

## GERMAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS OPERATING FOR THE ABWEHR IN POLAND IN THE YEARS 1918-1927

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### Abstract:

*This publication contains the information concerning illegal operations of the German intelligence in the years 1918-1927, ascertained by the Polish special services – the Second Department of the Polish General Staff (the Second Department). The paper is based on source documents currently stored by the Institute of National Remembrance and the Central Military Archive. Therefore, the information contained herein represents the data available to the Second Department in the relevant period. The Treaty of Versailles imposed military restrictions on Germany, limiting significantly their offensive capabilities. Driven by desires of further expansion and as a result of not coming to terms with the outcome of the Great War, the Abwehr had the government organisations operating in Poland infiltrated by undercover officers of the former Imperial German intelligence service. The most important ones included Consul, Zentrale Wannsee and Burgwall. In addition, the Second Department identified 16 detective bureaux receiving commissions from the Abwehr and eleven commercial establishments cooperating with the intelligence service. Furthermore, numerous officers of the pre-war German intelligence service did not find employment with the state, which gave rise to the rank-and-file initiative to create private intelligence bureaux. The pre-war connections were still maintained. The substantive value of the text consists in identifying the said organisations and presenting the then available information about them. Such data can be useful for researchers of the period of revival of the Polish State, methods employed for “bypassing” the Treaty of Versailles by the German Reich and the activity of German organisations in Poland in the relevant period. Furthermore, the paper may serve as a case study for the infiltration of organisations seemingly unrelated to the armed forces by intelligence agents.*

### Keywords:

*the Abwehr, intelligence, the Second Department of the Polish General Staff, special services, agents, network of agents, undercover activity, illegal intelligence, the Treaty of Versailles*



## INTRODUCTION

The Treaty of Versailles imposed many restrictions on the Weimar Republic and reduced its territory, in favour of reviving Poland in particular. The military restrictions were harsh and included, among others, the demilitarisation of the Rhineland, reduction in the army to 100,000 professional soldiers, no possibility of conscription for active military service, resulting in the lack of trained reserves, no possibility of maintaining heavy equipment (tanks, artillery) and no possibility of conducting offensive intelligence activities, which is of utmost importance for the research on intelligence services<sup>1</sup>.

Failing to come to terms with this state of affairs, the Germans were looking for ways enabling them to circumvent the applicable law. Under such circumstances, in the period under study, underground organisations and private intelligence firms started to open private intelligence bureaux. They were operating for the benefit of the German state.

Many officers of the pre-war intelligence service did not find employment with the state. Therefore, a significant number of them opened private detective bureaux, which received commissions mostly from the Abwehr. The connections existing before the Great War were still maintained and the Treaty of Versailles was gradually evaded, with increasing effectiveness.

### 1. ORGANISATIONS OPERATING FOR THE ABWEHR IN POLAND

Defensive intelligence was the most frequent form of intelligence activities conducted by private firms. They were rarely involved with offensive intelligence operations carried out in the border regions. In Poland offensive intelligence was most often conducted by organisations gathering the so-called German element. The Second Department identified the activities conducted by private intelligence firms as collecting the information about social responses and carrying out terrorist and sabotage activities<sup>2</sup>.

It was known that the majority of underground organisations conducted intelligence activities. Most of them carried out intelligence work on their own account, often for commercial purposes. However, a substantial number of them would receive their tasks directly from the Abwehr. The Second Department determined that *Consul*, *Zentrale Wannsee* and *Burgwall* were the three most dangerous organisations.

The first one brought together mostly the former intelligence officers, operating before the Great War. The organisation's employees included also students declared eligible for this type of activity and people who reported their willingness to join the military intelligence service before the Great War. The main tasks of this organisation comprised combatting antimonarchical elements, counteracting the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and eliminating people who supported the conciliatory policy to-

<sup>1</sup> *Traktat Wersalski, Dziennik Ustaw RP, nr 35, Warszawa 1920, sections I-III, p. 95-119.*

<sup>2</sup> Instytut Pamięci Narodowej / Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, sygn. IPN BU 23/29, Niemiecka służba wywiadowcza od czasu zawarcia Układu Wersalskiego /r. 1918/ do chwili obecnej, rozdział VII Biura wywiadowcze tajnych organizacji cywilno-wojskowych i prywatne biura wywiadowcze (PBW).



wards the Triple Entente. As indicated above, the organisation was focused on the internal strengthening of the German Reich. The Second Department characterised its activity as terroristic.

The data collected by the Polish intelligence service suggest that about 200 assassinations were attributed to this organisation in the years 1919-1923. It was implied that it was responsible, among others, for the deaths of the German communistic activists: Rosa Luxemburg, Wilhelm Liebknecht and Kurt Eisner. Furthermore, after the mobilisation of the intelligence services in 1923, *Consul* was responsible for murdering the members of the organisations which committed treason by disclosing military data, regarding the place and method of storing arms<sup>3</sup>.

Until the year 1923, the organisation was divided into three sections:

- *Consul 1* – attacks and assassinations;
- *Consul 2* – combatting communism;
- *Consul 3* – divided into three classes:
  - Couriers accompanying the transports of ammunition and establishing new commercial relations;
  - Couriers establishing new relations with the Soviets, citizens of Czechoslovakia, German and French monarchists, Hungarian irredentists, Russian monarchists and communist personnel in Poland;
  - Escorts supervising the ships sailing from the Soviet Union to the German ports.

It can be inferred, from the information of 1922, that the organisation carried out offensive intelligence operations through the well-prepared network of agents. Military attaches' offices located at the German diplomatic posts served as their workplace<sup>4</sup>.

The data concerning *Zentrale Wannsee* is scarce. It was known that the organisation was established at the initiative of Roszbach at the beginning of 1923. *Reichsblock* or "Roszbach Military Association" operated initially under the aegis of the Abwehr and performed defensive tasks. One of the tasks was the investigation into the mood in the German army. As a result of the failed assassination attempt at Severing, the Minister [of the Interior], the organisation was disbanded. Any traces of the attempted assassination were erased<sup>5</sup>.

The founding of the organisation called *Deutscher Herold* was an attempt to strengthen the intelligence activity conducted by *Zentrale Wannsee*. It exerted its influence through the press and journalists' associations. The managerial apparatus did not de-

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*



velop the activity of the organisation on a large scale. Therefore, the involvement of *Deutscher Herold* in the military intelligence activity was gradually decreasing<sup>6</sup>.

In 1923, *Burgwall* was the most dynamically developing underground intelligence organisation. It was directed by *Deutsche National Partei*. The organisation coordinated all military sections of this party. It was tasked with surveillance and responding to any manifestations of the communist movement in Germany. The army used it to seize power after Hitler's failed attempt to overthrow the government in 1923. The organisation's activity was mainly focused on defensive intelligence operations<sup>7</sup>.

In the years 1918-1919, within the territory of Germany, numerous civilian organisations of a military nature were established. The purpose of setting them up was to propagate civil defence preparation. Thus, their activity was focused on military training. Furthermore, the tasks assigned to these organisations were on the verge of sabotage. They were also involved in propaganda and intelligence activities. Some of them expanded their operations to cover Poland, primarily Pomerania, Greater Poland and Upper Silesia<sup>8</sup>.

From 1924, the organisation called *Stahlhelm* operated under the mandate of *Reichswehrministerium*. It monitored the activities of all civilian and military organisations within the territory of the Reich. Furthermore, within the territory of Poland it kept accurate statistics on former German military men. Its tasks were divided into three groups<sup>9</sup>:

- providing the data on potential agents and submitting acquired materials to the offices conducting offensive intelligence operations;
- support for the police in the home country by providing the information acquired by the organisation with its own efforts or assigning its members with intelligence tasks;
- conducting intelligence activities with regard to the organisations being of interest to the information and intelligence services.

*Stahlhelm* carried out its tasks mainly within the territory of Greater Poland and Pomerania, whereas Upper Silesia was the area of operation of another organisation, *Banschuts*<sup>10</sup>.

In the period under study a lot of private detective bureaux and intelligence firms were founded within the territory of the German Reich. They conducted both offensive and defensive intelligence operations. Apart from carrying out the tasks related to economy, trade, politics or armed forces, these bureaux and firms fulfilled also the officially declared purposes of their activity, such as searching for missing persons or conducting

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem.*



matrimonial investigations. Most often these establishments were set up by former military men. Some of them cooperated with the Abwehr on a permanent basis and some, just sporadically. It was known that with a low level of available expenditure the Germans were not able to pay for all intelligence-related activities on a permanent basis. Therefore, the cooperation was established not only on a commercial basis, but it was also maintained through bonds of friendship, dating back to the time of serving together.

Because of the threat posed by private detectives, the Second Department prepared a list of private detective (intelligence) bureaux, which could perform tasks for the Abwehr:

- *Argus - Detektiv Institut*: the company had its branch in Berlin. It performed its tasks most often in Łódź, Warsaw, Prague, Vienna and Innsbruck;
- *Altheide*: its office was located near the town of *Glatz*. Its agent, N. Urbańczyk, was an officer of the plebiscite police force in the Rybnik *powiat* (county);
- *von Behnke*: a branch of *Landes Grenzpolizei* in Königsberg. It collected the information about the Polish and French intelligence service activities targeting Germany;
- *Deutsche Pinkertongesellschaft*: its principal office was located in Berlin. In addition, the company had its branches in all major cities of the Reich. It carried out its intelligence activities in the Rhineland provinces. It also conducted its operations in the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland;
- *Detektiv Institut Schutz*: a bureau with its headquarters in Berlin. It exercised political supervision in the Rhineland provinces and Baden;
- *Detektiv Institut Grutzmaster von Miller*: a bureau with its headquarters in Berlin. It exercised political supervision in the Netherlands;
- *Deutsche Auskunftel*: a bureau with its headquarters in Berlin. It conducted intelligence activities targeting France and Belgium;
- *Detektiv Institut Zukunft*: a bureau with its headquarters in Wiesbaden. It exercised political and military supervision in the Rhineland provinces, in Belgium and Alsace and Lorraine;
- *Detektiv Institut Grager*: a bureau with its headquarters in Berlin. It exercised political supervision in eastern Germany and in Schleswig-Holstein;
- *Detektiv Institut Block*: a bureau with its headquarters in Berlin, which monitored foreign military missions during travels;
- *Detektiv Institut Rucks*: a bureau with its headquarters in Berlin. It carried out special political tasks in eastern Germany and monitored actions taken by politicians and relations with the governments of the foreign states;
- *Deutsche Reichs Detektiv Organisation*: its new headquarters expanded its operations into the whole of Europe. It was founded in 1925, with its princi-



pal office in Munich. Its role was to centralise the collected information and to coordinate the activities of subordinate detective bureaux. It published its own newspaper for detectives and spies, entitled *Reichs Detektiv Zeitung*. The organisation was headed by *Reichsoberleitung* Heinrich Saal. He managed 46 state central agencies, *Reichszentralen*. The organisation had a right to appoint the personnel in all these central agencies. Furthermore, the headquarters specified as “worthy of recommendation” the following detective bureaux: a commercial office, *Merkury*, Aachen; *Detektivbüro Germania*, Dresden; *Detektivbüro Kriminalia*, Mesendorf; *Detektivbüro Wach*, Hessen Katzenberg; *Detektiv Institut*, Stettin; *Detektiv Institut*, Wiesbaden; *Detektiv und Auskunftel*, Wurzburg;

- *Detektivbüro Greif*: a bureau with its headquarters in Beuthen. It was in contact, for intelligence purposes, with a military intelligence service office during the uprising in Upper Silesia;
- *Henberg alias Hlonicki*: a bureau with its headquarters in Breslau. It was in contact, for intelligence purposes, with a central agency, D.U.D;
- *Cappari, Roth, Roffi*: a bureau with its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. It monitored the political developments within the territory of the Rhineland provinces and Baden;
- Commissioner *von Treskow*: a bureau with its headquarters in Berlin. The bureau exercised supervision over the members of the foreign missions in Berlin and Cologne and was involved in the surveillance of the federalist movement in the Rhineland provinces. The organisation was financed by the heavy industry. Von Treskow was an officer of the political police of the Reich. He cooperated with Reserve Lieutenant Colonel Nicolai. Before the Great War he worked for the Imperial German intelligence service. In the period under study he cooperated with the department T.4 of *Reichswehrministerium*.

According to the documents of the Second Department, the reports prepared by private intelligence firms and detectives were submitted directly to *Abteilung P.A. Reichswehrministerium*. The ministry, in turn, made them available to *Staatskomissar für Öffentliche Ordnung*<sup>11</sup>.

Apart from private intelligence firms there were also informational bureaux of large corporations and companies. As indicated by the documents of the Second Department they had almost worldwide coverage. Such bureaux would often incorporate undercover military offensive intelligence units.

The intelligence services of corporations and companies did not operate exclusively for the benefit of the Abwehr. However, their cooperation was quite visible. It would happen that the Abwehr used them to keep in touch with its resident agents located in different places throughout the world. Informational units of private companies, apart

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.



from collecting political and military information, would also gather data concerning trade and industry. Commercial agents were entrusted with four types of tasks:

- tasks related to their own professional duties;
- intelligence activities, such as surveillance and eavesdropping, focusing on indicated targets;
- passing on guidelines, data, etc. to specific people;
- collecting intelligence information and transferring it to the headquarters.

There was a high number of commercial agents operating within the territory of Poland. It resulted from the fact that the crossing of the Polish/German border was easier. In the study on commercial agents, prepared by the Second Department, there was a recommendation that these people should be under special counterintelligence surveillance. As established by the Second Department, agents of the following companies were involved in intelligence activities:

- *Wirtschaftsinstitut für Russland und die Oststaaten*: the head office was located in Königsberg. Their intelligence activities were focused on Poland and other eastern European countries. The organisation had 300 agents located within the territory of Poland<sup>12</sup>;
- *Max Bange Import Export*: a trading company with its head office in Königsberg. It was an undercover unit of the military intelligence service. It was involved in recruiting agents. They were most often sent as travelling salesmen, representing the metallurgical industry. The company was in contact, for intelligence purposes, with *Landespolizei* in Königsberg and *Polizei Präsidium* in the Free City of Danzig;
- *Barasch et Comp.*: it was seated in Beuthen. The manager of the company, using the surname Kuzia (Kyra, Kiora), worked for the central intelligence agency, *Ostdeutscher Herold*;
- *Jaeger, Rothe et Comp., Chemische Fabrik*: the company was located in Breslau. It was situated next to the main headquarters of *Selbstschutz*. It was carrying out intelligence activities targeting Upper Silesia;
- *Landeschaum für die Previas Oberschlesien*: the company was located in Breslau. It incorporated an undercover intelligence unit targeting Poland. In 1922, its operations covered Upper Silesia and Teschen Silesia, four southern provinces and the territory stretching between Lublin, Warsaw and Częstochowa;
- *Kartell der Auskunfteien Burgel*: the principal office was located in Aachen. Karl Buecken was the company's director. The organisation was collecting economic and commercial information in the Reich and abroad. The organi-

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<sup>12</sup> Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego (Głównego) Wojska Polskiego, sygn. I 303.4.2170, Wykres "Deutschumsbundu", (DTB).



sation had 300 branches, responsible for collecting information and submitting it to the headquarters;

- *Ost Berichte für Industrie und Landwirtschaft*: a publishing house issuing bulletins regarding industrial and commercial issues;
- *Schiffahrte-Gesellschaft*: a company seated in Breslau. It incorporated Langguth's undercover intelligence bureau;
- *Stinnes A.E.G. Export-Import*: one of the largest trading companies with its headquarters in Berlin and numerous branches in major European cities. It had its own economic and political intelligence services. As confirmed by the data of 1922, it employed many pre-war intelligence service officers. The company passed on the information to the relevant *Abwherguppe*. Its Warsaw branch was tasked with monitoring the electrotechnical development of Polish enterprises;
- *Siemens*: its main headquarters were located in Berlin, while the Second Department pointed to hazards posed by its Warsaw branch;
- *Singer*: a world-famous company manufacturing sewing machines. It conducted intelligence activities similar to those of *Stinnes* and *Siemens*<sup>13</sup>.

The Second Department was convinced that the above institutions conducted intelligence activities through their commercial agents. There were many more such companies that could be reasonably suspected of conducting intelligence activities. Apart from the above, the Second Department paid special attention to the activities of the society called *Deutscher Überseedienst* and the association named *Deutschtumsbund*.

The origins of the former went back to the commercial society called *Transocean*. It was founded still in 1915 and was dealing with the transport of food to the overseas countries that did not take part in the war as well as disseminating pro-German propaganda and conducting intelligence activities targeting Great Britain and the U.S. and their overseas territories<sup>14</sup>.

After the war *Transocean* changed its name to *Deutscher Überseedienst* (D.U.D.). The society focused its activity on trading. The Second Department regarded D.U.D. as highly dangerous. Commercial agents were granted some privileges making it easier to cross state borders. Therefore, the officers of the Second Department voiced their concerns about the possibilities of conducting offensive intelligence operations by such agents.

D.U.D. was financed mainly by the largest industrial corporations. The organisation was expected to acquire the information useful for German enterprises for competing

<sup>13</sup> IPN PBW, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Instytut Pamięci Narodowej / Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, sygn. IPN BU 23/29, Niemiecka służba wywiadowcza od czasu zawarcia Układu Wersalskiego /r. 1918/ do chwili obecnej, rozdział Towarzystwo Deutscher Überseedienst /D.U.D./ (D.U.D.).





on the international market. However, economic information was also quite significant for the military offensive intelligence activities.

In order to ensure that the best experts in the field of acquiring information are employed, the German intelligence service would bring in officers of the former Imperial German intelligence service to D.U.D. Working for this society they were given, apart from employment, the opportunity to further prove themselves in the field of intelligence services. Many of them were highly appreciated as ideological officers, which was related to their old connections, from before the Treaty of Versailles. The society cooperated closely with the Abwehr through their employees' connections<sup>15</sup>.

For some time the agency was handling both economic and military intelligence activities. It resulted from the objectives of the companies providing the finance and from the military objectives. However, the lack of satisfactory results led to the separation of the military intelligence services under the official name *Sonderdienst*. After some time the name *Nuntia* was adopted. Another reason for the separation was the fact that the "military men" were not able to assess and analyse properly the information on civilian issues. As a result of that the use of such information was simply incorrect. To improve this situation *Deutscher Wirtschaftsdienst* was set up.

In the period under study D.U.D. comprised five departments:

- a) *Abteilung Vertraulichen Nachrichten: providing the information to influential right-wing individuals, cooperating with the Soviet legations in Berlin and probably with the Japanese ones, intelligence communications between D.U.D. and Auswartiges Ant.;*
- b) *Abteilung Deutscher Wirtschaftsdienst: the main agency for economic intelligence activities, close cooperation with the Reich Ministry of Finance;*
- c) *Abteilung Lichtbild Gesellschaft: disseminating propaganda abroad using German films;*
- d) *Kontinental Korrespondenz: disseminating German propaganda abroad by sending appropriately prepared articles to the press;*
- e) *Abteilung Sonderdienst Nuntia: conducting the military intelligence activities. Nuntia was a common name. The Second Department indicated that this unit was the continuation of the Third Department of the former German military intelligence service. It is worth noting that Nuntia was also financed by private sources and by the Ministry of Military Affairs. The Department was given guidelines directly by the Abwehr. Since 1923, the importance of Sonderdienst was gradually decreasing.*

The above structure describes the so-called headquarters, which were located in Berlin. D.U.D. had also many branches, *Zweigstellen*. Their work consisted in placing residents and acquiring intelligence liaisons, informers and members of local national minority parties. The information from the branches was passed on directly to Nuntia,

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem.*



where it was analysed. In the period under study the branches were located in Berlin, Stettin, Breslau, Dresden, Munich, Linden, Cassel and Hamburg.

Immediately after its formation Nuntia was given guidelines typical for the military intelligence service. Therefore, it can be concluded that the organisation was being prepared to perform the role of intelligence service. Probably, in the case of necessity, it could be incorporated into the Abwehr or transformed into an organisation conducting offensive intelligence operations. On the basis of organisational instruction *Reichswehrministerium Truppenamt T.IIIa Abwehrgruppe* no. 2560 Berlin, the following tasks were assigned to *Sonderdienst*:

1. Maintain, on a continuous basis, a properly functioning intelligence organisation [*Nachrichtenorganisation*], which operates independently of military intelligence institutions and does not act as an official institution with regard to third parties;
2. Expand and improve the intelligence service by making use of the experience gained during the war. In case of a war, make available to the state an established and improved intelligence organisation;
3. The employees of *Sonderdienst* are recruited from among the former intelligence officers of *des Grossen Generalstabes*. In case of a war their military ranks are reinstated and they are automatically promoted;
4. *Sonderdienst* is tactically subordinate to the Abwehr, from which it receives guidelines and tasks;
5. Communications with all official institutions should be kept strictly confidential;
6. It is necessary to keep up appearances that the organisation is civilian in nature;
7. Expenditure incurred on intelligence activities and soldiers' pay is financed by *Schwarzen Pond Reichswehrministerium*;
8. It is allowed to trade in the information of strategic importance for industry, but such information has to be thoroughly verified and analysed<sup>16</sup>.

D.U.D. can be described as a company dealing with the comprehensive acquisition of commercial information. Furthermore, relying on old connections and the promise of promotions in case of a war, D.U.D. conducted offensive political and military intelligence activities. Taking into account the privileges enjoyed by commercial agents in the period under study, the Second Department regarded D.U.D. and in particular its "military branch", Nuntia, as especially dangerous.

In the opinion of the Second Department, *Deutschtumsbund* (DTB) undoubtedly derived from the German intelligence service and the worldwide propaganda department, *Abteilung VII*. Its activity consisted in bringing together and supporting the German minority within the territory of the foreign states. It operated within the territory of Yugoslavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Alsace, for-

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.



mer colonies and overseas countries and Poland. After the Great War, within the territory of Poland, the Germans formed different organisations. Their goal was to gain political influences in the given countries and to work out some convenient solutions for the "lonely" German minority. Taking into consideration the decentralisation and scattering of the minorities the executives realised that some kind of fusion was needed and that it was necessary to unite the German minority in Poland. It was effected in 1921. In August, *Zentralverband der Deutschtumbunde* was founded in Warsaw as the uniting body. Under this name the Polish department of DTB conducted its activities in Poland<sup>17</sup>.

Apart from uniting the minorities and gaining political influences the objectives of DTB included providing the guidance for the social life of expatriate Germans, maintaining and fostering the German culture, gaining access to the Polish Sejm and Senate, striving for the incorporation of the lost territories into the German Reich, tracking the public mood in Poland, disseminating pro-German propaganda and carrying out acts of sabotage within the territory of Poland<sup>18</sup>.

According to the documents seized by the Polish counterintelligence service, the intelligence guidelines for DTB included the acquisition of any economic, political and military information.

In the opinion of the Second Department, DTB conducted intelligence activities, as the characteristic features of this organisation met the basic criteria for intelligence service operations. On the basis of the evidence of 1923, the Second Department ascertained that DTB was centralised, covered the relevant territory, employed qualified staff, was able to capture documents and information, had good internal communications and communications with the government, was financed by the government and carried out intelligence and counterintelligence operations.

The structure of DTB within the territory of Poland was strictly centralised. Its units were modelled on those of the parent organisation. The network covered the whole territory of Poland. The German consolidation was particularly noticeable in the territories taken from the German Reich pursuant to the Treaty of Versailles. The units of the organisation were very efficient in their operation. They supplied the headquarters with the information concerning not only the place where they were located, but also its entire region. According to the Second Department, in the period under study the Germans were able to investigate any spot of the Second Polish Republic of interest to them.

The staff of DTB were for the most part well prepared with regard to their task of acquiring information. These were mainly the active or former intelligence officers, like in the case of D.U.D<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Instytut Pamięci Narodowej / Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, sygn. IPN BU 23/29, Niemiecka służba wywiadowcza od czasu zawarcia Układu Wersalskiego /r. 1918/ do chwili obecnej, rozdział IX Związki niemieckie w Polsce (ZWNWP).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.



The main methods of acquiring the information by DTB included purchasing, stealing or taking photos of documents and surveillance, eavesdropping and questioning state and military officers. A highly dangerous phenomenon was the penetration of DTB employees into the structures of the Polish special interest associations. By making the acquaintance of the Polish members they would gain access to the information kept secret by the given association. These often included engineering, military or political associations. The information was most often supplied orally. Agents involved in this task were mostly ideologically committed. This method of acquiring the information was cheap and difficult to uncover and, therefore, very dangerous.

The organisation's internal communications was at a high level. The information was passed through two communications channels: by telegraph or via couriers. Furthermore, the Second Department noticed that DTB maintained communications with the Soviets, among others in Toruń. The organisation maintained communications with the government in a similar way, exchanging information and guidelines. In addition, to conduct communications with Berlin the diplomatic posts located within the territory of Poland were used. Couriers delivering direct correspondence between the government in the Reich and the headquarters of DTB in Poland would often use, for both communication and transport, the Free City of Danzig<sup>20</sup>.

The Second Department proved beyond all doubt that communications between DTB and the German diplomatic posts was maintained. It was uncovered that they shared the materials available to them and held conferences together at the management level of respective units.

Furthermore, over time, DTB obtained permission for direct communications with Berlin through a group of couriers. Bruns's (Knuth's) office was a courier organisation responsible for direct communications with the capital. The organisation was referred to by several names: *Unsere Vertretung*, *Berliner Büro*, *Büro Bruno* or *Büro Knuth*. The latter two names were derived from the manager's surname, Dr Carl Georg Bruns, and pseudonym, *Knuth*. The Reich government, to avoid compromising itself or DTB, appointed its representative for contacts with DTB, *Oberregierungsrat* Erich Kramer Moellenberg, using the pseudonym *Caro*. Thus, *Knuth* and *Caro* were responsible for direct communications between the Reich government and DTB in Poland. Such solution made it possible to ensure direct coordination and give instructions to the organisation conducting intelligence activities within the whole territory of Poland. Moreover, the German government gained direct insight into the developments in the Republic of Poland<sup>21</sup>.

In the period under study, the acts of sabotage carried out by DTB within the territory of Poland consisted mainly in decreasing the market value of assets and real property lost by Germany for the benefit of Poland. Furthermore, acts of sabotage were prepared, to be put into action only in case of war. DTB placed its officers in the army and in various administrative agencies and offices. It thus provided a realistic opportunity

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.



to intercept mobilisation plans or the data on fortifications, key bridges, war industry or railway. The prepared acts of sabotage concerned the above and were intended to weaken the defence of the attacked state, in this case – Poland <sup>22</sup>.

The Second Department described DTB as dangerous for several reasons. First, this organisation was an undercover unit of the Reich's offensive intelligence service. What is more, it maintained direct communications with the government. Secondly, it had a well-organised structure covering the whole territory of the contemporary Republic of Poland. DTB employed former officers of the pre-war German intelligence services. Therefore, its staff were knowledgeable about intelligence activities. The organisation had all the characteristics of intelligence service. It was capable of stealing, acquiring, eavesdropping and surveilling anything and anybody of interest to it.

In the course of its operations the Second Department uncovered 13 other organisations conducting intelligence activities within the territory of Poland. They included:

- *Bund der Deutschen Polens*: a nationalist association of the German minority in Łódź, directed by Edward von Behrens. The official tasks of this organisation comprised maintaining and fostering the German culture in this region. The Second Department acquired the evidence that it conducted intelligence activities for Germany, making use of a sizeable network of contacts;
- Bank of German Companies in Poland: it was engaged in financial espionage for Germany. It employed mostly the citizens of the Reich;
- *Deutsche Radfahrer Verein*: a German association of cyclists;
- *Frauenverein*: an organisation for women, subordinate to DTB;
- *Hauptbanernverein* and *Landbund*: German agricultural organisations operating within the territory of Poland, specifically Greater Poland;
- *Lehrerverain*: an association of German teachers;
- *Gesang-verein*: an association of singers;
- *Ruderclub*: a rowing club;
- *Schulverein*: a union of German teachers in the lost territories. Its headquarters in Poland were located in Bydgoszcz. Over time, the form of the organisation changed into a foundation, awarding scholarships to outstanding students;
- *Turnverein*: an organisation operating throughout Poland. Its headquarters were located in Bydgoszcz. The organisation was used by German officers to provide military training;
- *Vereinigte Geselligkeit*: a social club;

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.



- *Wohlfartsbund*: an association established in Bydgoszcz in 1920. Its tasks included taking care of orphans and disabled war veterans, providing assistance for the unemployed, etc. The association was supposed to gather all German charity organisations operating in Poland. It probably was a branch of the German ministry, *Ministerium für Volkswohlfahrt*, responsible for helping people affected by the war <sup>23</sup>.

All the above-mentioned associations and organisations cooperated with DTB. Furthermore, they were given specific instructions regarding the acquisition of information. Additionally, each organisation was conducting intelligence activities in its region and in its field. Thus, the Abwehr could rely on the correctness and accuracy of provided materials. It should also be taken into account that the majority of such organisations did not conduct the activity of typical intelligence service. They were founded to facilitate the living conditions of the Germans who stayed in the territory of the restored Polish Republic. They performed the intelligence tasks “alongside” their core activities.

*Ostdeutscher Heimatsdienst* (ODHD) was an organisation operating in East Prussia at the same time. Its objective was to retain the German influences in the lost territories and disseminate pro-German propaganda. It was founded in Berlin, immediately after the Treaty of Versailles came into effect. Its headquarters were located in Berlin and its most important branch, in Königsberg <sup>24</sup>.

The Second Department suspected that, in the period under study, there was a branch of ODHD in the territory of Alsace and Lorraine, and Saarland. The organisation was managed by Baron Scheifner-Richter. The office of the organisation was headed by the Baron’s mistress. ODHD had its branches in the Free City of Danzig, managed by Dr Richard Wagner. There were also branches in Chojnice, Elbing, Marienburg and Allenstein.

*Heimatdienst* conducted covert intelligence activities. It unified the cooperation between all German parties, except for communists and independent socialists. It was very difficult to counteract their operations, because the majority of party members working there were ideologically and patriotically committed <sup>25</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The description of intelligence activities conducted by private companies (which organised their own intelligence units) and private intelligence bureaux shows that the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles significantly restrained the operations of the German

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego (Głównego) Wojska Polskiego, sygn. I 300.76.446, *Ostdeutscherheimetsdienst*, (ODHD).

<sup>25</sup> Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego (Głównego) Wojska Polskiego, sygn. I 300.76.145, Organizacja niemieckiej służby wywiadowczej defensywnej (NSD).



intelligence services. The Germans could not accept such situation and tried to circumvent these limitations. The cooperation of different intelligence units and the employment of former officers of the pre-war intelligence service represented a considerable threat, among others, to Poland. Furthermore, the Germans efficiently organised their minority in the territory of the Republic of Poland, entrusting it with intelligence tasks. They did not hesitate to make use of additional privileges, granted to some people for purposes other than conducting intelligence activities. Taking into account the significant decentralisation of the German information and intelligence services, occurring in the years 1919-1923, it should be stated that the Second Department of the Polish General Staff managed to collect a lot of information, effectively uncovering and describing the threats posed by the Germans. The Abwehr centralised the intelligence services in 1923, after which the activities of German special forces were structured and orderly and produced measurable results. Their effectiveness increased significantly. Another event which boosted the Germans' efforts took place in 1927. The works of the Committee supervising the implementation of the regulations of the Treaty of Versailles, headed by General Nollet, were finished. Since then, Germany ceased to be under international supervision and its special forces were thus given a wider area for their operations.

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