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DOI 10.48261/INRR250705



TOMASZ KOZŁOWSKI
KONIEC
IMPERIUM MSW
TRANSFORMACJA
ORGANÓW BEZPIECZEŃSTWA
PAŃSTWA 1989–1990,
Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2019
AN OVERVIEW

Abstract

The book under review here, *Koniec imperium MSW. Transformacja organów bezpieczeństwa państwa 1989–1990* by Tomasz Kozłowski, is the first book-length publication devoted entirely to the transformation within the Polish apparatus of internal affairs during 1989–1990. It covers the background, course and results of that process. The author offers a critical verification of popular ideas about the transition from the Security Service (SB) and the Citizens' Militia (MO) to the Office of State Protection (UOP) and the Police. The publication features little-known or previously unavailable historical sources. The book has a major significance for understanding not just the premises and mechanisms of reorganisation in the interior apparatus, but also the mechanisms of transformation in Poland as a whole.

Keywords: Tomasz Kozłowski, transformation, reorganisation of state security organs, review

Original version: This text is an edited and expanded version of the article: Bereszyński, Zbigniew. "Tomasz Kozłowski, «Koniec Imperium MSW. Transformacja organów bezpieczeństwa państwa 1989–1990», Warszawa 2019." *Aparat Represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944-1989* 18 (2020): 717–738. DOI: 10.48261/ARPL201824.

The subject of political transformation in Poland is one of the most controversial topics both in our historiography and in current political life. It has become shrouded in various myths and, even after three decades, continues to evoke strong emotions. This will probably remain the case for many years to come (perhaps until the last generation directly involved in the events of that time leaves the political scene).

Research projects aimed at providing a reliable and in-depth understanding of the historical realities of that time, undertaken *sine ira et studio* and confronting the past with the images and myths that exist in the social consciousness, should thus be valued all the more highly. An excellent example of this approach to the country's recent political past is Tomasz Kozłowski's book *Koniec imperium MSW. Transformacja organów bezpieczeństwa państwa 1989–1990* [*The End of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Empire: The Transformation of State Security Bodies, 1989–1990*] published in mid-2019 by the Institute of National Remembrance. This publication addresses the particularly interesting, yet difficult and controversial topic of the liquidation of the Security Service and the creation of the Office of State Protection on its ruins, all within a much broader historical context, covering not only the political transformation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1989–1990, but also its earlier activities beginning in 1981.

This is not the first publication on this subject. The transformations in the Ministry of Internal Affairs were discussed by Antoni Dudek, among other topics, in his book on the collapse of the communist system in Poland (Dudek 2014, pp. 451–477). Among the works of a contributory nature, the articles by Kazimierz Mordaszewski, Jan Widacki and Stanisław Hoc are worth mentioning (Mordaszewski 2009, pp. 19–20; Widacki 2020, pp. 18–21; Hoc 2011, pp. 99–110). It is worth mentioning that Stanisław Hoc was formerly an officer of the Security Service and then a researcher and lecturer at the Feliks Dzierżyński Higher School of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in

Legionowo and at the Academy of Internal Affairs; (cf. Bereszyński 2014, pp. 263–264). Particularly noteworthy is Rafał Leśkiewicz's article, which is a comprehensive "attempt to describe the process of transforming the communist state security organs, i.e. the Security Service (SB) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, into the state security service, i.e. the Office of State Protection (UOP)" (Leśkiewicz 2016, pp. 165–188); an extended version of this article, entitled "Formal and legal aspects of the establishment of the Office of State Protection," was published in the internal publication of the Internal Security Agency, (see Leśkiewicz 2015). Patryk Pleskot also devoted considerable attention to the issue of transformation in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, at both the central and local levels, in the last chapter of his monograph on the capital city structures of the Security Service (Pleskot 2018, pp. 249–274). It is also worth mentioning the selection of sources edited by Sebastian Pilarski, illustrating the role of the Security Service in the political transformation process in Poland in 1988–1990, using the Łódź region as an example (see *Służba Bezpieczeństwa* 2009; cf. Bereszyński 2011, pp. 589–592). However, Tomasz Kozłowski's book is unique in that it is the first comprehensive publication devoted entirely to the process of systemic transformation in the Ministry of Internal Affairs; in the meantime, the book was also reviewed by Michał Przeperski (see Przeperski 2019).

The author of the reviewed publication set himself the goal of "establishing and organising basic facts, sometimes demythologising them, and confronting the perceptions of the transformation" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 9). This intention was realised to a degree that is close to exhausting the topic. The author has managed to critically and convincingly verify what is probably the entirety of the common perceptions regarding the transition from the Security Service and the Citizens' Militia to the Office for State Protection and the Police. He described in detail the conditions, course and effects of this process. At a time when so-called alternative history has become fashionable, he did not shy away from attempting to answer the question of whether events could have unfolded differently than they actually did. Any additions or corrections to the picture he has painted can only be of a supplementary nature.

The reviewed book includes an introduction, five chapters on specific topics arranged chronologically and thematically, and a conclusion, formally treated as the sixth chapter – "An attempt at synthesis." This structure does not raise any fundamental objections, except for the conclusion, which, in my opinion, has been unnecessarily treated as

one of the sequential chapters (this is, of course, only a minor detail). Each chapter, except for the last one, that is, the conclusion, consists of several subchapters (from three to five), each with its own title.

The first chapter, entitled “The End of the Ministry of Internal Affairs,” is devoted to the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs during the pivotal period of 1981–1990, until the liquidation of the Security Service and the Citizens’ Militia. The first subchapter of this chapter, entitled “The Kiszczak Decade,” deals mainly with the activities and internal structure of the Ministry of Internal Affairs during the period when it was headed by General Czesław Kiszczak, that is from 31 July 1981 to 6 July 1990. The introductory part contains, in particular, information about the political circumstances surrounding Gen. Kiszczak’s takeover of the ministry as a result of personal power struggles within the highest leadership of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) and between Warsaw and Moscow (the previous head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mirosław Milewski [a member of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party – editor’s note], lost his position after a failed attempt to undermine the position of General Wojciech Jaruzelski and Stanisław Kania). This is followed by a concise presentation of developments in the ministry on the eve of martial law and after its introduction, characterising the new practices and organisational solutions introduced by General Kiszczak, drawing on his experience in the army. The assumptions and consequences of the sweeping reorganisation of the ministry, carried out in 1983 pursuant to the Act on the Office of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the scope of activities of subordinate bodies, were discussed.

Much attention was devoted to the criminal activities of officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, considering the issue of Gen. Kiszczak’s personal responsibility for tolerating or attempting to cover up such cases. In this context, particular reference was made to cases such as the famous “Żelazo” scandal [smuggling and corruption in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Polish People’s Republic in the 1970s, uncovered in the 1980s – editor’s note] the lethal beating of Grzegorz Przemyski (in 1983) and the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko (in 1984). The author of the reviewed work points out that the then leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs sought to tighten control over the Security Service, as evidenced, among other things, by the establishment of the Officer Protection Board [*Zarząd Ochrony Funkcjonariuszy*, ZOF; an internal control unit within the Ministry of Internal Affairs – editor’s note] in December 1984. In his

opinion, this fact contradicts the thesis that General Kiszczak was unaware of the illegal activities of his subordinates.

In the opinion of Tomasz Kozłowski, General Kiszczak, as Minister of Internal Affairs, “accumulated unprecedented power in his hands” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 38). It could also have been used “against potential political rivals” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 34).

In the further part of the same subchapter, the author characterises the personnel potential of the Security Service in the 1970s and 1980s. In his opinion, these years were “in many respects a golden age for the Security Service” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 39). During this period, the ranks of this service grew significantly – nearly three times faster than the total number of personnel in the ministry. What attracted candidates to work for the SB were primarily material benefits and privileges. Ideological motivation ceased to matter and in the 1980s it could only be mentioned in a few cases. However, when comparing historical reality with myths on the subject, the author points out that, over time, working for the SB became less and less attractive to young people, who could find better working conditions and pay in various sectors of the economy. Furthermore, employment in the SB was associated not only with certain privileges, but also with more or less severe restrictions, for example on the possibility of travelling abroad. As a result, over time, the SB faced an increasingly acute problem of staff shortages.

The author rightly points out the key role of the SB in the political system of the Polish People’s Republic. However, it is difficult to agree with the statement that this service constituted “one of the pillars of the authoritarian system” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 39; the term “authoritarian” in relation to the political system of the Polish People’s Republic also appears in the summary on pages 287, 288 and 297). This description is certainly not adequate for the political system operating in the so-called People’s Poland and other communist bloc countries. Personally, I would lean towards the perhaps overly colloquial term “botched totalitarian system.” This system was originally created as a regime with totalitarian aspirations, but in the case of Poland, these aspirations were ultimately not realised, and by the 1980s, such aspirations had essentially disappeared (with the possible exception of certain circles of the so-called party hardliners in the Polish United Workers’ Party). General Jaruzelski’s personal position as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party was undoubtedly very strong; he was certainly the most powerful person in the country at the time, but it cannot be said that he played the role of a typical

dictator in an authoritarian system. His personal power was primarily an external expression of the power wielded by circles rooted in the apparatus of the Polish United Workers' Party under the supervision of the Kremlin.

The final part of this subchapter contains comments on the role played by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in preparing the political changes that took place in Poland in 1989, as well as on the feelings with which SB officers received the victory of Solidarity candidates in the elections held on 4 June 1989. These comments emphasise the depressing impact of the events of that time on the attitude and mood of the officers. To provide a more complete picture of the situation, it should be added that the same events also became a factor motivating the Ministry of Internal Affairs to intensify its activities. On 6 June 1989, two days after the elections, General Władysław Pożoga, First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, during a teleconference he had convened, assessed the current political situation and stated that the tasks of the security apparatus remained unchanged, but that "in the new situation" operational activities and work with the agents should be intensified (Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Wrocław Archives, ref. no. 09/140, Meeting of the staff [of the Voivodeship Office of Internal Affairs in Opole] on 7 June 1989, p. 60). At that time, the Security Service had by no means laid down its arms.

The subchapter entitled "Structural changes in the Ministry of Internal Affairs" describes the attempts made in 1989 and early 1990 to adapt the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the changed political reality through a partial reorganisation of the service, involving the liquidation of some organisational divisions and the establishment of new units with different competences. The first attempt was made at the end of May 1989, when the Ministry of Internal Affairs' "W" Office which was responsible for secret surveillance of correspondence [in other words, postal censorship – editor's note], was dissolved. Much more far-reaching changes were made after 24 August of the same year, with the creation of new organisational divisions for the protection of the constitutional order of the state, the protection of the economy, and studies and analyses, replacing divisions III (surveillance of the political opposition), IV (surveillance of the Church), V (surveillance of the opposition among workers) and VI of the Security Service, as well as the Study Office (surveillance of the most important opposition figures) and the Main Inspectorate for Industrial Protection (industrial guard) with their subordinate field units. At around the same time, the Political and Educational Service ("political officers" in

the Ministry of Internal Affairs) was abolished, and ZOMO (mobile units designed to suppress demonstrations) was disbanded, replaced with the Prevention Units of Citizens' Militia. In February 1990, the Board for the Protection of Officers was dissolved. To a lesser extent, the competences, structure or operating principles of certain other structures within the ministry were also changed. Tomasz Kozłowski draws attention to the cosmetic nature of the changes at that time with regard to the structures of the Security Service.

The next subchapter, entitled "The 'rollback' strategy of the Security Service," describes a different type of adaptive measure, consisting in the gradual reduction of the SB's personnel and the transfer of people and jobs to the MO structures. The author points to the negative consequences of these actions, writing that they were perceived as unfair to the militiamen, while the transferred SB officers "were unsure whether they would actually remain in service" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 59). In his opinion, the reform implemented in this way "was accompanied by enormous chaos, sowed uncertainty among former secret police officers and militiamen, and had a negative impact on the quality of work of state security agencies" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 62).

In the same subchapter, the author writes that "most of the activities of Departments I and II were classic intelligence and counterintelligence tasks." However, he notes that "emigration and the democratic opposition, which received support and equipment from abroad, were also targeted by officers, including those from Division XI of Department I" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 62). It should be added here that Division II of the Security Service was also responsible for surveilling and combating German minority circles in Poland. Starting in 1983, these circles began to organise on an increasingly larger scale, and by the end of the 1980s, the process had already gained momentum. The related preventive and repressive measures were among the most important tasks of Division II of the Security Service at that time. They had much in common with the activities of the Security Service towards opposition circles and clearly went far beyond counterintelligence activities (cf. Bereszyński 2017, pp. 112–124, 147–183).

The next subchapter, entitled "Decomposition of the Ministry of Internal Affairs", deals with personnel and organisational issues related to the political breakthrough in Poland and the restructuring of the ministry. This concerns, in particular, numerous personnel changes in individual positions, mass retirement of employees or their transfer to HR departments, resignations, and so on. These personnel changes

were driven by factors such as a sense of uncertainty, the negative image of the ministry in the eyes of the public, and the desire to find better jobs in other areas of social life. The culmination of these phenomena occurred in March 1990. Their consequence was a drastic deepening of staff shortages in the ministry's bodies. At the same time, Polish society experienced a "sharp increase in common and economic crime" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 72). The ministry, weakened by staff shortages, was unable to face the new challenges effectively, especially since, as the author emphasises, it was a bureaucratic machine accustomed to operating under different political conditions, namely those of an overwhelming advantage of the state and its institutions over citizens. This situation clearly encouraged the development of various forms of crime, especially organised crime.

Contrary to its title, "The Last Order: Destruction of Security Service Documents," the last subchapter of Chapter One is not limited to the phenomenon of the mass destruction of security service materials at the turn of 1989 and 1990. The author provides a wealth of information that deepens our understanding of this phenomenon and its mechanisms, but he also addresses another issue, namely the subsequent fate of some of the surviving documents and their role in the public life of the Third Republic of Poland. In particular, he touches upon the still controversial topic of materials concerning Lech Wałęsa and his relations with the Security Service, as well as the so-called "Olin case," which arose in 1995 when the then Minister of Internal Affairs, Andrzej Milczanowski, who was associated with Wałęsa, accused one of the leading activists of the Democratic Left Alliance of collaborating with Soviet and then Russian intelligence. According to Tomasz Kozłowski, these two cases may be indirectly linked. He suggests that General Kiszczak, who kept materials concerning Wałęsa [files on a secret collaborator codenamed 'Bolek' – editor's note] at his home, could have used these materials in 1995 to blackmail Wałęsa in connection with "Olin's" case. According to Kozłowski, the blackmail attempt at that time was ineffective, and no similar attempts had been made against Wałęsa before. This is a very important contribution to the discussion on whether Wałęsa's actions at various stages of his life could have been influenced to some extent by behind-the-scenes pressure using materials produced by the Security Service.

As regards the phenomenon of document destruction itself, it is worth mentioning that the records kept on this subject do not necessarily correspond to the actual state of affairs. Some of the materials which, according to these records, were to be destroyed

in 1989–1990, actually ended up in the private possession of former SB officers, for example as a kind of insurance policy. Some of these materials ended up in the IPN archives years later, such as a collection of documents produced in connection with various operational cases concerning the opposition circles in Opole in 1988–1989 (files with reference number AIPN Wr, 373/1. These files remained in the private possession of former SB Division III officer Lieutenant Cezary Kudyba for many years).

It is also worth adding that the mass destruction or “privatisation” of files in 1989–1990 has resulted in enormous difficulties, and in many cases even made it practically impossible, to carry out vetting procedures and has generally obscured the picture of the past with regard to vetting issues. In the last months of their operation, SB officers, for obvious reasons, destroyed or removed primarily materials that were still in their operational use at that time. However, there was not enough time to do the same for files that had already been archived. For this reason, it is quite common that there are no operational files on agents used by the Security Service in the final period of its activity. It can be assumed that agents used until the very end often had significant operational value. Unfortunately, such cases most often escape vetting procedures due to the lack of relevant operational files. The records kept in such cases are not sufficient to prove cooperation with the security apparatus in court. In general, it is easier to prove cooperation in regard to agents abandoned before the political transformation in Poland, and thus whose files were archived. Paradoxical situations may therefore arise in which we can prove collaboration with the Security Service regarding someone who did not meet the expectations of that service and, as a result, their collaboration was terminated before the end of the Polish People’s Republic, while we are unable to prove collaboration to someone who was much more useful to the Security Service and was therefore used by it until the very end.

The second chapter of the reviewed book is devoted to the political aspects of the reform of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, carried out in 1989–1990 as part of the political transformation in Poland. It should be added that the title of this chapter is somewhat misleading, as it refers only to the political conditions of the reforms.

The introductory part of this chapter, entitled “Our Prime Minister, Your Ministry of Internal Affairs” [the title is a clear reference to Adam Michnik’s significant opinion article “Your President, Our Prime Minister” published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 3 July 1989, postulating

a division of power between Communist party and Solidarity opposition in newly elected parliament, see (Michnik 1989) – editor’s note], discusses the circumstances surrounding the election of General Jaruzelski as President of the Polish People’s Republic (19 July 1989) and the subsequent formation of a government headed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki (12 September 1989). In this context, the activities of the Security Service at that time are briefly characterised, both in relation to the extra-parliamentary opposition of the time and to the newly elected parliamentarians representing Solidarity, with particular emphasis on attempts to influence the further development of the political situation in the country, and especially the election of the president by the National Assembly. The political elite of the time, led by Solidarity, as well as the church hierarchy, were greatly influenced by the fear that the security apparatus and the military might attempt to halt the changes. The author points to the low probability of such a danger materialising in the international situation at that time, which was fundamentally different from that which existed in December 1981, when martial law was imposed. All this calls into question the legitimacy of the “strategy of small steps and evolutionary change” adopted by the Solidarity elites of the time, with the blessing of the church hierarchy (Kozłowski 2019, p. 104).

The subchapters “Pressure from the Solidarity movement” and “Accelerating the process: advisors and Solidarity deputy ministers” describe the situation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs after the formation of Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s government, public opinion on the matter, and the views of various political circles on its future. There were reports of demonstrations organised in various parts of the country by groups demanding the dissolution of the Security Service and the Citizens’ Militia and an investigation into their activities to date. The last of these subsections is devoted in particular to the origins of the so-called police acts passed in April 1990, which provided for the liquidation of the MO and SB and their replacement by the Police and the Office for State Protection.

The next subchapter, “Trade unions and contacts with the new elite,” discusses grassroots initiatives by officers themselves to bring about change in the ministry and their efforts to organise their own union structures. This mainly concerns the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union of Citizens’ Militia Officers (NSZZ FMO), which had been gradually forming since autumn 1989, but the author also mentions similar initiatives on the part of Security Service officers.

The content of this subchapter should be supplemented with a few important facts. In particular, there was no mention of the fact that on 9 and 10 January 1990, in Kiekrz near Poznań, at another meeting of delegates of initiative groups (the previous one had taken place on 17 December 1989), the Provisional Council of the National Coordinating Committee of NSZZ FMO was established, with its seat in Gdańsk. The chairman of this council was Captain Roman Hula from Piekary Śląskie, and one of his deputies was Senior Sergeant Jan Jabłoński, dismissed from work in 1981 for organising trade union activities within the militia. The new union declared in particular its intention to work towards the creation of a state police force based on the MO. It is worth mentioning how the independence of this union was understood. It was supposed to mark its separation from the structures of the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions and “Solidarity” (“O jawność...” 1990, pp. 1–2).

It is also worth mentioning the initially promising attempt to establish Solidarity structures among MO officers, undertaken by those who feared that the NSZZ FMO, referred to by them as the Kiekrz union, might be dependent on the existing leadership of the ministry headed by General Kiszczak. This initiative, the only one of its kind in Poland, was launched by officers of the District Internal Affairs Office in Brzeg. On 5 January 1990, the Organising Committee of the Solidarity trade union was established there (Górniak and Olszewski 1990, p. 5). The source of concerns that NSZZ FMO might be linked to the existing leadership of the ministry was, in particular, a coded telegram sent in the summer of 1989 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the heads of Regional Internal Affairs Offices (RUSW) throughout the country. According to this ciphertext, the heads of individual RUSWs were to become involved in organising union structures within the ministry and ensure that suitable personnel were selected for them. In a written statement dated 1 August 2020, Senior Staff Sergeant Ryszard Karciarz, a former militiaman and retired police officer, stated that in July 1989, as the duty officer of the RUSW in Brzeg, he received and decrypted correspondence of this content and forwarded a copy to Second Lieutenant Andrzej Wojtycza, who was on duty that night as the control officer. The latter shared the contents of the ciphertext with Władysław Frasiński, then leader of the Lower Silesian Solidarity movement. (Statement by Senior Staff Sergeant Ryszard Karciarz, 1 August 2020, digital copy of the document in the author’s private collection). On 14 January, the Provisional Management Board of the Solidarity Trade Union

of RUSW Militiamen in Brzeg was established (Telegram from the Provisional Executive Committee of the Solidarity Trade Union of RUSW Militiamen in Brzeg to the Regional Executive Committee of Solidarity in Wrocław [14 January 1990], photocopy of the document in the author's private collection). On the same day – it was a Sunday – information about this was communicated to the faithful by priests during all Holy Masses in both churches in Brzeg. Referring to the difficulties caused to trade unionists by the head of the RUSW, Lt. Col. Sławomir Wajda, the priests asked the faithful to pray for the new social initiative. Its chairman was Second Lieutenant Andrzej Wojtycza, inspector of the Economic Crime Division, former employee of the local agricultural machinery factory “Agromet”, and graduate of the Agricultural University in Wrocław (This officer and another militia officer from Brzeg, master corporal Ireneusz Telego [son of Czesław Telego, an employee of “Agromet”], had been in contact with the local Solidarity movement since 1988. They passed on information about the mood among officers and the intentions of the Security Service. The following persons also became members of the Solidarity Trade Union of RUSW Militiamen in Brzeg: Sergeant Zbigniew Pszczolarski, Sergeant Zbigniew Duszeńko, Master Corporal Stanisław Mizera [three vice-chairmen], Senior Sergeant Zbigniew Wentrys [secretary], Sergeant Włodzimierz Wróbel [treasurer], Lieutenant Tadeusz Lech, Lieutenant Leszek Szkot, Master Corporal Ireneusz Telego, Sergeant Kordian Kropcio, and Sergeant Jerzy Pszczolarski; the source is telegram mentioned above).

In the days that followed, several dozen RUSW officers joined Solidarity. At the same time, 36 militiamen surrendered their Polish United Workers' Party membership cards, declaring themselves apolitical. The Militia “Solidarity” in Brzeg did not agree that the NSZZ FMO should be considered the sole representative of the professional community of militia officers. This position was presented in particular in a letter sent in January 1990 to the editorial office of *Trybuna Opolska* (Statement by the Organising Committee of the Solidarity Trade Union of RUSW Militiamen in Brzeg, 13 January 1990, photocopy of the document in the author's private collection).

On 13 February 1990, members of the Brzeg Solidarity movement began a protest action which involved flagging the headquarters of the RUSW and official vehicles. They demanded the dismissal of the current head of the RUSW, Lt. Col. Sławomir Wajda, who had been obstructing their union activities. The campaign ended on 16 February when this demand was met. At the same time, Brzeg militiamen

declared their support for a similar protest action by Voivodeship Internal Affairs Office (WUSW) officers in Wałbrzych, who were demonstrating their dissatisfaction with the sluggishness of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in implementing the demands they had made (Górniak and Olszewski 1990a, p. 5; Górniak and Olszewski 1990b, pp. 1–2). The latter action was also mentioned in the reviewed book (Kozłowski 2019, p. 146). It is worth noting that this was not an isolated phenomenon and had its counterpart in Brzeg.

In mid-March 1990, the Provisional Management Board of the Solidarity Trade Union of RUSW Militiamen in Brzeg protested against the transfer of Security Service officers to the local militia. This was a reaction to a personnel order issued at the end of February by the head of the WUSW in Opole to transfer twelve SB officers to work in the militia division of the RUSW in Brzeg (Personnel order [of the head of the Voivodeship Internal Affairs Office in Opole] No. 048/90 of 28 February 1990; Statement of the Provisional Management Board of the Solidarity Trade Union of Militiamen in Brzeg, 15 March 1990 – photocopies of documents in the author’s private collection). The statement issued on this matter by the militia Solidarity was supported by the Inter-Enterprise Coordinating Committee of NSZZ Solidarity in the Brzeg Region (Position of the Presidium of the Solidarity Trade Union in Brzeg Region, 19 March 1990, photocopy of the document in the author’s private collection). In May 1990, under pressure from Second Lieutenant Wojtycza and his colleagues from the Solidarity movement within the militia, SB officers were removed from almost all rooms of the RUSW in Brzeg (Statement by Andrzej Wojtycza dated 17 August 2018, digital copy of the document in the author’s private collection).

The Brzeg militia “Solidarity” was supported by the Inter-Enterprise Organising Committee of NSZZ Solidarity in Brzeg, led by Zbigniew Oliwa (Letter by the Inter-Enterprise Organising Committee of the Solidarity Trade Union in Brzeg, 5 May 1990, photocopy of the document in the author’s private collection). In an interview with journalists from “Trybuna Opolska”, local union activists spoke in favour of further changes in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, warning: “If we merely repaint the ossified militia hierarchy and change its name to ‘police’, we will not regain even a minimum of public trust” (Górniak and Olszewski 1990b, pp. 1–2).

The union members in militia uniforms were initially supported by regional authorities of Lower Silesia’s Solidarity movement, led by Władysław Frasyniuk. However, the life of the militia “Solidarity”

was short-lived. This was decided by Lech Wałęsa, who, at a meeting with the National Coordinating Committee of NSZZ FMO held on 14 February 1990 in Gdańsk, took the position that only one trade union should operate in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (“Nie zmieniamy...” 1990, p. 4; cf. Kozłowski 2019, p. 142). NSZZ FMO became the sole trade union in this environment. Due to Wałęsa’s negative stance, the militia “Solidarity” in Brzeg lost the support of regional union authorities in Wrocław. However, the local Solidarity movement in Brzeg did not forget about the trade unionists in Militia uniforms. In May 1990, in the first post-war local elections, Second Lieutenant Andrzej Wojtycza became one of the Solidarity candidates for the City Council. He was probably the only militiaman in Poland to be elected as a councillor (Statement by Andrzej Wojtycza dated 17 August 2018, digital copy of the document in the author’s private collection). This gave him four years of informal immunity in his professional environment. However, serious problems began to arise later on. In an official opinion issued in June 1995, the then district police commander in Brzeg, Superintendent Leszek Bednarski, concluded that, despite his extensive professional experience and previous awards, Commander Wojtycza did not qualify for promotion, as had been predicted in an earlier opinion of this kind (Official opinion, 22 June 1990, photocopy of the document in the author’s private collection). Instead, one of Wojtycza’s subordinates was promoted and consequently became his superior. Humiliated in this way, Wojtycza requested a transfer from his position as deputy head of the Traffic and Prevention Department of the District Police Headquarters in Brzeg to the Local Police Training Centre (Report [of Andrzej Wojtycza], 21 July 1990, photocopy of the document in the author’s private collection). It is worth noting that Leszek Bednarski, mentioned above, distinguished himself in the past with particular zeal in his activities related to combating opposition activities in Brzeg. Despite working in the militia division (in the Criminal Section of the RUSW), in 1983 he attempted to prosecute individuals involved in distributing leaflets, thereby entering into the competence of the Security Service. It got to the point where the Security Service itself opposed his actions, considering them a source of complications in its own operational work (cf. Bereszyński 2014b, pp. 260, 265–266). The fact that a figure with such a past was able to exert a negative influence on the professional career of the co-organiser of the militia “Solidarity” movement speaks volumes about the effects and scope of the transformation in the Ministry of Internal Affairs).

I believe that the case of the militia “Solidarity” in Brzeg deserved a more detailed presentation here, given its complete absence from the literature to date. It shows that changes in the Ministry of Internal Affairs did not necessarily have to develop in the direction they did in 1990. A different scenario was also possible, but it was ruled out by Lech Wałęsa’s controversial declaration of 14 February 1990, mentioned above.

The subchapter entitled “Czesław Kiszczak signs off” is devoted to the last months of General Kiszczak’s tenure as Minister of Internal Affairs. It addresses, in particular, issues such as the destruction of Security Service files, Prime Minister Mazowiecki’s attitude towards the pace of change, and the reasons and circumstances surrounding the dismissal of General Kiszczak from his position as minister. The author characterises various “survival strategies” attempted by the ministry’s leadership at the time: creating “the appearance that the SB was capable of transforming itself into an institution defending democracy,” introducing reforms simulating the dissolution of the SB, “playing the role of guarantor of the Round Table agreements and the continuity of state reforms,” presenting itself as “the guarantor of public order” (Kozłowski 2019, pp. 157–159). On the other hand, an attempt was made to find an answer to the question of why Prime Minister Mazowiecki delayed the pace of change, with the result that in 1990 Poland, which had previously been a leader of political change in Central and Eastern Europe, was overtaken by other countries. According to the author of the reviewed book, it was not about keeping to the agreement concluded with the communists at the Round Table: Mazowiecki was motivated by something else, namely the fear of “a possible counterattack by hardline renegades or even the architects of the Round Table themselves – Jaruzelski and Kiszczak” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 160). What ultimately forced him to dismiss Kiszczak was the new political situation, related in particular to the emerging conflict between Mazowiecki and Lech Wałęsa.

The main topic of Chapter Three, entitled “Legal Reforms” are the changes in the legal situation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that took place in 1990. In the next three subchapters, entitled “Drafts: parliamentary and ministerial,” “Sejm stage,” and “Senate stage,” the political conditions and course of the legislative processes that led to the adoption of the police laws, which came into force on 6 May 1990, are analysed. The author points out that the head of government’s desire to quickly and efficiently reorganise the Ministry of Internal Affairs, even at the cost of lowering legislative standards, clashed

with the attitude of senators, who wanted a well-thought-out and well-written law that would respect human rights.

However, the first of the above-mentioned subchapters also touched on a slightly different topic, the gradual liquidation of certain elements of the previous system, which were taking place in parallel with the legislative processes and which “were associated with the worst by the public” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 163). In this context, the case of the liquidation of the Voluntary Reserve of the Citizens’ Militia, finalised in November 1989, was presented in detail [a kind of “workers’ militia” being the reserve auxiliary forces of the communist order police – editor’s note].

Chapter Four – “Verification,” with the subchapters “Formulating Assumptions,” “Procedure” and “Verification and What Next,” is another example of the demythologisation of our knowledge about the political transformation in Poland. It deals with the two-stage vetting process conducted in 1990 for former Security Service officers applying for employment in the Police or the Office for State Protection. The author uses the term “verification,” which has been in common use for many years, but points out at the outset that it is inadequate in relation to the historical phenomenon described.

The issue of the so-called verification of former Security Service officers remains one of the most controversial topics in Poland’s recent political history. The reviewed book may contribute to changing this state of affairs by thoroughly analysing the mechanisms, course and effects of “verification,” taking into account its broader social and political context, including the international context.

The author draws attention to the discretionary nature of the verification process, resulting in huge differences in its results across individual voivodeships. It also points to the difficulties associated with the social hermeticism of the former SB officers, which meant that the members of the qualification committees lacked the knowledge necessary to properly assess individual cases and, to put it bluntly, to effectively separate the proverbial wheat from the chaff. Under these circumstances, some of the decisions may have been unfair to the persons assessed, while others may have been beneficial to individuals who actually deserved to be disqualified. By demythologising the issue of the effects of “verification,” the author emphasises that in general it did not determine the professional future of former SB officers who underwent this procedure. According to his findings, “out of over 10,000 positively verified candidates, at most every second one was able to find a job at the UOP” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 215).

Tomasz Kozłowski is highly critical of the view that it was possible in 1990 to implement the so-called zero option, which would have involved removing the vast majority or even all SB officers from the services. He points out that the option was not fully implemented even in Czechoslovakia and the former German Democratic Republic, where the scale of personnel changes was greatest. He points out that, contrary to his later statements on the matter, even Antoni Macierewicz, one of the later ministers of internal affairs, was not in favour of the zero option.

The last of the above-mentioned subchapters, “Verification and what next,” is devoted to those SB officers who did not pass the qualification procedure or did not submit to it at all. Many of them, responding to “social demand in times of heightened crime,” joined “detective and security agencies, most often run by their colleagues or former superiors” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 218). Some, on the contrary, joined “organised criminal groups” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 221). The author critically examines the view that former officers of the Polish People’s Republic’s secret services became financial beneficiaries of the political transformation in Poland. According to him, this opinion “seems justified, but only in relation to that group of officers who had exceptional experience and knowledge, e.g. gained from working in intelligence or units responsible for combating economic crime” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 226).

The main topic of Chapter Five, entitled “The Birth of the UOP,” are the circumstances and mechanism of the organisation of the Office for State Protection, as well as various aspects of the activities of this service in the early period of its existence. The subchapter entitled “The New Geopolitical Order and Intelligence” characterises the international context in which the UOP took over most of the human resources of the civil intelligence services of the Polish People’s Republic (Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs). In 1989–1990, these services proved very helpful to Poland’s new political partners, particularly the United States, thus gaining a positive image in their eyes. In this context, one may wonder – as does the author of the reviewed book – whether the privileged treatment of the former PRL intelligence services in the creation of the UOP was largely determined by domestic or foreign factors.

The subchapter entitled “Organisation of the new service” is devoted to building the organisational and human resources capacity of the UOP. The author points to various sources of personnel for this service: mainly former SB officers, but also some circles of the

former opposition, such as the Freedom and Peace Movement, the Independent Students' Association, the Fighting Youth Federation and the Confederation of Independent Poland. Confronting historical reality with myths about it, he emphasises that the main problem in organising the UOP was "a lack of people to do the work" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 251). Many people who were approached with such offers did not want to be associated with a service perceived as the successor to the Security Service, especially since a career there did not seem stable or predictable. According to the author, the latter factor was the most important. In this light, it is difficult to defend the view that recruiting UOP personnel mainly from former SB officers was unfair to people from other backgrounds and that an alternative solution was possible.

The subchapter entitled "At the origins of the Third Republic of Poland. Politics, economy and counterintelligence" characterises the working conditions of the UOP in the new political and socio-economic reality shaped by the collapse of the communist bloc and the political transformation in Poland. The tasks of this service were presented and their implementation was shown in practice, with particular attention paid to counterintelligence work and the fight against economic crime. In this context, reference was made, among other things, to certain cases related to the activities of the Russian special services in Poland, in particular the high-profile case of Vladimir Alganov [a Russian intelligence agent, identified as the case officer in charge of an agent codenamed "Olin" – editor's note] and his many years of activity in our country. There was also mention of an investigation conducted by the Office for State Protection (UOP) in connection with a loan taken out in Moscow by the political heirs of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) [in secret, from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1990, to finance enterprises and a newspaper associated with former party activists – editor's note].

Much attention was devoted to the difficulties faced by the UOP, resulting from underfunding, staff shortages and the failure of legal regulations to adapt to the challenges posed by the new socio-economic reality. In the author's opinion, "the Office for State Protection lacked the strength and resources to face the challenges of the period of transformation and globalisation – the deepening economic and state crisis and the development of international economic crime" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 268). Counterintelligence, "underfunded and constrained by regulations, had to face crime of an unprecedented nature and scale. From the outset, it was fighting a losing battle" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 266).

The author of the reviewed work also addressed the negative aspects of the UOP's activities related to the involvement of this service in the current political games in the country. The famous case of Colonel Jan Lesiak, whose team was involved in the surveillance of centre-right circles, which came to light in 1997, is described.

At this point, it is necessary to draw attention to a linguistic error that frequently appears in various publications, namely the confusion between confiscation and requisition. On page 275, the author writes about the requisition of documentation relating to cases handled by Lesiak. Meanwhile, requisition involves the seizure of certain goods (such as food or vehicles) for the needs of the military or other authorities, with compensation. In the case we are interested in here, it would be more appropriate to talk about confiscation. It would be good if this distinction became more widely recognised among those involved in the editing of various publications.

A bit earlier, on page 260, the author quotes, without further comment, a statement by former Minister of Internal Affairs Krzysztof Kozłowski, who, justifying his decision to abolish the department for combating economic crime, stated that this department, operating within the structures of the MO, "was particularly closely linked to the Security Service" (Kozłowski 2019, p. 260). However, the matter is not so simple, and Kozłowski's statement definitely requires more detailed commentary (cf. Borysiuk 2022, pp. 582–620).

The fact is that the activities of the economic crime division had a lot in common with the operational work of the SB. On the one hand, the Security Service was also involved in combating economic crime, and on the other, the economic crime division was used to exercise operational control over certain work establishments, replacing the SB in this respect. Therefore, one can speak of a certain complementarity or even partial duplication of the activities of both services. What is more, in 1981, before the introduction of martial law, the economic crime division was preparing proposals for the internment of Solidarity activists from enterprises supervised by this division (Bereszyński 2014b, pp. 17–18, 24, 558–560, 562, 566). However, generalising in such cases would be unfair to the considerable number of honest officers working in the economic crime division. An example are officers of this division in the RUSW in Brzeg, who, long before 1989, distanced themselves in various ways from the political reality of the Polish People's Republic. It was in this environment that the aforementioned initiative to create the militia structures of Solidarity was born. One of the founders of the new

trade union organisation was the head of the RUSW economic crime division, Lieutenant Tadeusz Lech, and the leading activists included Second Lieutenant Andrzej Wojtycza and Lieutenant Leszek Szkot from the same division (Górniak and Olszewski 1990, p. 5). It should also be added that, when necessary, officers from various divisions of the MO were involved in activities for the SB, including the traffic police. The economic crime division was no exception in this regard.

In the subchapter entitled “Counterpoint: military special services,” for comparative purposes, the author included his observations on the transformation of the national defence structures. He points to similarities and differences between the developments in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and those in structures subordinate to the Ministry of National Defence. The things they had in common include the mass destruction of documents produced during the communist era. The differences were particularly evident in the lenient treatment of the military special services by politicians with Solidarity roots, who were guided by the mistaken belief that the army was more apolitical (Kozłowski 2019, p. 276). As a result, changes in these services lagged far behind those in services subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In the summary, treated as the sixth chapter of the study – “An attempt at synthesis” – the author generally leans towards the thesis that, in 1990, the state authorities at the time applied the right model of change in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In his opinion, there was no real possibility of implementing the so-called zero option at that time, contrary to the view still appearing in the press that the special services of the Third Republic of Poland should be built from scratch: “No one wanted a thorough reform, not even politicians more radical than Kozłowski or Milczanowski” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 291). On the other hand, the author criticises the way in which the ministry was restructured: “the establishment of the Office for State Protection was not preceded by a broad discussion on the role of special services in a democratic state, and no clear tasks were set for the new institution” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 290).

Tomasz Kozłowski argues against the widely held view that “the secret services controlled national politics behind the scenes in the 1990s” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 292). In his opinion, it was “rather the opposite. It was the politicians who wanted the UOP to be loyal, not necessarily apolitical. [...] The secret service was usually ready to carry out the orders of any authority. [...] Many politicians not only took advantage of the situation in which the services sought support, but also deepened this pathology, consciously or not, with successive personnel changes that undermined the sense of continuity and

independence of the ministry. They themselves showed the officers that loyalty to their patrons was a condition for their survival, only to later discover, to their surprise, that the services were at the disposal of every successive political leader” (Kozłowski 2019, pp. 292–293).

The last sections of the book are devoted to attempting to answer the “question of the legacy of the Security Service.” The author regrets that “Poland was late in carrying out vetting,” which opened “the door to blackmail and the use of incriminating documents by secret service agents and their political masters” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 296). He points out that the first attempt at vetting, undertaken in 1992, “compromised the idea of disclosing the connections of public figures with the Security Service for many years” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 296). Another important issue of the “legacy” of the communist security services is the enormous effort that the Ministry of Internal Affairs (and the Military Intelligence Service) put into erasing the traces of their criminal activities – mainly by destroying files.

According to Tomasz Kozłowski, “Poland has had trouble finding its way to come to terms with communism for years” (Kozłowski 2019, p. 297) and, in fact, it has not found it so far. Some consolation can be found in the fact that, as the author of the reviewed book states, we did not fare worse than most countries of the former Eastern Bloc.

The book draws heavily on sources that were previously little known or unavailable. For the first time, materials from the Sejm Committee on Administration and Internal Affairs and the Senate Committee on Human Rights and the Rule of Law were used to such an extent. The source material for the reviewed work also includes protocols and transcripts of meetings of the Citizens’ Parliamentary Club and its leadership, which have been little used by previous researchers. The documentation of the then national leadership of NSZZ Solidarity and the transcripts of the Council of Ministers’ meetings from 1989 and 1990 were also consulted. The author also used resources from the Archive of New Records and the Institute of National Remembrance.

The reviewed book is of great importance for understanding not only the premises and mechanisms of the reorganisation of the internal affairs department, but also the mechanisms of the entire political transformation in Poland. By critically examining various myths on the subject, the author has given us the opportunity to take a sober and rational look at the political reality of the time. This is particularly valuable in a situation where mythologised ideas on this subject continue to circulate in society: on the one hand, there is uncritical glorification of the changes that have taken place and their

authors, and on the other, total condemnation of the transformation as the result of an alleged collusion between the old and new political elites. A rational attitude towards the past can also have positive consequences for our public life, which is entangled in ongoing and topical disputes about the assessment of historical events.

The author's observations on the mutual relations between political authorities and special services, as well as the threats arising from the improper shaping of these relations, are also particularly noteworthy. These observations are not only of historical value but can and should also serve as food for thought for those actively involved in current political life.

The author of the reviewed publication skilfully used an extremely rich source material of various origins, which is often difficult to access for the average researcher. Thanks to his thorough analysis and correct interpretation of sources, he answered many important questions and, in other cases, paved the way for further research. The resulting book has all the potential to become a classic in its field.

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