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BULGARIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SYSTEM OF JOINT ACQUISITION OF ENEMY DATA (SOUD)

The System of Joint Acquisition of Enemy Data (*Sisteme Objedinennovo Utschotyia Dannych o Protivniki* – SOUD) was designed to collect, process, preserve and deliver information about the ‘enemy’. The agreement for its establishment was signed by the ministers of the Interior of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Poland, Cuba, Vietnam, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the USSR at the end of 1977. Romania and Yugoslavia did not take part. SOUD collected information about the persons of certain categories and specific institutions and organisations engaged in activities against the socialist countries. The main function of SOUD was the exchange of intelligence data. All documents produced by SOUD are stored today in the Archives of the Commission for Disclosure of Documents and Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens with the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army. Unfortunately, a significant part of them are not accessible to researchers.

Chronologically, the first document on the participation of Bulgaria in the Interlinked System for Recognising Enemies is dated 13 January 1976. It is entitled ‘Commentary’ and was drawn up and signed by two officers of the First Chief Directorate (FCD) of the Bulgarian State Security, whose names I will not mention. Here are their views on the participation of Bulgaria in the future project of the creation of SOUD: “We believe it is therefore necessary to build a single database of information covering all available data stored in the relevant intelligence and counterintelligence units. Presently such data are being stored in the files and records of the FMD – the State Security Service (SSS), the Second Chief Directorate – SSS,

the Sixth Division – SSS, the Third department – SSS, the Intelligence Directorate of HQ”.¹

A ‘reference’ from 24 February 1976 reads that in November 1975, the FCD received from the Soviets a preliminary proposal about the principles for the establishment and functioning of a System of Joint Acquisition of Enemy Data.²

The management reacted quickly and sent the following response, which reveals details of the Soviet proposal. The first question referred to how much data the Bulgarian party may rely upon initially, and the answer was 3,500 to 4,000 pieces of information. The current flow of data in the future was estimated to be about 10–20 units a month, or ca 200 units per year. The system requested about 500 units per year. The deadline for initial submissions to the evolving system under full load, with the available staff, was set to be no more than a year and a half. During the preliminary discussions, it became clear that the input information was to be recorded in Russian, accompanied by a transcript in the Latin alphabet.³

In the same year (1976), the participating countries: the GDR, Bulgaria, Poland, Cuba, Mongolia, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Hungary, and the USSR with Romania not taking part, agreed on the founding principles of the SOUD. This paper will focus only on some of them:

1. SOUD was designed to solve intelligence and counterintelligence tasks.
2. The users-subscribers of the system would comprise not only the intelligence and counterintelligence services, but also the military intelligence and counterintelligence services of the participating countries.
3. Persons who were nationals of the countries involved in the system were not to be registered. In practice, however, there are data on such people in the preserved documents of SOUD in Bulgaria.
4. The data about the people taken on record were to be kept up to the age of 80 for men and 75 for women.
5. The operating language of the system was Russian.
6. The design, the construction and the equipment of the business unit (BU) was funded by the USSR.

The system was meant to last two to two and a half years, whereas its deployment was estimated to take one or one and a half year.⁴

¹ Архив на Министерството на вътрешните работи (hereinafter: AMBP), f. 8, op. 13A, a. e. 1, l. 4.

² Ibid., a. e. 1, ll. 12–13.

³ Ibid., a. e. 1, ll. 17–25.

⁴ Ibid., a. e. 2, l. 1.

On 14 November 1977, the Ministers of the Interior of Bulgaria, Hungary, Cuba, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Chairman of the KGB, the Minister of Public Safety of Mongolia, and the Minister of State Security of the GDR signed an agreement to create the system. The document was prepared in a single copy and was stored by the KGB.⁵

According to the preliminary plans, the system was meant to come into test operation in May 1980, with regular operations expected to start at the beginning of 1981. To make this possible, each country had to submit a number of survey forms. Bulgaria's concrete commitment was for 2000 forms a year. However, up to 23 May, 1980, a total of only 200 survey forms had been submitted for processing. This delay did not go unnoticed by the 'Soviet comrades' and, as they wrote in that document, "it hardly needs comment". The remark was followed by two pages of instructions of catching up.⁶

The agreement was followed by a Protocol for its application, as well as other legal documents regulating the activity of SOUND. The system started its test period in April 1979, and at the beginning of 1981 it was put into operation. It was an automated system with the following structure:

1. WORKING UNIT, headquartered in Moscow – providing the design, planning, operation and development of SOUND.
2. SUBSCRIBERS – the security services of the countries participating in the system.
3. USERS – the operating units designated by the management teams of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the subscribers of the system. In Bulgaria, the approved system's users were the following operational divisions: First Chief Directorate of the SSS, Second Chief Directorate of the SSS, Third Directorate of the SSS, and Sixth Directorate of the SSS.
4. DIVISION OF INTERACTION (DI) was in charge for the coordination of activities between users and the Working Unit of SOUND. It was decided that this unit (DI) was to be incorporated into the 'Third – SSS' department – the Information and Archives Directorate of the MI.

Data was provided by the SOUND under the following modes:

- **Mode A:** All available data were provided without informing the subscriber who provided the data about the request;
- **Mode B:** all available information was delivered but the subscriber who provided the information is notified of the request;

⁵ Ibid., a. e. 56, l. 42.

⁶ Ibid., a. e. 56, l. 93.

- **Mode E:** the data was not provided. The subscriber is informed that their request had been sent to the security body of the subscriber who is in charge of reporting, so that the required information might be provided.⁷

Work began slowly and in May 1981 the head of the Third Department – State Security Files, Archives of the Ministry of the Interior, Major General Nanka Serkedjieva, sent a memorandum to the Deputy Minister of the Interior Lt. Gen. Stoyan Savov:

“Despite the difficulties, some of which still exist today, we were able to provide the designated number of 3500 questionnaires for the year (1980). Of these, 58 per cent were traced, analysed, processed and sent by us [Third Department – State Security Files, Archives of the MI]. The remaining 42 per cent were received for processing from the four ‘users-subscribers’ of the system. Since January 1981, the System was put into operation and was available for its ‘subscribers’. This means that the ‘subscribers’ may request verification of the report of SOUD, meanwhile having the obligation of rhythmic submission of questionnaires, additions to them and corrections of the latter. Only seven requests for verification of the report have been submitted since January 1, despite the fact that in the initial specification of ‘consumers’ it was stated that some 320 requests per month would be circulated. For this very period of nearly five months no questionnaires have been entered by the: First Chief Directorate of State Security (SS), Third Directorate of SS, Sixth Directorate of SS, with some 5 or 6 Second DS received, only 5–6 questionnaires being received from Second main Directorate. Since the beginning of the year, some 900 questionnaires and appendices have been prepared making use of archival materials”.⁸

Two years later the situation was not much changed. General Nanka Serkedjieva, still the head of the department, reported that “in July 1983, First Chief Directorate has entered 19.5 per cent of all entries, Second Chief Directorate – 11.7 per cent; Third Chief Directorate of SS – 0.2 per cent; Sixth Directorate of SS – 5.6 per cent, the remaining 63 per cent have been set by the Third Department, namely State Security Files and Archive”.⁹ The same document stated that the user of the system made insufficient use of the opportunity to carry out an inspection of the SOUD’s reports on persons they had an operational interest in.

⁷ Ibid., a. e. 79, ll. 2–3.

⁸ Ibid., a. e. 56, ll. 92–93.

⁹ Ibid., a. e. 79, l. 15.

In 1984–1985, the gap was reduced. The First, Second and Sixth Directorates inputted information predominantly in the ‘A’ mode, with about 33 per cent being in ‘B’ mode. (evidence is available in the reports of the directorate).¹⁰

Assessment from the Russian side came promptly. This is evident from a letter of the ‘business unit’ to ‘subscriber’ 1-Bulgaria of 6 May 1985:

“We consider it necessary to note that the cooperation under SOUND with the security services of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria (PRB) has been developing successfully. During the period of operation of SOUND, subscriber No. 1 (PRB) has provided more than 8600 questionnaires as reports, which is almost 2.5 times more than the initially agreed numbers. The decline in the volume of incoming information noticed in 1982, is presently completely eliminated. The flow of questionnaires sent to the Business Unit of SOUND since 1983 significantly exceeds the additional obligations of subscriber No. 1 (PRB). This is due, most probably, to your activities aimed at expanding the number of users of SOUND. The quality of information has been improved, and the Business Unit of SOUND has no significant claims regarding that aspect”.¹¹

A piece of information about the work of the Ministry of the Interior on the SOUND read as follows:

“As a result of the efforts of the individual users and the division responsible for the interaction with the SOUND, 10,779 persons have been entered in the system since its launch on 30 March 1986. Our country is in fourth place after the USSR, GDR and CSSR regarding the number of persons entered into the arrays of the system. Cuba, Poland, Hungary and the other participants in this multilateral cooperation are behind us. For the past five years we have submitted 7,429 requests to the business unit for verification of information regarding people of special interest to us. Several thematic requests have also been submitted, with the former being a new service of the SOUND business unit which has been available since September 1985. The average percentage of positive responses for the last two years is estimated at 5 per cent for single users as First Chief Directorate of SS and Second Chief Directorate of SS for obvious reasons – the rate for specific years could be twice as high.¹²

[...]

¹⁰ Cf. AMBP, f. 8, op. 13A, a. e. 85, ll. 2–5; *ibid.*, a. e. 85, ll. 13–17; *ibid.*, a. e. 85, ll. 68–70; *ibid.*, a. e. 85, ll. 72–76.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, a. e. 18, ll. 19–20.

¹² *Ibid.*, a. e. 80, l. 41.

Last year we made an inquiry to the SOUD business unit regarding persons from those particularly dangerous categories which has been received from all users up to 30 September 1985. The analysis of the figures revealed the following important conclusions:

- a) The terrorists dominate, being over 88 per cent of all people belonging to the particularly dangerous categories.
- b) The persons from the other categories amounted to 1341, and they, together with the rest of the terrorists, are not being considered by our bodies.
- c) Very small is the figure of persons from the particularly dangerous categories set by the Ministry of the Interior of the PRB. They are 246 in total, which is only 2.15 per cent of all the persons belonging to particularly dangerous categories”.¹³

Another report of 11 February 1986 describes the following data introduced for people throughout 1985: “The persons entered into the System amount to 159. Regarding their nation of origin, they predominantly come from Yugoslavia – 47 people, followed by Greece – 32 persons, Turkey – 31, USA – 28, and others – 21 persons”.¹⁴

Second report of the same date and for the same period, but originating from the Sixth Directorate, contained a similar analysis by the so-called political police designated for keeping an eye on the intellectuals in Bulgaria:

“For the last year, a total of 426 questionnaires were submitted to the Sixth Directorate of SS. They were related to persons from the categories which are to be included in SOUD. Regarding the number of incoming documents from Sixth Directorate, you are in the first place among the other users both in absolute terms as well as percentage quota – 21.5 per cent.

The analysis of these figures reveals that about 83 per cent of the persons processed by Sixth Directorate are related in one way or another with ideological subversion activities, which confirms the overall specialization of the directorate, namely fighting against ideological subversion. Compared with 1984, this percentage has increased by 28 per cent, which is positive.

The distribution of the persons, considering their nationality is as follows: Greece – 29, Federal Republic of Germany – 22, Japan – 19, Arab countries – 16; however, most persons have been categorised as belonging to ‘other’ categories – 288”.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., a. e. 80, l. 45.

¹⁴ Ibid., a. e. 85, ll. 78–79.

¹⁵ Ibid., a. e. 85, ll. 82–84.

In the same document, the Sixth Directorate comes first also regarding the received requests for verifications of the report of SOUND for 1985, with their number amounting to 612.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the scope of persons included in the System was constantly expanding. In August 1986, the SOUND business unit reported that the participants in the regular workshops had concluded that “it is operationally appropriate, in some cases, alongside with the accredited journalists and correspondents, the SOUND would also report persons related to this category, but not accredited, e.g. cinema and TV cameramen, etc.”¹⁷

On 5 October 1988, a letter was received in Bulgaria from the business unit regarding the need to expand the circle of people about whom records were kept. Diplomats, journalists, employees of trade, economic missions and cultural centres were added. A month earlier another letter had stipulated that data should be entered about citizens of Thailand. In the early September, the “accumulation of information for the observers and inspectors in the areas of application of measures of trust and other representatives of the capitalist countries (including members of flight crews) began”.¹⁸

The collapse of the socialist system inevitably led to the collapse of the Agreement on SOUND. In the Spring of 1991, Bulgaria formally ended its participation in the System of Joint Acquisition of Enemy Data. Thus the problem with the accumulated information became relevant.

A document dated 24 January 1991 on the status of the SOUND concerning Bulgaria stated that “within the 12 years of its existence, the SOUND countries-participants have introduced over 260,000 operational interesting people, out of which 17000 by the Ministry of the Interior of Bulgaria”. Its author assessed the accumulated data in the system as follows “it contains a lot of data on persons conducting subversion of the participating countries as well as individuals who can take criminal action and are operationally interesting for the security services”.¹⁹ The same document suggested “to move towards cooperation on a bilateral basis in agreements, which the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria concludes with the security services of other countries, which are to agree provisions on the exchange of such information”.²⁰

Chronologically, the last Bulgarian document to SOUND could be regarded as an account of the results of the participation in the system.

¹⁶ Ibid., a. e. 85, l. 83.

¹⁷ Ibid., a. e. 22, l. 13.

¹⁸ Ibid., a. e. 13, ll. 117–18.

¹⁹ Ibid., a. e. 50, l. 35.

²⁰ Ibid., a. e. 50, l. 37.

This is a memorandum to the Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior by Major Lyubcho Iliev, from the Ministry of the Interior. The document is entitled “Solving problems with making use of the information received through the channels of SOUD and the future of the department for cooperation with SIA of the MI”. The document is dated 9 May 1991.

“During the last 12 years, the Department for interaction of the MI of Bulgaria has gained considerable in volume and quality to date and operational information about nearly 55,000 persons, nationals of foreign countries. The information stored in the department for interaction is related to:

- A. A card catalogue of persons containing data on nearly 17,000 people, which could be categorised as follows: 1. 12,000 are associated with special services intelligence officers, agents, suspected of belonging to and connected to these services; 2. About 1,000 – terrorists and persons linked to terrorist organisations; 3. Foreign correspondents and diplomats – 1,100 persons; 4. Persons expelled from Bulgaria and with the injunction to visit the country – about 2,500 people; 5. The rest are from other categories. The card catalogue is duly arranged and ready to work.
- B. A card catalogue of persons belonging to particularly dangerous categories terrorists, hijackers of air and sea vessels, hijackers of hostages. It contains data for about 17,000 persons. The card catalogue has been downloaded in an archive, but it can easily be brought into working condition.
- C. Information on persons verified within the reports of the SOUD with positive response – 1,100 persons. The information is stored as machine prints and information sheets.
- D. Information obtained from the business unit of the system under thematic queries it contains data on nearly 3,000 persons in the form of machine printouts and decoded references.
- E. Information about the persons examined in the report of the SOUD 17,500 persons it is in the records of the ‘Requests for verification’ sector.
- F. Information about objects of the enemy – special forces, intelligence and counterintelligence authorities, terrorist and extremist organisations – data on 2,000 sites in alphabetical order in machine printout obtained through the business unit, as well as reference books of the special services and terrorist organisations by country.

The data set represents the most reliable and relevant information on foreign nationals acquired by the former users of the system: 1st MD,

2nd MD, 3rd MD, 4th MD, 6th MD, SMD and the regional offices. The information on the persons belonging to particularly dangerous categories obtained through the channels of the SOUD reflects the efforts of the security services of the 9 countries, subscribers of the system”.²¹

All the mentioned information on the operationally interesting foreigners, which has been obtained as a result of Bulgaria's participation in the SOUD, is kept in the archive of the Secret Files Committee in Sofia.

A careful reading of the documents related to the participation of Bulgaria in the SOUD results in the conclusion that the party mostly interested in the SOUD is the former Soviet Union. Data of some 260,000 people remain in KGB information databases.

Bibliography

The text is based on documents preserved in the Archives of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Архив на Министерството на външните работи – AMBP).

Uczestnictwo Bułgarii w Połączonym Systemie Ewidencji Danych o Przeciwniku (SOUD)

Streszczenie: Połączony System Ewidencji Danych o Przeciwniku (SOUD) otworzył nowy etap współpracy pomiędzy Bułgaria, NRD, Mongolią, Polską, Kubą, Wietnamem, Węgrami, Czechosłowacją i ZSRR w obszarach wywiadu i kontrwywiadu. Ideologia i struktura organizacyjna zostały wypracowane w ZSRR w ramach inicjatywy rozpoczętej w 1975 roku. System został inaugurowany i uruchomiony w 1981 roku. Pod koniec 1989 roku, kiedy system zaczął ulegać dezintegracji, pomiędzy krajami członkowskimi zachodziła intensywna i aktywna wymiana danych wywiadowczych. W tym okresie Bułgaria gromadziła informacje na temat 17 000 osób, a Moskwa – ponad 260 000. Informacje te były wymieniane z pozostałymi krajami członkowskimi SOUD.

Słowa kluczowe: wywiad, kontrwywiad, SOUD, agent, tajne służby, bezpieczeństwo państwowe, KGB

Valery Georgiev Katzounov, (ur. 1953), dr, w 1979 r. ukończył magisterskie studia historyczne (archiwistyka) i filozoficzne. W 2000 r. uzyskał doktorat z historii za pracę na temat tworzenia się, rozwoju i dynamiki bułgarskiej samoświadomości narodowej w VII–XIV w. W latach 1989–2007 był adiunktem w Instytucie Archiwistyki i Dokumentacji Wydziału Historycznego Uniwersytetu Sofijskiego

²¹ Ibid., a. e. 50, ll. 82–83.

im. św. Klimenta z Ochrydy. W latach 2007–2012 był członkiem komisji lustracyjnej ujawniającej związki obywateli bułgarskich ze służbami bezpieczeństwa i wywiadu Bułgarskiej Armii Narodowej (członek komisji i kierownik archiwów komisji), w latach 2013–2014 był starszym asystentem w Departamencie Bułgarskiego Archiwum Historycznego Biblioteki Narodowej św. św. Cyryla i Metodego, a w latach 2014–2018 – dyrektorem Archiwum Naukowego Bułgarskiej Akademii Nauk.

Abstract: The System of Joint Acquisition of Enemy Data (SOUD) ushered in a new stage of the cooperation between Bulgaria, the GDR, Mongolia, Poland, Cuba, Vietnam, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR in the sphere of intelligence and counterintelligence. Its ideology and organisation were designed by the Soviet Union – an initiative that started in 1975. The system was inaugurated and came into force in 1981. By the end of 1989, when it started falling apart, there was an intense and active exchange of intelligence data between the member countries. Over this period of time, Bulgaria collected information on 17,000 persons and Moscow on more than 260,000. This information was shared with the rest of the SOUD member countries.

Keywords: intelligence, counterintelligence, SOUD, agent, Secret Services, KGB, State Security

Valery Georgiev Katzounov (b. 1953), holds master's degrees in history (specialising in archives) and philosophy. He received his PhD in history in 2000, after the defence of the dissertation entitled 'Formation, development and dynamics of the Bulgarian national self-consciousness in the seventh–fourteenth cc.' In 1989–2007, he was senior assistant professor at the Department of Archives and Documentation, Faculty of History, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. In 2007–2012, he was a member of the Commission for Disclosure of Documents and Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens with the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army (member of the Commission and supervisor of the Commission's Archives), in 2013–2014, he was a senior assistant in the Department of the Bulgarian Historical Archive at the SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library, and in 2014–2018, he was the director of the Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.