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The People's Republic of Poland, the Soviet bloc and international terrorism: the determinants of secret relations in the Cold War period

Abstract

During the Cold War, Western states repeatedly accused the Soviet bloc of supporting international terrorism. The declassification of many documents from the archives of the former intelligence services in Central and Eastern Europe has made it possible to verify these accusations and has also made it possible to take a broader look at the links between the socialist states and terrorist groups. The aim of the article is to present the factors determining the establishment and maintenance of secret contacts between the Soviet bloc states and terrorist organisations, to indicate the genesis of these contacts and to present their actual course, and in this context also the experience of the People's Republic of Poland against the background of other communist countries.

Keywords:

People's Republic of Poland, terrorism, the Cold War, the USSR, the PLO

From the beginning of the Cold War until the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, terrorism was a phenomenon that became a permanent feature of political life on both sides of the Iron Curtain. It also entered political discourse, becoming an indispensable element of propaganda and disinformation.

The term 'terrorism' functioned as a key word, an element of information warfare affecting public emotions. Both Moscow and Washington have sought to exploit the phenomenon to further their own interests. Terrorism is defined in many ways, with differences in approach due to political, ideological as well as religious reasons¹. During the Cold War, the two blocs accused each other of using terrorism and of supporting terrorist groups. Moscow tended to accuse Washington of pursuing terrorist policies against Cuba, Nicaragua, and of supporting Israel, which used terrorist methods against the Palestinians². In turn, the United States and its allies accused the Communist bloc states, especially Moscow, of supporting Middle Eastern terrorist organisations³.

Claire Sterling's book, entitled *The Terror Network*, which received much publicity in the American media, played an important role in creating the image of the Soviet Union as a patron of terrorist groups. In it, the author wrote that almost all the threads of international terrorism led to Eastern Europe and, more specifically, to Moscow, which, using both its own service (the KGB) and the services of communist states, supported various terrorist organisations, including: Red Army Faction (German: Rote Armee Fraktion, RAF), Red Brigades (Italian: Brigade Rosse, BR), Irish Republican Army (IRA), Basque Country and Freedom (Basque: Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, ETA), and the group of Ilich Ramírez Sánchez (known as 'Carlos'). According to Sterling, the Kremlin's main objective was to cause destabilisation in the West, aided by terrorist attacks that would cause chaos and panic in Western societies⁴. Despite the lack of convincing evidence, Sterling's arguments about the USSR's role as the centre of global terrorism controlling the terrorist international gained many supporters. The contents of the book even impressed William Casey, then head of the CIA, who is reported to have said to an officer not particularly convinced by Sterling's theses: *I paid USD 13.95 for the book and learned more from it than from you,*

¹ S. Wojciechowski, *Terroryzm. Analiza pojęcia* (Eng. Terrorism. An analysis of the concept), "Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego" 2009, no. 1, pp. 54–60.

² V. Bolchakov, *Le terrorisme à l'américaine* (Eng. American-style terrorism), Moscou 1986.

³ R.S. Cline, Y. Alexander, *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection*, New York 1984; S.T. Possony, L.F. Bouchey, *International Terrorism – The Communist Connection – With a Case Study of West German Terrorist Ulrike Meinhof*, Washington 1978; S. Elad, A. Merari, *The Soviet Bloc and World Terrorism*, series: Paper no. 26, Tel Aviv 1984.

⁴ C. Sterling, *Sieć terroru* (Eng. Web of terror), Warszawa 1990, pp. 313–325.

to whom I pay USD 50,000 a year⁵. However, as it later turned out, many of the revelations in the book were not based in reality and were the result of American, British, French and Israeli disinformation⁶.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the systemic transformation resulted in the gradual declassification of documents hitherto held in closed archives. The declassification also applied to materials produced by the security apparatuses of the former communist states, which contained important information on the links of these services with international terrorist organisations. These documents are incredibly important for understanding the history of terrorism in the context of the Cold War, as they make it possible to re-examine contacts between the Eastern Bloc and terrorist groups. At the same time, a number of publications appeared in the West, which - on the basis of declassified documents and the recollections of former secret service personnel - showed the approach of the services there to the phenomenon of terrorism in a new light. In these works, their authors drew attention primarily to the terrorist threat posed by Western policy towards the Middle East (e.g. the Austrian case⁷), the origins of cooperation between Western services in the fight against terrorism⁸ and behind-the-scenes agreements made by Western states with terrorist groups. Examples include the French services' secret deals with the Abu Nidal Organisation (ANO)⁹ or the agreement between the Swiss authorities and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)¹⁰. In both cases, the aim was to stop the terrorist

⁵ B. Woodward, *Veil. The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987*, New York 2005, p. 100.

⁶ Cf. A. Hänni, *Terrorismus als Konstrukt. Schwarze Propaganda, politische Bedrohungsängste und der Krieg gegen den Terrorismus in Reagans Amerika* (Eng. Terrorism as a construct. Black Propaganda, Political Threat Fears and the War on Terror in Reagan's America), Essen 2018.

⁷ T. Riegler, *Im Fadenkreuz: Österreich und der Nahostterrorismus 1973-1985* (Eng. In the Crosshairs: Austria and Middle East Terrorism 1973-1985), Göttingen 2011.

⁸ A. Guttman, *The Origins of International Counterterrorism: Switzerland at the Forefront of Crisis Negotiations, Multilateral Diplomacy, and Intelligence Cooperation (1969-1977)*, London 2017.

⁹ *Les espions français parlent* (Eng. French spies talk), S. Laurent (ed.), Paris 2013, pp. 490-491; M. Lammert, *Der neue Terrorismus: Terrorismus bekämpfung in Frankreich in den 1980er Jahren* (Eng. The New Terrorism: Counterterrorism in France in the 1980s), Berlin-Boston 2017, pp. 139-141.

¹⁰ M. Gyr, *Schweizer Terrorjahre. Das geheime Abkommen mit der PLO* (Eng. Swiss terror years. The secret agreement with the PLO), Zurich 2016; M. Gyr, *The Secret 1970 Moratorium*

activities of the groups in question in exchange for specific benefits, such as the release of prisoners or diplomatic support. New documents from the archives of both eastern and western states make it possible to revise the knowledge of their relations with terrorists and, in particular, to highlight the diverse dimensions of cooperation: ideological, political, economic and intelligence. Recent research shows that there was no single, established approach to the phenomenon of terrorism in the Soviet bloc, and that individual countries pursued independent policies in this regard, which, however, did not in any way infringe upon Moscow's interests. Moreover, anti-terrorist cooperation within the Warsaw Pact was severely limited, and the communist services did not usually share information about their own contacts with terrorist groups¹¹.

The purpose of this article is to present the secret links of the Soviet bloc states with international terrorist organisations, to discuss the sources and backstage of their cooperation and to point out the factors conditioning them. In this context, it is legitimate to find an answer to the question whether the People's Republic of Poland can be treated as a sponsor of international terrorism¹². The first part of the article discusses

Agreement Between Switzerland and the PLO, in: Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in the West, Middle East and Latin America, vol. 2, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2021, pp. 63–87.

¹¹ Cf. P. Žáček, "Our solidarity in the struggle is the guarantee of our victory". *The Counterintelligence Anti-Terrorist Apparatus in the East Bloc in the 1980s. A Czechoslovak Perspective*, "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 2020, no. 2, pp. 449–482.

¹² On the subject of the People's Republic of Poland and international terrorism, see in more detail: P. Gasztold, *Zabójcze układy. Szuszy PRL i międzynarodowy terroryzm* (Eng. Lethal arrangements. The services of the People's Republic of Poland and international terrorism), Warszawa 2017; idem, *Polish Military Intelligence and Its Secret Relationship with the Abu Nidal Organization*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, pp. 85–106; idem, *Biznes z terrorystami. Brudne interesy wywiadu wojskowego PRL z bliskowschodnimi organizacjami terrorystycznymi* (Eng. Business with terrorists. The dirty business of communist Poland's military intelligence with Middle Eastern terrorist organisations), "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 2014, no. 1, pp. 165–216; idem, *Międzynarodowi terroryści w PRL – historia niewymuszonej współpracy* (Eng. International terrorists in the People's Republic of Poland - a story of unforced cooperation), "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 2013, no. 1, pp. 275–315; idem, *Between Geopolitics and National Security. Polish Intelligence and International Terrorism during the Cold War*, in: *Need to know. Western and Eastern Perspectives*, W. Bułhak, T.W. Friis (eds.), Odense 2014, pp. 137–162; idem, *Międzynarodowi terroryści w Warszawie (lata siedemdziesiąte i osiemdziesiąte XX wieku)* (Eng. International terrorists in Warsaw (1970s and 1980s)), in: *Cudzoziemcy w Warszawie*

the relations of communist states with terrorist groups, followed by a presentation of the relations of the services of the People's Republic of Poland with terrorists. The article makes use of historical materials from the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, the Archives of the Modern Files, the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Military Archives, documents of the East German services from the Bundesarchiv (German: Das Stasi-Unterlagen-Archiv) in Berlin, additionally documents from the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., the Archives of the American University in Beirut and the Institute of Palestinian Studies in Beirut were also used.

The Soviet bloc and international terrorism - determinants of cooperation

The declassification of documents of the former intelligence services in communist states has meant that quite a lot is now known about their behind-the-scenes contacts with international terrorist organisations. This knowledge is certainly broader and more accurate than about such relationships established by the Soviet Union. Due to the lack of access to the Soviet Union's archival documents, they still largely remain *terra incognita* when it comes to researching the relations of terrorist states and organisations.

From the analysis so far, it is clear that the relationship of communist states with transnational terrorist groups does not fit into the division proposed by Daniel Byman, who presented the support given to terrorist groups by states on the following scale: strong, medium, small, ambivalent and passive¹³. In drawing up this division, Byman focused primarily on the contacts of the state authorities, but did not take into account the behind-the-scenes activities carried out by the intelligence services. He also neglected the importance of links of an economic nature, resulting, for example, from the arms trade, which were a characteristic element

1945–1989. *Studia i materiały*, P. Pleskot (ed.), Warszawa 2012, pp. 115–134; W. Gadowski, P. Wojciechowski, *Tragarze śmierci. Polskie związki ze światowym terroryzmem* (Eng. Porters of death. Polish links with global terrorism), Warszawa 2010.

¹³ D. Byman, *Deadly Connections. States that Sponsor Terrorism*, New York 2005, p. 15; cf. A. Wejksznier, *Terroryzm sponsorowany przez państwa. Casus bliskowschodnich państw-sponsorów* (Eng. State-sponsored terrorism. The casus of Middle Eastern sponsor states), "Przegląd Politologiczny" 2010, no. 2, pp. 56–57.

of, among other things, the cooperation of the Polish People's Republic's services with international terrorism.

In the public sphere, Moscow always condemned terrorist acts and was quite wary of the revolutionary concepts of *guerilla warfare* used by many leftist, anarchist and communist groups in the Third World and Western Europe. The Soviet authorities sought to draw a line between legitimate national liberation struggles, such as those of the IRA, and illegitimate actions, such as those of the RAF, which carried out terrorist acts. In Moscow's view, the latter actions in no way approximated the introduction of communism in Western Europe¹⁴. The Kremlin took a similar position with regard to aircraft hijackings, incidents which did not gain the approval of the CPSU mainly because they also occurred in the USSR. An example is the hijacking of an Aeroflot plane in October 1970 by two Lithuanians, who, after terrorising the crew, forced the pilots to land in Turkey¹⁵.

Before the 1967 Six-Day War between the Arab states and Israel, Moscow's policy towards the Palestinian movement was ambivalent. The Soviet Union was cautious about the Fedayeen's anti-Israeli rhetoric, just as it was cautious about their political course, which had little to do with the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. Hence, for example, in 1966 Soviet Russia, the party organ of the CPSU, even proclaimed that the fedayeen were a fictitious creation created by Israel to justify aggression against Syria. The Kremlin only changed its attitude towards the PLO after 1967, at which time, in the face of Israeli aggression, the struggle of the Palestinians was considered 'just'. The change in position became even more noticeable in 1969, when CPSU Politburo member Alexander Shelepin said that the Soviet Union considered the Palestinian struggle "just, anti-imperialist and of national liberation"¹⁶. Such a statement was written explicitly in late 1969 in the Soviet "Pravda"¹⁷. The Kremlin's change of attitude towards

¹⁴ G. Golan, *The Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organization. An Uneasy Alliance*, New York 1980, pp. 210–227; cf. M. Fredholm, *Soviet Approaches to Muslim Extremism and Terrorism*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in the West, Middle East and Latin America*, vol. 2, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2021, pp. 42–60.

¹⁵ E.R. Scott, *The Hijacking of Aeroflot Flight 244: States and Statelessness in the Late Cold War, "Past & Present"* 2019, vol. 243, no. 1, pp. 213–245.

¹⁶ A.R. Norton, *Moscow and the Palestinians. A New Tool of Soviet Policy in the Middle East*, Coral Gables 1974, pp. 7–8.

¹⁷ P.T. Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive. The United States, The Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*, New York 2012, p. 51.

the PLO was largely due to Beijing's policy of supporting the Palestinians and supplying them with arms as early as 1964¹⁸. Moscow did not want to lose its influence on PLO policy, hence it modified its previous approach. By the end of the 1960s, the Soviet services already had a good overview of the situation inside the Palestinian movement, and cooperation was unofficially established with some groups¹⁹.

Declassified documents from the resources of the so-called Mitrokhin archive show evidence of Soviet support for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and specifically, the faction led by Wadie Haddad. He had worked closely with the KGB since 1968 and was recruited two years later as a source with the pseudonym 'The Nationalist'. Thanks to its close contacts with the Soviets, Haddad's group received large quantities of modern weaponry, financial aid and support for intelligence and sabotage training²⁰. The Kremlin's particular interest in the activities of the PFLP stemmed from the political line adopted by this organisation, which was clearly Marxist-Leninist, in contrast to Al-Fatah led by Yasser Arafat²¹.

However, the KGB's assistance to the PFLP was not altruistic and Moscow, in exchange for arms supplies, planned to use Palestinian terrorists to kidnap, among others, Lewis V. Sevier, a CIA officer from the Beirut station. Ultimately, this task did not materialise, mainly due to the PFLP leadership's disagreement with such a risky operation²². According to Ronen Bergman, however, the group's fighters were involved in liquidating Soviet defectors and people suspected of having contacts with the CIA. They were supposed to be acting on behalf of the KGB, which did not want to be identified

¹⁸ W. Laquer, *The Age of Terrorism*, Boston 1987, p. 276.

¹⁹ R. Bergman, *The KGB's Middle East Files: Palestinians in the service of Mother Russia*, Middle East Transparent, 11 IV 2016, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4874089,00.html> [accessed: 13 IX 2022].

²⁰ Ch. Andrew, W. Mitrochin, *Archiwum Mitrochina II. KGB i świat* (Eng. Mitrokhin Archive II. The KGB and the world), Poznań 2014, pp. 280–284.

²¹ Archive of the American University of Beirut, Middle East Ephemera Collection, *Die Feinde Der Palästinensischen Revolution* (Eng. The Enemies of the Palestinian Revolution), Amman 1970.

²² I. Ginor, G. Remez, *The KGB's Abduction Programme and the PFLP on the Cusp Between Intelligence and Terrorism*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, pp. 21–39.

with the murders²³. After Haddad's death in 1978, the Soviet services found it difficult to continue their favourable relationship with the PFLP mainly because of rifts within the organisation²⁴. At the time, Moscow was increasingly actively supporting the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), a strictly Marxist grouping that also used terrorist methods, although no longer on such a spectacular scale as the PFLP²⁵. The KGB's Beirut station maintained regular contact with the DFLP leader, who was Nayef Hawatmeh and used his group to carry out disinformation operations²⁶. The DFLP also received assistance in the form of armaments, training, medical treatment and scholarships for its members²⁷.

While internationally Moscow recognised the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian movement, behind the scenes the CPSU leadership was quite sceptical of Arafat's political activities. Although the PLO received military support from the Soviet Union, the authorities in the Kremlin had limited confidence in Arafat and his closest associates²⁸. The Soviet services also maintained secret relations with Arafat's opponents in the Palestinian movement, including the ANO, which carried out a number of terrorist attacks targeting Israel and the more liberal-minded PLO leaders²⁹. According to declassified East German service documents, contacts with the ANO were maintained through the USSR Military Attaché Office in Damascus, so presumably through a GRU station. In turn, the ANO sought to acquire the latest weaponry from the Soviets. For a while Moscow did not want to develop contacts at the political level, but in March 1984 it was decided to step up cooperation with the terrorists, as they were said to represent a pro-socialist approach³⁰. Abu Nidal is

²³ R. Bergman, *Rise and Kill First. The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations*, New York 2018, p. 196.

²⁴ A. Hänni, *Introduction. State support for terrorist actors in the Cold War – myths and reality (Part 1)*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, p. 6.

²⁵ Y. Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism*, Ardsley 2003, pp. 45–48.

²⁶ Ch. Andrew, W. Mitrochin, *Archiwum Mitrochina...*, p. 287.

²⁷ H.W. Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, Thousand Oaks 2003, p. 164.

²⁸ Cf. R. Dannreuther, *The Soviet Union and the PLO*, New York 1998.

²⁹ P. Seale, *Abu Nidal: A Gun For Hire*, London 1992; Y. Melman, *The Master Terrorist. The True Story Behind Abu Nidal*, New York 1986.

³⁰ Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), MfS HA XXII, sygn. 5193/1, Abteilung XXII/8

believed to have maintained relations with the KGB using meetings with KGB officers in Sofia and in Warsaw, although the scale of these contacts is difficult to determine³¹. Unfortunately, Russian intelligence archives are still inaccessible to foreign researchers, making it impossible to draw new conclusions about the Kremlin's links to terrorist organisations.

Thanks to the declassification of East German documents, it is clear how international terrorism was used by the services there. In this case, a great deal of material has been preserved that clearly shows the collaboration of the GDR with various extremist groups operating in the Middle East and Western Europe³². The GDR authorities pursued an active policy in Third World countries, thus seeking international legitimacy for their rule. East Berlin therefore maintained close ties with various national liberation groups³³, to whom arms were supplied, financial support, training and scholarships were provided. From 1970 to 1989, the Stasi trained almost 1,900 fighters and security apparatus personnel from 15 countries. The scale of cooperation was enormous, but this was not the only thing that distinguished East Berlin's attitude to the national liberation movements from other Soviet bloc countries. Above all, the services there worked closely with the RAF, a terrorist group with a far-left profile that was wreaking havoc in Western Europe. The Stasi maintained regular contact with some RAF members, who were allowed to settle in the GDR, facilitated transit, and provided paramilitary training³⁴.

(Eng. Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (BStU), MfS HA XXII, ref. 5193/1, Division XXII/8), *Zur palastinensichen Organisation Fatah-RC – bekannt als Gruppe "Abu Nidal"* (Eng. On the Palestinian organisation Fatah-RC - known as the "Abu Nidal" group), Berlin, 4 XII 1984, c. 1.

³¹ T. Wunschik, *Palestinian Terrorism and the State Security of the GDR. Abu Nidal Between East Berlin, Moscow and Washington 1973–89*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, p. 67.

³² Cf. M. Bengtson-Krallert, *Die DDR und der internationale Terrorismus* (Eng. The GDR and international terrorism), Berlin 2016; T. Riegler, „*Es muß ein gegenseitiges Geben und Nehmen sein*“. *Warschauer-Pakt-Staaten und Terrorismusbekämpfung am Beispiel der DDR* (Eng. "It must be a mutual give and take". Warsaw Pact states and counter-terrorism using the example of the GDR), in: *Terrorismusbekämpfung in Westeuropa: Demokratie Und Sicherheit in Den 1970er Und 1980er Jahrens*, J. Hürter (ed.), Berlin–München–Boston 2014, pp. 289–315.

³³ Among others, with the African National Congress (ANC), the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU).

³⁴ J. Gieseke, *Stasi. Historia* (Eng. Stasi. History), Kraków 2010, pp. 254–257; J.C. Schmeidel, *Stasi. Shield and Sword of the Party*, New York 2008, pp. 142–162; M. Jander, *Die Stasi und*

The German service also maintained contact with far-right terrorists, the best example of which was its secret relationship with Odfried Hepp³⁵.

Close relations existed between the GDR authorities and various Palestinian groups³⁶, including the organisation of training for PLO fighters in the use of explosives, mines and small arms with silencers³⁷. They also established contacts with the ANO, which like the PLO was a beneficiary of paramilitary training³⁸. In addition, ANO members received scholarships and business opportunities, including those related to the arms trade. In return, the organisation promised not to carry out terrorist activities from within the GDR and not to attack communist countries. The Stasi's cooperation with the ANO continued until 1986, when the company linked with the terrorists was closed down³⁹.

During the Cold War, the West very often accused Bulgarian services of working closely with international terrorism. However, recent research of archival material has not confirmed these assumptions. No evidence has been found to show that the Bulgarian security services maintained direct contacts with the Red Brigades, a terrorist organisation operating mainly in Italy, which represented the far-left current⁴⁰. Moreover, the authorities in Sofia arrested four RAF members in 1978 and handed them over to the West German services, an unprecedented decision in the Soviet bloc related to the upcoming visit of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. In retaliation,

die RAF. Raunen statt Fakten: Regine Igels "Terrorismus-Lügen" (Eng. The Stasi and the RAF. Whispers instead of facts: Regine Igel's "Terrorism Lies"), "Osteuropa" 2013, vol. 63, no. 5/6, pp. 367–374; K. Storkmann, *Geheime Solidarität. Militärbeziehungen und Militärhilfen der DDR in die »Dritte Welt«* (Eng. Secret Solidarity. Military Relations and Military Aid of the GDR to the "Third World"), Berlin 2012.

³⁵ B. Blumenau, *Unholy Alliance: The Connection between the East German Stasi and the Right-Wing Terrorist Odfried Hepp*, "Studies in Conflict & Terrorism" 2020, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 47–68.

³⁶ L. Maeke, *DDR und PLO – Die Palästinapolitik des SED-Staates* (Eng. GDR and PLO – The Palestine Policy of the SED State), Berlin–Boston 2017.

³⁷ Ch. Andrew, W. Mitrochin, *Archiwum Mitrochina...*, p. 292.

³⁸ M. Wolf, A. McElvoy, *Człowiek bez twarzy. Autobiografia szefa STASI* (Eng. The man without a face. Autobiography of a STASI chief), Warszawa 1999, p. 353.

³⁹ T. Wunschik, *Palestinian Terrorism...*, p. 66–75.

⁴⁰ On the Red Brigades, see in more detail: A. Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists*, Ithaca–London 2011; R. Bartali, *Red Brigades (1969–1974): An Italian Phenomenon and a Product of the Cold War*, "Modern Italy" 2007, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 349–369; M. Re, *The Red Brigades' Communiqués: An Analysis of the Terrorist Group's Propaganda*, "Terrorism and Political Violence" 2020, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 275–292.

RAF terrorists blew up two offices of the Bulgarian trade delegation located in Western Europe. By contrast, it is known that Bulgarian services hosted at least one member of the Black Panthers and maintained secret relations with some Palestinian organisations, including the ANO. The joint meetings served, among other things, to gain intelligence on the situation in the Middle East. In addition, a number of wanted terrorists, such as 'Carlos', who used falsified passports, were in Bulgaria. Some of them were able to move freely in the country, but were subject to discreet surveillance⁴¹.

When Ali Ağca shot Pope John Paul II on 13 May 1981, one of the themes of the Italian investigation was the involvement of Bulgarian services in the attack. The would-be assassin was said to have received support from Sergei Antonov, an employee of the Bulgarian airline. There were even hypotheses that Lech Wałęsa, who had planned to visit Rome in January 1981, was also the target of the assassination⁴². It is assumed that the Bulgarian services, probably acting on orders from the KGB, planned the assassination of the Pope, which would have had the effect of weakening the growing role of the Catholic Church in Poland during the Solidarity era, as well as getting rid of a person with a clearly anti-communist orientation from the Holy See. On the one hand, some documents clearly indicate that the Bulgarian services may have been involved in the assassination attempt⁴³, while on the other hand, it has not been possible to find direct evidence in the Bulgarian archives clearly confirming that these very services ordered the Pope's assassination. It is known, however, that Ağca was in Sofia in 1980 using a forged passport. On the other hand, after analysing the declassified documents, there is no doubt that the Bulgarian services organised a vast disinformation campaign shortly after the assassination attempt to divert attention from Sofia's role in the would-be assassination of John Paul II⁴⁴.

Until 1968, Czechoslovakia was very active in providing assistance to Third World national liberation movements. The country also maintained

⁴¹ J. Baev, *Bulgarian State Security and International Terrorism*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, pp. 143–166; cf. *International Terrorism in the Bulgarian State Security Files. Documentary Volume*, Sofia 2010.

⁴² S. Elad, A. Merari, *The Soviet Bloc...*, pp. 42–43.

⁴³ Cf. A. Grajewski, M. Skwara, *Agca nie był sam. Wokół udziału komunistycznych służb specjalnych w zamachu na Jana Pawła II* (Eng. Ağca was not alone. Around the involvement of the communist secret services in the assassination of John Paul II), Katowice 2015.

⁴⁴ J. Baev, *Bulgarian State Security...*, pp. 153–156.

contacts with groups carrying out terrorist activities. It supplied them with weapons and also provided paramilitary and intelligence training at the Antonín Zápotocke Military Academy in Brno. Between 1959 and 1966, fighters of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola - Labour Party (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola - Partido do Trabalho, MPLA), the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, FRELIMO), as well as members of the Nigerian Action Front benefited from such support'. The Czechoslovak services were very active in infiltrating the liberation movements and recruited, among others, Amilcar Cabral, co-founder of the PAIGC⁴⁵, Virato da Cruz, secretary of the MPLA, and Mehdi Ben Barka Moroccan oppositionist⁴⁶. The authorities in Prague have also worked closely with states that sponsor international terrorism, a shining example being the relationship between Prague and Libya ruled by Muammar Gaddafi⁴⁷. They also maintained contacts with various Palestinian groups, to whom they supplied arms, provided training and cooperated in business ventures involving, among other things, the arms trade. In 1981, one of the PLO leaders Salah Khalaf alias Abu Ijad even proposed the assassination of Czechoslovakian émigré Jiří Pelikán, and this plan was reportedly accepted by the Interior Ministry. However, it was not carried out due to opposition from the Czechoslovak security services fearing international repercussions if the truth about Prague's collaboration with the PLO came to light. Recent archival research, however, indicates that known terrorists such as 'Carlos' or Abu Daud (born Mohammad Oudeh), who came frequently to Czechoslovakia, were not treated as allies but as a serious security threat. It is true that their stays in Prague were not made too difficult, but their arrivals, of which the services knew in advance, were discreetly monitored by counter-intelligence.

⁴⁵ N. Telepneva, 'Code Name SEKRETÁŘ': Amilcar Cabral, Czechoslovakia and the Role of Human Intelligence during the Cold War, "The International History Review" 2020, vol. 42, no. 6, pp. 1257–1273.

⁴⁶ J. Koura, A prominent spy: Mehdi Ben Barka, Czechoslovak intelligence, and Eastern Bloc espionage in the Third World during the Cold War, "Intelligence and National Security" 2021, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 318–339.

⁴⁷ P. Žáček, Military Intelligence from Libya and Terrorism – The 'Oil' residency in the materials of the Main Military Counterintelligence Directorate, "Behind the Iron Curtain" 2012, vol. 2, pp. 139–151.

At the same time, the authorities in Prague were doing what they could to discourage terrorists from using Czechoslovakia as a logistical centre and holiday retreat⁴⁸. An example of this are 'Carlos' frequent visits to Prague, which kept the local counter-intelligence services busy, as he always used false documents and diplomatic passports. Although they never decided to arrest him because of fears of possible reprisals in the form of an attack on Czechoslovakian targets, in 1986 the security services tricked him into leaving the country and since then the terrorist has not returned to Eastern Europe⁴⁹.

For many years, there were allegations that the Czechoslovak services supported the activities of the Red Brigades. Accusations directed towards Prague arose when weapons manufactured in Czechoslovakia and passports with Czechoslovak stamps were found in the detained terrorists. This was a clear indication that they had crossed the Czechoslovak border, and so there was speculation that they had benefited from support from the services there, including training at a secret centre in Karlovy Vary. There is a lack of reliable documentation on the subject, but recent research suggests that Prague's close collaboration with Italian terrorists is doubtful. Behind-the-scenes contacts may have been established in the early 1970s, but in the later period the Czechoslovak services probably did not have any relations with the Red Brigades, let alone support their terrorist activities⁵⁰.

A lot is known about Romania's links with terrorist organisations. Under Nicolae Ceaușescu, the country had a very active policy in the Third World and was even involved in various mediation missions in the Middle

⁴⁸ M. Pešta, *Reluctant revolutionaries: Czechoslovak support of revolutionary violence between decolonization and détente*, "Intelligence and National Security" 2022, vol. 37, no. 7, pp. 1009–1010.

⁴⁹ D. Richterová, *The anxious host: Czechoslovakia and Carlos the Jackal 1978–1986*, "The International History Review" 2018, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 108–132; P. Žáček, *Carlos the Jackal in Prague. Communist Czechoslovakia and International Terrorism. A Case Study*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, pp. 107–122; idem, *Ruce světové retuce. Carlos a Státní bezpečnost, 1976–1989. Edice dokumentů* (Eng. *The hands of the world revolution. Carlos and the State Security, 1976–1989. Documentary edition*), vol. I–II, Praga 2022.

⁵⁰ J. Petlák, M. Mareš, *The Red Brigades and communist Czechoslovakia: a troubling legacy full of ambiguities*, "Intelligence and National Security" 2020, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 870–884.

East⁵¹. It also worked closely with the PLO, which it recognised as a national liberation structure, although in this case Bucharest had to be cautious as it still maintained diplomatic relations with Israel after the Six Day War⁵². The Romanian services also made a secret agreement with ‘Carlos’, who was used to carry out a terrorist attack on Radio Free Europe in Munich on 21 February 1981⁵³. The background to this collaboration is known in outline, but many documents proving the involvement of the Securitate in the preparation of the attack have been destroyed⁵⁴.

Hungary, which became a safe haven for many radical organisations during the Cold War, played a special role on the terrorist map of the world. Among others, Basque, Turkish, Kurdish, Irish, Japanese, French, Italian and Armenian terrorists used to come to Budapest. Hungarian services tried to monitor the arrivals of suspicious visitors, but did not make it too difficult for them to cross the border. Budapest was a particularly favourite destination for ‘Carlos’, who often came there both to relax and to meet other terrorists. Various Palestinian groups were also active, including the PLO and ANO. There was close co-operation with some groups by Hungarian services, such as Abu Abbas’s Palestine Liberation Front (born Muhammad Zaidan), whose members received weapons free of charge and took part in military training. The Hungarian approach to international terrorism changed in the mid-1980s, when the ‘Carlos’ group and Abu Abbas were expelled, and it was also decided to dismantle Abu Nidal’s bases⁵⁵.

Yugoslavia’s involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement meant that it had a special relationship with Third World countries. This had a bearing on the approach of the authorities in Belgrade towards terrorist organisations,

⁵¹ Cf. I.M. Pacepa, *Czerwone horyzonty. Prawdziwa historia zbrodni, życia i upadku Nicolae Ceaușescu* (Eng. Red Horizons. The true story of the crimes, life and downfall of Nicolae Ceaușescu), Warszawa 1990.

⁵² E. Gheorghe, *Communists and Terrorists: Brothers in Arms or Allies of Convenience?*, Wilson Center, 13 IV 2020, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/communists-and-terrorists-brothers-arms-or-allies-convenience> [accessed: 20 IX 2022].

⁵³ L. Tofan, *Sacalul Securitatii. Teroristul Carlos in solda spionajului romanesc* (Eng. Security Jackal. The terrorist Carlos in the pay of Romanian espionage), București 2013.

⁵⁴ V. Gheonea, *Carlos Șacalul și politica antiteroristă a României în anii '70* (Eng. Carlos The Jackal and Romania’s anti-terrorist policy in the 1970s), “Arhivele Totalitarismului” 2021, vol. 29, no. 1–2, pp. 154–181.

⁵⁵ B. Orbán-Schwarzkopf, *Hungarian State Security and International Terrorism in the 1980s*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, pp. 123–142.

which in many cases were treated as national liberation organisations. And they not only tolerated the stay of their members, but also provided them with support in the form of weapons and training. Yugoslavia also played an important role as a transit country for many groups, although the services there tried to control the arrival of terrorists and the activities they carried out. An example of this is 'Carlos' and his group, who repeatedly asked to cooperate with the Yugoslav services, but such requests were rejected, and in 1983 the terrorists were even forced to leave the country⁵⁶. It is also worth adding that Yugoslavia was facing terrorism from radical emigration groups⁵⁷.

Albania took a unique stance towards the activities of Palestinian armed organisations. The authorities there supported their struggle for self-determination, but explicitly condemned terrorist activities. This may have been due to the fact that Albania worked closely with China and was therefore quite wary of the PLO's relations with countries under Moscow's control. The authorities in Tirana also did not agree to the transfer of arms to the Palestinians⁵⁸.

A country that had a specific attitude towards terrorism was the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The authorities in Pyongyang had an active policy in the Third World and supported various liberation organisations, including those that used terrorist methods⁵⁹. Between 1968 and 1988, there are believed to have been around 30 training bases on DPRK soil, where more than 5,000 fighters from 25 countries were trained in sabotage and guerilla warfare. The DPRK secret service also supported some Palestinian terrorist groups⁶⁰ and the far-left Japanese Red Army⁶¹. Its members hijacked a Japanese plane on 30 March 1970 and landed

⁵⁶ G. Akrap, *Yugoslavia, Carlos "The Jackal" and International Terrorism During the Cold War*, in: *Terrorism in the Cold War. State Support in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Sphere of Influence*, vol. 1, A. Hänni, T. Riegler, P. Gasztold (eds.), London–New York 2020, pp. 167–184.

⁵⁷ M.N. Tokić, *Croatian Radical Separatism and Diaspora Terrorism During the Cold War*, West Lafayette 2020.

⁵⁸ K. Këlliçi, *The PLO and Communist Albania: Cold War Relations*, "Journal of Palestine Studies" 2021, vol. 50, no. 4, pp. 53–66.

⁵⁹ B.R. Young, *Guns, Guerillas and the Great Leader. North Korea and the Third World*, Stanford 2021; J.T. Kim, *North Korean Terrorism: Trends, Characteristics, and Deterrence*, "Terrorism" 1988, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 309–322.

⁶⁰ B.E. Bechtol, Jr., *North Korea and Support to Terrorism: An Evolving History*, "Journal of Strategic Studies" 2010, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 45–54.

⁶¹ D.H. Chang, M. Yajima, *The Japanese Sekigun Terrorists: Red Army Samurai Warriors*, "International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice" 1989, vol. 13, no. 1,

in Pyongyang. There they were warmly welcomed by Kim Il Sung, who hosted them. He later used them in operations to kidnap Japanese citizens⁶². North Korean services have also carried out terrorist attacks themselves, including a bomb planted in Rangoon in October 1983 that killed 21 South Korean officials who were in Burma on an official visit. In November 1987, two DPRK intelligence officers planted a bomb on a KAL airline plane that crashed over the Andaman Sea. The crash killed 115 passengers and crew members. The bombing was intended to disorganise preparations for the upcoming Seoul Olympics⁶³. Since 1988 (with the exception of 2008-2017), the DPRK has been listed by the US State Department as a country supporting international terrorism⁶⁴. In this context, it is worth noting that some of the Japanese Red Army terrorists are still in the DPRK and under the protection of North Korean intelligence services⁶⁵.

After analysing the examples cited, it must be concluded that the Soviet bloc countries' approach to international terrorism differed from the concept presented in Claire Sterling's book. Moscow did not supervise a terrorist 'international', well-known terrorists such as 'Carlos' were not usually welcome in the capitals of communist countries, and some organisations, such as the Red Brigades, were unlikely to have cooperated with the intelligence services of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. This does not mean, however, that allegations of support for international terrorism levelled against the Soviet bloc are exaggerated and without source basis. Thanks to recent research, it is possible to identify motivations other than those mentioned so far that guided individual countries in establishing secret relationships with terrorists, the best example being the People's Republic of Poland.

pp. 1-22; Ch. Gerteis, *Mobilizing Japanese Youth. The Cold War and the Making of the Sixties Generation*, Ithaca-London 2021, pp. 42-67.

⁶² P.G. Steinhoff, *Kidnapped Japanese in North Korea: The New Left Connection*, "The Journal of Japanese Studies" 2004, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 123-142.

⁶³ A. DiFilippo, *North Korea as a State Sponsor of Terrorism: Views from Tokyo and Pyongyang*, "International Journal of Korean Unification Studies" 2008, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 1-40; *Terrorism by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)*, in: *The Oncoming Threat of Terrorism: The Growing Severity of the International Terrorism Situation*, Tokyo 2005, <https://www.npa.go.jp/archive/keibi/syouten/syouten271/english/pdf/sec04.pdf> [accessed: 14 IX 2022].

⁶⁴ *State Sponsors of Terrorism*, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/> [accessed: 14 IX 2022].

⁶⁵ B.R. Young, *Guns, Guerillas and...*, p. 53.

The People's Republic of Poland as a sponsor of international terrorism

The approach of the People's Republic of Poland to international terrorism was to some extent no different from that of other communist countries, although Warsaw was not as frequent a destination for members of terrorist organisations as Budapest, Prague or East Berlin. Perhaps they did not feel very safe here, especially after the assassination attempt on Abu Daud carried out on 1 August 1981 in Warsaw's Victoria Hotel⁶⁶. The PZPR authorities never publicly condoned terrorist acts, and propaganda cautiously reported on attacks in the West⁶⁷. The security apparatus of the People's Republic of Poland had been collecting information on the phenomenon of terrorism since the early 1970s, and the data of terrorists were transferred to special files. Some of them (e.g. members of the RAF) were later put on an index of undesirable persons, which in theory was supposed to prevent them from coming to the People's Republic of Poland. However, as these people often used forged passports, this type of tool was not very effective in restricting their arrivals.

Behind the scenes of the official policy of the Polish authorities, however, some radical groups could count on the favour and support of the communist regime's services. Such clandestine relationships were entered into for a variety of reasons. The predominant factors determining Warsaw's cooperation with terrorist organisations include political, ideological and economic reasons.

Political conditions determined that the People's Republic of Poland recognised the PLO as the only organisation representing the Palestinian national liberation movement and provided it with support in the international arena. However, the genesis of these contacts is interesting, as they were initiated in 1968 in Beirut by the station of the Directorate II of the General Staff of the Polish Army⁶⁸. It was the military intelligence services of the People's Republic of Poland that made the first contacts with Palestinian militants, influenced by developments in the region,

⁶⁶ On the assassination, see in more detail: P. Gasztold, *Zabójcze układy...*, pp. 279–348.

⁶⁷ J. Szumski, *Międzynarodowy terroryzm w polskiej literaturze i prasie lat siedemdziesiątych XX wieku (wybrane przykłady)* (Eng. International terrorism in Polish literature and press in the 1970s (selected examples)), "Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i Materiały" 2015, no. 14, pp. 161–187.

⁶⁸ P. Gasztold, *Wars, Weapons and Terrorists: Clandestine Operations of the Polish Military Intelligence Station in Beirut, 1965–1982*, "The International History Review" 2021, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 122–135.

particularly the 1967 Six-Day War, which resulted in the severance of diplomatic relations between the communist states (except Romania) and Israel⁶⁹. The defeat of Syria and Egypt in 1967 came as a huge shock to the Palestinians⁷⁰. They could no longer rely on the armies of the Arab states, so they decided to fight for independence on their own. The Palestinians did not want financial assistance, as they had a lot of cash received from the richer Arab states. However, they lacked modern weapons. Since they could not buy them in the West, they turned to the Soviet bloc states, which had been supplying arms to the 'progressive' Arab states since 1955. During this period, the Kremlin authorities were also changing their tactics towards the Palestinian movement, as exemplified by the establishment of the KGB's secret cooperation with the PFLP and Arafat's visit to Moscow in 1970⁷¹.

Talks with the Palestinians, initiated by the Beirut station of Directorate II, led to the conclusion of the first agreements for the sale of arms: *'The Palestine Liberation Organisation is interested in purchasing, as soon as possible, 1,000 AK-47s with metal flasks, 200 RPG-7 grenade launchers and 6,000 PG-7W grenades'*, wrote the director of the Central Engineering Board (Cenzin)⁷² Col. Kazimierz Mazurek⁷³, in November 1968. The first contract was successfully signed in January/February 1969 and concerned the delivery of 1,300 AK-47 rifles worth USD 110,000⁷⁴. In the following years, Cenzin concluded a number of contracts with Palestinian organisations for the sale of arms. Among them were: Al-Fatah, PFLP, As-Saika and

⁶⁹ See in more detail: P. Gasztold, *Zabójcze układy...*, pp. 19–64.

⁷⁰ J. Jarzabek, *Palestyńczycy na drodze do niepodległości. Rozwój, przemiany i kryzys ruchu narodowego* (Eng. Palestinians on the road to independence. The development, transformation and crisis of the national movement), Warszawa 2012, p. 41.

⁷¹ R. Ginat, U. Bar-Noi, *Tacit support for terrorism. The rapprochement between the USSR and Palestinian guerilla organizations following the 1967 war*, "Journal of Strategic Studies" 2007, vol. 30, no. 2, p. 267.

⁷² From 1955, located in the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Central Engineering Board was responsible for the export of armaments and military services.

⁷³ Military Historical Bureau-Central Military Archives (WBH-CAW), Head of Procurement and Supply of Military Technology, ref. 248/91/600, letter from the director of the Central Engineering Board of the MHZ, Col. Kazimierz Mazurek, to the head of the Bureau of Import and Export of the General Staff, Col. Boratyński, Warszawa, 6 XI 1968, c. 45.

⁷⁴ WBH-CAW, Head of Procurement and Supply of Military Technology, ref. 248/91/600, report on business trip to the Republic of Lebanon, 19 II 1969, c. 83.

the Palestine Liberation Front⁷⁵. Certain weapons (e.g. PM-63 submachine gun, the so-called RAK) were particularly cherished by terrorists, who often used them in assassinations.

Arms supply agreements were followed by relations of a political nature, an example of which was the opening of the PLO Permanent Representation in Warsaw in 1976⁷⁶. Shortly thereafter, the Security Service also made unofficial contact with PLO security officers, exchanging information on the activities of groups opposed to Arafat. This was important from an intelligence point of view, as it allowed both the pre-emptive identification of suspicious individuals coming from the Middle East and the recognition of the current position of Arafat's team. In 1983, Abu Iyad, one of the PLO's leaders, proposed officially establishing cooperation between the Polish services and Palestine, although it is not known whether a formal agreement was signed to this effect⁷⁷. At the time, the Palestinian movement was strongly differentiated. The leadership of the PZPR had the closest relations with the current subordinate to Yasir Arafat called Al-Fatah. Less intimate contacts were established with groups that represented the Marxist-Leninist current and were therefore ideologically closest to the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), namely the PFLP and DFLP⁷⁸.

According to declassified documents, the PFLP bought large quantities of armaments in Poland, especially in the early 1970s⁷⁹. The organisation's fighters admitted that weapons produced in socialist countries allowed them to offset to some extent the advantage of Israel, which was steadily

⁷⁵ P. Gasztold, *Wars, Weapons...*, p. 129.

⁷⁶ *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski. Informator* (Eng. Poland's diplomatic relations. Guide), vol. 4: *Afryka i Bliski Wschód 1918-2009*, K. Szczepanik, A. Herman-Lukasik, B. Janicka (eds.), Warszawa 2010, p. 226.

⁷⁷ Archive of New Records (hereinafter: AAN), Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), file LXXVI-624, *Excerpt from a note of a meeting held on 15 July 1983 between Mirosław Milewski, member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR, and a delegation of the PLO leadership led by Abu Iyad /SalahChalaf/, member of the Fatah Central Committee, visiting Poland at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, [n.p].

⁷⁸ Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter: AMSZ), Department V, ref. 26/86, w-2, 023-1-82, letter of the Commercial Counsellor Chargé D'affaires a. i. in Beirut Tadeusz Lisek to the Director of Department V of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Stanisław Turbański, Beirut, 1 II 1982, [b.p].

⁷⁹ In November 1970, for example, the PFLP purchased 1,000 Kalashnikovs for USD 79,000. WBH-CAW, Head of Procurement and Supply of Military Technology, 248/91/475, specification of goods supplied under contract no. 12021, [November 1970], p. 5.

expanding its military-industrial complex⁸⁰. The weapons purchased by the PFLP could also have been used in terrorist attacks or given to other extremist groups, such as the Red Army Faction. So far, however, no circumstantial evidence has been confirmed to indicate any agreement between the PRL services and the PFLP. At least until 1980, Poland was the only socialist country with which the PFLP did not establish official cooperation⁸¹. The leadership structures of the PZPR did not maintain closer relations with the PFLP, and delegations from this organisation visiting the People's Republic of Poland were later invited only by the Polish Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The grouping did, however, receive support in the form of four scholarships granted annually⁸². DFLP could also count on similar assistance⁸³. Both groups were able to operate freely in the People's Republic of Poland, and the subsidies they received could be treated as rewards for trusted or experienced fighters. They could also count on the favour and tolerance of the communist services. Nevertheless, they were actively infiltrated by the communist counterintelligence, which together with PLO services tried to monitor the situation in the Palestinian diaspora. When one of the Polish sources located inside the DFLP milieu received a proposal to go to Israel and carry out a terrorist attack there, the Security Service carried out a thorough analysis of the benefits and risks associated with the offer. In the end, it was decided that the participation of a Pole in terrorist activities would bring more damage internationally than the benefits, which would be the information coming from the organisation itself⁸⁴.

There is also a lack of documents confirming the cooperation of the People's Republic of Poland's services with the extreme left-wing RAF. It is known that in the internal studies of the Ministry of the Interior,

⁸⁰ Institute of Palestine Studies, PF-P831mi, *Military Strategy of the PFLP*, Beirut 1970, pp. 40–42.

⁸¹ AMSZ, Directorate V, ref. 25/85, w-4, 22-5-80, memo by Janusz Zabłocki, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Poland to Lebanon, from a conversation with a member of the Political Bureau of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - Taysir Khuba, Beirut, 31 I 1980, [n.p].

⁸² AAN, Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), ref. LXXVII-38, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - a study by the Department-Secretariat of the International Commission of the Central Committee of the PZPR, Warsaw, April 1989, [n.p].

⁸³ Cf. P. Gasztold, *Zabójcze układy...*, pp. 92–96.

⁸⁴ Idem, *Międzynarodowi terroryści w PRL...*, pp. 307–308.

the terrorism of this organisation was strongly criticised as ineffective and even working in favour of the authorities in Bonn, who used it to increase the powers for West-German counterintelligence. Members of the RAF travelled all over Europe, using false documents, and also visited Poland. In 1978, one of them was even recognised, prompting a nationwide search, which, however, did not lead to anything specific. It is known that East German services supported the RAF, but there are no documents that would allow the thesis of a similar role for the Polish security apparatus⁸⁵. However, some circumstantial evidence suggests that such cooperation may also have taken place⁸⁶. It is also known that 'Carlos', who used false documents, came to Poland several times, however, he was not always subjected to surveillance. It is also not known whether he maintained contacts with Polish services⁸⁷.

Instead, there is no shortage of documents confirming the long-standing cooperation of the Polish services with the ANO and the Monzer al-Kassar group. In both of these cases, the main plane of operation was economic and intelligence, not ideological. The terrorists' partners on the Polish side were the military intelligence services and Cenzin employees. Closer contacts were established after the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war, when the regime in Baghdad began to buy large quantities of armaments in Poland. The intermediary in the contracts concluded between Cenzin and Iraq was Samir Najmeddin, an arms dealer and head of the financial wing of the ANO⁸⁸. Andrzej Urbaniak, an employee of Cenzin and an asset of the military intelligence of the People's Republic of Poland, reported on the behind-the-scenes establishment of the relationship with ANO:

⁸⁵ Idem, *Der Sicherheitsapparat der Volksrepublik Polen und die Rote Armee Fraktion* (Eng. The Security Apparatus of the People's Republic of Poland and the Red Army Faction), "Inter Finitimos. Jahrbuch zur deutsch-polnischen Beziehungsgeschichte" 2011, no. 9, pp. 144–154.

⁸⁶ *O współpracy komunistycznych służb specjalnych ze światowym terroryzmem – z Witoldem Gadowskim rozmawiał Tomasz Plaskota* (Eng. On the cooperation of the communist secret services with global terrorism - Witold Gadowski interviewed by Tomasz Plaskota), "Glaukopis" 2013, no. 28, pp. 238–239.

⁸⁷ P. Gasztold-Seń, „Szakal” w Warszawie (Eng. „The Jackal” in Warsaw), "Pamięć.pl - Biuletyn IPN" 2012, no. 2; idem, „Szakal” na Starym Mieście (Eng. “The Jackal” in the Old Town), "Historia", a supplement to "Uważam Rze" 2017, no. 9, [n.p].

⁸⁸ Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter: AIPN), sign. 1405/23, memo of the Head of the Military Internal Service concerning trade talks with the Iraqi representative, Warsaw, 2 VII 1981, p. 23.

In 1980-82, the value of completed contracts amounted to approximately USD 550 million. What is worth emphasising is that the above cooperation took place in an atmosphere of mutual trust, without any irritations or misunderstandings. The aforementioned secured us very favourable prices, timely payments often ahead of actual delivery dates, which is unique in this business. Through their influence in Iraq, they inspired certain forms of assistance to our country, such as the placement of Iraqi deposits in BH (Bank Handlowy - author's note) in Warsaw to the tune of approximately USD 350 million. At the same time, with the help of the PLF (Abu Nidal - author's note), NATO armament patterns were delivered to the country in 1981, including components of the M-60 Chieftain tank⁸⁹.

The cooperation was going so well that the terrorists proposed to take it to the next level. To this end, a meeting was organised late in the evening on 18 May 1983 at Cenzin's headquarters. On behalf of the ANO, it was attended by Najmeddin, Mohammed Al-Bitar and a certain Mr 'Hani'; on the part of the hosts, Urbaniak, among others, was present. In addition to cooperation in the arms trade, Abu Nidal's men offered to share political and intelligence information⁹⁰. An unwritten agreement was made and thanks to it, the terrorists obtained many advantages related to their stays in Poland. The ANO leader also came to Poland many times for rest and recovery, using falsified passports, of course. His people were able to count on visa facilitation, received scholarships, and legalised their business activities by setting up two companies together with Cenzin and Directorate II of the General Staff⁹¹. The first (S.A.S.) was located in Warsaw's Intraco skyscraper, the second (Intermador) in Zurich. Both companies made huge amounts of money from legal and illegal arms trafficking. In exchange for hospitality, the terrorists shared information and also supplied the military intelligence of the People's Republic of Poland with goods embargoed by the West, especially weapons and military materials (e.g. bulletproof vests)⁹². The fruitful cooperation lasted

⁸⁹ AIPN, ref. 2602/27782, memo from "Urban" concerning a proposal for cooperation on information exchange, 24 V 1983, c. 221-222.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, c. 223-225.

⁹¹ Cf. P. Seale, *Abu Nidal...*, pp. 275-278.

⁹² AIPN, ref. 2602/17400, note on the possible possibility of supplying copies of arms and equipment produced by various countries through Palestinian groups with offices in Damascus, 10 VIII 1984, c. 50-51.

until the late 1980s and was not even interrupted by pressure from the US State Department. The Americans repeatedly reported to the communist authorities that a terrorist-controlled company was operating in Warsaw⁹³. Although S.A.S was closed down in 1987, Cenzin continued to cooperate with its representatives. According to the East German services, the CIA had a very good understanding of terrorist activities, thanks to the fact that Najmeddin had betrayed Nidal in the late 1980s, turned himself in to the Americans and can be guessed to have given them all the details of the terrorists' business ventures in the People's Republic of Poland and the GDR⁹⁴. Such a scenario is very likely, as evidenced by the cessation of ANO activities in Poland after 1990.

The relationship of the Polish People's Republic's services with Al-Kassar and his group has a similar genesis to its contacts with the ANO. In the 1980s, Al-Kassar ranked among the world's most important arms dealers. He also worked closely with Abu Abbas's Palestine Liberation Front and helped prepare terrorist attacks on, among others, the Italian ship Achille Lauro in October 1985. His cooperation with the People's Republic of Poland had a purely economic dimension. In 1983, Directorate II and Cenzin, together with Al-Kassar, set up the Alkastronic company in Vienna. It operated until December 1985, i.e. until the Austrian police raided its office and suspected Al-Kassar of illegal arms trafficking, drug smuggling and terrorist activities. Two Poles employed by Alkastronic - Tadeusz Koperwas and Henryk Majorczyk - were also arrested in Vienna and charged with terrorist activities. Both had worked for Cenzin and the military intelligence service of the People's Republic of Poland. In 1986, Al-Kassar opened his office in Warsaw, where he could count on the favour of military services and Cenzin employees, with whom he cooperated until 1990 and even later, as shown by declassified documents of the Military Information Services⁹⁵.

The contacts of the services of the People's Republic of Poland with the ANO and the Al-Kassar group differed from those with other groups. Firstly, the bilateral cooperation, based on the economic factor, concerned the arms trade. It was thus a business relationship in which ideological

⁹³ National Security Archive, TE00925, *The Abu Nidal Terror Network*, July 1987, c. 12–15.

⁹⁴ BStU, MfS HA XXII, ref. 1031/1, CIA activities in connection with the Abu Nidal group, Berlin, January 1990, c. 8.

⁹⁵ See in more detail: P. Gasztold, *Strange bedfellows in the arms trade: Polish intelligence, Monzer al-Kassar and the Iran-Contra affair*, "Intelligence and National Security" 2022, vol. 37, no. 5, pp. 627–650.

considerations were not paramount. Secondly, both ANO and Al-Kassar provided embargoed goods and information to the services of the People's Republic of Poland in exchange for favour from the services, visa facilitation, scholarships received and the possibility of legitimate political and business activities. Thirdly, the authorities in Warsaw were aware that both ANO and the Al-Kassar group were involved in terrorist activities, for which they also used the profits from the arms trade. However, this was not an obstacle to maintaining long-term cooperation. It can also be deduced from the available documents that the terrorists may have used corruption as a method of gaining favour from the communist services. Taken together, all these factors make it clear that the People's Republic of Poland was a state sponsoring international terrorism.

Conclusions

First of all, it is worth considering the question of why the Soviet bloc supported international terrorism. The policy of the Eastern Bloc states towards international terrorist organisations was of a varied nature. It resulted essentially from the interests of individual governments, their fears and ambitions, rather than from Moscow's deliberate strategy. The authorities in the Kremlin were not in a position to control the behind-the-scenes contacts of the GDR, Czechoslovakia or the Polish People's Republic with terrorists, although they obviously tried to monitor them. Besides, the KGB also supported Middle Eastern terrorists and planned to use them for covert operations. Having analysed the cooperation of communist states with terrorist groups, it can be concluded that its basis is ideological, political, economic and operational.

The ideological reasons stemmed from the political line of the group in question, which had to be Marxist-Leninist in nature and approved by the Kremlin. Hence, the socialist states maintained contacts with the PFLP and DFLP, which they assisted to a greater or lesser extent.

The political reasons were a consequence of international developments and the decolonisation process taking place in the world. An example is the cooperation with the PLO, which was recognised by the Soviet bloc as the only legitimate political representation of the Palestinians. Despite the official condemnation by the socialist countries of the terrorist acts committed by the PLO, the military and political activities of this

organisation were actively supported by them, precisely because they were located in the concept of the 'national liberation struggle' associated with the decolonisation process.

An important reason of a political nature was also the fear of assassinations. The authorities of the communist states were genuinely concerned about whether known terrorist groups, such as the 'Carlos' group, would carry out an attack behind the Iron Curtain. In order to counter such threats, very often agreements were made with terrorists that, in exchange for hospitality and facilitation of their activities, they would not attack targets in these countries. Hence, for example, the policy of tolerance of Czechoslovakia and Hungary towards 'Carlos'. Fear of assassination also influenced the cooperation of East German and communist services with the PLO and, to some extent, with the ANO. Visa facilitation and the favour of the local services made it possible to use the territories of the communist states for the peaceful and safe preparation of assassinations, which the services (e.g. of the GDR and Hungary) were aware of⁹⁶.

The operational reasons were related to the use of radical groups for various covert operations. The Soviet services planned to use the PFLP to kidnap a CIA officer and may have used terrorists in similar operations. The Romanian services commissioned the 'Carlos' group to carry out a terrorist attack on Radio Free Europe in Munich. It cannot be ruled out that other socialist countries also jointly planned or collaborated with terrorists to carry out covert attacks or assassinations, although this level of relationship is the least well-known. Contrary to widespread opinion, however, terrorist organisations were not seriously considered as a tool for inciting chaos at the outbreak of the World War III. Although initial concepts of preparing a plan to use members of the RAF or 'Carlos' at the outbreak of a war appeared in the GDR, among others, they were rejected because of the unpredictability of terrorist behaviour. It was difficult to control them effectively in East Berlin and Budapest, let alone during a global armed conflict. It is noteworthy, however, that the GDR services regarded the RAF's activities as a useful tool to destabilise West Germany. Despite the fact that the terrorists' political line was judged to be anarchist, the East German services gave them active support precisely because of their

⁹⁶ Cf. *Minutes of Meeting Between Czechoslovak and Hungarian Interior Ministry Officials on the Carlos Terrorist Group and Radio Free Europe Bomb Attack*, Wilson Center, 25 IV 1981, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121525> [accessed: 20 IX 2022].

tactical usefulness in achieving their long-term goal of weakening their western neighbour.

The economic factor played an important role in maintaining the Soviet bloc's contacts with terrorists. This was particularly true of Warsaw's links with the Abu Nidal groups and with Al-Kassar, in which economic cooperation formed the core of the clandestine relationship. In this case, the terrorists were business partners of the services and state-owned companies responsible for the arms trade. In return, the terrorists reciprocated by supplying embargoed goods, mainly Western armaments and electronics. They also provided intelligence on, among other things, the situation in the Middle East.

Thus, it can be said that, regardless of the motivation behind the communist states' cooperation with terrorist groups, such clandestine contacts were usually mutually beneficial. Hence, there is no doubt that during the Cold War, the Soviet bloc states collaborated with various organisations and can be counted *ex post* as sponsors of international terrorism.

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