

Original article

## Transformation of the special services in Poland in the context of political changes

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### INFORMATION

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### ABSTRACT

The article presents the transformation of special services in Poland against the background of political changes. It presents the activities of security bodies – civil and military intelligence and counterintelligence during the communist era. Their task was to strengthen communist power, eliminate opponents of the system, strengthen the alliance of socialist countries led by the USSR, and fight against democratic opposition. The creation of new special services was also shown: the UOP and the WSI. The focus was on the new tasks that were set for them in connection with the democratic changes and new alliances. There were presented spectacular UOP actions, which contributed to raising the prestige of Poland on the international arena.

### KEYWORDS

special services, political changes, democracy, security

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## Introduction

Special services – intelligence and counterintelligence – are essential elements of the state's internal and external security systems. In democratic countries, these institutions serve the citizens and prevent threats that could lead to destabilization of the state and its structures. Their secrecy of action determines their effectiveness. They have the right to secretly collect information concerning citizens, state and local government institutions, private and international entities, and other states. However, they are subject to systemic control and supervision, which determine their proper use. That is not the case in totalitarian or authoritarian states, where intelligence and counterintelligence serve the status quo and strengthen

political existence, and the enemy is often identified with a political opponent within the country. During the communist era, the secret service served to strengthen power, keep under surveillance and eliminate opponents of the existing system, both in the country and in the émigré communities.

The first part of the study will present the intelligence and counterintelligence organizations operating in communist Poland and the goals and tasks they pursued. The second part will discuss the role and tasks of the new special services created after the collapse of the communist system in Poland.

### **Tasks of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) services 1944-1990**

The authorities of communist Poland very early started to create subordinated and politically controlled special services. Initially, until around 1948, they were a guarantee of the existence of new power, then they were a tool of politics imposed by the USSR, and then by the Warsaw Pact. Such security organs were the intelligence and counterintelligence structures, situated in successive civil institutions: A. The structures of intelligence and counterintelligence were positioned in the following civilian institutions: A. the Ministry of Security of the PKWN (Polish Committee of National Liberation) and its subordinate field units (July-December 1944); B. the Ministry of Public Security and its subordinate field units (1945-1954); C. the Public Security Committee (1954-1956); D. the Ministry of the Interior and its subordinate field units (1956-1990); and also military service: E. Intelligence: the Division II of the General Staff (Supreme Command of the Polish Armed Forces)/General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces (1943-1951) and the Board of the General Staff II of the Polish Armed Forces (1951-1990); F. counterintelligence: Main Information Board of the Polish Armed Forces (1943-1957), Military Internal Service (1957-1990), Main Board of Internal Affairs of military units of the Ministry of the Interior; G. shallow military-civilian intelligence: under various names, most recently as the Reconnaissance Board of the Border Protection Troops (1945-1991) [1, p. 25].

The first state intelligence organization that was organized after World War II was the Department of Intelligence. It was established on 2 January 1945 and operated within the Public Security Department of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, and then the Ministry of Public Security of the Provisional Government. Its aim was not only to organize the foundations of future intelligence but also to join the fight against the German occupier. Thus, agents and saboteurs were recruited, trained, and thrown behind the front line with intelligence and sabotage tasks. These included gaining knowledge of the enemy's forces and means and recognizing organizations subordinate to the government in London. From the very beginning of its existence, the Ministry of Public Security's intelligence was intended to fight the opponents of the new system. In July 1945, the name was changed to Special Division II, then Independent Division II, and in 1947 to the Department VII. At that time, civil intelligence was closely related in terms of personnel and organization to the military intelligence located in the Division II of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. In July 1947, there was an organizational merger of military and civil intelligence, and in 1950 it was separated again [2, p. 82-4]. New tasks for intelligence were established in the second half of 1949. The focus was on gathering information about the enemy's potential, which were the United States and Western European countries. The second task was to join the class struggle to defend the socialist system. The civil intelligence activities were only intensified

in 1953. Numerous desertions had previously been dealt with, there were many dismissals of political and anti-Semitic nature, as well as under the pretext of incompetence, or links to capitalist spheres. The reorganization in April 1953 was associated with new priorities:

- conducting political intelligence activity in Western European and non-European countries, i.e. those whose policies might have conflicted with the interests of the Polish People's Republic and socialist countries; Germany, the USA, Great Britain, France and the Vatican were considered the main opponents,
- keeping the circles in exile under surveillance, as the main threat to the communist power in Poland was still seen in exile,
- keeping the staff of Polish embassies and consulates under surveillance to counterintelligence protection of Polish diplomatic missions – traces of secret searches, wiretapping, burglaries were detected in the posts,
- conducting scientific and technical intelligence activity – acquiring information and documentation on the latest scientific achievements and technical progress was to serve Polish and Soviet science and economy,
- developing and evaluating agency materials and preparing information for the party leadership and government management [2, p. 87, 88, 94].

After further betrayals, desertions, and unmasking of the intelligence employees and associates, a new organizational formula, indicating a change of direction, was adopted in June 1961. The Third World intelligence units and the illegal division<sup>1</sup> were liquidated, and their work was to be carried out by the various operational departments. From then on, the most crucial role was played by the Division III, which organized the work of the residencies, checked the loyalty of the intelligence workers and their sources, and supervised the employees of the diplomatic missions of the People's Republic of Poland and Polish citizens going abroad on business. In mid-1973, in line with the expectations of the party leadership, scientific and technical intelligence built from scratch after the head of this intelligence had escaped in 1961 [2, p. 95, 98, 99], was expanded. Subsequent reorganizations, which changed little in the intelligence service priorities, took place in 1977 and January 1978.

Throughout all the years of its operation, PRL intelligence treated the United States as its main opponent, which determined its operational activity directions. The U.S. was accused of pursuing a policy aimed at weakening socialist countries' unity and the intention to "lead out" Poland from the socialist camp. For this reason, countries considered to be the USA's most important allies, such as the Federal Republic of Germany and Great Britain, remained in the circle of the most considerable interest of the communist intelligence. According to the intelligence, Western Germany posed a threat to Poland as it sought to gain a dominant position in NATO and the EEC, and thanks to its economic and military strength, it sought to unify Germany and revise the Oder-Neisse border. Therefore, the intelligence was expected to confirm that opinion. The intelligence apparatus was geared to obtaining information confirming the threat of German revisionism.

Great Britain existed in the circle of interest of intelligence not only because of being an ally of the USA but also because of the anti-communist activity of Polish emigration, which did

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<sup>1</sup> Illegal network is an intelligence term for a group, a team of people, or agents carrying out tasks commissioned by the resident, see: K.A. Wojtaszczyk (ed.). *Polskie służby specjalne. Słownik*. Warszawa: ASPRA – JR; 2011, p. 130.

not recognize the communist power in Poland. Other western countries, such as Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, and Denmark, as allies of the USA, also remained in the circle of interest of the intelligence. The intelligence was interested in people working in NATO institutions and offices or having access to them. Information concerning the plans of NATO countries towards the Polish People's Republic and other socialist countries was particularly desired to obtain.

The second direction of the operational intelligence's interest was the European Economic Community and the process of the economic integration of its Member States. The threat to Polish export plans regarding the markets of EEC Member States was seen here. The intelligence predicted that Western countries' shared policy in economic matters would hinder the economic development of socialist countries. It will limit the possibility of obtaining financial resources to support development [2, p. 102-5]. For intelligence, equally important was the knowledge about the policy of the Vatican and the Polish Episcopate. The actions of the Holy See and the Episcopate were treated as anti-Polish. Hence it was ordered to recognize them with intelligence methods and then fight with the means appropriate for the political police. Information about the Vatican was extremely valuable for the leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party (Polish abbrev. PZPR) and the operational units of the Security Service (Polish abbrev. SB). The election of a Pole as Pope did not restrict operational activities in the Vatican. As a threat to the government and the party was perceived, information was expected from Rome on inks between Vatican institutions and opposition in the country and foreign centers such as Radio Free Europe and the Parisian "Culture". The communist authorities always treated the latter as the main threat to the ruling system and ideology. Their activity was described as hostile and destructive. Before the emergence of organized political opposition in Poland, the development of these centers was handled by the Division VIII, and later by the Division XI of the Department I. The external intelligence links in Paris and Cologne appointed Jerzy Giedroyc the editor-in-chief of "Culture", and Jan Nowak-Jeziorański the director of Radio Free Europe. Besides, the intelligence was interested in organizations and scientific institutes in Germany, Israel, and England. The people employed there were kept under surveillance, and effective attempts were often made to locate the Polish scholarship holders obtained by the interview in these research centers [2, p. 109, 111, 116].

In the mid-1980s, the directions of work of the PRL's intelligence service changed. More was expected from political analyses, economic intelligence information, and scientific and technical intelligence achievements [2, p. 342]. The latter was to support the Polish economy. Thanks to it, economic difficulties were to be overcome, and the effects of the embargo imposed on Poland were to be mitigated during martial law. However, despite the successes achieved by the intelligence, the industry of Poland and other socialist countries was only to a small extent able to take advantage of the achievements of the intelligence service. In the last months before the "Round Table", the intelligence attempted to gather information on the nearest "Solidarność" strategy and the goals it intended to achieve during the negotiations. A new era for intelligence began in 1990 when people of opposition origin took control of the Ministry and its special services [2, p. 359].

Although the intelligence units had existed earlier in the military units commanded by Zygmunt Berling since their creation in the USSR in May 1943 [3, p. 49], the genesis of the communist military intelligence is usually seen on 8 August 1944, when the Information Department of the Polish Armed Forces General Staff was established. However, it was not until July 1945 that the "Headquarters" of the military intelligence, i.e., the Division II of the

General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, was set up. The managerial positions were taken by Soviet secret service officers and Polish communists coming from the civil structures of the Communist Party of Poland, cooperating with the military intelligence of the USSR. In 1951, the name was changed to the Board II. Initially, the military intelligence consisted of four units: two intelligence (shallow and deep intelligence<sup>2</sup>) ones and two for securing operational activities, and several auxiliary and technical departments. Apart from that, the Board II consisted of reconnaissance units and radio-electronic combat units. The further expansion of military intelligence took place in the 1960s and 1980s [1, p. 142].

In the first phase of the communist military intelligence activity, matters related directly to the country were the most important. First, it was assumed that the independence underground (civilian and armed) would be liquidated and cut off from the natural background, namely, Polish exile in Western Europe (mainly in England and France) and North America. From the beginning, the Polish Armed Forces, alongside the NKVD Internal Troops and operational groups of the Ministry of Public Security, were involved in pacifying the Polish underground. The country's underground activity was closely connected with Polish emigration and the institutions of the state in exile, which expected an imminent outbreak of World War III. Therefore, military intelligence worked out almost all institutions, political parties, associations, and many of their representatives. The disintegration of the American Polish community, which supported the American administration's anti-communist attitude, became a priority [3, p. 107, 109, 110].

In the early 1970s and even before, the Polish People's Republic's military intelligence priorities were in line with Moscow's war doctrine. The Soviets wanted the Polish ally to recognize the future Central and Northern European war zone and demanded, among other things, information on the deployment of NATO's nuclear weapons stockpiles, exercises of the armed forces in the Central European zone, the development and combat readiness of the Bundeswehr, and the possibilities of mobilization and transfer of British land forces [3, p. 194]. At that time, the action codenamed "Scorpion" was also carried out. It aimed at permanent surveillance of the emigration and Polish community, which was involved in anti-communist activities and monitored the staff of diplomatic missions to counteract this type of activity [3, p. 194].

The failures of the external apparatus of the Board II influenced the intelligence's interest in domestic affairs. As early as in the 1970s, the Board II expanded its network of co-workers and officers undercover in various state institutions. During martial law, when the borders were closed, and the People's Republic of Poland was isolated in the international arena, the process was even more extensive. Many officers of the Board II became plenipotentiaries of military commissioners in central offices, such as the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Radio and Television Committee, and the lower level, as well as in numerous workplaces [3, p. 431-2]. Martial law weakened the external apparatus, which was burdened with treason (Romuald Spasowski in Washington and Zdzisław Rurarz in Tokyo – they refused to return to the country), disclosures, and counterintelligence actions. It also paralyzed the technical aspect of intelligence activity. After 13 December

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<sup>2</sup> The shallow interview was conducted at a distance of up to 250 km from the state border; the deep interview – more than 250 km from the state border on the territory of a foreign country, see: K.A. Wojtaszczyk (ed.). *Polskie służby specjalne. Słownik*. Warszawa: ASPRA – JR; 2011, p. 235.

1981, operational activities in the American section were suspended due to the intensified surveillance of diplomatic posts and staff. The employees of residencies who were unable to carry out operations were therefore assigned the task of using open sources (press, radio, television) to get to know propaganda, disinformation, and the war strategy of NATO Member States [3, p. 253-5]. The reorganization of the Board II in 1984 again resulted in a change of priorities, e.g., in the Information Department, the NATO Armed Forces Assessment Department was established instead of the European Department, and the Military and Political Situation Assessment Department was set up instead of the overseas department. The latter was to follow the development of the situation in flashpoint and war regions. A crucial role was played by the Technical Information Department – which already existed before – which was to collect, study, and develop materials concerning the combat technology of land forces and aviation technology, as well as the use of space for NATO's military purposes. Those tasks were significant because of Moscow's expectations, which was extremely interested in acquiring Western military technologies [3, p. 267].

Among other tasks from that period, those of the Division Y are worthy of attention: "organizing commercial enterprises under cover" [3, p. 285] or "conducting financial or business activities" [3, p. 286]. After 1987, the military special services-controlled agencies began to be transformed into companies with private capital [4, p. 73-5].

The military intelligence of the People's Republic of Poland suffered many defeats. There were many reasons for such low efficiency. Poor results were from mistakes in training, selection of personnel, lack of independence, professionalism, too much counting on rapid success or Soviet allies, financial shortages, and inadequate planning. Numerous betrayals and disclosures led to necessary reorganization. They also showed the weaknesses of counterintelligence. Although in the first period it focused on verifying the ideological correctness of the intelligence officers and looking for internal enemies, after 1956, the military counterintelligence – the Main Information Board – had the primary task of protecting the Board II against the penetration by the Western secret services [3, p. 439-41].

One of the most sinister symbols of the People's Republic of Poland was the Security Service (SB). It was the apparatus established to protect state security and public order in the People's Republic of Poland, created by the Act of 13 November 1956 [5], which constituted the new security bodies and sanctioned their material powers. Detailed regulations were specified in the 1956 Resolution of the Council of Ministers, containing the Ministry of the Interior's organizational statute, which separated the three main operational departments of the SB: intelligence, counterintelligence, and the fight against the anti-state activity. Independently of these departments, many operational offices of the Security Service were established. The service was reorganized over several years, but its basic tasks did not change. From the 1960s onwards, the Security Service expanded in terms of staff and organization. In the early 1970s, the Department IV was created to fight the Church, and in the early 1980s, the Department III A was set up to protect the economy. The Security Service's task was still to protect the communist system, and therefore it took part, on the order of the ruling party, in the repression of the participants of protests and strikes organized by NSZZ "Solidarność" [6, p. 254-5]. The Office for Research and Analyses of the Security Service of the Ministry of Interior was established at the beginning of 1982 to combat the opposition's governing structures. It was a special unit with an independent department's status, dealing not only with analytical but also operational work, with branches in major field centers. In 1989, it

was renamed the Department for Research and Analysis, and the most valuable agency was handed over to it. In the management's instructions, it was recommended to use provocation methods and create fake groups illegally equipped with printing equipment to enter important underground structures [7, p. 360-1]. In fighting activities considered contrary to the interests of the authoritarian system, the Security Service also used "special actions": beatings, abductions, illegal threats, intoxication, arson, assaults on apartments, and property damage<sup>3</sup>. The Section "D" was responsible for such actions ("disintegration" and "disinformation"). Its officers were responsible for the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, as well as for numerous beatings and probably murders, e.g., the torture of Father Tadeusz Zaleski in 1984 and the assault on Father Jerzy Suchowolec<sup>4</sup>.

Before the beginning of the "Round Table" talks, new goals (and therefore other forms of work) of the Ministry of Interior for 1989, were presented during the annual briefing of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' management. "SB can and should create various associations, clubs, or even political parties, and deeply infiltrate the existing ones. The governing bodies of these organizations, at the central, voivodeship, and commune levels, must be operationally controlled by us. We must provide ourselves with operational opportunities to influence these organizations and create their activities and policies". At that time, the Security Service employed around 25,000 officers, and the Ministry of Interior used 79,000 secret associates in all operational departments. As one can see, the tasks of the communist secret service were similarly targeted. In the period of an evident economic weakness of the country, they focused on the acquisition of Western technologies. When the collapse of communism was sealed, the priority was to place people connected with the services in such a way that they could participate in the political and economic life of the Third Republic.

## The role and tasks of the secret services after 1990

It is necessary to describe the political events that determined the shape of the services responsible for Polish security in the new reality to present the location and scope of the secret services' tasks after 1990.

After the parliamentary elections held on 4 June 1989, the democratic opposition won 35% of the seats in the Sejm (the maximum set under the "Round Table" agreement) and 99% of the Senate seats. The government of the first NSZZ "Solidarność" Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki was formed in September of the same year. It consisted of representatives of the Civic Parliamentary Club, the United People's Party, the Democratic Party, and the Polish United Workers' Party. Two key ministries for national security – the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of the Interior – remained under the control of people from the People's Republic of Poland (General Florian Siwicki and General Czesław Kiszczak). Formally, the "Round Table" agreement did not violate the communists' control over the security apparatus. However, already during the talks between the communist authorities and the "Solidarność" opposition, the process of internal structural and personnel changes in the Security Service commenced. The most repressive and embarrassing departments in the new

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<sup>3</sup> *Informacja o działalności komórek „D” pionu IV byłej SB* (from the report of the Sejm's Extraordinary Commission for the investigation of the activities of the Ministry of the Interior). Warszawa. February 1991, p. 363.

<sup>4</sup> *Informacja o działalności komórek „D” pionu IV byłej SB...*, op. cit., p. 358-9, 362, 377.

reality were liquidated: IV – for the Church and III – for the opposition affairs. The number of SB staff was also reduced, with some staff being retired or transferred to the Civic Militia.

The real changes began when Krzysztof Kozłowski, a senator on the “Solidarność” list of the Civic Parliamentary Club, was appointed as Deputy Minister in the Ministry of the Interior on 7 March 1990. The process of transforming the Ministry of the Interior and the Security Service, as a tool for supervising society and repression, into an instrument of power whose task will be to ensure the state’s internal and external security. The main problems debated in the Sejm and Senate concerned the shape and method of creating the civilian special services and their location in the hierarchy of government administration. The symbolic dissociation from the past was emphasized by the change of the name, which was also to reflect the new service’s idea – the Office for State Protection [8, p. 6-7].

The Act on the establishment of a civilian special service, under the name of the State Protection Office (Polish abbrev. UOP), was adopted by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on 6 April 1990 [9]. The purpose of the UOP was to protect state security and its constitutional order. Within the framework of its tasks, the Office for State Protection performed operational, exploratory, and investigative activities to recognize, prevent, and detect crimes. Under the Act, the Office for State Protection was obliged to perform activities on the order of courts or prosecutors, to the extent specified in the Code of Penal Procedure. Officers of the Office for State Protection were obliged to conduct activities only within the scope of competence of their office, and in this respect, they were entitled to procedural rights of police officers, resulting from the provisions of the Code of Penal Procedure. Officers. While performing official activities, they had the right to:

- identify persons in order to establish their identity,
- detain persons in the manner and in the cases specified in the provisions of the Code of Penal Procedure,
- search persons and premises in the course of and in the cases specified in the provisions of the Code of Penal Procedure and other acts,
- carry out personal inspections, as well as review the contents of luggage and check the cargo in ports, stations, and means of land, air, and water transport, if there is a justified suspicion of committing a criminal offence,
- demand the necessary assistance from state institutions, request such assistance from economic entities and social organizations, as well as request emergency assistance from every citizen.

The Office for State Protection was headed by the Head, who was the central body of government administration, competent in matters of state security and protection of its constitutional order. His/her tasks included [10]:

- identification and counteraction to threats to the security, defence, independence, integrity, and international position of the state,
- prevention and detection of espionage and terrorism crimes, as well as other crimes that undermine state security, and prosecution of their perpetrators,
- prevention, detection, and prosecution of offences affecting the economic basis of the State,
- prevention and detection of crimes of a transnational nature or scope, including the illicit manufacture, possession, and trafficking of weapons, munitions and



explosives, narcotic drugs, psychotropic drugs, or nuclear or radioactive material, and the prosecution of their perpetrators,

- identification and prevention of violations of State secrecy,
- preparation of information and analysis relevant to state security for the highest authorities and state administration,
- cryptographic protection of information constituting a state and professional secret, transmitted by technical means of communication for the needs of state administration bodies and state financial and economic institutions.

The organization of the Office for State Protection was determined by the statute granted by way of Regulation by the Prime Minister [11]. This regulation gave the Head of the Office for State Protection the possibility to merge, transform, or abolish organisational units listed in the statute, in justified cases, with the consent of the Prime Minister [11, § 2].

The Office for State Protection was also composed of the UOP Delegations, local departments, and training centers established under separate regulations. Moreover, the Head of the Office for State Protection, following the statute, could – to the extent necessary to carry out his/her statutory duties, notifying the Prime Minister – create branches or teams of a permanent character or perform specific tasks. He/She could also appoint collegial, advisory, and opinion-forming bodies. Initially, 14 delegations of the Office for State Protection were set up with specified seats and territorial jurisdiction. The headquarters and territorial jurisdiction of the Office for State Protection changed slightly [12]. Also, the organizational structure, defined in the statute, changed to a small extent [13]. According to the Act on Establishment, the Office for State Protection was subordinate to the Minister of the Interior. Since August 1996, the Office for State Protection was excluded from the Ministry of the Interior's structures, and the Head of Service was subordinated directly to the Prime Minister. When creating new services, the so-called zero option was abandoned, which assumed the dissolution of previous services and their officers' dismissal. It was believed that due to the continuity of the state, the zero option could not be implemented. Pursuant to the Ordinance No. 043/90 of the Minister of the Interior of 10 May 1990, the Security Service ceased its activities on that date, except for the continuation of intelligence and counterintelligence operations, which were essential for state security (the exception also concerned persons suspected of espionage or a terrorist attack). The Cipher Bureau also continued to carry out its tasks. Within a few months, it was necessary to organize the UOP (headquarters and field centers), verify Security Service Officers, recruit others for service in the UOP, and at the same time supervise the activities of intelligence, counterintelligence, and the Cipher Bureau, to the extent indicated above [14, p. 43]. The Council of Ministers defined the mode and conditions of admission of candidates and former Security Service officers to serve in the Office for State Protection and other organizational units subordinate to the Minister of Interior. On 21 May 1990, the Council of Ministers adopted Resolution No. 69 on the admission of former security officers to the newly created service. According to this resolution, former security officers could be admitted to the Office for State Protection service after receiving a positive opinion of the competent qualification committee, issued after the qualification procedure [15]. The Central Qualification Committee, the Qualification Committee for Central Staff, and voivodeship qualification committees were appointed to carry out the qualification procedure. The committee issued a positive opinion on the candidate to state that he/she met the requirements for an officer of the service, as defined in the Act, and if he/she

had moral qualifications to perform the service. It was especially checked that during his/her previous service, he/she had not violated the law, had performed his/her official duties in a manner not breaching the rights and dignity of other persons, and had not used his/her official position for non-services purposes [15, § 1-4, § 8.1]. As already mentioned, in 1989, the Security Service employed about 25,000 officers, and a little over 14,000 officers were verified<sup>5</sup>. About 10,500 officers were given a positive opinion. Of those positively verified in the Office for State Protection, about 5 thousand people were employed. The results of the verification by some voivodship qualification commissions aroused surprise. In several voivodships, where after the introduction of martial law, "Solidarność" and the democratic opposition showed almost no activity, the committees gave a negative opinion of 50% to 70% of former Security Service officers. On the other hand, in a few voivodships, such as Szczecin or Gdańsk, where the social resistance was high, the negatively verified ones constituted a dozen or so percent [14, p. 46]. On 1 August 1990, the Office for State Protection started its activity. The Intelligence Board, as an operational unit carrying out tasks outside the country, maintained a significant degree of work and staff continuity. It was tasked with supporting new strategic directions of the country's foreign policy (including cooperation with NATO), supporting the activities of countries carrying out missions in the field of the legal protection of the international order, including counter-terrorism, protecting and supporting the implementation of new economic and political objectives of the Republic of Poland. The objectives and methods of operation of the Counterintelligence Board also changed. It resulted from the subordination of its activities to the rule of law and a significant reduction in the possibility of uncontrolled operation of service officers in institutions and enterprises. The Counterintelligence Board, being an operational unit operating on the territory of the country, not only fulfilled the tasks related to combating activities of foreign interviews against the interests of the Republic of Poland but also recognized and fought crimes against the state in other areas indicated by the Act, including economic crimes and terrorism.

Counterintelligence also faced new challenges in 1990, as Poland broke its former alliances, establishing close cooperation with Western services, chiefly the American, British, and German ones. That resulted in considerable changes in the perception of threats and, consequently, tasks. The Soviet services and their satellites became new and dangerous opponents. As former allies, they were well prepared to operate in Poland. The opening of the borders, allowing the free movement of capital and people, resulted in new threats in the form of terrorism, international organized crime, illegal migration, and arms and drug trafficking. From the point of view of counterintelligence protection, it was imperative to station Soviet Army units in Poland until 1993. The intelligence structures operating in their vicinity, aware of the fact of the imminent withdrawal of their troops, started to create a new agent base. One of the ways was to establish companies and partnerships and place agents there. The economic transformations in Poland were also conducive to the infiltration of foreign intelligence representatives to the business and political circles and their lobbying, which was dangerous for the country's security. Russians also recruited Polish officers. The rapid development of the ICT network and the Internet posed a threat to the sphere of IT and the protection of classified information. A new task was therefore to prevent computer hacking and infiltration of cyberspace [16, p. 131-2, 134].

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<sup>5</sup> According to the above resolution, requests for verification could be submitted by former Security Officers under 55 years of age, and by retired officers over 55 years of age.

A completely new unit was the Office for Analyses and Information. The unit did not have operational powers. Its tasks covered extensive monitoring of social, political, and economic phenomena – based on open sources of information and analyzing them in terms of possible threats to state security. The Office also developed information and analyses for the state management and operational divisions. The work of these basic units was supported by the logistics and support divisions. One of the most important was the Investigation Board, which controlled the rule of law of the activities undertaken by the operating divisions, as well as giving legal opinions on planned and implemented operational activities and preparatory proceedings [8, p. 10, 11].

The services faced a critical task in connection with Poland's intention to join NATO structures [17, p. 25]. The sine qua non condition of acceptance to the Pact was the creation of a system for the protection of classified information and state secrets and a system of safe transmission of information. Poland's accession to NATO in 1999 accelerated the process of Poland's integration with the European Union.

The most spectacular UOP's actions at the beginning of its activity were the operations known under the cryptonyms "Samum"<sup>6</sup> and "Bridge" performed by the Polish intelligence service. The first was carried out in 1990 during preparations by the USA and its allies for a military operation against Iraq in the effect of Kuwait's capture by Saddam Hussein's troops. A problem with the agents, officers of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Iraq appeared. They watched the dislocation of Iraqi troops before the Gulf War. In such a situation, the Americans were unable to evacuate their agents safely. So, they asked the United Kingdom, France, and Russia for assistance. However, these countries refused to help, justifying it with the inability to act. Then the United States turned to Poland. The decision about the Polish officers' participation in this operation was made by the Head of the Office for State Protection Andrzej Milczanowski, with the approval of the Minister of Interior – Krzysztof Kozłowski. On the spot, the operation was commanded by a long-time PRL intelligence officer, while in the headquarters, the action was coordinated by the Director of the Intelligence Board, who was earlier also the PRL intelligence officer. The most important task was to establish contact with the hiding agents and provide them with Polish passports, thanks to which they could leave Iraq on the bus together with Polish workers. Initially, the Americans all found shelter in a Polish building base, where they were taught their new names. Then they set off towards the border they managed to cross and safely reached Turkey. Polish officers save the agents and brought detailed maps of Baghdad and Iraq, with marked military installations significant for Operation Desert Storm. All the participants were awarded CIA medals for this operation, while the U.S. administration contributed to the cancellation by the U.S. and other western countries of half of the Polish debt from the communist era [1, p. 150-1]. Operation "The Bridge", which was to secure the passage of thousands of Russian Jews emigrating to Israel, was also a success. As part of the operation conducted several weeks jointly by Polish and Israeli special services under the supervision of Krzysztof Kozłowski [18, p. 391], Okęcie Airport in Warsaw became a safe transit place for displaced persons. These actions were of great importance for Poland's prestige, thereby contributing to gaining the trust of new allies and serving the interests of the country.

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<sup>6</sup> This is the name of the operation given by the dictionary of Polish secret services edited by K.A. Wojtaszczyk, but in fact the operation did not have such a codename (source: information obtained from the person taking part in the operation).

As part of the operation conducted for several weeks under the supervision of Krzysztof Kozłowski, the Office for State Protection was liquidated in June 2002. The reform of the left-wing government, consisting in the liquidation of the UOP and the establishment of the Internal Security Agency (Polish abbrev. ABW) and the Intelligence Agency (Polish abbrev. AW) enabled dismissing several hundred people from service, without the possibility to use the appeal procedure. Budgetary restrictions were cited as the reason for the dismissal, but a political criterion was used. Even though the Act on the ABW and AW required the officer's relevant qualifications, his/her usefulness, and only then the financial constraints should be considered, many Heads of Delegations who were successful in counterintelligence activities and those resulting from the cooperation with NATO were dismissed. Such numerous dismissals were described as "purges" in the special services. Since the Act did not prohibit the admission of negatively verified SB officers to the service, some of the management positions in the special services returned to those who had previously worked in the Security Service [19]. When criticizing the liquidation of the UOP, the first Head of the Office Krzysztof Kozłowski stated: "Last week, a parliamentary committee positively assessed the activities of the State Protection Office in 2001. Nevertheless, the UOP ceased to exist" [18, p. 497-8].

Apart from the Office for State Protection (civilian special services), in 1990, the military special services – Military Information Services (Polish abbrev. WSI) – were established. They were created by merging the Board II of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces and the Counterintelligence Division of the Military Internal Service. Initially, they acted as the WSI Department, and then, until the mid-1990s, as the WSI Headquarters. The last name – the WSI Inspectorate – was adopted after another reorganization. The legal basis, which put the functioning of the Military Information Services in order, was created by the "Act on amending the Act on the universal obligation to defend the People's Republic of Poland and certain other acts". One of the articles of the Act specified the Military Information Services' tasks, which were related to recognizing and counteracting the threats that harmed the state defense and could breach the state secrets in the field of defense, as well as the preparation of information and analyses essential for the state authorities [20]. Much more important was the "Act of 9 July 2003 on Military Information Services", which, among other things, more precisely specified its tasks. It defined the Military Information Services as a separate and specialized service, being part of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, and as a special service and state protection service competent in matters of state defense and security of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. The WSI's tasks defined by the Act included:

- identification, prevention, and combating external and internal threats affecting the independence of the State and the integrity of its territory, the security and integrity of its borders, and the defense and security of the Armed Forces,
- recognition, prevention, and detection of criminal offences subject to the jurisdiction of military courts: against peace, mankind and war crimes, espionage, terrorism, crimes under the military part of the Penal Code and other crimes against the defense of the State or committed to the detriment of an allied state, protection of classified information concerning the defense of the State, in the field of scientific research and development works, as well as production and trade in technological goods and services for military use, carried out by entrepreneurs, universities and research and development units, supervised by the Minister of National Defense, as well as by other organizational units conducting scientific research or development

works, or performing production or services for the needs of state defense or the Armed Forces, illegal production, possession and trade in weapons, ammunition and explosives, as well as means of mass destruction, in domestic and international trade, as well as cooperation in this respect with the bodies appointed to prosecute their perpetrators,

- performing, within the limits of its competence specified in the provisions of the Act of 22 January 1999 on the protection of classified information, tasks of the state protection service and tasks related to the performance by the Head of the WSI as a national security authority in the field of protection of classified information, in international relations concerning matters of State defense,
- obtaining, collecting, processing, analyzing, and transmitting information, which might be significant for the State defense, as well as the combat capability and security of the Armed Forces, to the competent authorities,
- identifying and analyzing threats occurring in areas of tension, crisis, and international conflict affecting the defense of the State, and taking action to eliminate them,
- protecting the security of military units and soldiers on duty and serving outside the country,
- conducting radio-electronic intelligence and counterintelligence, cryptanalysis, and cryptography,
- carrying out undertakings resulting from military alliances and agreements to which the Republic of Poland is a party,
- participating in planning and controlling the implementation of international agreements on disarmament,
- cooperation in organizing Polish military representations abroad and maintaining contacts with members of the military diplomatic corps accredited in the Republic of Poland,
- taking other actions, which are specified in separate international laws and agreements [21].

The structure of the Military Information Services was formed by the following functional division [21, Art. 10, 11]: analytical and informational, military intelligence, military counterintelligence, protection of classified information, security, military representations, command and staff. Besides, there were organizational units:

- Inspectorate of Military Information Services,
- field WSI units,
- specialized WSI organizational units.

Initially, the Military Information Services were located within the Ministry of National Defense's structures and subordinated directly to the Minister. In February 1994, it became subordinated to the Chief of General Staff, and two years later, the Military Information Service was once again under the responsibility of the Minister of National Defense. Starting in 2005, the process of liquidation of the military services began. First, the Military Attache Offices were separated from the services, and then, after the Act on the liquidation of the WSI was passed, the Military Counterintelligence Service and the Military Intelligence Service were established. Within a few years, officers and heads were accused of participating

in, among others, the “bakshish” and “fuel” scandals and of being filtered by foreign special services. The allegations were not confirmed [1, p. 229-30]. Many more charges against the WSI were made by their liquidator Antoni Macierewicz in his report. He mentioned, among other things, illegal arms trade, illegal sources of financing, counterintelligence omissions regarding the Soviet and later Russian services, and surveillance of political circles. Given the public allegations against the WSI concerning the conduct of activities that went beyond its statutory tasks, as well as the lack of substantive and personnel reform of military intelligence and counterintelligence after the fall of communism, the Polish Parliament decided to liquidate the services by the Act of 9 June 2006.

## **Conclusions**

In the times of the People’s Republic of Poland, special services were characterized by political control of the society, ideologically conditioned repressions, and the attitude of subordination to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In view of the political transformations taking place, it was necessary to liquidate the existing structures, which had been operating under the conditions of real socialism, combined with the verification of staff and the introduction of civil control, including parliamentary control, over the services.

The situation in Poland after 1989 was very complicated. Within a few months, the country’s political, economic, social, and international situation changed. The situation in the countries neighboring Poland was destabilized, there were tensions in the international arena, there were still garrisons of the Soviet Army stationed on the territory of Poland and the GDR, and a process of the free market economy, accompanied by degenerations and pathologies, was taking place in the country. In extreme conditions, it was particularly important to ensure the security of the state and its citizens. That could not be achieved without efficient services. The non-application of the zero option and the employment in the services of a democratic state of the former communist services is difficult to assess unequivocally. The spectacular successes of the newly established special services indeed testify to the benefits of such a solution. However, the employment in the Internal Security Agency and the Intelligence Agency of previously negatively verified security service officers is controversial.

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## **Conflict of interests**

All authors declared no conflict of interests.

## **Author contributions**

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## **Ethical statement**

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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## Transformacja służb specjalnych w Polsce w kontekście przemian ustrojowych

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### STRESZCZENIE

W artykule przedstawiono transformację służb specjalnych w Polsce na tle przemian ustrojowych. Zaprezentowano działalność organów bezpieczeństwa – wywiadu i kontrwywiadu cywilnego oraz wojskowego w czasach PRL. Ich zadaniem było umacnianie komunistycznej władzy, likwidacja przeciwników ustroju, wzmacnianie sojuszu państw socjalistycznych pod przewodnictwem ZSRR, walka z demokratyczną opozycją. Ukazano również powstanie nowych służb specjalnych: UOP oraz WSI. Skupiono się na



nowych zadaniach, jakie przed nimi zostały postawione w związku z przemianami demokratycznymi i nowymi sojuszami. Zaprezentowano spektakularne akcje UOP, które przyczyniły się do podniesienia prestiżu Polski na arenie międzynarodowej.

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**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** służby specjalne, przemiany ustrojowe, demokracja, bezpieczeństwo

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