

# Active and Sharp Measures

Cooperation between the Soviet KGB  
and Bulgarian State Security

❖ Christopher Nehring

## Introduction

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR the topic of Soviet State Security Committee (KGB) intelligence activities in the West fell out of fashion. Under Russian President Vladimir Putin, however, the Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti (FSB), Sluzhba Vneshnoj Razvedki (SVR), and Glavnoe Upravlenie (GU; formerly known as Glavnoe Razuzvedyvatel'noe Upravlenie, GRU) have become key pillars of the Russian state. They first gained public attention in internal political battles (as in the case of the most prominent oligarch to oppose Putin's regime, Mikhail Khodorkovsky), when used against defectors (e.g., former KGB and FSB officer Aleksandr Litvinenko, who defected to England after accusing the Putin regime of having ordered murders), and through participation in military conflicts (in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, Libya, and Ukraine). Today, a good deal of scholarship on and research into the Russian secret services focuses on the topics of "hybrid warfare," which consists of two parts: military warfare and special disinformation campaigns about the causes, actions, actors, and course of the conflict (so-called information warfare).<sup>1</sup>

The Russian secret service's manipulation of information, however, is by no means a recent development. It was widely used by the KGB during the Cold War as well—known under the *terminus technicus* "active measures." Rolf Wagenbreth, the long-time head of the disinformation unit (Division X of the Foreign Intelligence Division, Hauptverwaltung A, Chief Directorate

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1. On "hybrid warfare" and "information warfare," see Ofer Fridman, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare" Resurgence and Politicisation* (London: Hurst, 2018); Margaret S. Bond, *Hybrid War: A New Paradigm for Stability Operations in Failing States* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: USAWC Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2008); Gregory J. Rattray, *Strategic Warfare in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); and Daniel Ventre, *Cyberwar and Information Warfare* (London: Wiley, 2013).

A, HVA) of the East German Ministry for State Security (MfS or Stasi), once declared in a lecture to his staff: “Our friends in Moscow call it *dezinformatsiya*, our enemies in Washington call it *active measures* and I, my dear friends, call it my favorite pastime.”<sup>2</sup>

The question of what Soviet-bloc intelligence services meant by “active measures” (*aktivniye meropriyatiya*) remains open. No precise or literal equivalent of this term exists in the world of Western intelligence. The closest Western equivalent is “(covert) psychological warfare” or what today is often called “strategic communication.”<sup>3</sup> It is useful to contrast the terms “active measures” and “passive measures.” During the Cold War the latter referred to the passive gathering of information, the former to the active use and application of information in disinformation operations or propaganda campaigns. The aim of such operations was to influence the behavior of individuals, social groups, political institutions, or key decision-makers to favor Communist goals and outcomes. In general, “active measures” sought to increase support among Western politicians and the public for Soviet foreign policy goals by advocating issues through open, semi-covert or clandestine actors. These nuances were referred to as “black,” “gray,” and “white propaganda.”<sup>4</sup> In contrast to “white,” official propaganda, active measures were mostly clandestine and illegal intelligence operations meant to disrupt, discredit, and influence intelligence targets. Their approach to “active measures” was subtle, blending truths, half-truths, and untruths. The KGB and DS employed agents to ensure that their forgeries would not be uncovered. Active measures were therefore a field of work unique to Soviet-bloc intelligence services.

By the 1950s, the Soviet state security organs had developed a separate department for disinformation and active measures: Service “A” of the First Main Directorate (Pervoe glavnoe upravlenie, or PGU) of the KGB. Subsequently, the KGB encouraged its “fraternal organs” in the Eastern bloc to engage in similar operations.<sup>5</sup> The archives of these former Warsaw Pact countries (which are today all members of the European Union) provide crucial

2. Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer, *Auftrag Irreführung: Wie die Stasi im Westen Politik machte* (Hamburg: Carlsen, 1992), p. 19.

3. See Denis Kux, “Soviet Active Measures: Overview and Assessment,” *Parameters: Journal of the US Army War College*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1985), pp. 19–28.

4. See Richard Shultz and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1984), pp. 1–16.

5. On cooperation between Bulgarian, East German, and Soviet foreign intelligence, see Christopher Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit der DDR-Auslandsaufklärung mit der Aufklärung der Volksrepublik Bulgarien: Regionalfilialen des KGB?* (Konrad-Adenauer Foundation Bulgaria, 2016), available online at [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_21492-1442-1-30.pdf?170124145839](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_21492-1442-1-30.pdf?170124145839).

information on KGB cooperation with other Warsaw Pact services in campaigns of disinformation and active measures. Recent studies on the KGB's wide-ranging disinformation campaign regarding the origins of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) have demonstrated the value of using materials of the East European foreign intelligence archives to shed light on the KGB overseers in Moscow.<sup>6</sup>

Bulgaria, one of the smallest Soviet satellite states in Europe, serves as a perfect example. Even though the intelligence work of the Bulgarian State Security (Durzhavna Sigurnost, or DS) service was "of little interest" to the KGB, the DS was one of Moscow's closest allies.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, for example, to the notorious State Security (Stasi) organs of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which thought of themselves as a partner to the Soviet KGB, the DS's self-image was that of a "regional branch of the KGB."<sup>8</sup> Not only did the Soviet Union build the entire Bulgarian security apparatus, it also lent massive theoretical, practical, and technical support and helped to operate the Bulgarian DS. Thus, Soviet-Bulgarian cooperation, particularly in the field of active measures, can serve as a prism through which to scrutinize Soviet intelligence work.

The analysis here provides historical context for contemporary debates about the Russian security services and their strategic use of disinformation and active measures. The article begins by describing the general history of intelligence cooperation between the Soviet Union and Communist Bulgaria to highlight the structures and procedures for planning and carrying out "active measures." The article then looks at specific instances of cooperation on active measures and disinformation, using several case studies to bring out the general division of labor, the methods, and the operations' goals. In some of the East European intelligence services, such as Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, "sharp operative measures" (*ostroye operativnoe meropriyatiya*) such as

6. See, for example, Christopher Nehring and Douglas Selvage, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung: Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit und die AIDS Desinformationskampagne des KGB* (Berlin: BStU, 2014); Douglas Selvage, "Operation 'Denver': The East German Ministry for State Security and the KGB's AIDS Disinformation Campaign, 1985-1986 (Part 1)," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Fall 2019), pp. 71-123; Douglas Selvage, "Operation 'Denver': The East German Ministry for State Security and the KGB's AIDS Disinformation Campaign, 1986-1989 (Part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Summer 2021), pp. 4-80; and Christopher Nehring and Douglas Selvage, "Operation 'Denver': KGB and Stasi Disinformation Regarding AIDS," *Sources and Methods: A Blog of the History and Public Policy Program*, Woodrow Wilson Center, 2019, available online at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/operation-denver-kgb-and-stasi-disinformation-regarding-aids>.

7. Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: My Thirty-Two Years in Intelligence and Espionage against the West* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 176.

8. See Christopher Nehring, "Bulgaria—The 16th Soviet Republic?" *Journal of Cold War Studies*, forthcoming.

assassinations and abductions were, in the early 1960s at least, organized by the departments in charge of active measures. Hence, this sensitive field of intelligence work can serve as an indicator of Soviet-Bulgarian intelligence cooperation. The article also analyzes the reactions of Western intelligence agencies and governments to Soviet and Bulgarian active measures and assesses the effectiveness of the operations.

## **Bulgaria: The “16th Soviet Republic” with a “Regional Branch” of the KGB**

Bulgaria was so close to the Soviet Union during the Cold War that some Bulgarians dubbed it the “16th Soviet republic” behind closed doors. After the collapse of Communism, Bulgarian archives revealed that public opinion on the issue was not far from the truth. At least three times, the leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP), Todor Zhivkov, proposed to Soviet leaders that Bulgaria officially join the Soviet Union. Although each proposal was motivated by his own personal goals and political calculations, he ensured ongoing Soviet support by demonstrating his complete loyalty to Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

Zhivkov’s strategy of ensuring Moscow’s support through complete subordination was also mirrored at other levels of the Bulgarian state. This was especially the case for the Communist regime’s secret police. As in the other countries of Eastern Europe, the founding and development of the vast apparatus of Bulgarian state security after the Second World War was heavily influenced and guided by the Soviet “liberators”—notably, the KGB (the name used for the Soviet state security apparatus from 1954 on).<sup>10</sup> Zhivkov then pushed things to the extreme. In November 1969, after the security crisis in the Warsaw Pact prompted by the Prague Spring in 1968, Zhivkov personally assured Yuri Andropov, then head of the KGB, that the DS was a “branch of the KGB.”<sup>11</sup> Zhivkov used submissive and exaggerated language to assure the Soviet Union of his loyalty and remain in Moscow’s good graces.

During the DS’s formative period in the 1950s and 1960s, the agency routinely received direct “orders” from Moscow and the KGB advisers in Sofia

9. Ibid.

10. See Jordan Baev, *KGB v Bulgariya* (Sofia: Voenna izdatelstvo, 2009), pp. 25–60.

11. See “Information Nr. 724 of Bulgarian State Security regarding talks with the Soviet delegation headed by Comrade Yu. Andropov from 24.12.1969,” in Tatyana Kirakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS: DS-KGB: Vryski i Zavisimost: Dokumentalen Sbornik na Komisiyata za razkrivane na dokumenti i obyavyavane na prinaadlezhnost na bulgarski grazhdani kym durzhabna Sigurnost i razuznavatelni sluzhbbi na Bulgarskata Narodna Armija* (Sofia: COMDOS, 2009), Doc. 68, pp. 417–424, esp. 418, scanned online version at <http://comdos.bg/E0H8B5%208740=8O/ds-i-kgb>.

on how to build a Soviet-type secret service. However, in the early 1970s, a shift took place. Instead of waiting for “orders,” the DS practiced its own kind of anticipatory obedience—for example, by sending every directive to Moscow for approval before it was signed.<sup>12</sup> The same applied to every speech given by the head of Bulgarian foreign intelligence at multilateral meetings of the Soviet-bloc intelligence agencies, which began in 1970.<sup>13</sup> The shift to anticipatory obedience marked the end of the formative years of the DS and found expression in two key documents. First, in 1972, the BKP Politburo ordered the DS to draft a new basic statute (*osnovno polozhenie*) for its work. All drafts of this document were sent to Moscow and edited to comply with Soviet ideas.<sup>14</sup> The statute codified all formal regulations that guided the work of the DS until its collapse in 1989–1990, thus providing the overall frame for its existence. Second, on 8 April 1972, the first formal written agreement between the KGB and one of its “fraternal organs” was signed with the DS in Sofia.<sup>15</sup> The document clarified the principles guiding and regulating cooperation between the KGB and the DS. The significance of the document was not its seven pages of content but the fact that the KGB signed such an agreement with the Bulgarians first among all the Soviet-bloc security services. Joint work plans for cooperation in foreign intelligence, counterintelligence, and military counterintelligence soon followed. The agreements between the sections in charge of monitoring every sphere of society at home (secret police) and the information and analysis departments were of much greater significance insofar as they set the frame for joint operational work in the following years. Following Zhivkov’s line, the long-time Minister of Internal Affairs Dimitur Stoyanov went even further in 1975 by welcoming the “direct transfer [*pryako prilagane*] of Soviet experience in intelligence work” to the DS and the “full integration” (*pulna integratsiya*) of the DS into the KGB.<sup>16</sup>

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12. See Baev, *KGB v Bulgariya*, pp. 94–96.

13. See “Letter from the head of PGU-DS to Minister of Internal Affairs A. Solakov and his deputy M. Spasov concerning the draft for the lecture, to be delivered at the meeting of the heads of the foreign intelligence services of the Warsaw Pact in Budapest,” 7–11 November 1970, in Archive of the Commission for the Disclosure of Documents and for Announcing the Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens with State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian People’s Army (COMDOS archive), Fond (F) 9, Opis’ (Op.) 2, a.e. 780, pp. 134–137.

14. Baev, *KGB v Bulgariya*, p. 95.

15. “Agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the PRB and the KGB under the USSR Council of Ministers,” 4 August 1972, in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 75, pp. 476–484, and Doc. 76, pp. 485–493; and Baev, *KGB v Bulgariya*, pp. 94–97.

16. See the Bulgarian Minister of Internal Affairs D. Stoyanov at the “Consultation concerning the common work plan of the Bulgarian foreign intelligence with the KGB,” June 1975, in COMDOS archive, F. 9, Op. 2, a.e. 838, p. 15: “In execution of the orders of Comrade Todor Zhivkov the

This “full integration” of Bulgarian foreign intelligence into the KGB had several day-to-day implications. What was true for all high-ranking normative documents concerning the DS—for example, that they were passed on to Moscow, discussed at annual meetings, and produced in coordination with the KGB adviser in Sofia—also held for each operational division. All annual work plans for Departments I (Turkey) and II (Greece and Cyprus) of Bulgarian foreign intelligence were coordinated with the KGB before they were approved. Furthermore, each plan contained special sections on common operational measures that were not only negotiated beforehand but also carried out jointly.<sup>17</sup> Hence, the KGB knew in advance where, how, and when the Bulgarians were trying to gather information about neighboring countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Even though KGB General Oleg Kalugin later claimed that Bulgaria’s contributions were of little interest, evidence in the DS archive suggests otherwise.<sup>18</sup>

All operational departments of Bulgarian foreign intelligence stuck to this pattern and, when they recruited an important source they sometimes went further. When, for example, Department VII (Economic and Industrial Espionage) recruited agent “DELON,” a Bulgarian working in Switzerland and Austria who was in possession of information on the U.S. Department of Defense, it immediately informed the KGB, passed on all his information, and asked its KGB colleagues for advice on how to use him. Before long the KGB and Bulgarian foreign intelligence had switched roles. Having trained “DELON” as a spy, the Bulgarians turned him over to be run directly by the KGB. The KGB, in turn, promised to pass on his information to the DS.<sup>19</sup>

coordination and cooperation between the DS and the KGB will rise to such a level that they function as one unified system, that the DS works as a branch of the KGB.” See also “Talks with the PGU-KGB concerning the plan for cooperation from 1972 to 1975,” 2-5 June 1975, in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 99, pp. 664–686. For the matching statements of the KGB delegation, see “Stenographic minutes of the information of Comrade Andropov—head of the KGB under the USSR Council of Ministers—which he made at the plenary meeting of the two delegations on 14 November 1974,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 94, pp. 618–629.

17. “Plan for common active measures of the foreign intelligence services of the PRB and the USSR,” 4 June 1975, in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 101, pp. 687–697; “Information Nr. 503 on the plan for common active measures for 1977,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 110, pp. 725–729; and “Information concerning the work meeting in Sofia with Colonel Vadim Petrovich Ivanov, head of Service ‘A’ of the PGU-KGB,” 4 September 1977, in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 119, pp. 748–752.

18. On Soviet-Bulgarian cooperation, see Kalugin, *Spymaster*, pp. 176–182.

19. “Information on the condition of the cooperation between dep. VII PGU-DS and the Administration STI of PGU-KGB for the period 1/1/1976 until 20/10/1977,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 118, pp. 743–747; “Annual Account of Dep. VII for 1984,” in COMDOS, *Durzhavna sigurnost i nauchno-tekhnichesko razuznavane* (Sofia: COMDOS, 2012), Doc. 90, pp. 579–590; and “Information concerning the work of Department VII PGU-DS in execution of the action plan on

The KGB also played a key role in conducting surveillance on foreign embassies in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. Because Germany had traditionally been the most important European trade partner for Bulgaria, the West German trade mission (1963), which was subsequently upgraded to an embassy in 1973, was a major intelligence target. Contrary to what one might expect, however, the East German Stasi did little work with the Bulgarians in this field until the mid-1970s. The KGB, in contrast, was involved in all major plans on how to monitor the trade mission and its personnel from the beginning. A key objective was to break into the mission and install surveillance equipment that would track all diplomatic communications with Bonn. These operations were carried out jointly by DS and KGB personnel. The information the Bulgarians gathered by reading West German telegrams was regularly transferred by the Bulgarian internal affairs minister to the chairman of the KGB.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, all agents the Bulgarians succeeded in recruiting among the West German diplomatic staff were run jointly with the KGB. The KGB and the DS would, for example, organize a trip of a West German secretary with her Romeo agent to the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> The KGB advised the Bulgarians on how to run sources. If the contacts proved promising, the KGB would take them over. One of the best examples was a West German diplomat codename “RAVEN.” The Bulgarians had used the Romeo strategy to get to his wife, who passed on occasional pieces of information. The Stasi’s foreign intelligence branch, the Hauptverwaltung A (HVA), was also working on “RAVEN” and consulted the DS on the case. In the end, the KGB took charge of “RAVEN” because he was a promising diplomat with a special focus on Eastern Europe.<sup>22</sup>

Another prominent case was agent “PIKADILI,” who was suspected of having killed the Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov in London. After a large blank spot in his agent file around the year of the murder, “PIKADILI” assumed tasks of minor importance. At the beginning of the 1980s he was handed over to the KGB, for whom he tried (and failed) to seduce a secretary at NATO headquarters in Brussels. He was then sent to Africa, where he established contacts with Western diplomats.<sup>23</sup>

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the cooperation of the PGU-DS with the PGU-KGB in STI for 1973,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 89, pp. 587–590.

20. See Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, pp. 124–147.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 138–140.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 135–138.

23. See Khristo Khristov, *Dvoiniyat zivot na agent “PIKADILI”: Dosieto na edinstveniya agent, za-podozriyan v ubiistvoto na pisatelya, i klyuchoviya arkhiv na purvo glavno upravleniye* (Sofia: Ikonome-dia, 2008), pp. 107–115.

For the Bulgarian intelligence service, being a branch of the KGB meant opening up internal secrets, disclosing nearly all of its operational work, and hardly ever running an operation abroad without first consulting on every detail with Moscow. This, however, was a two-way street. By opening up completely, the Bulgarians induced the KGB to become more deeply engaged in Bulgarian operational matters and to assist them on a daily basis. Each of the aforementioned cases proves the point. The KGB either provided the Bulgarians with know-how and technology (which the DS could not have obtained on its own) or took the overall lead in joint operations. The murder of Markov serves as only one example of how this principle worked to Bulgaria's advantage. Not only did the Bulgarians engage in espionage for the KGB abroad, but the KGB became engaged in Bulgarian affairs in which they had hardly any interest.

As these examples show, the working level on an everyday operational basis was very important for an understanding of the DS as a "branch of the KGB," working in "full integration." Other than in the political sphere, nearly all "operational goods"—that is, all details, ranging from the number and names of agents to the staff, planning, and results of operations in all departments of the DS—were known by and accessible to the KGB.<sup>24</sup> Some of this work was carried out by the KGB's advisers in the Bulgarian Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the long-time head of KGB counterespionage, Kalugin, the Soviet advisers played a large supervisory role vis-à-vis the DS.<sup>25</sup> All details of the operational work of the Bulgarians were shared during the various meetings with both sides. The KGB was given charge of some sources recruited by the DS, and in other cases the KGB received nearly all the information the DS acquired. The "need-to-know-principle," on which all intelligence work is based, was unilaterally suspended.<sup>26</sup> However, as recent findings in the archives of the KGB defector Vasilii Mitrokhin have shown, the devotedness of the Bulgarians to Moscow did not prevent the KGB from gathering intelligence inside Bulgaria as well. In May 1973, the KGB installed a

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24. See Nehring, *Zusammenarbeit*, pp. 492–496.

25. See Kalugin, *Spymaster*, pp. 176–177.

26. On intelligence cooperation, see James Walsh, *The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Jennifer Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison: Devils, Deals, and Details," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2006), pp. 195–217; Chris Clough, "Quid pro Quo: The Challenges of International Strategic Intelligence Cooperation," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2004), pp. 601–613; Martin Alexander, ed., *Knowing Your Friends: Intelligence inside the Alliances and Coalitions from 1914 to the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 1998); and Jeffrey Richelson and Desmond Ball, *The Ties That Bind: Intelligence Cooperation between the UKUSA Countries* (Cambridge, UK: Allen & Unwin, 1985).



station chief (*rezidentura*) in the Soviet embassy in Sofia who was responsible for gathering information on Bulgarian domestic and foreign policy, along with developments in the BKP Politburo and other party organizations and the inner circle of power around Zhivkov.<sup>27</sup> Initially, the Soviet *rezidentura* had three operatives. The KGB even went so far as to recruit so-called trusted connections (*doveritel'nye svyazi*) in the BKP Central Committee, including a deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and the head of human resources and accounting.<sup>28</sup>

An unusual element of cooperation between the DS and the KGB was that most of Bulgaria's foreign intelligence operatives and all of the DS's highest officers were trained at the KGB academy in Moscow.<sup>29</sup> Special training was obligatory for every Bulgarian intelligence officer working in one of the Bulgarian residencies abroad. Hence, working at the "Bulgarian branch of the KGB" was more than a political decision. It was part of the self-image of the Bulgarian DS, and these developments rested on the direct approval of BKP leaders, most of all Zhivkov.

## Cooperation with the KGB: Active Measures

Having developed under the strong influence of the KGB in the 1960s, the departments for active measures in the foreign intelligence services of the Warsaw Pact shared a common structure, used common methods, pursued common goals, and fought a common "enemy." A division of labor arose in which each country had its own regional focus and targets. Common active measures between the KGB and the DS were carried out almost exclusively in countries in which the two countries' "regions of interest" overlapped. By the end of the 1970s, the DS had developed into a serious partner of the KGB, although the scope of its activities was still limited geographically. As the international contest of political systems broadened, the KGB urged its "fraternal organs" (e.g., at the multilateral conferences of the heads of the socialist intelligence services) to concentrate more on the "main enemy" (i.e., the United States), multilateral operations, and a general broadening and deepening of

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27. See the notes by Vasilii Mitrokhin, transcribed in Vasilii Mitrokhin Papers, MITN 19-2, pp. 10-12, in Churchill College Archives, Cambridge University, UK.

28. Ibid.

29. See Baev, *KGB v Bulgariya*, pp. 248-252; and Momchil Metodiev, *Mashina za legitimnost* (Sofia: Siela, 2008), p. 146.

cooperation in the field of active measures.<sup>30</sup> A shared goal was to “unmask the imperialistic policy of the West” and to advocate the international and domestic policy line of the USSR. The KGB also established common joint operations to which its allies’ divisions for active measures were expected to contribute.

The beginnings of cooperation in the field of active measures between the KGB and the DS can be traced to the early 1960s.<sup>31</sup> By the late 1960s, as a document of the Bulgarian foreign intelligence service titled “Information on the cooperation with Service ‘A’ of the KGB 1965–1968” suggests, the DS had already established formal, annual cooperation with the KGB in the field of active measures.<sup>32</sup> By 1968, Bulgaria’s Department VIII had begun to translate, as standard practice, its annual work plans into Russian and to send them to Moscow for comments and approval. Furthermore, input from Soviet advisers in Sofia was sought and given during the preparation of annual work plans. Also, as the DS explicitly stated, “the initiative for the realization of common active measures derived mainly from the KGB.”<sup>33</sup> The head of Bulgarian foreign intelligence from 1968 to 1972, Dimitur K’osev, confessed to his East German colleague Markus Wolf: “Normally, we affiliate ourselves with operations of the KGB. We do not have secrets from the [East] German comrades, [but] our possibilities are small.”<sup>34</sup> The DS informed the KGB of every active measure that it undertook. Sometimes, however, the Bulgarians offered proposals that went beyond what the KGB considered possible or desirable. For example, K’osev’s suggestion to the Soviet adviser in Sofia to create “a group of agents in Moscow, who organize common and multilateral active measures” was never implemented.<sup>35</sup>

The work of Department VIII of Bulgarian foreign intelligence, which cooperated with Service “A” of the KGB, consisted mainly of translations—usually into Greek and Turkish—of manuscripts and materials to be used

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30. For the 1970 conference in Budapest, see “Speech of A. Sakharovskii given at the Warsaw conference,” 7–11 November 1970, in COMDOS Archive, F 9 Op. 2, a.e. 782, pp. 20–48. For Warsaw 1974, see COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 2, a.e. 792, pp. 40–82. For Prague 1978, see COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 3, a.e. 414, pp. 16–67. For Moscow 1982, see COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 4a, a.e. 19, pp. 2–38.

31. “Assessment of the common work between administration I KDS and PGU-KGB after 1965,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 54, pp. 343–353.

32. *Ibid.*

33. “Information on the meeting of the head of the PGU-DS with the head of department AM of the intelligence administration of the MSS of the GDR and his deputy, 11/2/1971,” in COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 2, a.e. 539, p. 63.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 66–73.

in active measures. The department also passed along such materials when created by Service "A" of the KGB. The DS's regional expertise was confined to the eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus) and the Middle East. The division of labor between the KGB and the DS was clear: the KGB dominated the conception and planning of common active measures, and the DS contributed its regional expertise.

The organization of active measures within the Bulgarian intelligence service followed a more or less strict scheme. First, the basic guidelines and aims were fixed in five-year "perspective plans." Annual work plans for Department VIII were drafted with both Bulgarian and Soviet interests in mind, checked against available Bulgarian resources, and then sent to Moscow for comments. The KGB would then review and amend the plan. The changes made by the KGB explain why the second significant document for Department VIII, the annual work plan for joint active measures with the KGB, overlapped almost completely with Department VIII's annual work plan. Both plans were subsequently approved by the head of the department, the head of foreign intelligence, and the deputy minister of internal affairs.

The end of the 1970s saw a deepening of cooperation between the KGB and the DS on joint active measures. For example, the 1975 plan listed twelve joint operations targeting Turkey, eleven targeting Greece, and one targeting Albania.<sup>36</sup> The draft work plan for 1978 listed 27 operations targeting four countries: Turkey (six operations), Greece (five), Cyprus (seven), and Albania (six addressing "Maoism").<sup>37</sup> With Turkey and Greece the basic goals were to weaken conservative or "reactionary" forces inside the country, to support "progressive-democratic" forces, and to disrupt both countries' relations with the United States and with each other.<sup>38</sup> The DS tended to focus on domestic affairs and the KGB on foreign policy.

In the mid-1970s, targets of the joint active measures expanded to include the Cyprus question, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and the "Maoist threat." Around the same time, the DS gained some good "positions" in Iran and the Middle East, all of which were coordinated and shared with the KGB.

The work plans of the Bulgarian DS suggest that the active measures can be divided into three categories:

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36. "Information Nr. 503 on the plan for common active measures for 1977," pp. 725–729.

37. "Information concerning the work meeting in Sofia with Colonel Vadim Petrovich Ivanov, head of Service 'A' of the PGU-KGB," pp. 748–752.

38. "Information Nr. 503 on the plan for common active measures for 1977," pp. 725–729.

1. Active measures executed by one service alone. In the case of the DS these operations had a regional concentration on neighboring Western countries (such as Greece and Turkey) or were focused on a national problem (e.g., so-called “hostile émigrés” from Bulgaria).
2. Active measures planned on a bilateral basis. The KGB sometimes drew on the regional expertise or “channels” of the DS and other times provided assistance. The DS-KGB work plan for 1975, for example, includes roughly equal numbers of the two kinds of operations.<sup>39</sup>
3. Active measures either planned as or that developed into multilateral operations. More often than not, these were inspired and conceived by the KGB on a bilateral basis and subsequently expanded to other regions, persons, or organizations.

The third category of active measures, which were largely ad hoc in the 1960s (to the extent they existed at all) but by the end of the 1970s had become an important element in Warsaw Pact intelligence operations. In the 1980s, most of the active measures planned by the DS were carried out jointly with the KGB and often with the East German HVA. At the regular multilateral conferences of the heads of the Soviet-bloc intelligence services in 1978 and 1982 and at a special conference on active measures in 1986, the KGB called for broader multilateral cooperation in the field of active measures.

Over the years, the KGB urged its “fraternal organs” to concentrate all means available on the “main enemy” (i.e., the United States and NATO), and this focus dominated the orientation of common operations. For the Bulgarian DS, active measures with the KGB were focused on the “southern flank” of NATO. The Bulgarians did not have the resources or capacity to engage in large-scale operations against the United States. Therefore, they reinterpreted their own regional work as an attack against U.S. allies or institutions in those countries. The available evidence supports the claim that the era of détente fostered closer cooperation in the field of active measures both bilaterally and multilaterally. The increased importance of active measures as a counterweight to the West’s “ideological subversion” was also noted by the head of Soviet intelligence at the 1970 conference of the heads of socialist intelligence services in Warsaw.<sup>40</sup> The Bulgarian foreign intelligence service became so heavily dependent on and affiliated with Soviet active measures during the 1980s that

39. “Plan for common active measures of the foreign intelligence services of the PRB and the USSR, 6/4/1975,” pp. 687–697.

40. “Speech of A. Sakharovskii given at the Warsaw conference,” pp. 20–48.

it hardly ever conducted operations in the field on its own without the KGB or the HVA, its second-closest partner. Department VIII of the PGU-DS, following the lines of Minister of Internal Affairs Stoyanov, characterized this status as a “level of full integration.”<sup>41</sup>

The KGB did more than suggest specific operations and oversee their execution. It also critically analyzed the methodology and type of active measures to be used. In 1978 and 1979, the KGB criticized the Bulgarians’ annual work plans because they consisted almost exclusively of operations with forged documents. The KGB frequently provided its Bulgarian counterpart with blank blueprints for documents, ready-to-use forgeries, and information for conducting such operations. Fearing that the forgeries might be traced back to the USSR, the KGB demanded a halt to such operations.<sup>42</sup>

A major concern of the KGB in the 1980s was the overall strategic and methodological improvement of active measures. Increased Western and especially U.S. countermeasures had begun to hamper the success of the KGB’s operations in the West. In response, a multilateral, bloc-wide meeting of all departments for active measures was convened in 1986 in Budapest. For the first time, all heads of the respective departments working in this field came together to discuss methodological and strategic issues. As the KGB stressed, the main focus of the gathering was to improve the effectiveness of active measures all over the world.<sup>43</sup> The conference did not, however, suggest a change to the types of active measures being planned. The concluding document merely harkened back to the regular multilateral meetings of all intelligence service chiefs in Moscow in 1982. All major efforts should continue to focus on “support for the peace policy of the USSR,” an end to the nuclear arms race, the “unmasking of the adventurism and aggression” of U.S. foreign policy, support for the “peace movement” in Western Europe, and exposure of the “state terrorism of the imperialists in the Third World.”<sup>44</sup> Bulgarian active measures, as described by the head of DS Department VIII, Dimo Stankov, would

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41. “Account of common active measures with the KGB for the period 1981–1985,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 241, p. 1577.

42. See “Assessment of the annual work plan for 1977 of department VIII PGU-DS by Service ‘A’ PGU-KGB,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 110, pp. 725–729; and “Assessment of the annual work plan for 1979 of department VIII PGU-DS by Service ‘A’ PGU-KGB,” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 131, pp. 788–790.

43. See letter of invitation for the Bulgarian Minister of Internal Affairs, in COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 4, a.e. 671, pp. 1–5.

44. See “Final document of the summit of the heads of the foreign intelligence services of the Socialist camp,” 1986, in COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 4, a.e. 671, pp. 51–63.

continue to focus on disrupting the southern flank of NATO and combatting the “anti-Bulgarian campaigns” of the West.<sup>45</sup>

The speech by the head of Service “A” of the KGB, Vladimir Petrovich Ivanov, to the meeting regarding the methods that should be employed in the planning and conduct of active measures reveals much about the operational environment of the time. He linked the success of active measures in the 1980s to the political context in which they were executed, and he lamented that Western countermeasures had become a grave threat to the outcome of disinformation operations. All the conference participants agreed that growing Western cooperation in implementing countermeasures could be best countered with increased cooperation among the Soviet-bloc security services.<sup>46</sup> Ivanov emphasized the importance of “conversations to influence” (*besedy dlia vliyaniya*), forged documents, and greater use of unknowing individuals (so-called “useful idiots”). He outlined three major goals. First, these methods would make it harder for Western agencies to trace active measures back to their origins in the KGB or other Warsaw Pact intelligence services. Second, direct political influence on persons and groups should be given priority over the earlier objective of “abstract ideological influence.”<sup>47</sup> Third, the structure and composition of each operation should be made more complex, with preference given to operations in which several actions were taken in succession rather than operations consisting of a single action. The KGB official explained that the best way to achieve a cumulative effect was to conduct coordinated measures within a short period of time. Doing so would also ensure the simultaneous spread of disinformation at several different places, thus making it harder to trace the source of the disinformation.

The multilateral meeting of 1986 was by no means the only initiative the KGB undertook to address the perceived decline in effectiveness of active measures around the world. In 1985, Ivanov, head of Service “A,” transmitted a written lecture on “the art of planning, conceiving and executing active measures” to be presented to officers of the Bulgarian intelligence service.<sup>48</sup> Likely, the same lecture was sent to the heads of all the active-measures divisions of

45. “Speech of D. Stankov at the multilateral meeting in Budapest,” in COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 4, a.e. 671, pp. 10–42.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–40.

47. “Consultations between the head of Service ‘A’ V. P. Ivanov and the PGU-DS about the use of agents of influence: forms and methods of their work. Use of agents of influence (talk with V. P. Ivanov, 25 April 1979),” in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 133, pp. 801–807.

48. See the lecture notes in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 233, pp. 1520–1525.

the Soviet-bloc intelligence services.<sup>49</sup> Ivanov had already spoken many times with DS officials about such methodological issues, but these earlier talks had always been conducted on a need-to-know basis with the head and deputy head of Department VIII. The goal in 1986 was to make all departments of Bulgarian foreign intelligence more aware of the requirements for active measures and their importance. The lecture explained how active measures worked and their goals: a “sharp political weapon of an intelligence service designed to exert influence abroad,” citing the authority of the Bolsheviks’ founding leader, V. I. Lenin. The effectiveness of active measures, Ivanov noted, depended on a correct assessment of the political context in which they were to be conducted, the fashioning of the right content at the right moment, and the distribution of this content via the right channels at the right time. For example, if the goal was to obtain a harsh reaction in the short term, he recommended “emotional” topics and environments. Therefore, any officer who worked on such measures should be familiar with the international political situation and possess several agents and “trusted connections,” including government and parliamentary officials, journalists, publishers, and the heads of party and societal organizations. The ideal intelligence officer for work in the field was described as especially creative, politically aware, sly, and of quick wit. Both the lectures of 1985–1986 and the multilateral conference of 1986 were apparent efforts initiated by the KGB to increase the effectiveness of active measures and overcome Western countermeasures.

### **Case Studies in Cooperation: “AKROPOLIS,” “SHIWA,” and a Multilateral Conference**

Another common aspect of the KGB’s cooperation on active measures with its “fraternal organs” was a system of double accounting. Service “A” urged all services to engage in global disinformation and propaganda operations despite their limited resources. The East European agencies tended to include the same operations in multiple plans with different partners or to complain about their lack of resources until the KGB itself engaged in the operation.

One example was Operation AKROPOLIS. As early as the 1960s the KGB had urged the Bulgarians to expand their active measures in the Balkans with the aim of disrupting relations among NATO members. Because the

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49. The quotation from Rolf Wagenbreth’s lecture to Stasi officers in 1986 mentioned in the introduction of this article was taken from his version of Ivanov’s lecture.

main economic and political European force at that time was the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), FRG-Greek and FRG-Turkish relations were a major target for these measures. “AKROPOLIS” was the codename for an active measure that included the fabrication of a letter by the head of the conservative Christian Social Union (*Christlich-Soziale Union*, or CSU), former minister and later prime minister of Bavaria Franz Josef Strauss, to former members of the Greek junta in which he called for a military coup. The Bulgarians provided background material on the political situation in Greece, the HVA forged the letter and transferred it back to the DS, and the Bulgarians then sent it to one of their contacts at the Greek embassy in Vienna.<sup>50</sup>

The DS employed a system of double accounting for active measure. From 1971 on, Department VIII did not undertake any active measure with FRG-related content without consulting East German Stasi colleagues.<sup>51</sup> Hence, in response to the KGB’s message urging actions to disrupt West German–Greek relations, the Bulgarians listed Operation AKROPOLIS two times, once in their annual work plan for common active measures with the KGB and once in their plan with the East German HVA.<sup>52</sup> Even though the Bulgarians had informed the East Germans at the beginning of their cooperation that each of their active measures was coordinated with the KGB, nobody explicitly acknowledged this system. As a result, the Bulgarians listed an operation they carried out with the HVA as one of their common operations with the KGB.

The KGB’s disinformation campaign regarding AIDS in the 1980s unfolded in a similar manner. Operation DETRICK/PANDEM was an active measure devised as early as 1983 to spread the rumor that the then-unknown AIDS virus was the result of U.S. military experiments with biological weapons.<sup>53</sup> After press articles were planted in India but did not attract much attention, the KGB in 1985 took steps to boost the operation, not least because the disease by then had grown into a worldwide epidemic. In the summer of 1985, all the Warsaw Pact intelligence agencies received a cable from Moscow urging them to include active measures in their agenda and

50. “Draft of the plan for common and coordinated active measures for 1977,” in COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 3, a.e. 210, pp. 7–11.

51. Untitled note by Colonel D. Stankov, 26 April 1972, in COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 2, a.e. 539, p. 93a.

52. See “Plan for common active measures of the foreign intelligence of the USSR and the PRB for 1975,” pp. 687–697; and “Draft of the plan for common and coordinated active measures for 1977,” pp. 7–11.

53. See, for example, Nehring and Selvage, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*; and Nehring and Selvage, “Operation ‘Denver.’”



come up with new ideas for how and where to promote the AIDS conspiracy theory. As Douglas Selvage has shown at length in two recent articles in the JCWS, the HVA soon took over the lead in this operation, which was originally devised by the KGB to attack the United States all around the globe.<sup>54</sup> Bulgarian foreign intelligence contributed little to the operation, in part because no Bulgarian scholar was willing to support the theory. Even so, the DS from the mid-1980s on listed the operation in every annual plan both with the KGB and with the HVA. In the autumn of 1989, only weeks before the Berlin Wall was opened, the DS finally proposed to have its own agent “SHIWA” in India publish the HVA material.

Agent “SHIWA” was, according to Bulgarian documents, the head of the International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies in New Delhi and had been, since 1983, an agent for the Bulgarian foreign intelligence service.<sup>55</sup> He was listed as an agent of influence on Operation NAPRED (Forward), the codename for all influence operations targeting the Non-Aligned Movement. In 1989, Department VIII of the PGU-DS wanted “SHIWA” to publish an HVA-financed documentary on the supposedly artificial, U.S. origin of AIDS. This, however, was the last item in a long list of materials the Bulgarians gave to “SHIWA,” whose role in this venture perfectly demonstrates how the Bulgarians tackled worldwide active measures. After recruiting him, the Bulgarians immediately informed the KGB and asked for materials to pass on to him for publication. Department VIII’s documents on “SHIWA” leave the impression that the Bulgarians provided him with hardly any information on their own, relying instead on Moscow or East Berlin for documents. (They did, however, support “SHIWA” financially, and Stankov of

54. Selvage, “Operation ‘Denver,’” Part 1; and Selvage, “Operation ‘Denver,’” Part 2 (see note 6 *supra*).

55. On agent “SHIWA,” see “Letter from the HVA/X” 1 April 1986, in ABS, A.Č. 81282/117, p. 308; and “Note of department 36 (Disinformation) of the First Main Administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning the transfer to the head of the HVA/X Rolf Wagenbreth,” 22 July 1986, in ABS, A.Č. 81282/117, p. 304. See also “Kpt. Meisner, I. Správa SNB, Odbor 36, Telefonát z NDR—Seznam,” 18 August 1986, in ABS, A.Č. 81282/117, p. 307; and “Questions of department VIII PGU-DS prior to the work meeting between HVA/X and department VIII PGU-DS,” 26–29 September 1989, in COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 4, a.e. 691, p. 207. Further “Information concerning talks with the Service for AM PGU-KGB in Moscow,” 28 November 1988, in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 283, pp. 1870–1903; “List of the materials hand over by the East German comrades 1988,” in COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op., 4 a.e. 691, p. 163; and “Information on the official trip of Colonel D. Stankov to Moscow to meet with AG ‘SHIWA’ and an assessment of the work with ‘FROID,’” 24 November 1987, in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 270, pp. 1792–1798. On agent “GOVDA,” see the agent materials in Archivní Protokol A1592–A4974, 11.11.1986, p. 71, Reg. Nr. A2738, [http://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/knihy/APIS/APIS\\_10.pdf](http://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/knihy/APIS/APIS_10.pdf); and Protokol registrace osobních svazků tajných spolupracovníků I. Správy SNB, S. 96, Reg. Nr. 48637, [http://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/knihy/IS4/IS4\\_6.pdf](http://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/knihy/IS4/IS4_6.pdf). On the work of the HVA at the Harare summit, see Nehring and Selvage, *AIDS-Verschwoerung*, pp. 58–61.

Department VIII met with him at least once in Moscow.) One of the documents supplied by the East Germans was the 88-page “Conspiracy against Non-Alignment.” In 1988, Department X of the East German HVA handed over the document to the Bulgarians, who enlisted “SHIWA” to publish it in India (codename “VORWÄRTS-IV/NAPRED-IV”).<sup>56</sup> However, the HVA forgot to tell the Bulgarians that it had passed the same material to the Czechoslovak disinformation department two years earlier. The Czechoslovaks had already seen the brochure published in India and then distributed at the 1986 Non-Aligned summit in Harare, Zimbabwe. That operation was unknown to the Bulgarians, who learned about it later and were not amused. The Bulgarians were especially irritated to discover that the Czechoslovak State Security (StB) agent “GOVDA” who published the material in India, and the Bulgarian agent “SHIWA” were one and the same. Stankov and his colleagues realized from this fiasco that “SHIWA” was using several intelligence services to support his institute. Stankov pressed both the HVA and the StB to give him a list of materials they had transferred to “SHIWA.” Perhaps most surprisingly of all, the KGB knew all about the double role played by “SHIWA/GOVDA” but apparently saw no need to take any measures to coordinate his activities.

Thus, even though the KGB routinely exerted control over and directed the East European intelligence operations, it did not always do so completely. Given limited resources, the Bulgarians did try to rely on external support. Much of the work fell back on the KGB and HVA. In this division of labor, the KGB or HVA provided the content for Bulgarian operations and reused materials they had used in other operations. The adoption of Soviet-planned global active measures, which caused a massive increase in the PGU-DS workload, spurred the Bulgarians to compensate for their lack of resources by handing part of the work back to the KGB or the HVA. The DS, like all other East European intelligence agencies, included support of the USSR’s “peace policy” as a main goal in its annual work plans. All plans for joint work between Department X of the HVA and Department VIII of the DS First Main Directorate contained a preamble-like statement that fixed the general orientation of their cooperation as being “in support of the foreign and peace policy of the USSR” and against the imperialistic policy of the United States, NATO, and the FRG, and the hostile policy of the People’s Republic of China.<sup>57</sup> These

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56. This publication is still available on the homepage of the institute: <http://iins.org/publications/>.

57. In 1975, for example, this plan listed six basic orientations, stored in COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 2, a.e. 540, pp. 175–180.

plans and mechanisms demonstrate the many levels at which the KGB influenced the active measures of the other intelligence services and their cooperation with one another. In the Bulgarian case, the KGB's influence concerned not only the overall framework and priorities of active measures but also the methodological execution of operations.

### **The “Bulgarian Umbrella” and the Pope: A “Special Relationship” for “Sharp Measures”**

“Sharp measures” (*ostrye meropriyatii*, OM) started as a special field within active measures. According to Soviet-bloc defectors such as Ladislav Bittman and Jan Šejna, “sharp measures” in the late 1950s and 1960s were a specialized realm in certain East-bloc intelligence services such as those of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.<sup>58</sup> Available archival documents indicate that Department (*otdel*) XVI of the Bulgarian foreign intelligence service was in charge of such measures.<sup>59</sup> From 1963 to 1968, Department XVI existed separately before it was first renamed Department XII and then in 1969 merged into Department VIII (active measures). In 1973, “sharp measures” found their final organizational home being transferred to Department IV (foreign counterespionage).<sup>60</sup> In 1974, after fierce criticism from the BKP leadership, the DS's work against the “hostile émigré community” (*vrazheska emigratsiya*), as political dissidents abroad where labeled, was restructured.<sup>61</sup> DS resources, agents, and work were fiercely criticized not only by the BKP Politburo and the heads of Bulgarian intelligence but also by the chief KGB adviser in Sofia, Ivan Savchenko. One measure intended to bolster the DS's effectiveness against the Bulgarian opposition abroad was the “Statute for the Work of the Foreign Intelligence Department,” which was approved by Internal Affairs Minister Stoyanov and the BKP Politburo and subsequently affirmed by the KGB in 1973. The statute reads: “The intelligence service plans, prepares and executes sharp measures on the territory of capitalist and developing countries against objects of the enemy and persons who engage in active hostile activities or have committed

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58. See Ladislav Bittman, *Geheimwaffe D* (Bern: Verlag Schweizerisches Ost-Institut, 1973), pp. 13–33; and Jan Šejna, *We Will Bury You: The Soviet Plan for the Subversion of the West* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982).

59. “Report on the condition and perspective of the work concerning special and sharp measures at department VIII PGU,” in COMDOS Archive, F, 9, Op. 2, a.e. 522, pp. 12–23.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Khristov, *Dvoiniyat zivot na agent “PIKADILI,”* pp. 74–75.

crimes against the PRB [People's Republic of Bulgaria].”<sup>62</sup> The term “sharp measures” was not defined in the statute. But as former high-ranking Bulgarian intelligence officers explained, “in operational language, sharp measures mean killings, abductions and sabotage actions. This term is part of the intelligence dictionary . . . and there are no sharper measures than killings.”<sup>63</sup>

The party thus formally gave the PGU-DS carte blanche to abduct, injure, or kill anybody who was deemed an enemy of the BKP regime. Various Communist Party organs (e.g., the BKP Politburo’s “Security” Department) as well as Zhivkov and the prime minister nevertheless reserved the right to review prospective “sharp measures.”

As a brief internal report on the development of the branch for “sharp measures” stated in 1970, the section started in 1963 with only four officers, increasing to seven in 1966. Department XVI had recruited its entire staff from special army forces who were ordered to train and prepare special agents in partisan warfare, wartime reconnaissance, and acts of sabotage.<sup>64</sup> These partisans were meant to work mainly in Greece and Turkey, Bulgaria’s neighboring NATO countries. Two years after Department XVI was formed, its four officers demanded and received support from the Soviet KGB for basic organization of their work and tasks. In 1967, however, at the behest of the BKP Politburo, Department XVI’s work with guerrillas and partisans was stopped completely, and new tasks were defined. From then on, the department focused exclusively on countering “traitors of the nation” (*izmennici na rodinata*), a collective term invented by the DS and the BKP to criminalize refugees, political exiles, dissidents, defectors, and anyone else who “illegally” left or opposed the country, state, or party. In 1970 and 1971, the only years for which the annual work plans of this department could be found in the archives, up to seven (1970) and nine (1971) “target persons” were named, all of whom were former DS officers, former Bulgarian National Army personnel, or political émigrés. Until 1973, “sharp measures” were not strictly defined, but Department XVI’s plans left little to the imagination: the contemplated end for every person on the target list was either abduction or liquidation. These were the “peacetime measures” that Department XVI was restructured to carry out in 1967. The department’s plans, however, proved to be more ambitious than realistic. The eight officers in the department not only lacked

62. See the statute in Tsentralen durzhaven arkhiv (Central State Archive, CDA), F. 1, Op. 64, a.e. 427, p. 5.

63. Khristov, *Dvoiniyat zivot na agent “PIKADILI,”* p. 76.

64. *Ibid.*

experience but also insufficient resources to carry out missions. In 1971 Department XVI had sixteen agents, most of whom had been transferred from other departments, and none of whom was capable of kidnapping or killing anyone (even though the agent codenamed “PIKADILI,” who later became the most probable suspect in the Markov murder, was listed among them). Several years passed before the agents even started to collect information about the direct surroundings of their “target persons,” and by then they were not poised to act on the information. Hence, the department sought help from the KGB, which readily supplied it. KGB experts provided the DS with special training—both theoretical and practical—in explosives, mines, incendiary devices, and narcotics.<sup>65</sup>

The next year the Bulgarians planned to ask the Stasi for help with these matters, too. The DS department for “sharp measures” lacked sufficient technology and could not legally obtain necessary equipment. In 1972, Department IV of Bulgarian intelligence, in charge of working against the “hostile émigré community,” planned to ask the HVA for a variety of items:

We are currently working against certain objects, for which we need to conduct sharp measures. To this end, we need some operational technology. Can the comrades provide us with:

1. Miniature pistols with silencer (Western models)
2. Quick-working poisons
3. Some gadgets (instruments) for the sudden injection of poison into the body of an object (Western origin)
4. A system/gadget for delayed explosive actions
5. Do they possess information about so-called letter bombs or magnetic mines, which have been spoken about in Europe?<sup>66</sup>

Not only does this document give an account of the plans and methods of Bulgarian intelligence, but it is telling in at least three other ways. First, it demonstrates that the Bulgarians needed technical help in carrying out “sharp measures.” Second, most scenarios later employed by Bulgarian assassins (e.g., poisoning) were outlined in the document. Third and most important, the Bulgarians were never allowed to pass on their requests to the Stasi. The handwritten Russian word “NYET” (No), underlined and followed by two exclamation marks, was inserted next to this passage of the document. The

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65. See the “Work plan of division XVI of the First Main Department [*Purvo glavno upravlenie*] of the DS for 1970/71,” in COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 2, a.e. 522, pp. 1–11. For analogous records for 1971/1972, see COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 2, a.e. 524, pp. 1–9.

66. “Report on some questions in the joint work of the intelligence organs 1972,” in COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 2, a.e. 539, pp. 131–136.

KGB adviser was unwilling to let the Bulgarians ask the Stasi for such highly sensitive information and materiel.

Instead, the KGB signed its first general agreement on cooperation with the Bulgarian foreign intelligence service. Several top-secret amendments were made to the agreement, one of which—No. 13—is titled “On the Necessary Help to Be Granted by the PGU-KGB to the PGU-MVR with OM for the Period 1972–1976.” The amendment states,

At the current moment, the necessity prevails to unveil the experience of the PGU-KGB to the specialized department 16 concerning the following questions:

1. The contingent for the recruitment of agents for the preparation and execution of OM: a) local citizens, b) foreign citizens, c) bandit groups of foreign origin
2. The preparation of agents executing OM: . . . c) contact—radio, secret writing, impersonal, personal, d) conditions of explosive, combustion, technical, chemical and other materials to carry out OM . . .
3. The possibility to deliver the following special materials to the PGU-MVR: a) explosive and fire mines . . . , b) surprise mines, c) devices for soundless, mechanical shooting of needles containing fast-acting poisons, d) strong toxins
4. During the second trimester of 1973, the following will be delivered to the PGU-MVR for use in current cases: a) explosive, magnetic mines to be activated by radio, b) camouflaged mines activated by radio, c) camouflaged fire mines activated by radio, d) a device for the soundless shooting of needles . . .
5. To the extent necessary, meetings will be held regarding individual cases between representatives of the PGU-MVR and the PGU-KGB at the necessary level for providing assistance.<sup>67</sup>

By signing the agreement, the KGB secured complete control over almost any act of physical violence the DS might carry out abroad, and Bulgarian foreign intelligence again earned its reputation as a “regional branch of the KGB.”

Assumptions about and characterizations of the DS as “killers for the KGB” who specialized in “sharp measures” gained currency both during and after the Cold War.<sup>68</sup> However, nothing could be further from the truth. The

67. “Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the PRB and the KGB under the USSR Council of Ministers,” 4 August 1972, pp. 476–493. In this document Bulgarian foreign intelligence is referred to as “PGU-MVR,” meaning “First Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.” See Amendment No. 13, in COMDOS Archive, F. 9, Op. 2 a.e. 815, pp. 105–106.

68. For these old interpretations, see John Barron, *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents* (New York: Reader’s Digest Press, 1974); Jennifer Sims, “Foreign Intelligence Liaison: Devils, Deals, and

Bulgarians relied almost completely on the KGB when carrying out their own, limited “sharp measures.” Thus, allegations such as the “Bulgarian Connection” in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II in 1981 seem, in retrospect, unconvincing. The Bulgarians were incapable of executing such a difficult and risky operation on their own. Even in the unlikely event that the KGB would have enlisted someone else to assassinate the pope, the DS was not an obvious candidate. Three years before, in 1978, the KGB had provided the DS with equipment and training to carry out the murder of one of the Bulgarian regime’s most hated dissidents abroad, Georgi Markov.<sup>69</sup> But even though the operation was successful, it was promptly traced back to the DS and KGB. Hence, if the KGB wanted to maintain plausible deniability, the DS did not seem the best “co-conspirator” in a plot to assassinate the pope. Official investigators and academic researchers have not found ironclad evidence of Bulgaria’s involvement (Italian prosecutors in the 1980s amassed only circumstantial evidence), and the well-known KGB defector Vasilii Mitrokhin also did not bring out proof of Bulgarian involvement in the attempt to kill the pope.

This is not to imply, however, that the Bulgarian foreign intelligence service and the KGB did not engage in a major intelligence operation with regard to the attack on Pope John Paul II. However, the available documents from PGU-DS suggest that the attack became an issue for them only at the end of 1982, when a representative of the Bulgarian National Airline in Rome, Sergei Antonov, was arrested as a co-conspirator of the accused Turkish citizen Mehmet Ali Ağca. The BKP Politburo immediately formed two commissions to investigate the attempted assassination—one within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a second in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>70</sup> The head of Bulgarian foreign intelligence drafted an “action plan for massive countermeasures against the West’s anti-Bulgarian campaign.”<sup>71</sup> Whereas a special task force was set up by the Bulgarian authorities to investigate and gather information on the attack, the DS’s countermeasures—that is, active measures—were coordinated with the KGB and other “fraternal organs.”

Details,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2006), p. 201; and Nigel West, *The Third Secret: The CIA, Solidarity and the KGB’s Plot to Kill the Pope* (London: HarperCollins, 2001).

69. For an up-to-date overview of research into the killing of Georgi Markov, see Christopher Nehring, “Umbrella or Pen? The Murder of Georgi Markov: New Facts and Old Questions,” *Journal for Intelligence History*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2017), pp. 47–58.

70. See Baev, *KGB v Bulgariya*, p. 210.

71. See the documents in COMDOS Archive, Sluchaya Antonov, a.e. 218, pp. 1–8.

Hungarian foreign intelligence, for example, arranged for the publication of press articles via their channels in the Vatican, and Polish foreign intelligence was responsible for “unmasking” the alleged Bulgarian agent and union leader Luigi Scricciolo as an agent of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Conducted along with the East German HVA, the long-term Operation Papa (the Bulgarian word for “Pope”) was designed to “unmask Ağca’s connections with Turkish Neo-Fascists and their cooperation with right-wing forces in the FRG.”<sup>72</sup> As early as December 1982, Blagoy Plachkov, deputy head of Department VIII of the PGU-DS, flew to East Berlin to meet with the director of the HVA and Deputy Minister of State Security Markus Wolf, along with the heads of the departments for counterespionage and active measures, Horst Jaenicke and Rolf Wagenbreth, respectively. (From East Berlin, Plachkov continued on to Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest for similar meetings.)<sup>73</sup> The main goal of their active measure was to make the world believe that the CIA was behind the attack and had enlisted the Turkish extremist organization known as the “Grey Wolves” (of which Ağca was a member) to shoot the pope.<sup>74</sup> Wolf, for his part, was relatively certain that the CIA had launched the “anti-Bulgarian campaign” to blame the Soviet bloc, although his service possessed no hard evidence. Nevertheless, within a month the HVA had composed two manuscripts about the shooting based on the Bulgarians’ requirements. One 35-page document was entitled “My God, why? Who had an interest in the Death of John Paul II?” The second was a 56-page text on Ağca’s biography, travels, and political connections.<sup>75</sup> Years later, the Bulgarians still pointed to these texts as the greatest contribution made by their East German colleagues.<sup>76</sup>

As early as January 1983, Bulgarian foreign intelligence embarked on its own active measures. For example, its *rezidentura* in West Germany began to send out forged letters from an anonymous person in the West German

72. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

73. “Report by Colonel B. Plachkov on Talks with the German Comrades in Berlin,” 21–23 December 1982, in COMDOS Archive, Sluchaya Antonov, a.e. 269 (Operatsij “PAPA” AM “VEZUVIJ” Vol. II), pp. 14–16.

74. “Information on our ideas for Undertaking a Common Operation with the German Comrades in Response to the Antisocialist Campaign in Connection with the Attack on the Pope,” 20 December 1982, in COMDOS Archive, Sluchaya Antonov, a.e. 269 (Operatsiya “PAPA” AM “VEZUVIJ” Vol. II), pp. 6–8.

75. “My god, why? Who had an interest in the death of John Paul II?” in COMDOS Archive, Sluchaya Antonov, a.e. 269 (AM VEZUVIJ Vol. II), pp. 17–115.

76. The HVA labeled one brochure, which they fashioned, as one of their own active measures. See “The Grey Wolves: Political Home of Assassin Mehmet Ali Ağca,” in COMDOS Archive, Sluchaya Antonov, a.e. 269 (AM “VEZUVIJ” Vol. II.), pp. 167–172, 176–193.



intelligence community claiming that an alleged conspiracy between the Turkish nationalist Alparslan Türkeş and Bavarian Prime Minister and conservative CSU leader Strauss was behind the attack on the pope.<sup>77</sup> For this operation, the Bulgarians used an alleged record from a meeting of all NATO heads of counterterrorism that the KGB had either acquired or skillfully forged.<sup>78</sup> The purported minutes of this meeting affirmed that none of the Western services had found any proof of a connection between Ağca and the KGB or the Bulgarians. The KGB and the Bulgarians also managed to obtain copies of the interrogations and hearings for all the major witnesses from Rome.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, the Bulgarians' active measures did not have much success in persuading the world of Sofia's innocence.

Only after Antonov was acquitted of all charges—no hard evidence could be produced of his involvement with Ağca, the assault, or a connection to Bulgarian intelligence—did the accusations against the Bulgarians and the KGB begin to abate. Time and again, the Communist countries had claimed that Claire Sterling and her coauthor, Paul Henze, who were the first to write about Antonov and the alleged “Bulgarian connection,” were influenced by the CIA.<sup>80</sup> Melvin Goodman, a former CIA section chief for the Soviet Union who became disaffected with the agency, claimed in a recent documentary that Sterling's book drew on false information planted by the CIA, and the

77. See the draft for the forged letter, “Untitled, 1982,” in COMDOS Archive, Sluchaya Antonov, a.e. 254 (AM “ETNA”), pp. 5–8. See also Bundesministerium des Innern, ed., *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1983* (Bonn: Bundesministerium des Innern, 1984), pp. 191–193.

78. “Proposal concerning the execution of AM ETNA,” 22 March 1983, in COMDOS Archive, Sluchaya Antonov, a.e. 254, pp. 4–6, 9–12.

79. Information from the Security Organs of the PRB, 22 December 1982, in Bundesbeauftragter für die Stasi-Unterlagen (Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Files, BStU), MfS Abt. X 235, pp. 15–17; Telegram from Minister Solakov, 1 February 1983, in BStU, MfS Abt. X 235, pp. 29–30; Telegram from Minister Solakov, 2 September 1984, in BStU, MfS Abt. X 235, pp. 64–66; “Information from the Security Organs of the UPR: Information on the Ağca case, 3 June 1983, in BStU, MfS Abt. X 235, pp. 99–109; Information from the Security Organs of the PRB on the Trial against the Bulgarian Citizen Sergey Antonov, 29 March 1985, in BStU, MfS Abt. X 235, p. 131; “Telegram from Minister Solakov, 23 September 1985, in BStU, MfS Abt. X 235, pp. 142–143; “Information from the Security Organs of the PRB on the Anti-Bulgarian Campaign in the West, 30 July 1984, in BStU, MfS AS 19/87, pp. 2–3; “Information from the Security Organs of the PRB on the Anti-Bulgarian Campaign in the First Trimester 1984,” in BStU, MfS Abt. X 235, pp. 82–90; “Information from the Security Organs of the PRB on the Campaign against the PRB, Its Security Organs, and other Socialist Countries in Connection with the Assault on the Pope, January 1983,” in BStU, MfS HA XXII 17754, p. 16; and Assessment of the Campaign against the Socialist Countries Raised by Western Media in connection with the assault on the Pope, 21 December 1982, in BStU, MfS HA 17752, pp. 46–48.

80. See the interview with Melvin Goodman in the German-Italian documentary film *Schüsse auf dem Petersplatz* [Shots on St. Peter's Square], dir. Moritz Enders and Werner Koehne (Berlin: Pronoun Film; Rome: SD Cinematografica, 2015).

book then persuaded CIA Director William Casey of the Bulgarian and KGB connection.<sup>81</sup>

After the close of Antonov's trial in 1985, Bulgarian foreign intelligence complained bitterly to the KGB about the other "fraternal organs."<sup>82</sup> Only the KGB had offered real help. The East Germans had provided some information, but all the other Soviet-bloc intelligence services kept out of the matter until they, too, were accused of a role in the assassination attempt. Decades after the collapse of Communism, however, Stankov, the former head of Department VIII of the PGU-DS, admitted that the KGB had suspected Bulgarian involvement in the assault and had conducted investigations along those lines.<sup>83</sup> The investigations ended after the KGB concluded that the DS was not involved and that the "Bulgarian connection" was a "flagrant [U.S.] provocation" (*provokatsiya na golo myasto*).<sup>84</sup>

Another murder attempt, however, can be unambiguously attributed to the DS: Georgi Markov's murder in London in 1978.<sup>85</sup> The Bulgarian dissident and émigré was poisoned by a small pellet that contained ricin, a quick-working, deadly poison that has no antidote. On his deathbed, Markov recalled a man with an umbrella on Waterloo Bridge and stated that he had felt a short sting in his right thigh, where the pellet was later found. One week later, another Bulgarian émigré in Paris, Vladimir Kostov, was attacked in a similar fashion and survived only because the poison pellet did not open. It proved easy to link both attacks to the DS, especially because Markov was murdered on Zhivkov's birthday.

As KGB General Kalugin revealed in the 1990s, Zhivkov had directed Stoyanov to ask the KGB for help with "neutralizing" Markov.<sup>86</sup> KGB chief Andropov declined at first but later agreed to help in order not to insult Zhivkov personally. Eventually, the KGB agreed to provide the Bulgarians with the necessary technology and devices and to train Bulgarian operatives in how to use them. The KGB did not want to use its own agents. Again, a special relationship revealed itself: The Soviet Union could control the

81. Ibid.

82. "Protocol on the work meeting with the KGB delegation," 17 May 1983, in Kiryakova et al., eds., *KGB i DS*, Doc. 203, pp. 1296–1304.

83. See the online interview with Stankov, "Polk. Dimo Stankov, bivsh zam.-shef na PGU na DS: Papata znaeshe, che zad pokushenieto stoi 'Svetata Troica' – turskite, amerikanskite i italyanskite sluzhbi," 14 October 2010, <https://www.blitz.bg/article/20948>. Stankov was the longest-serving head of Department VIII of Bulgarian foreign intelligence.

84. See Baev, *KGB v Bulgariya*, p. 214.

85. See Nehring, "Umbrella or Pen?"

86. See Kalugin, *Spymaster*, pp. 178–181.

Bulgarians and their “sharp measures,” in part because the KGB was the only agency that had the resources to carry out such operations abroad. At the same time, even someone as powerful as Andropov, who was also a member of the Soviet Politburo and future leader of the Soviet Union, could hardly say no to a personal request from Zhivkov. Being a “local branch of the KGB” and the “16th Soviet republic” paid off for the Bulgarians in this case.

An analysis of the cooperation of the KGB and Bulgarian DS in the field of “sharp measures” shows some interesting results. First, Cold War-era claims that Bulgaria specialized in or was highly accomplished at carrying out murders or abductions abroad are unfounded. On the contrary, the DS lacked necessary resources for such operations. Second, to make up for this lack of resources, the DS cultivated almost uniquely close cooperation with the KGB, which provided the Bulgarians with material and know-how, in turn ensuring that Moscow could control and oversee DS “sharp measures.” The case of Markov is a perfect example of what was feasible, but conversely it also shows why the KGB probably would not have wanted the DS to be involved in an assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II. Finally, the record of KGB-DS cooperation shows that “sharp measures” were only a small part of Bulgaria’s active measures and reinforces how heavily the Bulgarians in the departments responsible for such measures depended on their Soviet comrades.

## **The Effectiveness of Western Countermeasures against Soviet-Bloc Active Measures**

Active measures against the West were of considerable significance in the “intelligence war” between East and West in the 1960s and 1970s and involved not only increased disinformation and propaganda attacks but also defectors. Bittman and Šejna, for example, both defectors from Czechoslovakia, spoke at length about the KGB’s work in this field.<sup>87</sup> Even though both men warned about the West’s lack of interest and vulnerability to Soviet-bloc active measures, Western intelligence communities gave little indication of being concerned. Despite the constant propaganda attacks of the GDR and the Stasi, the West German counterintelligence service (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, or Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, BfV) did not mention active measures in its annual public reports until the 1980s. Even major events such as the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, a special target of

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87. Bittman, *Geheimwaffe D.*, pp. 13–33; and Šejna, *We Will Bury You*.

active measures by the Stasi, were not seen as being at any special risk from information warfare.<sup>88</sup>

Not until the 1980s did active measures become a grave concern for Western intelligence services. In the United States, special task forces of the CIA and the State Department and annual congressional reports sought to list and give detailed accounts of Soviet disinformation operations. Organizations such as the United States Information Agency (USIA), the West Berlin-based Radio in the American Sector (RIAS), Voice of America (VOA), and Radio Free Europe (RFE) then used these accounts to publicize and counter the East-bloc disinformation operations by launching their own information campaigns.<sup>89</sup> In the FRG, the BfV took on similar tasks and tried to inform the public about Soviet disinformation attempts.<sup>90</sup> Efforts to counter Communist active measures followed a threefold model. First, measures of “classic” counterespionage were implemented—that is, identifying Soviet spies, front organizations, and forgeries used by the KGB to spread disinformation.<sup>91</sup> Second, government agencies such as the State Department, the White House, the CIA, and the Department of Defense publicly addressed the issue at stake, analyzed it, and revealed its untrue character. Third, Western news organizations such as USIA, VOA, RFE, the BBC, and Deutsche Welle released a steady flow of “serious” news and information into the Soviet bloc and the “Third World.”<sup>92</sup> Dennis Kux, a State Department employee who served on one of the U.S. task forces that looked at Soviet disinformation, later described

88. On the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, see Justus Johannes Meyer, “Politische Spiele—Die deutsch-deutschen Auseinandersetzungen auf dem Weg zu den XX. Olympischen Sommerspielen 1972 und bei den Spielen in München,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Hamburg, 2010, pp. 309–350.

89. See Alvin Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation: American Propaganda, Soviet Lies, and the Winning of the Cold War—An Insider’s Account* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995), pp. 93–125; Herbert Romerstein, *Soviet Agents of Influence* (Alexandria, VA: Center for Intelligence Studies, 1991); Herbert Romerstein, *Soviet Active Measures and Propaganda: New Thinking & Influence Activities in the Gorbachev Era* (Toronto: Mackenzie Institute for the Study of Terrorism, Revolution, and Propaganda, 1989); Dennis Kux, “Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation,” *Parameters*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1985), pp. 19–28; Christopher Lamb and Fletcher Schoen, *Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference*, Strategic Perspectives No. 11 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, June 2012); U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Special Report No. 101: Soviet Active Measures. An Update* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1982); U.S. Congress, Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on European Affairs, *United States Policy toward East Europe, West Europe and the Soviet Union: Hearing, 99th Cong., 1st Sess., 1986*; and U.S. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986–87* (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, 1987).

90. See, for example, Innere Sicherheit. Informationen des Bundesministeriums des Inneren Nr. 1 vom 20. 3. 1985; and Bundesministerium des Innern *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1983*, pp. 201–202.

91. See Kux, “Soviet Active Measures,” p. 26.

92. Snyder, *Warriors*, pp. 73–163.

the gravest problem of such countermeasures. On the one hand, giving too much attention to forgeries, falsehoods, and propaganda could overstate their importance; on the other hand, ignoring active measures would only spur the KGB to undertake more of them.<sup>93</sup> Western efforts to counter Cold War disinformation campaigns are well worth remembering today, at a time of heightened Western concern about the Russian government's use of "hybrid and information warfare."

## Conclusion

Bulgaria and the Soviet Union were united politically and by their special intelligence relationship. Both facets of this union, however, were asymmetrical and dominated by the USSR. Still, the Bulgarians skillfully managed to employ tactics of extreme submissiveness to get as much out of their cooperation as they possibly could. For instance, by revealing agents, work plans, and operations to the KGB, they succeeded in obtaining Soviet support for their work even when Moscow had little interest in it. Even though the DS was heavily dependent on the KGB, the Bulgarians gained materially from the relationship.

Active measures, disinformation, and propaganda were specific fields of work for Soviet-bloc intelligence services, especially because such activities were closely connected to the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union. The Bulgarian (and other) departments for active measures were set up based on the model of Service "A." Because the Bulgarians never had the ambition to become globally engaged in active measures, they chose to affiliate themselves with operations initiated by the KGB—but never without hinting toward their limited resources. Agents were shared with or transferred completely to the KGB. Materials the Bulgarians planned to use were almost always produced in Moscow (or East Berlin). Frequently, the services would "double-account" for their actions and operations in order to reconcile their limited resources with their Soviet-assigned global tasks. During times of fierce international conflict, notably the propaganda war after the attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul and Western speculation about a "Bulgarian connection," these tricks came back like a boomerang to the Bulgarian foreign intelligence service.

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93. Kux, "Soviet Active Measures," p. 26.

The record of Bulgarian-Soviet intelligence cooperation during the Cold War yields several lessons that can be applied to the current Russian campaigns of “hybrid and information warfare.” First, Moscow’s use of active measures as an instrument for exerting clandestine influence did not stop with the collapse of Communism and the Soviet Union itself. Service “A” of the former PGU-KGB was not dissolved, although it did suffer from layoffs and cutbacks when the Russian state encountered severe financial problems in the 1990s. The intelligence service was simply renamed and integrated within the structures of the new Russian SVR. Afterward, especially during the consolidation phase of Putin’s rise to power, active measures, disinformation, and influence measures were employed to stabilize domestic rule and to accompany internal conflicts, as in Chechnya, the Caucasus, Ukraine, and Central Asia.<sup>94</sup> After 1991, active measures did not die out as an instrument of Russian foreign policy toward the West, but the resources that could be directed in this direction were initially limited.

Second, despite Moscow’s loss of its “fraternal states” and its outer empire, close personal and structural ties continued to exist between individuals and organizations active in the West during the Cold War years and the Soviet state. Most likely, clandestine structures in the former states of the Soviet bloc are still being used today to spread disinformation.

Third, the digital age is the real driving force behind the change in Russian disinformation policy. On the one hand, the Internet, blogs, Facebook, and real-time communications around the globe have facilitated contacts with foreign societies while helping, in some cases, to conceal such ties. On the other hand, the shape of “hybrid and information warfare” has been adapted to the digital age. Internet blogs, “trolls,” and “fake news” on Facebook can spread disinformation much more rapidly and can reach a far broader audience than newspaper articles could during the Cold War. The use of digital instruments also raises the question of penal codes concerning the spread of “foreign disinformation,” which may cause a massive problem for Western law enforcement authorities.

The examples analyzed in this article support proposals for a concentrated and coordinated set of steps to counter disinformation. The commissions formed within the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Congress, the CIA, USIA, and the West German BfV caused great concern among the “warriors of

94. Irena Borogan and Andrei Soldatov, *The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia’s Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010); and Irena Borogan and Andrei Soldatov, *The Red Web: The Struggle between Russia’s Digital Dictators and the New Online Revolutionaries* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015).

disinformation” in the KGB and its “fraternal organs” in the 1980s.<sup>95</sup> Even though the effectiveness of these efforts was not always clear at the time, archival evidence indicates that the KGB, the HVA, and the Bulgarian foreign intelligence all felt the pressure and rising costs.

Finally, disinformation policies and efforts to counter them carry strong political implications. Countermeasures did not stop Soviet disinformation during the Cold War—and will not stop Russian operations today. However, they will raise the costs of such operations and complicate the efforts of the other side. In any case, Russian disinformation policy (which officials in Moscow call “information policy”) claims to “counter” Western efforts to spread disinformation and “propaganda.” This rhetoric creates an atmosphere of insinuations and counter-insinuations, measures and countermeasures, a spiraling interaction that obscures what is true and what is not. Today, as during the Cold War, hostile states’ efforts to creating mistrust, disruptions, and confusion are fairly successful when Western societies are internally divided. On the other hand, disinformation seldom has “positive” or “creative” effects. For example, Soviet propaganda did not succeed in creating a new and attractive “master narrative” or even in persuading anyone of the superiority of Communism. Hence, “hybrid and information warfare” should not be overestimated, just as it should not be underestimated. The same is true of countermeasures. The real challenge—and the level at which disinformation must be tackled—is the political sphere. Western liberal democracy proved more attractive and effective during the Cold War (and, one hopes, will do so again).

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95. See, for example, the documents in COMDOS Archive, F 9, Op. 2, a.e. 540; Nehring, *Zusammenarbeit*, pp. 239–265; and Christopher Nehring, “Russische (Des) Informationspolitik: Bruch oder Kontinuität,” in *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik*, Vol. 10 (2017), pp. 441–451.