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## Under UB and MO surveillance : a contribution to the studies of the activities of security organs in the Rzeszów region

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### Under UB and MO Surveillance: A Contribution to the Studies of the Activities of Security Organs in the Rzeszów Region

Literature on the history of the communist security machine in post-war Poland is relatively rich. The works written in the times of the People's Republic – both those that aspired at being scientific, and those of the character of memoirs – concentrated on propagating “the fight to fix the people's government.”<sup>1</sup> It was not until recently that the character of these publications began to change. Saturated with half-truths – perceived through the interests of the “department” – the history of public security organs, “the sword of the revolution”, still intrigues researchers. It calls for the verification of an ideologically blurred image. In the course of the past decade a number of works have been published that improved our knowledge and evaluation of such “security department” structures as the UB, MO, KBW, WOP, prison services, and ORMO. Among these publications monographs of security organs seem to be the most

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<sup>1</sup> For example: *1944-1947. W walce o utrwalenie władzy ludowej w Polsce (1944-1947: Fighting to Fix the People's Government in Poland)*, ed. W. Góra and R. Halaba, Warsaw 1967; *W walce ze zbrojnym podziemiem 1945-1947 (Fighting in the Armed Underground Movement 1945-1947)*, ed. M. Turlejska, Warsaw 1972; M. Jaworski, *Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego 1945-1965 (Internal Security Corps 1945-1965)*, Warsaw 1984; Z. Jakubowski, *Milicja Obywatelska 1944-1948 (Citizen's Militia 1944-1948)*, Warsaw 1988; T. Zybala, *Polegli w służbie i obronie Polski Ludowej (1944-1952). Wybrane sylwetki (Killed in Service and Protection of People's Poland (1944-1952): Selected Characters)*, Warsaw 1989; S. Wałach, *Był w Polsce czas... (There was a time in Poland...)*, Cracow 1971; *Czas gorących serc (The Time of Hot Hearts)*, Rzeszów 1984; H. Piecuch, *Siedem rozmów z generałem dywizji Władysławem Pożogą, I zastępcą Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych, szefem wywiadu i kontrwywiadu (Seven Dialogues with Division General Władysław Pożoga, 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy for Internal Affairs Minister, Chief of Intelligence and Counterintelligence)*, Warsaw 1987.

important.<sup>2</sup> They have, however, an obvious drawback in that they do not tell the whole truth about the "department". Fortunately, every now and then, significant detail on the subject have been brought to light by the publications on Polish independence conspiracies of 1944-1956 since source materials have not been destroyed.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, the collections of "department" documents are helpful in compiling the history of security organs.

Documents released from the MBP comprise mostly of reports and protocols of the briefings held with MBP department directors ("active members" of the MBP) and Voivodeship Public Security Offices chiefs, as well as of MBP bulletins.<sup>4</sup> These materials make it possible to see the

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<sup>2</sup> H. Dominiczak, *Organy bezpieczeństwa PRL 1944-1990. Rozwój i działalność w świetle dokumentów MSW (Security Organs of the PRL 1944-1990: Development and Operation in the Light of Internal Affairs Ministry Documents)*, Warsaw 1997; Z. Nawrocki, *Zamiast wolności. UB na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1944-1949 (Instead of Freedom: The UB in the Rzeszów Region 1944-1949)*, Rzeszów 1998. It is worth mentioning W. Tkaczew's work, *Powstanie i działalność organów informacji Wojska Polskiego w latach 1943-1948. Kontrwywiad wojskowy (Creation and Operation of Information Services of the Polish Army in 1943-1948. Military Counterintelligence)*, Warsaw 1994.

<sup>3</sup> We may quote studies referring to the Białystok region: *Dzieje polskiego podziemia na Białostocczyźnie 1939-1956 (A History of the Polish Underground Movement in the Białystok Region 1939-1956)*, conference materials, Warsaw 1992; T. Łabuszewski, K. Krajewski, *Od "Łupaszki" do "Młota" 1944-1949. Materiały źródłowe do dziejów V i VI Brygady Wileńskiej (From "Łupaszka" to "Młot" 1944-1949: Historical Materials on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Vilnius Brigades)*, Warsaw 1994. J. Kułak, *Pierwszy rok sowieckiej okupacji (The First Year of Soviet Occupation)*, Białystok 1944-1945, Białystok 1996; K. Krajewski, T. Łabuszewski, *Białostocki Okręg AK-AKO (VII 1944 – VIII 1945) (The Białystok District of AK-AKO (June 1944 – August 1945))*, Warsaw 1997

<sup>4</sup> A. Paczkowski, "Krótki kurs historii Departamentu X" ("A Short Course in the History of the X Department"), *Krytyka*, 1993 no. 41-42, pp. 130-173; *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w latach 1944-1956. Taktyka, strategia, metody, Część I. Lata 1945-1947 (Security Apparatus of 1944-1956: Tactics, Strategy, Methods. Part I. 1945-1947)*, ed. A. Paczkowski, Warsaw 1994; *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w latach 1944-1956. Taktyka, strategia, metody, Część II. Lata 1948-1949 (The Security Apparatus of 1944-1956: Tactics, Strategy, Methods. Part II. 1948-1949)*, ed. A. Paczkowski, Warsaw 1996; *Biuletyny informacyjne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1946 (Information Bulletins of Public Security Ministry 1946)*, Warsaw 1996; *Biuletyny informacyjne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1947 (Information Bulletins of Public Security Ministry 1947)*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1993; *Biuletyny informacyjne Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego 1948 (Information Bulletins of Public Security Ministry 1948)*, vol. 2, Warsaw 1995; Z.

plans and tactics of the communist security machine. They do not disclose operational technique of regional structures of the UB, MO, KBW and individual officers. The briefing reports and materials were censored in a way. Superiors usually got general information without any drastic details, or indeed details which might be considered dangerous for the department. The internal voivodship or ministerial briefings did not reflect the so-called internal investigations of the WUBP or PUBP.

In the source material – pre-projected in a way – the security machine of 1944-1956 is depicted in a selective fashion, according to the wishes of the “department”. As a matter of fact, illegal methods used repeatedly to protect the “people’s government” by the UB, MO and military intelligence have been documented. Repressive activities of the security organs is usually connected with impersonal casualty or imprisonment statistics, or with superficial reports of omnipresent supervision and control of the society.

If we trace operational details of the security machine, we can see the image of the “civil war” that broke out at the end of 1944. Operational materials of the regional security organs contain some considerable “interesting” information. It must be understood that such documents should be approached with great caution as generalizations made upon biased, selective source material lead to a falsification of the past and may discourage further research. Historians however cannot shun inconvenient subjects. Naturally, a solid and fully objective image of the public security machine depends on disclosing the “department secrets.” One must hope that thorough studies of modern history will be intensified and simplified with the creation of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (National Remembrance Institute).

Before that happens, let us try to contribute to the studies of the “work” of communist security organs of the second half of the 1940s. All examples presented here come from the Rzeszów region. It is impossible to tell if and to what extent it was a region representative of all of Poland. The times of German occupation had a decisive influence on the potential of the post-war independence conspiracy in Rzeszów. It was then that the underground army gained some 50 000 members, who after the war comprised the basis for local anticommunist conspiracy and the staff of “illegal” organizations nationwide. Rzeszów was special for an additional reason, namely the reaction to the activities of the UPA and its political structures. Because documents quoted here present bare facts, it is first necessary to provide a broad context.

First and foremost, we need to take a stand with regard to the assassinations committed by the security department officers, i.e. to activities unsanctioned directly by law. "Departmental" publications included lists of those who "died in service and defense of People's Poland." After 1989 one could expect similar specifications that would include names of persons murdered during the actions of security organs. We find numerous examples of these.<sup>5</sup> Doubts arise however over the legal qualification of the offense: premeditated murder, or the result of resistance to the arrest attempt. Here are a few unresolved examples from the Rzeszów region. On the night of April 9-10, 1945 during the security office's round-up in Straszydle, Mieczysław Zdrojewski (alias "Orzeł"), a Rzeszów AK diversion soldier, was killed. No trace of Jan Florczykiewicz (alias "Lupin") was found after his capture at that time.<sup>6</sup> On May 17, 1945 in Rudna, Lieutenant Wiktor Błażewski (alias "Orlik"), the manager of the DSZ Guards Inspectorate, was shot dead by WUBP officers. On May 30, 1947 in Rudna, Sebastian Waltoś (alias "Sowa"), the manager of the Rzeszów WiN Department Guards, was killed by security officers.

These murders can be regarded as "accidental". There is no trustworthy confirmation of the circumstances of the deaths of the above-mentioned independence conspirators. It is difficult in this way to explain the action conducted on December 8, 1944 by the MO's "expedition division" of the Voivodeship Investigative Department. The report of its commander, Major N. Głowacki,<sup>7</sup> deputy voivodeship chief of the MO, presents a devious explanation of the circumstances of the death of Rev. Michał Pilipiec (alias "Ski"), chaplain of the Rzeszów AK District; which will be discussed later.

Rev. Pilipiec was arrested on December 3, 1944 in Błażowa by the Rzeszów UB and MO operational group commanded by Captain Zygmunt Bieszczanin. According to Stanisław Rybka, after a difficult investigation – led by the above-mentioned Captain Bieszczanin – a court issued a summary conviction in which it sentenced Rev. Pilipiec and four other locals of Błażowa, also captured on December 3, to death. The execution

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<sup>5</sup> The first letters from the victims of security officers have been compiled before. See: *Słownik biograficzny ofiar terroru PRL (Biographical Dictionary of PRL Terror Victims)*, ed. F. Wilk, Zeszyty Historyczne, Paris 1964, vol. 6

<sup>6</sup> The round-up action in Straszydle was in retaliation for not allowing destruction of the village on April 1, 1945, when two Rzeszów WUBP officers died. District Archive of the Research Commission on Crime Committed Against the Polish Nation – National Remembrance Institute (hereafter: IPN) in Rzeszów, Daily Order no. 1, April 5, 1945

<sup>7</sup> "Głowacki" is probably a guerrilla pseudonym of one of Rzeszów Voivodeship MO Headquarters officers.

was carried out in the morning of December 8, 1944 in the forest near Głogów Małopolski. The place of the slaughter is known thanks to Stanisław Rybka (alias "Szpak"), an AK soldier that managed to avoid and escape the site of the execution. Thanks to his description<sup>8</sup> – written in the United States in October 1975 – in the spring of 1977 the remains of the three other victims, including Rev. Pilipiec, were exhumed.

Major Głowacki's report<sup>9</sup> presents the events of December 8, 1944 differently. On December 14, 1944 the deputy voivodship chief of the MO in Rzeszów wrote to the Chief Commander of the MO in Lublin with his account of the forest expedition, approximately six kilometers outside of Głogów, together with a chauffeur, eight "expedition division officers" (the report mentions their names) and "Citizen Marian from the publ[ic] sec[urity]."<sup>10</sup> The action sought to determine – according to Major Głowacki – "the location of a printing facility and a radio transmitter of the AK moved after my recent round-up in Błażowa." The location of the printing facility and the radio transmitter were supposed to have been indicated by Rev. Pilipiec and "four other prisoners." Before the expedition reached their destination, it fell into a trap at 6.15 a.m. and found itself under "heavy machine gun" fire. This is how Major Głowacki recounted further events:

"Before the car was stopped and its lights turned off, in one second we were in ditches, scattered in extended order, returning the enemy fire with our heavy machine gun shelling. In a few seconds prisoners started to jump out of the car heading for their escape, and two of them suddenly rushed to take my machine gun away. With my left hand, pulling my spare handgun out of my pocket, I shot the two attackers dead. My soldiers killed two more, and only one of the five prisoners – Rybka Stanisław of Błażowa – though wounded, managed to escape taking advantage of the brushwood, hilly terrain and daybreak darkness.

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<sup>8</sup> See: J. Łopuski, *Losy Armii Krajowej na Rzeszowszczyźnie (sierpień – grudzień 1944). Wspomnienia i dokumenty (A History of the AK in the Rzeszów Region (August – December 1944). Recollections and documents)* Warsaw 1990, pp. 267-270; G. Brzęk, *Książd Michał Pilipiec ("Ski"). Bohater i męczennik sprawy polskiej (Rev. Michał Pilipiec ("Ski"). Polish issue hero and martyr*, Lublin 1995, pp. 51-54.

<sup>9</sup> A copy of this document can be found at the IPN archive in Rzeszów.

<sup>10</sup> According to Stanisław Rybka's account (J. Łopuski, op. cit., p. 269; G. Brzęk, op. cit. P. 53) the expedition was led by a captain, the same one that conducted the investigation. He had a ten-strong force of militia dressed in army uniforms, and a civilian driver.

Having crossed in extended order to the enemy's wing, I pushed him out of the place convenient for him, and afraid to lose my soldiers and the car, having left the dead – prisoners and probably other assailants, as we inferred from their screams and moans – we withdrew quickly. Losses: my TT handgun and 127 rounds of PPSz ammunition lost in my scuffling and crawling.

Having driven a few kilometers away, with the car left hidden, I crept back into the brushwood with a few of my soldiers to the place of fighting, but there was nobody there anymore. I considered further chase useless since my division was small and I had lost blood through the left wrist that had been shot through.

I have reported of this immediately to the Voivodeship Commander Lieutenant [Franciszek] Księżarczyk and herewith I report it officially to the Secu[urity] Chief, with materials charging the four bandits arrested and killed, and the fifth escapee – Rybka Stanisław – who is wanted by the Investigative Department.”<sup>11</sup>

The author of the report uses the term “prisoners” instead of “convicts” for Rev. Pilipiec and his four comrades. This contradicts later publications, which claimed that the execution in Głogów had been based on a summary conviction.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the record of the alleged summary conviction has never been found.<sup>13</sup> One way or another, the description of events in Major Głowacki's report sounds dubious. It is hard to believe that the MO officers – “under heavy fire” – had not suffered any losses (except for the slight injury of Major Głowacki), and their car had not been damaged. The logic behind the goal of the expedition does not withstand close analysis. The security offices allegedly turned out to be naive. They believed that the printing facility and radio transmitter of the AK had been moved from Błażowa to nearby Głogów Małopolski - to foreign territory, unknown to the soldiers of the AK Rzeszów-South Subdivision. The documents of the AK do not mention any radio transmitters hidden in December 1944. The last Rzeszów transceiver was detected by and lost to

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<sup>11</sup> A copy of this document can be found at the IPN archive in Rzeszów.

<sup>12</sup> M. Kryczko, "Ks. Michał Pilipiec "Ski" – kapelan Obwodu Armii Krajowej Rzeszów" ("Rev. Michał Pilipiec "Ski" – chaplain of the Rzeszów AK District"), *Rocznik Przemyski*, vol. 27, Przemysł 1990; J. Łopuski, op. cit.; G. Brzęk, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Sentences in other cases that ended in executions have been preserved. In the Rzeszów region, such verdicts had been pronounced from October 1944 on, initially by Soviet war tribunals. Copies of these sentences can be found at the Central Military Archive (hereafter: CAW), State Archive in Rzeszów and the archive of the UOP Office in Rzeszów.

the Soviets on October 15, 1944.<sup>14</sup> Was the presence of all five prisoners needed to localize the printer and the transmitter? The description of the trap on the MO car also raises doubt. It is clear that rescuing the prisoners – if it really happened – could have been prepared only along the checked route of the convoy. Let us remind ourselves that AK plants in the Voivodeship Commander's Office of the MO knew the departure time, alleged destination, and route of the expedition in advance. It is not hard to guess that the decision to take the prisoners was kept secret till the very last moment. How was it possible then for the AK to notify its fighting group in the Głogów forest? Another theory seems false as well, namely that the attempt to take the car with the MO officers could have been undertaken by the AK guerillas of their own accord. If so, then we would have to assume the attackers had spent a December night in the forest.

Stanisław Rybka does not mention any shots that allegedly made the escape possible. Apparently they were never fired. There is no mention of any conspiracy action of December 8, 1944 nearby Głogów in AK documents either.<sup>15</sup> When it comes to escapee Rybka, he was not chased extensively. Still, he was arrested in a Soviet round-up for those suspected of AK membership. When handed over to the Rzeszów WUBP, he was not questioned about the AK printing facility or transmitter.<sup>16</sup>

Let us return to Major Głowacki's report. The question "Who buried the AK members shot in Błażowa?" remains unanswered.<sup>17</sup> Was it Major Głowacki who ordered that the bodies of the "bandits" be left in the forest? In 1977 the remains of Rev. Pilipiec and two of three killed locals of Błażowa were found and identified. Although much suggests that on December 8, 1944 in Błażowa the MO officers executed a murder planned earlier, the deaths of Rev. Pilipiec and three other AK soldiers from

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<sup>14</sup> See: *Teczka specjalna J. W. Stalina. Raporty NKWD z Polski 1944-1946 (J. V. Stalin's Special File: NKVD Reports from Poland in 1944-1946)*, selected and edited by T. Cariew-kaja, A. Chmielarz, A. Paczkowski, E. Rosowska, Sz. Rudnicki, Warsaw 1998, p. 66.

<sup>15</sup> The last AK action in this region was conducted on October 14, 1944. AK soldiers arrested by the MO and UB in Sokołów, Nienadówka and Trzebuska were rescued in the Trzebuska forest. G. Ostasz, *Obwód ZWZ-AK Rzeszów. Konspiracja wojskowa i "Burza" (ZWZ-AK Rzeszów District: Military Conspiracy and "the Storm")*, Rzeszów 1992, p. 105

<sup>16</sup> *Report from Lieutenant Ivanov (collaborator of the "Smiersz" Operational Group of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front) to Colonel Glina (deputy director of intelligence management of the "Smiersz" Operational Group of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Front)*, a copy of this document in IPN Rzeszów.

<sup>17</sup> Accounts mentioned by G. Brzęk (op. cit.) indicate attempts to get rid of evidence of the crime by burning the bodies.

Błażowa still have to be explained once and for all. Other documents preserved prove beyond any doubt that officers of security organs were preoccupied not only with chasing political opponents of the "people's government". They were also preoccupied with their physical elimination. Naturally, they were not executing lawful court sentences. Executioners were not prison guards, as one would expect, but full-time public security officers.

An official letter from Lieutenant P. Mycawka – deputy prosecutor of the military garrison – to the WUBP chief in Rzeszów of January 3, 1945 proves that UB officers fulfilled the duties of executioners. The deputy prosecutor notified the addressee of a death sentence – calling it "final" – passed on January 2 by the Military Garrison Court on three AK soldiers: Bolesław Płachciński, Leon Dziama, Kazimierz Kurpyta. All were convicted of "illegal" possession of weapons. "The sentence," wrote Lieutenant Mycawka, "will be carried out tomorrow, i.e. January 4, 1945, at 9 a.m. Moscow time".

Detailed instructions for the Rzeszów WUBP chief followed:

"You are requested to appoint a firing squad with one officer as commander and 12 riflemen, instruct them on their duties as a firing squad, establish the place of the execution, appoint a prison doctor to assist the squad.

I wish to point out that the convicts should have their hands and legs tied, and at the place of the execution their legs should be untied and they themselves tied to trees.

The commander of the firing squad will report to me tomorrow morning (January 4, 1945) at 8.45 a.m. Moscow time".<sup>18</sup>

Three AK soldiers were executed in accordance with the above orders. It is impossible even now to locate the place of either the execution or burial of the executed. One thing is certain: the executioners were Rzeszów WUBP officers. Over time the way of carrying out a death sentence was rationalized in Soviet NKVD fashion. Instead of a firing squad, a single man would kill. The documents of the Military District Court in Rzeszów recorded the names of executioners of those times, security officers Bronisław Kisiel and Sylwester Bizoń.<sup>19</sup> Personal files of the WUBP indicate that Kisiel was "an internal arrest employee", while

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<sup>18</sup> CAW, a copy of this document in IPN Rzeszów. See: *Dokumenty mordów dokonanych przez komunistyczne Wojsko Polskie (Documents of Murders Committed by the Communist Polish Army)*, ed. A. Zagórski, Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u, 1992, no. 2, pp. 84-96.

<sup>19</sup> The names of the Rzeszów executioners have been listed in articles and books. See Z. Nawrocki, op. cit., pp. 67, 163.

Bizoń was “an on-duty aid at the WUBP jail.” He would shoot and hang convicts. Twice he performed public hangings; on June 17, 1946 at the market in Rzeszów, and on July 10 of the same year in Dębica.

When it comes to Rev. Michał Pilipiec, the AK chaplain, and the four AK soldiers, it cannot be determined beyond doubt if their deaths resulted from a premeditated lynch. There is no doubt however as to the circumstances of the murder of eight Ukrainians, killed by Rzeszów security officers. The soldiers of the 5<sup>th</sup> independent operational battalion of the 4<sup>th</sup> KBW Brigade brought eight Ukrainians suspected of collaborating with the UPA to a WUBP jail on November 3, 1945. Three days later officers concluded that the Ukrainians were no longer in their jail. The matter was to have been cleared in a departmental investigation. A highly classified report of January 30, 1946, presented to Lieutenant Mikołaj Orechwa, Personnel Department director at the MBP, offered conclusions drawn from the internal investigation. The Ukrainians were murdered “on an order of Major [Władysław] Sobczyński by P[ublic] S[ecurity] officers”.<sup>20</sup> The officers lynched their victims on the night of November 3-4, 1945, just outside the forest, some 300 meters from a Rzeszów airplane production plant. Major Sobczyński, the Rzeszów WUBP chief, was apparently a specialist in “dirty work”. A couple of weeks earlier, on September 17, 1945, he led the abduction and murder of Władysław Kojder, a PSL activist. It is significant that the departmental investigation of the deaths of the eight Ukrainians did not break Major Sobczyński’s career. Before Lieutenant Piotr Wackiel, a senior official in the MBP, compiled his report, Major Sobczyński was promoted and became director of the WUBP in Kielce.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> UOP Archive Warsaw, highly classified. To MBP Personnel Department manager Lieutenant Orechwa, January 30, 1946

<sup>21</sup> Władysław Sobczyński alias Spychaj (1904-1986). During World War II security chief of District III at the Rzeszów AL.; in November 1944 moved to the “Lublin Poland” territory; became deputy director of the WUBP in Kielce. On June 4, 1945 promoted to Major. From June 28, 1945 director of the WUBP in Rzeszów; December 27, 1945, at the MBP’s disposal; from January 9, 1946 director of WUBP in Kielce. Lost the position after the so-called “Kielce pogrom”. 1947-1950 in the Information Management of the KBW. December 16, 1947, promoted to Colonel. From June 15, 1950, director of MBP’s Foreign Passport Bureau. Dismissed from the “department” on January 20, 1952. Soon after the “mysterious” death of Władysław Kojder Sobczyński received three orders: on October 1, 1945 – Medal Partyzancki of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree (Guerrilla Order); October 10 – Medal Odrodzenia Polski of the 5<sup>th</sup> degree (Polish Rebirth Order); October 26 – Medal Zwycięstwa i Wolności (Victory and Freedom Order).

The task of the communist security organs was mostly to maintain omnipresent control over the society. Such control was made easy by permanent terror and the atmosphere of fear. The fear, spread by the security office, militia and army, resulted from the court murders and lynchings described above. The methods used by security officers during interrogations played a role in paralyzing conspirators. Patterns of investigation were pointed at by Soviet NKVD advisors, the "technique" was also hinted at by German occupation experiences. The Soviets advised employing all possible means of interrogation.<sup>22</sup>

The original staff of the security offices consisted of people trained by the Soviet NKVD security machine. One of them was Lieutenant Ludwik Bojanowski, director of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section of the 1<sup>st</sup> Department of the WUBP in Rzeszów. Trained in the spring of 1944 in Kuibyshev, he became a WUBP officer on November 4, 1944. He directed the intelligence and discovery of an independence conspiracy. Polish underground reports described him as "a sadist, a specialist in interrogations."<sup>23</sup> It was Bojanowski who led the investigation of Bolesław Płachciński, already mentioned, killed on January 4, 1945. According to the reports of the DSZ he led the round-ups in which underground activists were killed in Starszyle and Rudna. No wonder he became the target of retaliatory action undertaken by the Guards of WiN Department in Rzeszów. Bojanowski was shot dead on November 24, 1945.

Beatings and torture of the arrested were not exclusive trademarks of the Kuibyshev school. Such methods were used every day as they helped to obtain accusatory evidence. According to Henryk Dominiczak the security officers - "armed with hatred towards the enemy" - tried to "beat the evidence out with rods", for which they were awarded with promotions and honors.<sup>24</sup> During trials it would transpire that defendants had been tortured. Defendants would often change their original testimony made during the investigation.

Let us use the example from the investigation against the Rzeszów network of the WiN "Intelligence Brigades". It was traced by UB officers in the spring of 1946 and they arrested most of its members in the summer and fall of that year. One of those wanted, Józef Krzywonos (alias "Korczak"), WiN intelligence director for the Nisko region, was arrested by security officers in Gdańsk on October 3, 1946. He was "treated"

<sup>22</sup> N. Petrov, "Cień Sierowa" ("Sierow's Shadow"), *Karta*, 1992 no. 9, pp. 81-82.

<sup>23</sup> G. Ostasz, "Działalność Rzeszowskiego Wydziału WiN (1945-1947)" ("Activity of the Rzeszów Division of the WiN (1945-1947)", *Studia Rzeszowskie* vol. 2, Rzeszów 1995, p. 107

<sup>24</sup> H. Dominiczak, op. cit., p. 59

preliminarily in the WUBP jail in Krakow. During the interrogation led by Lieutenant Antoni Trybus, senior investigator of the MBP, on October 7, Krzywonos had not confessed to conspiracy work after the war ended. He repeatedly claimed that he did not know the names of the underground activists presented to him by the security officer, that he had never before seen the individuals in the photographs shown to him. The interrogation protocol recorded the following reaction of Lieutenant Trybus: "You're telling untruths, you're lying, the investigation calls on you to testify truthfully." On the next day, the investigation was led by another MBP officer, Lieutenant Władysław Strzałkowski. The defendant was no longer trying to evade the accusations. The first question posed by the investigator was, "For what reasons did you testify untruthfully on October 7, 1946?" One can only speculate with what means the defendant was convinced to change his testimony and confess to the work in "an illegal, spying organization."<sup>25</sup> Less than one year later, on August 4, 1947, Józef Krzywonos was executed by a death squad at a Rzeszów prison established at the Lubomirskis Castle. He was the only one killed among all the many captive Rzeszów "Intelligence Brigade" members.

All arrested members of the "Intelligence Brigades", WiN conspirators, and members of NOW-NZW, went through similar hell. Not all of them were lucky enough to survive the interrogation. Major Mieczysław Słaby, a WiN informer from Przemyśl, a Westerplatte defender of September 1939 died in the Krakow Military Information Service jail. Jerzy Laskownicki of the "Intelligence Brigades" died during the WUBP interrogations in Rzeszów. Because of long months of persistent interrogations, many conspirators did not manage to survive imprisonment, among them Mirosław Biliński (alias "Andrzej"), Władysław Szechyński (alias "Kruk"), and Wincenty Rutkowski (alias "Haszysz"). Suicide attempts were made, which may be understood as self-defence against the torture. Shortly after his arrest, Leopold Rząsa (alias "Wacław"), deputy director of the WiN Rzeszów District, jumped out of the third floor of a UB building at ul. Jagiellońska in Rzeszów; though saved, he was executed on January 31, 1949. Maria Dzierżyńska, a WiN liaison officer, acted similarly. Unbroken by the UB, she jumped out of the WUBP building window, just like Rząsa.

In late 1945 an anonymous AK soldier provided activists of "Intelligence Brigades" of the WiN Rzeszów District with an account of the conditions in UB jails a few months after the end of German occupation. The author of *Reports of Those Recently Released from Russia – on October 4, [1945]* wrote:

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<sup>25</sup> CAW, Branch 2, Sr. 77/54, vol. 1

"I was arrested on December 11, 1944 by the NKVD in Rzeszów where I stayed for five days without food for interrogations, during which beating was used to extort testimony. On December 15, 1944, tied to other prisoners, I was handed over to the WUBP where I remained until January 2, 1945. In the WUBP prisoners were horrifically beaten, especially those who admitted to have ties with the AK, as well as those who had decent clothing and shoes on them, which were later taken away. Rybka Stanisław<sup>26</sup> was himself beaten a number of times, and when he gave away his last shoes, he was moved to another cell. Having been beaten, Zagórski<sup>27</sup> was so badly tormented that he was too sick to be transported away. Almost every day prisoners whose names I did not know were beaten. The torturers were platoon leaders called Franek and sergeant Kanarek, as well as others"<sup>28</sup>.

The case of Bronisław Stęga (alias "Kolejarz") provides further evidence of the sophisticated investigative methods used. Stęga, who had earlier been an AK diversion soldier at a Krasne village near Rzeszów, was chased for the private war he proclaimed against the Soviets. Having escaped on November 24, 1944 from the transport to the labor camp in Borowicze, he set traps for Soviet soldiers for the next year. WUBP officers in Rzeszów arrested him on December 15, 1945. His investigation was exceptionally brutal and is recorded in court files. Tortured, he was forced to confess to fabricated allegations. He provided a detailed description of a trap for a car that took place on October 19, 1945 near Łańcut. Stęga confessed to the murder of a Krosno glassworks director travelling in that car. This odd "success" of the investigators in this case was not reflected in the indictment. Before the investigation was concluded on March 29, 1946, the real perpetrators of this crime – three Soviet deserters – had been caught by a different public security office.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1946 Stęga and his men became the target of propaganda hysteria. Based on the information provided by UB officers, the communist press in Rzeszów accused his group of a number of cruel murders. Articles on the activities of the NSZ "gang" – as Stęga's people were called – were being published both during the investigation and after

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<sup>26</sup> The AK soldier who escaped the place of execution on December 8, 1944; arrested later by the Soviets and transferred to labor camps in Stalinogorsk.

<sup>27</sup> Franciszek Zagórski (alias "Ostoja"); civilian officer at the Przeworsk AK District headquarters.

<sup>28</sup> CAW, Branch 2, Sr. 77/54, vol. 1; G. Ostasz, *Relacja z katorgi (Drudgery report)*, "Orzeł Biały" 1998, vol. 7-8, p. 21-22.

<sup>29</sup> State Archive in Rzeszów, R.301/46

the trial, which was in contradiction to the sentence that proclaimed defendants not guilty of the alleged crimes except for the murders of Soviet soldiers. The number of group members was estimated at no fewer than fifteen, including those who were “interned” by the Soviets and remained in labor camps, and even those who were sentenced by communist courts and executed in the fall of 1944.<sup>30</sup>

The NSZ “gangs” became the propaganda’s bogeymen. Most of the actions of the anticommunist underground movement were ascribed to the NSZ divisions. Moreover, NSZ “gangs” were accused of crimes committed by security officers. Here are two striking examples. First is a special report of June 2, 1946 filed by the director of Department A of the Rzeszów WUBP for the MBP in Warsaw. Notifying of Władysław Kojder’s funeral, the director mentioned that the PSL politician had been “killed [...] by a NSZ gang”.<sup>31</sup> Another example may be quoted in which it was “proven” that a number of people from the anticommunist forest division of Jan Stefko (alias “Mściciel”) belonged to a NSZ “gang”. A report of the Rzeszów WiN District management reads that “the defendants were proven guilty based on interrogation and their mutual denunciations, which resulted from maltreatment and beating for four months at the UB jail. The prospect of the gallows seemed more amiable to them than torture, so they confessed to crimes one would not be able to prove otherwise”.<sup>32</sup> On June 10, 1946 three “bandits” of the allegedly NSZ-backed forest division were hanged at the market square in Dębica.<sup>33</sup>

Before the security machine started arrests, investigations and interrogations, often superiors would set directions. At least a few times it conducted operations coordinated nationwide. Such was the case with the “popular” referendum and the first parliamentary elections. Local structures of public security organs kept up initiative and vigilance. Their tactics were in tune with current needs. An interesting “idea” surfaced in the summer of 1947 in the Rzeszów security organ structures. The PSL was chosen as the target of intensified investigative and secret operations.

<sup>30</sup> “Dziennik Rzeszowski” 1946 no. 7; “Dziennik Rzeszowski” 1946 no. 121. See *Czas gorących serc (The Time of Hot Hearts)*, Rzeszów 1984 (illustrated insert)

<sup>31</sup> Message taken by phone, no. 58 in WUBP Rzeszów, June 2, 1946, a copy in G. Ostasz’s archive.

<sup>32</sup> *Zrzeszenie “Wolność i Niezawisłość” w dokumentach (“Freedom and Independence” Association in Documents, vol. 2, August 1946 – January 1947, Wrocław 1997, p. 156.*

<sup>33</sup> See: A. Zagórski, “Publiczny mord w Dębicy w 1946 roku” (“Public Murder of 1946 in Dębica”), *Studia Rzeszowskie* vol. 1, Rzeszów 1995, pp. 160-162; G. Ostasz, “Wyrok w sprawie grupy ‘Mściciela’” (“The Verdict in the ‘Mściciel’ Group Case”), *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u*, 1998 no. 11, pp. 249-272

This political party, still legal at the time, was clearly losing the fight for power. It was failing in further confrontations with the communists, during the “popular” referendum of June 1946 and the parliamentary elections in January 1947. In the summer of 1947 Lieutenant Teodor Duda, chief of the WUBP in Rzeszów, issued “Special instructions regarding the PSL.” Sixteen directors of county security offices subordinate to Rzeszów, except for that of the PUBP in Lubaczów, received detailed instructions as to the operational methods against the PSL activists of the Rzeszów region. Lieutenant Duda brought it to the attention of his subordinates that the so-called Krakow trial underway at that time “had so far fully proven close contact and direct, strong, inseparable cooperation of the PSL with the WiN.” The WUBP Rzeszów chief was concerned because “the PSL managed [...] to put us off our guard and slowed our work in this field, since we have not been able to break and dissolve it as an organization so far.” In relation to this, he ordered that county security organ directors “do their best to have the fight against and dissolving of the PSL completed.” He argued, “Because our tactics against the PSL have so far been insufficient and have not brought the desired results, we must return to the hard stand system of fight against the PSL. That is why our chief task is [...] to ridicule the PSL in any form. [...] Extermination of local PSL activists and prominent activists of PSL management [...]. Total defeat and collapse of the PSL from the highest to the lowest organizational level [...]”<sup>34</sup>

The chief of security in Rzeszów set work directions: “Reopen cases against members of the PSL. [...] Obtain by all possible means all materials to PSL’s disadvantage. [...] File lawsuits against PSL members for committed crimes (especially of oral propaganda).” Experience that security organs had gathered during parliamentary elections of 1947 when thousands of PSL members were held captive, sometimes without prosecutor’s sanctions, was supposed to be helpful. The chief ordered that as part of the new action “methods be used to interrogate suspects for a few hours, in the election period, [...] not ruling out the possibility of numerous interrogations of PSL members to obtain any disgraceful materials, even if of lesser importance. [...] Former activists of the PSL should not be excluded, even if they currently belong to different political parties or to none, but they should be treated differently from PSL members”<sup>35</sup>.

Such “techniques”, broadly used and put into practice by public security organs, brought success in the fight with the “class” enemy. The

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<sup>34</sup> IPN Rzeszów Archive

<sup>35</sup> IPN Rzeszów Archive

UB, MO, and KBW played an undeniable part in the communists' victory. Until the summer of 1947 they managed to break up numerous and well-functioning conspiracies of the WiN. Most activists of the WiN Rzeszów District management were caught, nearly all regional structure directors – of regional and county WiN boards – got arrested.<sup>36</sup> The national underground movement posed no threat to the “people’s government” in 1947; in the first place security organs destroyed NOW-NZW. Perhaps success in this motivated them in reaching yet another goal. It may have been the reason for paying more attention in UB’s operations to PSL again.

## Stalinist Influences on the Polish Economy Internal and External Conditions and Structural Changes (1944–1955)

### Research Problems

Estimation of the economic changes in Poland after World War II is still a very controversial matter, one that is the subject of disputes and discussions among historians, economists, sociologists and political theorists. Even though research into the area is fairly well developed when compared to other, particularly political, sciences, there are still too many gaps, mainly in the research of Poland’s place in the world economy and the economic relations with other Soviet block countries. The key to understanding many phenomena and problems is getting acquainted with economic facts and the subservience structure of Poland to the Soviet Union without which any discussion of Polish economic history after World War II does not make sense.

The dependence on the Soviet Union was the most important and lasting factor for Polish history after 1945. Its presence was apparent throughout the post-war period, even if not always perceived as such. This problem became the subject of academic discussion only in the 1990s with censorship toppled and secret documents were gradually revealed. Naturally, historians had used some sources, although these concentrated on issues of secondary importance related mostly to official contracts and treaties between the two countries (which were changed with secret addenda omitted in publications), the start-up of the economy, and the

<sup>36</sup> In April 1949 the new chief of the WUBP in Rzeszów reported to Minister Stanisław Radkiewicz of new successful attempts in chasing WiN members, but such information may only be called bragging. Also, Minister Radkiewicz’s “revelations” of March 23, 1949, where he suggested there had been an extended WiN network in the Rzeszów voivodeship in the spring of 1948, should be treated as a false MBP document. By the spring of 1948 only a handful of WiN activists and small groups of conspirators survived, but they did not form a consistent underground structure. They lacked, however, the critical insight into the