сивкович стал предателем от неполноценности* – ГБР, Досьє, 23 VII 2022, <https://dosye.com.ua/news/2022-07-23/sivkovich-stal-predatelem-ot-nepolnocennosti--gbr/206288/?print=1> [accessed: 20 VII 2023].

<sup>45</sup> *Клюев ранен и находится в Киеве, - источник в АП, РБК – Україна*, 25 II 2014, <https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/klyuev-ranen-i-nahoditsya-v-kieve---istochnik-v-ap-25022014131600> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>46</sup> Kluyev comes from a Donetsk mining family and started his professional career as an underground miner.



militia<sup>47</sup>, and that an assassination attempt was being prepared on Yanukovych as part of an operation codenamed “Ceaușescu”<sup>48</sup>.

The Russian court, after hearing witnesses and presenting alleged evidence, declared the 2014 opposition takeover as a coup d'état. This was then used by the leaders of the Ukrainian opposition in exile for further political initiatives, including the creation of the aforementioned PB to coordinate political and social activities aimed at changing Ukraine's political line. The office is located in Moscow at Краснопресненская набережная 12<sup>49</sup>. The same building houses the Expert Institute for Social Research (Russian: Экспертный Институт Социальных Исследований, EISI), which was set up<sup>50</sup> as a think tank for regional policy research and liaison with the expert community in this field. The institute is funded by state-owned companies Rosatom, Rostech and Rosgidro<sup>51</sup>. There appears to be cooperation between the EISI and PB, whose sources of funding, however, are not published anywhere (one can speculate that the FSB finances PB's activities, perhaps using Russian state-owned companies, which generously contribute to all Kremlin political initiatives). It is also known about a minimum of 15 companies in Ukraine owned by Sivkovich whose income was used for PB's activities<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Бывший глава администрации Януковича рассказал о причастных к “евромайдану”, 16 XII 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190308080855/https://ria.ru/20161216/1483786590.html> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>48</sup> М. Алешина, Против Януковича готовилась операция “Чаушеску”, RG.RU, 16 XII 2016, <https://rg.ru/2016/12/16/reg-cfo/protiv-ianukovicha-gotovilas-operaciia-chaushesku.html> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>49</sup> At this address is the... World Trade Centre (Russian: Центр международной торговли), which offers offices for rent. See: <https://2gis.ru/moscow/firm/4504127908496856> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>50</sup> The constituent entities of the institute are: M.W. Lomonosov University of Moscow (Russian: Московский государственный университет им. М.В. Ломоносова), St. Petersburg State University (Russian: Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет), Leningrad Alexander Pushkin State University (Russian: Ленинградский государственный университет им. А.С. Пушкина), State Research University “Higher School of Economics” (Russian: Национальный исследовательский университет „Высшая школа экономики”), Russian Public Relations Association (Russian: Российская ассоциация по связям с общественностью), Russian Polyglot Association (Russian: Российское общество политологов).

<sup>51</sup> Экспертный институт социальных исследований, <https://eistr.ru/about/> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>52</sup> See: В офисах, связанных с экс-заместителем секретаря СНБО Сивковичем, правоохранители проводят обыски, delo.ua, 5 IV 2023, <https://delo.ua/ru/politics/v-ofisax-svyazannyx-s-eks-zamestitelem-sekretarya-snbo-sivkovicem-pravoohraniteli-provodyat-obyski-414336/> [accessed: 18 VII 2023]; Экс-замсекретаря СНБО Владимир Сивкович, работающий на ФСБ, контролировал 15 компаний в Киевской области, New Voice, 5 IV 2023, <https://nv.ua/ukraine/events/vladimir-sivkovich-kontroliroval-15-kompaniy-v-kievskoy-oblasti-kotorye-rabotali-na-fsb-sbu-50315788.html> [accessed: 18 VII 2023]; В. Подорожная, В Украине обыскивают

The Politburo thus ostensibly appeared as a platform of opposition politicians drawn mainly from the Party of Regions (Ukrainian: Партія регіонів), who - relying on a court ruling on the illegitimacy of Ukraine's current political system - were aiming to regain power, allegedly only by constitutional means. During the 2019 parliamentary elections Kluyev, in order to legally enter the Verkhovna Rada<sup>53</sup>, registered his candidacy with the Central Election Commission of Ukraine. In this way, he wanted to emphasise that this activity was fully legal. In doing so, the Politburo presented a political agenda that was popular with many Ukrainians<sup>54</sup>, based on three main demands:

- the implementation of the Minsk agreements, in which Ukraine undertook, inter alia, to decentralise power and grant self-government rights to the Donbas<sup>55</sup>,
- a return to the 2012 language law, giving linguistic minorities the right to use their native language as an official language<sup>56</sup>,
- abandonment of the Euro-Atlantic political course in favour of Ukraine's neutrality.

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компании, связанные с экс-замсекретаря ЧБО Сивковичем, Корреспондент.net, 5 IV 2023, <https://korrespondent.net/ukraine/4578287-v-ukrayne-obyskyvavit-kompanyu-sviazannye-s-eks-zamsekretaria-snbo-syvkovychem> [accessed: 18 VII 2023].

<sup>53</sup> His registration was withdrawn by the Central Election Commission due to the impossibility of establishing whether he had actually been residing in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk for five years. See: ЦИК України отменив реєстрацію Ключова і Шарія на виборах в Раду, Радіо Свобода, 3 VII 2019, <https://www.svoboda.org/a/30035705.html> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>54</sup> It should be emphasised that the majority of Ukrainian society did not want the conflict prolonged and demanded an end to the war in the east. According to political scientists, this attitude determined the electoral success of Volodymyr Zelensky, who in the election campaign described himself (in opposition to Petro Poroshenko) as an advocate of peace at all costs. See: Зеленский: Лишь бы ни один украинец не умер, хоть с чертом лысым договориться готов – легко, YouTube, 19 III 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dE8fUyS4Dd8> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>55</sup> Such a protocol was signed on 5 September 2014 by members of the tripartite contact group, whose signatories included Ukraine, Russia and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as representatives of the two 'people's republics'. See: *Protocol on the results of consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group with respect to the joint steps aimed at the implementation of the Peace Plan of the President of Ukraine, P. Poroshenko, and the initiatives of the President of Russia, V. Putin 5.09.2014*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 8 IX 2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150907032447/http://mfa.gov.ua/en/news-feeds/foreign-offices-news/27596-protocol-on-the-results-of-consultations-of-the-trilateral-contact-group-minsk-05092014> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>56</sup> This law was furthermore based on the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine guaranteeing minorities the right to their language, their own traditions and culture. See: Конституція України, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

It was obvious to many in Ukraine, especially those coming from the power sector, that the programme line proposed by PB allowed for a brake on aggression from the Russian Federation, whose authorities had made it clear since 2007 that they would not accept further NATO enlargement to the east<sup>57</sup>. Since 2008 with regard to Georgia, and since 2014 with regard to Ukraine, they have pursued this objective by force<sup>58</sup>. PB activists, by establishing contacts with old acquaintances active in the current Ukrainian government apparatus, were able to present themselves as the only rational political option capable of saving Ukraine from war with a nuclear power. Such argumentation, coupled with the direct nature of the acquaintanceship with the people reached by the Bureau's emissaries, may have been effective. One can hazard a guess that PB's envoys presented themselves as saviours of Ukraine, whose (in their view) irrational political course must have led to a large-scale war with a threatening neighbour. This kind of justification, as well as promises of money and promotion once in power, could (and indeed must) have greatly facilitated recruitment.

Of course, PB was merely a legend created by the FSB to infiltrate Ukraine's power and political structures. The curators of PB were two officers of this service: Igor Chumakov, who headed Division 9 of the Operational Information Department of the 5th FSB Service<sup>59</sup>, and Alexander Chulindin, head of the 1st Division of the 9th Department of the Operational Information Department of the 5th FSB Service<sup>60</sup>. However, in setting up and funding PB, the FSB took care to conspire the structure's contacts with the Russian internal service. SBU information shows that FSB curators maintained relations with the Bureau with the help of FSB officer Marina Terentieva<sup>61</sup>, operating undercover as a journalist, who was responsible

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<sup>57</sup> А. Черкасов et al., "Доктрина Путина". О чем российский президент говорил в Мюнхене 15 лет назад и что из этого вышло, *Настоящее Время*, 18 II 2022, <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/putin-doctrine-analizing-munich-speech/31709917.html> [accessed: 1 VII 2023]. See also: *Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности*, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034> [accessed: 14 VII 2023].

<sup>58</sup> Both the war with Georgia and the intervention in Ukraine, in geopolitical terms, were the result of these countries adopting a Euro-Atlantic political course in a situation where the Russian Federation had, since 2007, unequivocally announced that it would not allow any further NATO approximation to its borders.

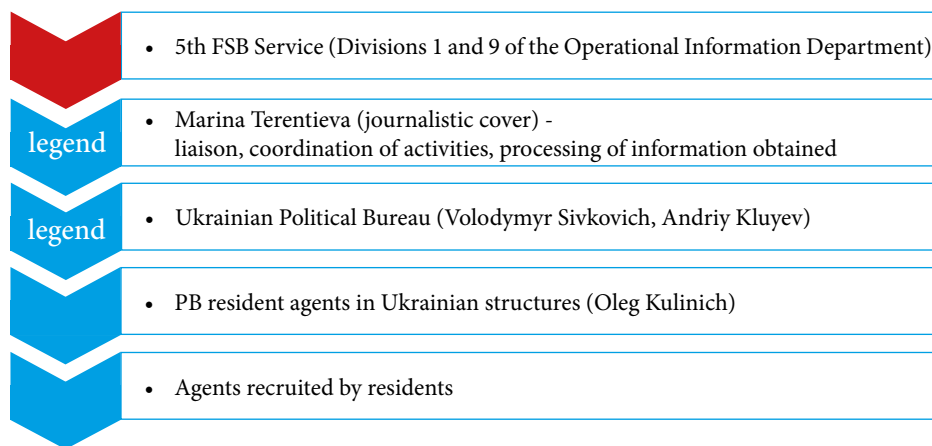
<sup>59</sup> 5th FSB service is responsible for conducting operations outside the borders of the Russian Federation, but only in the post-Soviet area, mainly in Ukraine.

<sup>60</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, the FSB did not take care to fully legendise Terentieva, who - although formally appearing as an ITAR TASS correspondent - was in the past a spokeswoman for the FSB's regional office. Even the information available online about her former workplace has not been removed. See: *Сотрудники УФСБ нашли девушку, "заминировавшую" магаданский аэропорт*, Интерфакс,

for receiving information obtained by the PB agent and delegating tasks and coordinating activities. The agent structure created by the FSB thus consisted of at least four links (Figure 1):

- a cover organisation in the form of PB,
- an allegedly independent journalist acting as a channel of direct communication between PB and the FSB,
- indirectly - agents positioned in sensitive places in the SBU (and probably also in the civil and military administration),
- subagents recruited by resident agents.



**Figure 1.** The agent structure created by the Federal Security Service.

Source: own elaboration.

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27 II 2013, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/292646> [accessed: 20 VII 2023]; В. Таюрский, *Сотрудники ФСБ пресекли канал поставки героина на Колыму*, RG.RU, 11 III 2013, <https://rg.ru/2013/03/11/reg-dfo/kanal-anons.html> [accessed: 20 VII 2023]; *Магаданские силовики перекрыли утечку золота с Колымы в руки кавказских боевиков*, newsru.com, 6 XII 2017, <https://www.newsru.com/russia/16nov2012/gold.html> [accessed: 20 VII 2023]; *В Риге открылся центр фонда "Русский мир"*, Русский Мир, <https://russkiymir.ru/fund/press/78927/> [accessed: 20 VII 2023]; *Telegram-канал ВЧК ОГПУ: сообщения от 23.07.2022*, Азбука Компромата, 24 VII 2022, [https://acomproamat.com/articles/vchk\\_ogpu\\_23\\_07\\_2022.html](https://acomproamat.com/articles/vchk_ogpu_23_07_2022.html) [accessed: 20 VII 2023].

## Offensive creation of an operational situation

One of the most interesting elements of the intelligence structure in question was the FSB's identification of targets set by the SBU. Although the agents collected information, which later went to the aforementioned divisions of the Operational Information Department of the FSB's 5th Service, **the most important task was not espionage (understood as the acquisition of information about the opponent), but gaining full agent control over the SBU.** Thus, the FSB was pursuing the tenets of the offensive counterintelligence developed during the Soviet era. The aim was to transform the Ukrainian service into its own tool, directed by an agent network deployed at the most important levels of the service hierarchy. This is clear from the transcript published by the SBI of conversations between Sivkovich and Kulinich<sup>62</sup>, who were using the Threema instant messenger<sup>63</sup>, given that SBU officers are unable to decipher this correspondence<sup>64</sup>.

The following lines of action by the FSB against Ukraine's state structures (especially the SBU) emerge from excerpts of published news items<sup>65</sup>:

1. The destabilisation of both society and Ukraine's state structures by building a message suggesting that it is incapable of functioning as an independent entity<sup>66</sup>.
2. Initiating processes of self-destruction of the SBU by inducing the leadership to make counter-effective decisions, nipping in the bud

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<sup>62</sup> Only excerpts of conversations from the days of: 2 VI and 26 X 2019, 8 I and 19 V 2020. The reason why only four transcripts were made public and handed over to the court is not known. From: В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>63</sup> Ю. Вишнеvский, *Дело Кулинича. Как Банковая готовится объяснять, кто сдал юг*, dsnews.ua, 8 IV 2023, <https://www.dsnews.ua/politics/alibi-dlya-zelenskogo-zachem-bankovoy-speshit-sudom-nad-kulinichem-07042023-477437> [accessed: 10 VII 2023].

<sup>64</sup> Neither the SBI nor the SBU have reported how these recordings were obtained. Ukrainian journalists speculated that either Kulinich recorded the conversations and these recordings were later secured during the search, or the recordings were handed over to the SBU by the CIA, which was interested in Sivkovich. See: В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>65</sup> The directions of FSB activities were extracted from the transcript of conversations between Kulinich and Sivkovich: *СРОЧНО! Перехват звонка. Крот в СБУ. Как Сивкович через Кулинича вербовал для ФСБ предателей Украины*, YouTube, 5 IV 2023 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xL-TB-8iej8> [accessed: 10 VII 2023].

<sup>66</sup> See: *Агент ФСБ Кулинич "Котигорошко" и его куратор Сивкович обсуждают усиление влияния на СБУ: "Наумова поставьте первым замом. Времени у нас мало – пару месяцев"*, цензор.нет, 5 IV 2023, [https://censor.net/ru/video\\_news/3410271/agent\\_fsb\\_kulinich\\_kotigoroshko\\_i\\_ego\\_kurator\\_sivkovich\\_obsujdayut\\_usilenie\\_vliyaniya\\_na\\_sbu\\_naumova](https://censor.net/ru/video_news/3410271/agent_fsb_kulinich_kotigoroshko_i_ego_kurator_sivkovich_obsujdayut_usilenie_vliyaniya_na_sbu_naumova) [accessed: 7 VII 2023].

- any offensive and defensive actions<sup>67</sup>, and blocking changes in leadership positions occupied by people deemed ineffective in or even detrimental to the service<sup>68</sup>.
3. Staffing the leadership of SBU field offices with their own people, mainly in areas bordering the Russian Federation (including Chernihiv, Sumy and Kharkiv regions), as well as in Odessa, Transcarpathia and Lviv<sup>69</sup>.
  4. Lobbying Bakanov for a swap in the position of 1st deputy head of the SBU and replacing Ruslan Baranetsky with Andriy Naumov<sup>70</sup>. This would have resulted in a more complete control of the FSB over the SBU Counterintelligence Department<sup>71</sup>, which was already under the control of Kulinich's agents at lower levels of the hierarchy<sup>72</sup>. This personnel change was promoted despite the fact that Naumov had no experience in the special services. Previously, he had worked in a series of positions in the prosecutor's office<sup>73</sup>. Baraniecki, on the other hand, became inconvenient for the FSB because on 22 July 2021 the Counterintelligence Department headed by him arrested two SBU officers working for the FSB<sup>74</sup>. For the FSB, this meant that the counter-intelligence control exercised by Kulinich's agents ranked in lower positions was not sufficient<sup>75</sup>.
  5. Attempts to place an agent in the top management of the SBU's internal security division, in the Personnel Bureau and in the position

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> В. Соколов, *Кто предатель?*, День, 25 VII 2023, <https://day.kyiv.ua/ru/blog/politika/kto-predatel> [accessed: 25 VII 2023].

<sup>69</sup> See: *Агент ФСБ Кулинич...*

<sup>70</sup> This issue is unclear. This is because the SBU and the SBI have assumed that the 'Hunter' mentioned in Kulinich's conversations with Sivkovich (Russian: Охотник) is Andriy Naumov. However, there is a lack of any evidence for this, other than the fact that Naumov was also an FSB agent, fled Ukraine just before the Russian invasion and carted away the money he had illegally earned. From: В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*; К. Скоркин, *Зеленский и люди в погонах...*

<sup>71</sup> *Агент ФСБ Кулинич...*

<sup>72</sup> The State Bureau of Investigation deleted in the recording the part of Kulinich's statement indicating who he meant when he spoke of the influence he already had over Ukrainian counterintelligence. He only indicated that he was referring to the 5th Directorate of the SBU Counterintelligence Department. See: В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>73</sup> Н. Рогальская, *Дело Кулинич: генерала Баранецкого в СБУ заменили российским "кротом"*, Стопкор, 6 IV 2023, <https://www.stopcor.org/section-uanews/news-sprava-kulinicha-general-a-baranetskogo-v-sbu-zaminili-na-rosijskogo-krota-butusov-06-04-2023.html> [accessed: 12 VII 2023].

<sup>74</sup> They were Hutor and Sidorovich, active in the Kherson SBU. The latter was linked to Kulinich. His detention could therefore have hindered Sidorovich's activity.

<sup>75</sup> See: Н. Рогальская, *Дело Кулинич...*

of commandant of the SBU Academy<sup>76</sup>. This last move is intriguing, as it shows how deep the FSB went in trying to harm the SBU already at the basic level affecting the entire service - by deteriorating the quality of cadre training. This would further lower the professionalism of the SBU, where, since Bakanov's appointment as head, there has been an influx of people from outside the service, lacking experience and professional knowledge, but quickly promoted thanks to private connections<sup>77</sup>. Incidentally, the FSB agent Naumov, who was introduced into the SBU, implemented the reform of the SBU's internal security division (in a manner similar to Kulinich's 'reforms'), which shows the methods of paralysing the service's activity by the Russians, who, with the help of agents, apparently initiate processes of supposed reform in order to block the activity of the 'reformed' operational units<sup>78</sup>. At the same time, Naumov - as the grey eminence of the SBU - supervised the entire activity of this division, including issuing orders to initiate or abandon investigations into espionage cases against SBU officers<sup>79</sup>, which clearly facilitated the activities of Russian intelligence networks in the service.

6. Attempts to create small analytical groups in the SBU's Department of Information and Analytical Security (ДИАЗУ). This move by the FSB is difficult to explain. It may be that the Russians assumed that they would be able to influence the functioning of such analytical groups through their agents, which provided a greater opportunity to block correct analytical work than to control dispersed, individual analysts. The transcript of the conversations shows that Bakanov partially agreed to such a solution<sup>80</sup>.

The aforementioned objectives of the FSB put into question the activities of traditional Western counterintelligence. Indeed, the Russians were interested not in information about the SBU's operational activities, but in the **agential control of this service, especially its counter-intelligence component**. This is logical, given that the Kulinich case was one of many cases of this type, and that Ukrainian PB agents were also active in other sectors of the Ukrainian state. Thus, subduing the SBU - as the body responsible for combating espionage - not only paralysed

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<sup>76</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Н. Рогальская, *Дело Кулинича...*

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> В. Самар, *Кроты ФСБ в СБУ...*

the activities of this service, but also made it possible to conduct infiltration operations in other state structures as well.

The pattern of operation of the Russian services confirms that the effectiveness of the Ukrainian counterintelligence in combating the activities of the FSB must have been very low. This is because when infiltrating the SBU, the Russians used (in addition to the methods described above) several phenomena characteristic of Eastern-type state institutions. Firstly, the infiltration mechanism, as already mentioned, targeted people ethnically, culturally and mentally close to the recruiter, usually previously associated with him. Secondly, already acquired agents were given tasks to recruit further agents among people known to them. Thirdly, the functioning of the FSB was based on pathological phenomena:

- the lack of a rational personnel policy, this policy was shaped by cronyism and political influence, through which it was possible to influence the filling of top positions in the SBU<sup>81</sup>,
- leading to a decline in the professionalism of the service, as a result of which it has been possible to promote counter-productive organisational and operational solutions and candidates who do not meet elementary job requirements,
- the prevalence of non-formal relationships in the management of the service over formal service paths, through which Kulinich, despite not holding a high position in the hierarchy, could effectively influence the decisions of the head of the service.

Fourthly, the SBU, as the organisation under attack, was itself responsible for counter-intelligence, so getting agents inside this structure made it much more difficult (if not impossible) to detect them<sup>82</sup>.

The modus operandi of the Russian secret services can therefore be likened to an infection with a dangerous virus that spreads throughout the body, attacking its immune system in particular.

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<sup>81</sup> In doing so, the Russians used a mechanism derived from assumptions about civilian control of the services. Accordingly, the head of the SBU could become a person from the show business sector, whose knowledge and professional experience in no way prepared him or her for his or her position, which allowed Russian agents to lobby for solutions that were clearly detrimental to the service.

<sup>82</sup> In his interview with Sivkovich, Kulinich stated that - despite attempts to put Naumov in charge of counter-intelligence - he was already controlling the department at this stage through lower-ranking agents.



## The origins of the method used by the FSB

The outlined scheme of conduct of the FSB was developed by the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage (Russian: Всероссийская чрезвычайная комиссия по борьбе с контрреволюцией и саботажем, VChK), and later by the State Political Directorate (Russian: Государственное Политическое Управление, GPU) during operations against the Second Department of Polish General Staff of the Polish Army in the early 1920s. The method was only just taking shape - not all its elements were present and some were in embryonic form. The mechanism of attacking the SBU described earlier was based precisely on this methodology. For the Chekists, exactly like the FSB which was the heir to the VChK, attacked Polish military intelligence in the following ways:

- used Polish renegades (with the same or similar experiences and biographies as the candidates to be recruited) rather than VChK/GPU officers of other nationalities in the recruitment operations conducted against soldiers of the Second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army,
- masked the role of the recruiters by emphasising the political (rather than espionage) nature of the proposed cooperation - they were not acting as Soviet counterintelligence officers,
- presented the offered cooperation as a politically good and therefore moral solution for Poland, while describing anti-Soviet activity as imperialist, criminal and harmful to the Polish people,
- concealed the real nature of the cooperation undertaken with the VChK/GPU by creating a political organisation that officially had no contacts with the Soviet secret services, declared a quasi-national character and ostensibly offered only a political line different from the official one,
- used the Polish officers thus acquired not only for information and espionage activities, but also to lobby for solutions favourable to the Soviets and to recruit more agents.

A case study illustrating this pattern is the activity of Soviet counterintelligence during the Polish-Bolshevik war and in the first years after the signing of the Riga Treaty ending the conflict between Poland and Soviet Russia. The previously described activities of PB and Kulinich inside the SBU are reminiscent of the method Chekists used against the Second Department of the Supreme Command of the Polish Army (NDWP).

### Historical case study: operations carried out by the WCzK against the Second Department of the NDWP

In 1919, due to the growing conflict in the east, the Second Department of the NDWP was forced to create a reconnaissance apparatus in Soviet-controlled areas. As a result of the decision of General Edward Rydz-Śmigły, who in November 1918 incorporated the clandestine Polish Military Organisation (POW) into the Polish Army, the previously existing intelligence network of the POW in the east de facto ceased to exist<sup>83</sup>. Despite this, Polish military intelligence used the remnants of this borderland organisation to build intelligence outposts in the east. One of these was created by an officer of the Second Department of the NDWP, Ignacy Dobrzyński<sup>84</sup>, who arrived in Moscow in November 1919.

Dobrzyński enlisted the cooperation of his uncle Jerzy Hryniewski, well-known in the pre-war bohemian Moscow milieu, through whom he obtained information on the political situation in Sovdepia<sup>85</sup>. Thanks to his uncle, Dobrzyński ended up in the Red Army, where he quickly became first a regimental writer and then a political officer. Dobrzyński's network at various times consisted of several intelligence posts (in Orsha and Smolensk), and included (at different times of its activity) Julian Zawadzki, Władysław Kwiatkowski, Halina Wojciechowska,

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<sup>83</sup> This resulted in a situation in which "A lack of ideological, confident and educated people was felt in Ukraine, so the Supreme Command was forced to draw female youths into more and more responsible work". See: I. Ziemiański, *Praca kobiet w P.O.W. – Wschód*, Warszawa 1933, pp. 98–99.

<sup>84</sup> Lieutenant Ignacy Dobrzyński, later Sosnowski (1897-1937), as a secondary school student from 1912 took an active part in the activities of many Polish patriotic and self-education organisations in Vilnius, studied at Moscow University, joined the Polish Socialist Party (close to the party's Revolutionary Faction), and in 1918 fought as a volunteer in General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki's Polish First Corps. After leaving for Poland, he was sent to work as an intelligence officer; on behalf of the Second Department of the NDWP, he created an intelligence network in Moscow, relying on his own family's contacts. After the network was broken up by the VChK, he went over to the side of the Bolsheviks, and actively participated in the liquidation of Polish intelligence networks in Belarus and Ukraine. In 1920, he became a member of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). From May 1921 he served as deputy chief in the VChK. In 1922, he was already the head of the Counterintelligence Department of the Unified State Political Board (KRO OGPU), and in the years 1926-1929 - a plenipotentiary officer of the Secret Operational Board of the OGPU (Russian: Секретно-оперативное управление), later chief of counterintelligence of the Belarusian Military District and the Central Black Sea Region (Russian: Центральнo-Черноморская область). From January 1935 to November 1936 he was deputy head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR (Russian: Народный комиссариат внутренних дел, NKWD) in the Saratov Country. He was executed in November 1937. See: *Разведка и контрразведка в лицах*, А. Диденко (ed.), Москва 2002, p. 463.

<sup>85</sup> Sovdepia (from Soviet Deputat) - colloquial name for Russia under the Bolsheviks, in later years used only by anti-communists.

Mikołaj Dunin-Żochowski, Waclaw Grzymała, Stanisław Lewandowski, Wiktor Martynowski, Maria Piotuch, Maria Szymkiewicz and Leon Borejko<sup>86</sup>.

Dobrzyński cooperated closely with a twin outpost in Petrograd, code-named “Wik”, headed by another officer of the Second Department of the NDWP, Wiktor Steckiewicz<sup>87</sup>. From November 1919 to May 1920, Dobrzyński’s post was not tasked by Headquarters, and only sent reports, using the diplomatic post of the Latvian representation<sup>88</sup> headed by Jan Vesman<sup>89</sup>.

In June 1920, the VChK dismantled Dobrzyński’s network and detained all its members. Source studies lack information on the reasons for the unmasking, but there are many indications that Dobrzyński voluntarily went over to the side of the Bolsheviks and offered his services to the Chekists<sup>90</sup>.

Dobrzyński, in the first stage of his collaboration, was used to recruit his closest collaborators sent to Russia by the Second Department of the NDWP. There are many indications that all the members of his post in Moscow (including

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<sup>86</sup> *Działalność Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej w Moskwie, 1919–1920* (Eng. Activities of the Polish Military Organisation in Moscow, 1919–1920), “Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy” 2013, vol. 14, no. 3, introduction and elaboration W. Rawski; *Działalność Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej w Moskwie, 1919–1920: cz. 2* (Eng. Activities of the Polish Military Organisation in Moscow, 1919–1920: part 2), introduction and elaboration W. Rawski, “Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy” 2014, vol. 15, no. 3. The author of the article does not provide pagination, as Hryniewski, the author of the report, inaccurately reported the personal composition of the Outpost. He included, for example, the courier Szymkiewicz, but not Borejka. Hence, the cumulative list of outpost personnel is based on these texts as a whole.

<sup>87</sup> Wiktor Steckiewicz-Kijakowski (born in Warsaw in 1892), was a resident of the Polish intelligence services in Petrograd in 1920. Recruited by the VChK, he later served in the GPU later transformed into the United State Political Executive (OGPU). Died in Mongolia in 1932.

<sup>88</sup> *Działalność Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej...*, p. 107.

<sup>89</sup> Jan Vesman was a participant in the negotiations for the signing of the Peace Treaty between Russia and Latvia on 11 September 1920.

<sup>90</sup> See: *List otwarty do towarzyszy z pracy peowiackiej – oficerów i żołnierzy Armii Polskiej oraz kolegów akademików od Ignacego Dobrzyńskiego (Świerszcza) b. podporucznika Wydz. II Naczelnego Dowództwa W.P. – b. Szefa wydziałów wywiadowczych w okręgach Grodzieńskim i Suwalskim D.O.K., b. kierownika Okręgu informacyjno-wywiadowczego B. W. II. N.D. na Rosję Sowiecką*, quoted from a reprint in the 1921 pamphlet of the Communist Workers’ Party of Poland titled “The Communist Party of Poland” entitled *POW po stronie rewolucji* (Eng. POW on the side of the revolution), Warszawa 1921, p. 8: “Gradually approaching the very sources of this Revolution, the essence of the programme and tactics of these ‘terrible Bolsheviks’, seeing at the same time all the defects and faults, and realising exactly the enormity and power of this superhuman struggle they are waging against the whole world - I came to the certainty that along the road of struggle with them I have no strength and do not wish to go any further. Quickly thereafter came the moment when I said to myself that under their banners one must die or be victorious”.

his cooperating uncle) undertook some form of collaboration with the VChK<sup>91</sup>. Dobrzyński also managed to persuade Steckiewicz to betray him<sup>92</sup>.

On 18 July 1920, the Soviets - convinced of the imminent fall of Warsaw - decided to make propaganda use of Dobrzyński by distributing his open letter, in which he explained the ideological rationale behind his “transition to the revolutionary camp”<sup>93</sup>. Subsequently, however, Dobrzyński and the former members of the Polish intelligence networks in Russia he had acquired joined the thousands of Polish communists who had been posted to the rear of the Western Front. Their task was to support the political-agitation activities of the Provisional Polish Revolutionary Committee<sup>94</sup> (Russian: Временный революционный комитет Польши, Polrewkom), a political entity formed by the Soviets, and recruiting Polish prisoners of war<sup>95</sup>, and above all colleagues and acquaintances from the Polish areas occupied by the Red Army<sup>96</sup>. Dobrzyński managed to recruit a number of people who would soon play an important role in VChK/GPU operations. These included Wiktor Marczewski-Witkowski<sup>97</sup> (close friend and officer from the Second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army, Wiktor Tomir Drymmer, in charge of an intelligence post in Estonia), Jadwiga Tejszerska<sup>98</sup> and probably Halina Dybczyńska<sup>99</sup> – the future wife of Capt. Jerzy

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<sup>91</sup> See: *List otwarty do towarzyszy...*, p. 8: “I know very well that a whole lot of faithful servants of the bourgeoisie will respond to this letter at the very least by claiming that I might want to ransom my life with it, having been caught on the job, or that I sold myself outright for ‘Bolshevik gold’. I believe that for those who know me a little, I do not need to make such accusations. For the rest, it may suffice to know that, together with me, all my ideological collaborators, sent to Russia from the country - officers, couriers - have openly and voluntarily renounced their work against the Revolution; most of them are already standing firmly with me in the ranks of the Revolution, in the revolutionary struggle and work; others, having voluntarily renounced the struggle and surrendered themselves into the hands of the Soviet authorities, do not yet consider it possible to go into action”.

<sup>92</sup> *Działalność Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej...*, cz. 2..., pp. 135–136.

<sup>93</sup> See: *Działalność Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej...*, p. 102.

<sup>94</sup> The formation of the TKRP was officially announced on 1 August 1920 in Białystok.

<sup>95</sup> Dobrzyński said this about this part of the activity during his testimony in 1936: “We set ourselves the task of working among prisoners of war, among the arrested in order to recruit supporters. The task was set politically – ‘POV’ against ‘POV’ - and those most suitable for the job were chosen”. Quoted from: А. Папчинский, М. Тумшиш, 1937. *Большая чистка. НКВД против ЧК*, Москва 2009, <https://coollib.com/b/144998> [accessed: 28 VI 2018].

<sup>96</sup> See: J. Mackiewicz, *Mój szwagier – szef GPU* (Eng. My brother-in-law - head of the GPU), “Wiadomości” (Londyn) 1964, no. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Drymmer helped Marczewski escape from Polish custody, during which a gendarme was killed. See: А. Папчинский, М. Тумшиш, 1937. *Большая чистка...*

<sup>98</sup> I. Ziemiański, *Praca kobiet w P.O.W. – Wschód...*, pp. 167–169.

<sup>99</sup> А. Папчинский, М. Тумшиш, 1937. *Большая чистка...*

Niezbrzycki, who was in charge of intelligence in the East. He also recruited and trained Eduard Oppenput<sup>100</sup>, who between 1921 and 1927 was the main contact with the Second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army on behalf of the alleged monarchist organisation MOCR (Trust). Later, Dobrzyński also enlisted WP Lt Tadeusz Kowalski, through whom he recruited Tadeusz Kobylanski, the Polish military attaché in Moscow, to work with the GPU<sup>101</sup>. The activities of Dobrzyński and other Polish renegades exploited by the Chekists led to the arrest of **1,385 members of the Polish Military Organisation** operating in the east<sup>102</sup>. Due to the fact that the Eastern Supreme Command No. 3 of the POW<sup>103</sup> numbered a total of 2,500 people<sup>104</sup>, most of whom had already been conscripted into the Polish Army in 1918, the operations carried out by the Polish renegades led to the complete destruction of Polish intelligence in the east. This made it necessary in the future to build nets from scratch by inexperienced officers, unfamiliar with Russian realities, sent to Sovdepiya by the Second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army.

### Similarities between the methods of the VChK and the FSB

The FSB's modus operandi in the Kulinich case shows striking similarities to the methods used by the VChK. One hundred years ago, recruitment tasks were ceded to ethnic Poles who concealed the fact of their collaboration with the Chekists by creating a supposedly independent Polish political organisation to mask the real nature of the Polish-Bolshevik war. This was done by presenting it as a conflict of political options (i.e. People's Poland in alliance with the peace-seeking Soviets against bourgeois Poland used for military purposes by the imperialist

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<sup>100</sup> Б. Прянишников, *Незримая паутина*, New York 1979, p. 98.

<sup>101</sup> See extract from Dobrzyński's testimony before NKVD investigators from: А. Папчинский, М. Тумшис, 1937. *Большая чистка...*: "He tells me that his boss is Major Kobylański, a man without principles, a former Piłsudski adjutant, a man who needs money and who has been assigned a very specific task - to recruit this Kobylański. Kobylański is a pederast, who later told me that he had been doing this practically for a long time, that it was almost innate. He loved Kobylanski like a woman, or even more, so we decided to use that in the sense of influencing him. He told me that Kobylański said that if anyone came to Moscow, they would definitely look for me. They were terribly interested in me. He said that Kobylański needed money, that he was related to me, by whom, I don't know".

<sup>102</sup> В.Н. Сафонов, *Неизвестная тайная война Или Особый Отдел против 2-го Отдела Генштаба Польши*, in: *Исторические чтения на Лубянке 1998 год*, Москва-Великий Новгород 1999, p. 113.

<sup>103</sup> Covering the East as far as the Black Sea.

<sup>104</sup> А. Holiczenko, *Żołnierze tajnego frontu* (Eng. Soldiers of the secret front), Olsztyn 2012, p. 12.

West). Poles recruited by renegades were not commissioned to passively collect espionage information, but were entrusted with recruitment tasks, mainly in circles of friends and trusted acquaintances. For example, Marczewski and Steckiewicz were used to establish contact with Drymmer, while Dobrzyński and Kowalski recruited Kobylański (taking advantage of his bisexuality and family connections with Dobrzyński). There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Dybczyńska may have been similarly used<sup>105</sup>. The Chekists were also planning to use Jadwiga Tejszerska to get closer to Józef Piłsudski (helped by her alleged kinship with the Marshal's family), but these plans were not realised due to her suicide. Although the framework of the article does not allow for a full discussion of the issue, it should be noted that agents acquired in this way were used as agents of influence, in addition to espionage and recruitment in their environment. This included - like Kobylański - to promote theses politically convenient to the USSR, the most damaging of which was successfully instilling in Polish ruling circles the conviction that, for ideological reasons, there was no possibility of cooperation between the Third Reich and the USSR<sup>106</sup>. This idea was formulated and popularised by the Eastern Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, headed by Kobylański. Subsequently, it was supported by the leadership of the Second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army<sup>107</sup>. This ultimately

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<sup>105</sup> On the VChK's attempt to build a Dybczyńska legend after her arrest by the Chekists, see: А. Папчинский, М. Тумшиц, 1937. *Большая чистка...*

<sup>106</sup> See: M. Świerczek, *Szkodnictwo jako metoda działania sowieckich służb specjalnych* (Eng. Pestilence as a method of operation of the Soviet secret services), in: *Kontrwywiad II Rzeczypospolitej*, vol. 9, R. Majzner (ed.), Warszawa 2022, pp. 79–106; *Rozpoznanie zagrożenia Rzeczypospolitej ze strony ZSRR – relacja mjr. dypl. Rafała Protassowickiego* (Eng. Recognition of the threat to the Republic from the USSR - an account by Major Rafał Protassowicki), elaboration W. Włodarkiewicz, "Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy" 2001, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 86: "The head of our diplomatic mission in Moscow, during a personal hearing with the Commander-in-Chief in August this year, reported that in the event of a Polish-German armed confrontation, we would be assured of the benevolent neutrality of the Soviet Union and even assistance in war material and raw materials"; Ю.А. Борисёнок, *Звонок товарища Сталина на полмиллиона* "Родина" 2016, no. 9, pp. 122–125.

<sup>107</sup> See the observations of one of the best officers of the Second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Army, Major Roman Protassowicki (all quotations are from: *Rozpoznanie zagrożenia Rzeczypospolitej ze strony ZSRR – relacja mjr. dypl. Rafała Protassowickiego*, elaboration W. Włodarkiewicz, "Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy" 2001, vol. 2, no. 2, the page number is indicated after the hyphen): "The most authoritative factor in Soviet political affairs, the long-standing director of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Ministry, Tadeusz Kobylański, who had been in Soviet Russia during the years of the NEP and on that account considered himself an accomplished expert and specialist on the Russian question, continually illuminated the situation according to his own vision, and in his policy towards the Soviets was guided by his personal antipathy to them, rather than by a real assessment of phenomena. He also bears the primary responsibility for what happened later, since by virtue of his position his opinion was decided not only at the Foreign Minister's office

led to the adoption of a political line detached from the political-military realities of the time and, as a consequence, to war with Germany, and then to entry into the Soviet sphere of influence for several decades.

## Summary and conclusions

As the analysis of the two described case studies shows, the *modus operandi* of the Russian special services has not changed significantly over the years. The Federal Security Service, exactly like the VChK/GPU a century earlier, in infiltrating hostile intelligence organisations relied on people from backgrounds similar to the target group, i.e. from the same ethnos, social class, with a similar pool of life experiences and worldview. Adopting Pierre Bourdieu's terminology, it can be concluded that the Russians used and are using in their recruitment work people with the same *habitus* as the candidates to be recruited, meaning the totality of an individual's acquired skills and competences that make up the way he or she perceives the world and the rules of action and thought<sup>108</sup>. This is the spy equivalent of police methods of infiltrating organised crime groups, in which it is much more effective to identify with the help of recruited group members than to place suitably prepared so-called 'undercover agents' within the group.

In doing so, the pattern of Russian services facilitates the agent's acquisition work by masking the real, espionage nature of their mission. The creation of political organisations by the (legal or illegal) opposition of a country allows them to be used as a screen to conceal the interests of a foreign state. The political line promoted by such an organisation and its members (*de facto* carrying out the orders of a foreign secret service) allows the recruitment for espionage activities to be presented

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but also at the General Staff, even when the data provided by the intelligence service differed". – p. 86; "The decisive voice in authoritative spheres was the option promoted by the Foreign Ministry outposts (They, too, bear responsibility for putting their vigilance to sleep, for by underestimating the political dexterity of the Soviets and ruling out the possibility of any surprises on that side, they even overlooked the true face of the Soviet-German pact)". – p. 85; "(...) I was confronted with this dismissive and deeply rooted misconception of the evolution and capabilities of Soviet Russia, which prevailed in our military and political authoritative spheres and which could not be overcome in any way". – p. 82; "(...) there was no appreciation of the transformations taking place there, no treatment of the news obtained against the background of the whole issue, no application of some kind of comparative scale to it, but eagerly picking out only particular fragments, trying to bend and adapt the rest to the theories arranged for themselves in advance". – p. 83; "Hence the almost conscious acquaintance with the evolution that was taking place in the USSR after 1932, and the economic and military potential of the Soviets was never appreciated, let alone their political dexterity". – p. 83.

<sup>108</sup> See in more detail: P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press 1995.



merely as the choice of a national political option, which, in addition, may appear much more favourable to the ethnic group of the person being recruited than the one pursued by the current power. This purpose was served in 1920 by calling the Polish-Bolshevik war a self-defence by the Soviets against Polish aggression, allegedly cynically exploited by the Western powers, and the creation of an alleged left-wing equivalent of the Polish government (Polrewkom). It was intended to prove that the Soviets did not intend to conquer and occupy Poland, but to stop at political reforms supposedly beneficial to the nation. By the way, this was not the only organisation providing a screen for the Soviet services, as an identical role had already been played by the Polish Office at the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Comintern, which, while doing strictly subversive and intelligence work, effectively concealed their true character behind a veil of ideology and politics.

In the Kulinich case, Ukrainian PB is playing the same role as Polrewkom did in 1920. According to the message, the Russian Federation did not plan the conquest of Ukraine and did not challenge Ukrainian statehood; instead, the Bureau's political line - based on the neutrality enshrined in the Ukrainian constitution, respect for minority rights and the increased powers of local self-governments as a result of the federalisation of the state - meant above all avoiding an escalation of the war with Russia, which had been de facto going on since 2014. According to many people, such a solution was rational and beneficial for the Ukrainian people. Consequently, recruitment was not necessarily seen by those recruited as an act of national treason, but as helping to avoid a devastating war. It is possible to hazard a hypothesis that the people cooperating with the Bureau may thus have successfully suppressed the idea that they were in fact carrying out tasks for an enemy secret service. They may have convinced themselves that their activities were essentially an act of patriotism, through which there was a chance of avoiding a national tragedy. The findings of social psychology on the reduction of cognitive dissonance<sup>109</sup> are clear in such a case. The Russians, by means of the methods described above, even created greenhouse conditions for betrayal, telling candidates for recruitment that their actions were the only rational, pro-national option.

The FSB's main objectives of trying to gain control of the organisation under attack also fitted into this pattern. Firstly, the psychologically difficult odium of being a spy was thus avoided. Agents were assigned the role of saviours of the nation who, by recruiting followers, aim to save statehood under threat. Therefore, Kulinich's tasks constantly included lobbying for neutrality instead of the Euro-Atlantic option. Since Putin's Munich speech and since Russia's aggression in 2014, it was clear that the pro-Western option of Ukrainian policy would lead to war with

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<sup>109</sup> E. Aronson, *Człowiek – istota społeczna* (Eng. Man - a social being), Warszawa 1987, p. 134 et seq.



the Russian Federation. This was known to the Ukrainian government, which had been expanding its army and fortification systems in the east of the country since 2014. Western politicians who rearmed and retrained the Ukrainian armed forces were also aware of this. Without judging this political agenda line, it can be assumed that many Ukrainians (especially from the power ministries, who understand the consequences of such a war) wanted to avoid this conflict at all costs.

Also, recruiting people with a similar assessment of the situation and placing them in key places in the SBU structure was part of this political masquerade. As is known from the intercepted conversations between Sivkovich and Kulinich, they were supposed to control and disorganise the activities of the organisational units entrusted to them. Their transmission of information was a secondary matter, which masked the treachery by emphasising the political-organisational (rather than strictly espionage) nature of these tasks. In doing so, the method referred to the phenomenon of cronyism, common in post-Soviet states.

The described scheme of operation is an extremely dangerous tool of the Russian secret services in that it is based on the ways in which people reason and act - at least in relation to Eastern European societies<sup>110</sup>. In countries with high levels of corruption<sup>111</sup> and strong political polarisation, the Russians can (potentially) control state institutions with the help of agents recruited through screen political organisations, effectively hiding the involvement of their secret services and the pursuit of their own geopolitical goals.

In the case described, the traditional counter-intelligence method is ineffective because recruitment work and handling of personal sources are not carried out from traditional places of cover. It is not Russian diplomats protected by immunity who are the main counter-intelligence risk factor, but various types of screen organisations whose links with foreign special services are masked by a network of liaisons (journalists, political activists). Moreover, the Kulinich case paradoxically proves that the environment most exposed to intelligence activities is the special services of the state attacked by the Russians. The military-hierarchical nature of these services, combined with the presence in them of dysfunctions characteristic

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<sup>110</sup> It can be assumed, although this would require additional research, that a method based on cronyism is theoretically powerless against an organisation with objectivised procedures for selecting personnel. This is because it is impossible to bring one's own people into the structure in a situation where, for example, they would have to take part in fairly conducted competitions for positions. Also, recruitment by means of a screen in the form of political organisations offering a line drastically different from the current one, in states with a party system usually located in the political centre and operating within the framework of the constitutional order, would be hardly effective. So this tool is tailor-made for community-type societies with strong social polarisation.

<sup>111</sup> Understood broadly, not only as bribery, but also as using the position for one's own ends.

of bureaucracy, make it possible to take control to a much greater extent than over civilian, less hierarchical institutions. Kulinich's example shows that it is enough to place an agent in the direct environment of the head of such a service in order to effectively influence the processes taking place within it. And this can be done both at the basic level - by degenerating professional education - and at the highest level - by lobbying for specific organisational solutions and candidates for key positions in the structure. This effectiveness is evidenced, among other things, by the number of investigations against SBU officers launched after Bakanov was removed from his post. According to operational logic, if circumstantial evidence of treason was found against 650 officers, then - given the difficulties involved in detecting espionage activity - their number was definitely higher<sup>112</sup>. An analysis of the assignments received by Kulinich shows that the FSB was not interested in ordinary officers, but only in people in positions that guaranteed influence over the service. The questions must therefore be asked: if the SBU has about 30 000 officers<sup>113</sup>, what is the size of the management staff, what percentage of this staff has been investigated and what is the actual percentage of agents?

The Kulinich case should be an argument in favour of the need to strengthen and increase the professionalism of the internal security divisions of the special services, which should be granted maximum autonomy in view of the fact that, as the case in question shows, the main recruitment target for the Russians are persons at the highest levels of the service hierarchy. It should be remembered that the Russians, in order to fully protect themselves against the deconspiracy of a network established in a foreign service - in addition to placing agents as high up as possible - also master organisational units which, in the course of their tasks, could come across information indicating the possibility of infiltration at the highest levels. In this way, an organisation responsible for counter-espionage can become a tool of foreign intelligence, which can be effectively concealed through secrecy, which de facto takes the organisation out of public control.

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<sup>112</sup> The prevailing belief in the secret services is that one detected spy means ten undetected. However, the author is unable to support this with any empirical research.

<sup>113</sup> Закон України. Об общей структуре и численности Службы безопасности Украины, "Ведомости Верховной Рады Украины" 2006, no. 4, p. 53.

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