

FORMATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE POLISH INTELLIGENCE STRUCTURES IN THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC

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Abstract. The article's main subject matter is a historical presentation of formation process and evolution of the intelligence and counterintelligence agencies of the Second Republic of Poland, between the 1918 a 1939. The authors attempt to characterize, based on historical and contemporary sources and evaluated data, the structure, organization and general activities of the Polish intelligence and counterintelligence agency, in that period ending at the outset of WWII. In an effort to analyze specific intelligence agencies – the role they played in the state security system of the Second Republic of Poland, we can observe an evolvement of the intelligence sector of Poland being initiated by the patriots working previously for the independence movement's organizations, also those, who were prior to Poland's regaining independence the officers of foreign armies and security forces. And later were able to use acquired knowledge for the new organizational structures. However, relying especially on the Poland's tradition of intelligence services prior to the loss of independence.

Keywords: The Second Polish Republic, Polish intelligence, Polish counterintelligence, security forces, structure of the intelligence and counterintelligence institutions.

Introduction

It is a well known fact that structuring of the intelligence, counterintelligence and special forces institutions is rather a delicate process based on practice, since these are the public domains that have an implicit right of operating and surveying domestically and abroad, protecting state security, and walking a tightrope of legality and use of force. Since their main goal is the acquisition and safeguarding of information critical to existence of a country or protection of internal and external security of the state, its activity must be very thoroughly forethought. Obviously their main focus and goals of the outmost importance is protection and securing of all the aspects of state businesses. Hence, they must apply a fairly unconventional methods, which quite often may arouse controversy, however, this of course implies necessity and the state's survival. Even the questionable activities and possible uses of forbidden methods or activities considered as unbecoming of the democratic state, such as torture, blackmail or bribery may become a necessity for attainment of above goals. All these activities are carried out under law, in order to ensure the

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protection of state's interests and of its nationals. This sometimes may excuse even a radical and violent practice.

The truth is, that the use of specific and varied intelligence arrangements to operate on the domestic and international scene in order to control the highly developed and correlated network of special services requires very motivated personnel and good management system. Most of all, all of these have to be experienced, practiced and tested in prolonged period of time to check for its effectiveness or low downs. When it comes to Poland of the interwar period – 1918-1939, the time was not its ally, yet it managed to build “from the scratch” the intelligence system's institutions that were able to protect its citizens and state institutions for two decades, in a very harsh environment of international relations, at that thime in Europe.

When we analyze from historical perspective the role of intelligence, counterintelligence and other security services in Poland of that period, we come to understanding that its actual activity may very well be unknown for the average student or researcher on politics of the first half of the 20th century. This leaves out the necessary knowledge on politics and functioning of the Polish state at that time, especially in respect to the politics, security studies, and other fields where the historical evolution and context of activities of very specific institutions simply implies the survival of the State. Hence, this article overviews the development of Polish intelligence services in its original historical settings, of outmost importance for state's existence in the period of 1918-1939, when Poland regained its independence and created intelligence community of professionals with the highest credentials.

The aim of the research is a presentation of main areas of development of Poland's intelligence and counterintelligence, beginning in 1918 and ending in 1939, exemplifying the role it played in national security system, as well as its organizational and structural development soon after the country regained its independence in 1918. This is both a specific and difficult topic, since in addition to the basic information one can primarily find in declassified archives, it's hard to learn about the operational knowledge on functioning and activities of the institutions and its departments dealing with covert intelligence and counter intelligence. Secrecy was the basis for their operations, where without it its actions would become completely useless and flawed. At the same time we must understand that Poland's security institutions very properly formed and commanded, in a correlation to the entire security system of a country, a force that allowed for early detection and nullification of the threats so pervasive in the interwar period. And this force was created after the 123 years of Poland's captivity.

We therefore overview condition of the intelligence services of the Second Polish Republic from its development in 1918 to its final activities, prior to 1939. There is an attempt to characterize the structure, organization and activities of the intelligence, counterintelligence community, in order to present the hypothesis

that that the Polish intelligence services played a very significant role in national security system of Poland, due to a wide range of activities and methods employed, flexibility in performing the tasks, and adjustments to different transformation changes during the times of transition or upheavals. As always, doing a research on this issue is a delicate task, since each state has particular institutions responsible for intelligence activities; and access to detailed information on them is very limited and closely guarded. And this is a case of Poland, with the exceptions to some limited extent of the historical general data. In any case, one can possibly notice, based on the research information available, some possible differences and similarities in functioning of the intelligence professional institutions, in the face of variations in political systems or the changes in the international relations.

It seems that it is because of those, that the intelligence institutions grow and established its specific activities and norms – such was the case with the Polish intelligence community. At least this picture evolves when we analyze its activities going through the available archives and literature. It should be noted however, that this picture is somewhat limiting, since description of the organizational aspects, as in this case, must rest on documented legal structures and documented activities. And for the understood reasons, the documentation on the activities is hard to come by since both the clandestine and the authenticated operations are seldom well described. However, we can notice still that the priorities of those intelligence institutions were often different in respect to particular time frame and problems for the national security. Therefore, one trait can be distinguished in this case: flexibility, that is necessary for constant readjustments and changes, and fluidity of steady norms that make those institutions of state's security essential for protection of the country. At the same time full knowledge of whether specific activities were run smoothly, or whether they were repressive etc., is to some degree speculative.

Nonetheless, one can easily determine that its role in safeguarding Poland's borders and security of the II Polish Republic was very significant. Looking at chronology of the historical events leading to II WW and during, one can also state that its activities were very important for the Allies. Many concrete events and successes predeceasing Allied victories, like the first deciphering of the "Enigma" code by the Polish cryptologists, and many others of the stormy events of those times were organized by the Polish intelligence and security forces.

The history of the Polish intelligence and counter-intelligence is inextricably connected with the Department II of the Intelligence of the Polish Army General Headquarter, also known as "the Second Dpt.". This was the main intelligence and counterintelligence entity of the II Polish Republic together with the Bureau of Ciphering (cryptology and radio intelligence), the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Information Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Political Defense Inspectorate of the National Police Headquarters.

The evolution of the military information services in the years of 1918-1921

The shaping process of the Poland's military information services in the years 1918-1921 was complicated. The new Polish State, reappearing on the world map after 123 years of captivity, from the start was facing many problems. The economic crisis, the social and political ferment, poor infrastructure, as well as the internal political differences were only few of the numerous obstacles on the road to a stable and secure statehood. The key problem was instability of the European boundaries at that time, and building of the internal and external state security system able to defend the stability of the nation's newly established State.

It was decided that these fundamental objectives were to be implemented through the appropriate political, diplomatic and military measures. A significant impact on successes of the Polish military forces had extensive experience in the armed combat of its soldiers. Polish soldiers in foreign uniforms had been fighting at different European fronts, for different opposing forces of WW I. And after re-acquiring its statehood again they had to fight to protect its newly established borders. The natural effect of military operations was the unison with the state institutions that were run in a similar military fashion. Many branches of the public life in various forms have been militarized, and in addition the military institutions were modernized to the level corresponding to conditions of war. This lasted almost to the end of 1921. Only after this period, the running of state and military affairs was passed to the state, with its non-military organization and operational focus. The military hegemony had to give way to the rules and standards of the normal public life and the political functioning².

In the years of 1918-1921, the forms and methods of intelligence and counterintelligence activities were of course in many aspects different from those common in the time of peace. It should be noted also, that the unstable political and military situation of Poland led to the formation of numerous security and intelligence institutions.³

One of the first major institutions dealing with state security at that time was the Ministry of the Military Affairs run by col. Jan Wroczyński. It replaced the previous "Military Commission". The Regency Council kept the Supreme Command of the Military Forces but it created at the same time the central institutions of the military – The Chief of General Staff commanding the General Staff of the Polish Army. At the beginning it was supposed to answer to the Minister of Military Affairs but it became an independent institution. The first Chief of General Staff was Lieutenant General Tadeusz Jordan-Rozwadowski.⁴ However, new changes were made after the

² A. Misiuk, *Służby Specjalne II Rzeczypospolitej*, Bellona, Warszawa 1998, p. 15.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem.

arrival of the future Polish Marshall – Józef Piłsudski. Some were very important and had a significant impact on the organizational scheme of the military institutions.⁵

During the struggle for Poland's independence, different Polish clandestine organizations created covert networks that gave rise to creation of military intelligence of the II Polish Republic. This was the first source of experience that the future Polish officers of military intelligence were receiving. Of course, the Marshall Piłsudski and his close associates still had a dilemma of selecting and enlisting the appropriate personnel for the Polish intelligence units. The key question of that time was whether the loyalty towards a newly re-established Polish state and trust could be built among the candidates that previously were often working for the foreign occupiers, who were eliminating any independence movements in the past.⁶ It was decided at the end that only the lower level officers from the previous occupying armies with the Polish soldiers, would be accepted for the job⁷.

On the November 11th, 1918, the Regency Council entrusted Józef Piłsudski with the Supreme Command of the Military Forces. This was confirmed with the decision of the Council of Ministers on 20 November 1918, exercising control over the military, according to the law. A difficult military situation was the cause of the separation of different duties in running of the armed forces. The General Staff was assigned control of the military war duties, and the Ministry of Military Affairs was to deal with the administration of the army. The Chief of General Staff and the Minister of Military affairs were subordinate to the Commander in Chief of the Polish Military Forces. At the end of March 1919 there was a next reorganization of military institutional structure as a result of which the competences regarding military affairs was split between the Chief of the Polish Military Forces and the Ministry of Military Affairs. The Chief of Polish Military Forces and the General Staff controlled the army at the time of war, and the Ministry of the Military Affairs played a supportive role in organizing, mobilizing, training, supplying and logistics. In both of these institutions the intelligence and counterintelligence sections were created. Its dual character was intentional and was a result of different competency and activities of those institutions.⁸

Within the structure of the General Staff there was already the Information Department, created before the 25th of October 1918. The main duties of this intelligence unit were to control the information and data on:

- Foreign armies and military literature of the enemy,
- Offensive and defensive intelligence,

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ It seems that Poland had a similar dilemma after the regained sovereignty in 1989.

⁷ ABW, *Służby Specjalne II RP (1918-1939)*. *Blaski i cienie*, Emów 2013, p. 3.

⁸ A. Misiuk, op. cit., p. 16.

- Polish Units abroad,
- Informational bulletins of the foreign countries (especially the superpowers),
- Military and political information of the neighbor countries,
- Ciphery and instructing of the military attaches.⁹

In addition, outside of above structures there was created separately the Press Bureau responsible for the research and data storage. Later the Information Department was reorganized and renamed into the Second Department of the Polish General Staff. Its structure was organized into sections responsible for specific tasks (with commanders):

- Section IIa – Intelligence in the West (Capt. W. Anders),
- Section IIb – Intelligence in the East (Capt. A. Myszkowski),
- Section IIc – counterintelligence (Lt. Z. Witecki),
- Section IId – political and military information on neighbors (2d. Lt. Michalski)¹⁰.

The reorganizations were not uncommon and later the Second Department was run by a chief and deputy chief, with the following structures:

- Section of special activities, organization and ciphery,
- Eastern Section,
- Western Section, and of the Military Attaches,
- Political Section,
- Military-Policing Section,
- Adjutant Section,
- Intelligence Unit,
- Press Office,
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Liaison Office,
- Military Police Liaison Office.¹¹

Consolidation of the position of the Commander in Chief of the Polish Military Forces resulted in the increasing powers of intelligence units, and grew outside of the military activities. The organizational changes were often made, consisting usually of structural arrangements and personnel adaptation. The defensive area of focus was split into the war-zone issues – controlled by the General Staff, and the domestic issues – controlled by the Ministry of Military Affairs. As the general rules and because of the intelligence work methods it consisted, among the others, of following:

- a) Operational work based on the ideological sympathisers and paid confidents.
- b) War captives and deserters used as information sources.
- c) Radiotelegrafical intelligence.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 17.

- d) Air units intelligence.
- e) Listening devices intelligence.¹²

One can notice that in a short period of time Poland managed to create the organizational structure of effective military intelligence, which was up to date with the European norms and standards. Essential intelligence activities created at the beginning, were the collection of information and its analysis and development. As part of the reorganization of the Second Department by the General Staff, there were created new cells – the Evidence Bureau and the Intelligence Bureau. The Evidence Bureau took under its wing the East and West military-diplomatic sections.¹³

During the continued reorganization of the military intelligence and counterintelligence authorities, the specific intelligence and counterintelligence duties were taken over by the created on January 7th, 1921 the War Council (specifically by its internal organ controlled by the Commander in Chief – the General Staff War Council), the General Staff and the Ministry of Military Affairs. The Department II was put under a command of the the General Staff. In general, both offensive and defensive intelligence services were put under one authority, and became the Department II of the General Staff of the Polish Army.¹⁴

Between 1918-1921 during the development of the socio-political structure and the administrative border formation of the II Polish Republic, the activities of this still small intelligence community, was very effective in controlling many radical anti-Polish organizations and Poland's hostile neighbors activities. In these times the police suppression institutions were also necessary. And the intelligence institutions became natural coordinators for their activities. The aim of such cooperation between state security cells led to necessary specializations of central surveillance centers. At the beginning the plan was to set up three such centrals by the General Staff of the Polish Army, the Ministry of Military Affairs and the National Police Headquarters.¹⁵

In the above period of 1920-1921, the counterintelligence and political undertakings were controlled by the Department II of the Ministry of Military Affairs. Many of the repressive undertakings and executing actions were put under particular dispositions of the military gendarmerie units.¹⁶ The main tasks of intelligence units controlled by the General Staff of the Polish Army centered on combating and preventing espionage and sabotage at the frontal battlefield areas, and in its back – with the help of police. The same area was covered by the Central Surveillance of the Ministry to Military Affairs. Its activities were supported with the national gendarmerie (with

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 18.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 23.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 25.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 26.

the exception of the frontal battlefield areas). There was also a defensive police whose role was to suppress the anti-state activities, as well as other crimes.¹⁷

The development of institutional schemes and organizational units were not developed without a deliberation as a straight forward agreement. On October 25, 1919 the decision was taken to create a military surveillance bureau within the Department II of the Military Gendarmerie Headquarters of the Ministry of Military Affairs. At that time of development this unit had 31 posts, with the following main tasks:

- a) Coordination of the military surveillance services,
- b) Analysis of investigative and sensitive surveillance materials,
- c) Preparation of the press releases on the military affairs (editing *The Investigation Gazette* (*Gazeta Śledcza*), in Polish).¹⁸

The numerous discussions related to matters of operational activities, rules of military repression, counterintelligence practices, as well as on the organization of the mutual relations were coordinated with the civilian security authorities, but not without some frictions.¹⁹ For example, in May of 1920 the chief of the Department II of the GSPA, major K. Bołdeskuł gave his negative opinion on establishing of two military surveillance centers. According to him the pragmatics and organizational functionality of this type of activities required installing a one central surveillance institution for Poland.²⁰

At the end, the activities of defensive and political nature were controlled by the National Police. The authority and control on the military counter-intelligence duties, with own gendarmerie units', and responsibility for security of the Polish armed forces against hostile foreign intelligence activities, as well as against subversive propaganda, were given to the military.²¹

Department II of the General Staff/Headquarters of the Polish Army

The end of the Polish-Russian War of 1920 and overcoming of the other conflicts was a chance to reorganize the military institutions in a way allowing proper functioning within a peaceful environment. On June 22nd 1921, the Ministry of Military Affairs published the new regulations on "the new organization of intelligence duties". The main aspect of intelligence undertakings focused on protection of military secrets, and most of the activities run by the Department II were centered around it.²²

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 17.

¹⁸ A. Misiuk, op. cit, p. 26.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ B. Woszczyński, *Ministerstwo Spraw Wojskowych 1918-1921. Zarys organizacji i działalności*, Warszawa 1972, s. 56-80.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 26.

²² H. Ćwięk, *Zwalczanie niemieckich służb specjalnych na ziemiach zachodnich i północnych Rzeczypospolitej*, UOP, Warszawa 1998, p. 159.

It is worth of noting of two key concepts announced in this document. The intelligence controlled by the military was to be decentralized. At the same time, its political counterintelligence, understood as problem of political defense, was given under control of the internal affairs institution, the National Police – and its specialized in counterintelligence units. There were also other state security institutions that also had its own intelligence units protecting the Poland's new boundaries. Those were the Border Protection Corps, established in 1924, and the Border Guards, established in 1928. Both of them had its own intelligence units, however, acting as an aid and assistance to Department II. That's the reason why the Department II was considered in the contemporary opinions and historical works as the main state security institution dealing with the intelligence and counterintelligence issues as the main surveillance and information gathering institution of the state and the Polish Army.²³

The central structure of this military intelligence (including its field agencies) had been reorganized on number of occasion ((in 1923, 1927, 1929, 1930), what was dependent on a perspective of within the General Headquarters of the Polish Army. Hence the competency areas of the Department II in the interwar period included various tasks but mainly:

- Organization and training of the information gathering, command and control;
- Military training for the intelligence;
- Centralization of data and intelligence, the development and implementation of information for the authorized personnel;
- Research on methods, means of activity, equipment and techniques of intelligence service improvement;
- Preparation of plans for the effective operation of intelligence service during the transition from peace time to the time of war;
- Targeting actions in securing the intelligence activity in other countries.²⁴

The tasks have included work on the three levels:

- Gathering intelligence and counterintelligence data;
- Studies and analyzing researches on the data;
- Training and management of the intelligence apparatus.

Those tasks and its organization would change however during the war.²⁵

The reorganization of June 1921 was considered a temporary restructuring of the Department II. Nonetheless, its internal structure was divided into divisions, which were in turn divided into section offices. At the head of Department II was a chief director with one deputy. At that time there were established the following divisions:

²³ Ibidem, p. 27.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 28.

²⁵ Ibidem.

- I Organizational – sections of organization, training, personnel, finance, ciphering, correspondence, and foreign press.
- II Data – four sections organized geographically (East, West, North, South), plus two others, of statistics, and of ethnicity.
- III Intelligence – sections of intelligence techniques, agency services, counterintelligence and foreign ciphering, radio intelligence and operational technics.

The divisions II and III were active in traditional intelligence and counterintelligence works. The organizational activity was aided by positions of adjutancy. The main objective was to properly conduct the organizational and main activities of the entire Department II. Its Operational division was responsible for proper organization and functions of its military intelligence units in the areas of:

- Development or liquidation domestically or abroad of the intelligence surveillance cells.
- Controlling of the cell units personnel.
- Funding operations and budget running for the Department II through its organizational division.

Some other sections were responsible for the ciphers and ciphering protection, or open sources intelligence.²⁶

In 1921 at the Headquarters there were 64 officers, one warrant officer, 12 non-commissioned officers, 20 office staff positions. Considering that at that time the net of internal and external surveillance units was not yet developed, the most means of actions and operational personnel were concentrated at the headquarters.²⁷

Its soldiers managed to recruit agents throughout the country and abroad. They performed schooling and training duties for new agents, plus deep level and low level surveillance and intelligence. This was a huge task, but performed with limited cadre and tools. It is exemplified by a document on agents recruitment, from march 2nd. 1922 specifying the agenda and means of execution:

- Finding means of intelligence penetration of countries like Germany and Russia, and then other countries, should be done economically.
- The recruitment should include enough agents to run proper activities and be able replace in a given moment field workers.
- The agents' training should be constant.
- The intelligence system should run on unitary evidence and surveillance implementation.²⁸

After the end of the IWW the widening of the international political, economic and cultural cooperation, led to bilateral and international connections for different

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 29.

Polish commercial companies, as well as the scientific and cultural institutes. This was one of the means for intelligence expansion in Department II planning, that in this case was relying on professional in particular business and other fields. It was also a rule, that the agents of the Department II were used as the translators or foreign delegations guides²⁹. Also, the new contacts and cooperation with the foreign intelligence agencies of the allied countries very quickly influenced the radical growth of the Poland's intelligence capacity.

The level of analytical studies and research was dependent on the state concerns and interests and countries' involved. To improve and increase the effectiveness of intelligence analyses, the countries were grouped in the four main categories:

- a) countries bordering Poland, either considered friendly or a foe,
- b) countries having borders with Poland's neighbor – that in a case of conflict can act positively or negatively,
- c) non-bordering directly or indirectly countries, that may cause or influence the international events,
- d) countries of no direct interest.³⁰

The May coup of 1926 had a very crucial impact on human resources and staffing within the military intelligence. The Marshal Józef Piłsudski gave much attention to external and internal security of Poland, and this is the reason why he constantly showed interest in the activities of the Department II and its agendas. This is one of the reasons why the highly acknowledged understanding, that position in the government required a proper training in many fields, and intelligence was the most professional experienced a candidate for State posts could have, was common after the May coup.³¹

However, the work of intelligence professionals was considered of the outmost importance. Both, the government and the military required the knowledge, data and updates of changing European political environment of those times, and requests for analysis of potential adversarial possibilities of Poland's two totalitarian neighbours, were constant and in reference to military and economic danger posed by them to Poland. This is the reason why two independent sections were created in 1930ies. One was named "Germany", and the other "Russia".

The "Section Germany" was aimed at following objects and objectives:

- German army (mobilization issues, internal relations, organization in peacetime, organization in war, training, diplomacy, weapons and heavy weapons).
- The general and war industry, raw materials.
- The state budget, communication, aviation, fortifications

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 32.

³¹ Ibidem.

- The Police, security units, intelligence units, work units.
- The political system, domestic affairs, international politics (especially the relations with the Soviet Russia).
- The merchant and military navy.³²

The „Section Russia” had similar interests and divided its personnel in two groups. One group was responsible for data and evidence input, and the other, for research and analysis.³³

The Department II activities in its eastern flank, were concentrated towards the organizing the offensive surveillance in neighboring countries. Poland was in strategic conflict in the East, and that included border animosities. The East was considered to be a source of the gravest dangers. That is why the proper intelligence sections were put Moscow, Leningrad, Charkov, Kiev, Tbilisi. Its activities were done with support of the Border Protection Corps, overt intelligence.³⁴ One of the most important officers directing the intelligence work in the East, was Cpt. Jerzy Antoni Niezbrzycki, who became the director of the eastern section in December of 1930, and in reality he run the intelligence work in Russia.³⁵ As an analyst he prepared a numerous opinions and documents on the system of Russian politics, and knew its real face. Among the other activities, he was also documenting the Russia's atrocities in the Ukraine at the time of Russian imposed starvation of its millions of citizens³⁶. And he was also an organizer of the so called, the “promethean action”, educational programs for the eastern countries³⁷. His career is the best example of professional involvement and advancement in the intelligence units. He became a member of Department II in 1920. At the beginning he was holding a position of adjunct for Besarabia – Kiszyniów, as well as a intelligence resident in Romania. And also in Constantinople. After that he gained another type of experience as the agent saboteur in Russian part of Ukraine, and also as the intelligence director of surveillance posts in Kiszyniew and Odessa. For his service during the Polish-Soviet he was awarded one of the highest military medals, Polish Cross of Valor.³⁸

We should also not forget about one of the most important officers of the Department II, famous Marian Rejewski working in ciphering and deciphering section, who with the help of Henryk Zygalski and Jerzy Różycki broke the Enigma ciphering

³² Ibidem, p. 36.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C5%82u%C5%BCby_specjalne (data 17.03.2016).

³⁵ CAW – *Rocznik Archiwalno-Histeryczny*, http://caw.wp.mil.pl/plik/file/biuletyn/r2/r2_12.pdf, s. 304. (17.03.2016).

³⁶ A. Pełtoński, *Wywiad polski na ZSRR 1921-1939*, Bellona, Warszawa 1996, p. 105-107.

³⁷ *Promethean Action* – activities of suport and education for national and independence movements within the Soviet Russia.

³⁸ R. Szawłowski, *Między ZSRR a III Rzeszą. Polski wywiad we wrześniu 1939 r.*, „Arcana” nr 32 (2/2000), p. 128.

code, in 1932. This code was used by the Germans in its military intelligence, later changed but thanks to members of the Polish intelligence, broken again in WWII. This one of the biggest successes of military intelligence was helped by the innovative methods that was used in Poland. The mathematical cryptology, in times when the methods of linguistics dominated and were the only used by other countries, was simply revolutionary.³⁹

At the end, in 1939 when the German and Russian armies overwhelmed Poland, its intelligence was not much bigger than a decade earlier. Yet surely, it consisted of the very qualified man. We can estimate that at that time its central headquarters had about 100 officers employed.⁴⁰

The Intelligence services of the border guards units

With respect to the border guards formations, namely the *Border Guards* and *Border Protection Corps*, the first had in its division the Information Services of the Border Guards, and the second, the Intelligence Units of the Border Protection Corps. The Second Polish Republic had main borders with the Germany from the west and Russia from the east. For a country that has regained its independence from those two foes that broke it apart, this was a dangerous and not an easy place to work for the intelligence of any units. But the work of border units was tough, since the real danger of antagonism. In time when the international political system was still evolving in the 1920s' and the economical exchange was still evolving as well, the borders were a place to protect. Especially since the smuggling was a drainage for the economy and large money loss for the tax system. The western and southern Polish borders were especially dangerous because of the international smuggling mafias. The money lost meant that the Polish government had to pay a special attention, and established civilian and military institutions responsible for the protection. In the first decade between the 1918 and 1929 those would be:

- the Military Border Guards,
- the Border Riflemen,
- the Guarding and Custom Battalions,
- the Custom Guard⁴¹.

We have to remember, however, that at those times the border protection system was not stable enough, and wasn't effective in the southern and western borders.⁴²

At the end of 1927 the work was begun on restructuring the units at the southern and western borders. And at the 22 or March, 1928 by statutory law the Custom

³⁹ M. Grajek, *Enigma. Bliżej prawdy*, Poznań 2010, p. 675.

⁴⁰ A. Misiuk, *Śłużby specjalne II Rzeczypospolitej*, op. cit., p. 36.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 16.

⁴² Ibidem.

Guard was replaced by the Border Guards. The new formation took over the entire organizational structure of the previous one. However, it became a subordinate as the executive body of the fiscal authority within the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, and part of the general administration. Its chief officer, and then “commandant” was appointed by the President of Poland, at the request of the Minister of Treasury in an agreement with the Minister of the Military Affairs. It was run from the Headquarters, the five district inspectorates (the Mazovian, Pomeranian, Greater Poland, Silesian, and Lesser Poland), answering directly to the Commandant of the Border Guards. The five district inspectorates were controlling the work of the more numerous border inspectorates, that run border stations and outposts of the first and second line.⁴³

It was this organizational scheme that allowed for incorporation of the intelligence work within its division of operations. This was not fully possible in the past scheme.⁴⁴

According to the statutory regulation of the President of Poland from the 22nd of March 1929, the Border Guards had following functions:

- Preventing illegal personal movements;
- Tracing and disclosure of cigarette smuggling and other offenses that rest on the immigration regulations of the customs and treasury;
- Sentry and security work, convoy duties and duties in custom offices, regulated by the Ministry of Treasury;
- Protection of the integrity of the border devices;
- Cooperation with the competent authorities in implementing regulations, which were aimed at public security, and prevention of threats against the general and particular interest of the State;
- Cooperation with the military units in defense and security of the State.⁴⁵

The statutory functions catalog presented above came down mainly to border security and smuggling defense. To be able to achieve the above tasks, it was necessary to use the measures and methodology of intelligence work. It was clear that it was not the methods used by the military services, or a police and the counter-espionage intelligence. In practice this meant the service based on an interviews, direct observation, using the agents and informers, and open source intelligence. The Department II was using quite often the information gathered by the Border Guards and its help. It was understood that usefulness of this sort of cooperation, especially in reference to the border areas, and its importance is obvious, since those were based on the comparative data.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 134.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

The structure of the intelligence services of the Border Guard has been adapted to the activities in the border area and interior alike. Its success were also observed by the German intelligence, active in the autonomous, so called “the free city of Danzig”. However, there were also incidents of German intelligence penetration of this Polish institution in the border areas, observing its potential and looking for possible agents in Gdańsk facility of border guards.⁴⁷ Especially during the time of restructuring, the German intelligence were extremely active. Very often it would be using misleading informations trying to awake uncertainty or fear of losing jobs. This was done usually in discussions with the Polish custom officials, but not only.⁴⁸

During the interwar period, a very big threat to Poland’s security came from the internal ethnic minorities, mostly Germans, Soviets and Lithuanians. Those countries were extremally active in efforts to penetrate Poland and its institutions. For example, the German minority – close to one million in numbers, was spread throughout the country. It was very well organized and had a best consolidation of its members, in comparison to others. For that reasons the Germans were able to create and spread false information and news.⁴⁹

The threat to national security by the eastern border of Poland was due in large part to Russian saboteurs and intelligence activities. Russians were constantly using the ethnic minorities to bring about disruption in that region, and it was not an easy task to cope with because of many agents the Russians had in eastern parts of Poland. After the Polish-Russian War of 1919-1921, the government of Poland has made and activated plans for protection against Russian sabotage and deception acts, but those turned out not quite effective. While the Russian intelligence was perfecting the infiltration and methods of intrusion. The ethnic minorities and backward social condition of the region were a part of the reason why government and people responsible for security were afraid of potential disorder infused by Russians. As some author’s point out it wouldn’t be a big exaggeration pointing out that the activities of Polish security institutions was taking place in conditions similar to civil war.⁵⁰

In August of 1924, finally a plan was developed against the sabotage and deception activities of the Russian intelligence and its agents. There were the three counterinsurgent bureaus created (in Vilnius, Brest and Lvov). Its major role was a counterespionage and counterinsurgency, and they became a part of the Department II.⁵¹

It is understood that they were involved in different intelligence work, but the new units were supposed to concentrate especially on the following activities:

⁴⁷ A. Misiuk, *Służby specjalne II Rzeczypospolitej*, op. cit., p. 141.

⁴⁸ A. Peptoński, *Kontrwywiad II RP*, Bellona, Warszawa 2002, p. 112.

⁴⁹ P. Stawecki, *Polityka wojskowa Polski 1921-1926*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 31-32.

⁵⁰ A. Misiuk, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 143.

- 1) Internal surveillance and monitoring of the saboteurs and leaders controlled by Russians.
- 2) Offensive intelligence – enemy terrain activities, reconnaissance and pin-pointing enemy operational centers.
- 3) Deep offensive intelligence – controlling the deception activities or taking control of the operational centers aimed against Poland.⁵²

On September 12th 1924 the Ministry of Military Affairs created the Border Protection Corps (KOP – Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza). This was an institution that was combining the activities of police and the military, responsible for counter-deception and sabotage prevention, especially at the eastern Polish borders. In peace time it would be answering to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and in time of war to the Ministry of Military Affairs.⁵³

The purpose of establishing the “KOP” was the final suppression of deception and sabotage problems, run by Soviet intelligence. In practice, the functions and role of the “KOP” was significantly bigger. This included primarily the border protection and protection of border areas, public safety protection, customs, taxes and regional centers of finance protection, also military cooperation and activities. In general its activities were various, most important were the following:

- a) Border signposts and devices protection;
- b) Prevention of illegal goods flow through the borders;
- c) Prevention of illegal border crossings;
- d) Prevention of smuggling, tax evasions and crimes, prevention of misdemeanors;
- e) Cooperation with the official institutions also working in the same area;
- f) Cooperation with the military on state security.⁵⁴

In its planning, the „KOP” was supposed to be a key state security service in the border areas, but also in the interior. That’s the reason why its jurisdiction was a subordinate of the public administration organs. At the same time, when the “KOP” was created it also received the duties of counter-sabotage from the civilian and military units, since on November 1st 1924, the counter-sabotage cells of the Department II and some of its intelligence nets, were given under the control of the “KOP”.⁵⁵

The Border Protection Corps however was not in a position to handle any tasks on intelligence and defensive level. At the beginning its operations were repressive and pacifying. It means that they were fully focused on elimination of guerrillas and

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 144.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

saboteurs, usually coming from the local minorities. With time only the system of intelligence was developed allowing it to participate in more detailed activities.⁵⁶

Conclusions

Before the WWII the international environment was very unstable. The intelligence and counterintelligence services of the Second Polish Republic was an essential element of state security. Its tasks were at the same time very difficult and very delicate. Its officers and personnel quiet often had to work on the edge of the law and be always vigilant and prepared for any dangers. However, they were always an integral part of Poland's security. In many respects it must be true also today.

The issues of intelligence and counterintelligence are always particular and specific for every country, and its structures therefore differ. Access to information, even the historical ones is not easy, since every country and institutions responsible for intelligence activities does not allow for detailed information on their work and closely guards their means of successes, covering their mistakes. Poland's secret services played an effective role in the system of internal and external security because of the wide range of activities, and flexibility in the implementation of the tasks, as well as the proper adjustments at the times of transformations.

It is worth noting that no state at that time and today would feel one hundred percent safe without the intelligence and counterintelligence institution. The intelligence services in dangerous times are therefore an element of security without which the regular military forces and state institutions could not survive. It is true than that Poland if it did not employ intelligence services in the interwar period probably would not survive for so long. If it was not attacked again by Germany and Russia, and betrayed by its allies – the British and French, perhaps the WWII would never happened. We will never know. But we do know that now a days without the intelligence and counterintelligence a country is vulnerable to any dangers stemming out of politics.

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PROCES POWSTAWANIA I TRANSFORMACJI WYWIADU I KONTRWYWIADU II RP

Streszczenie: Głównym przedmiotem rozważań w artykule jest proces kształtowania się służb wywiadowczych II Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w przełomowym okresie między 1918 a 1939 rokiem. Prześledzono przebieg formowania się i ewolucji powstałych wtedy instytucji wywiadu i kontrwywiadu. W pracy podjęto próbę scharakteryzowania struktury organizacji i działalności polskiego wywiadu oraz kontrwywiadu w tamtych latach przed II WŚ. Przy założeniach analitycznych treści dotyczących specyficznych instytucji wywiadowczych i kontrwywiadowczych możemy zaobserwować rolę, jaką pełniły w systemie bezpieczeństwa państwa. Ewolucja systemu bazowała na patriotycznym uczestnictwie osób działających wcześniej w organizacjach wolnościowych i na polskich żołnierzach obcych wojsk, którzy pracując wcześniej w komórkach sztabowych, byli w stanie wykorzystać swoje doświadczenie w budowaniu nowych struktur. Oczywiście wpływ na rozwój tych struktur miało również odwołanie się do polskich tradycji wojskowych sprzed utraty niepodległości.

Słowa kluczowe: II RP, polski wywiad, polski kontrwywiad, służby bezpieczeństwa, struktura jednostek wywiadowczych i kontrwywiadowczych.