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**“Active Measures”**

**The Soviet Political Warfare in The Last Decade of  
The Cold War**

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## Abstract in English

This work is intended to offer a detailed study of one of the numerous offensive approaches employed by the Soviet Union and the intelligence services during the last decade of the Cold War. Starting from the analysis of the concept of political warfare and what “active measures” means in the panorama of international relations, the thesis will examine a specific case of disinformation campaign that occurred in the early 1980s concerning a secret operation, codenamed “Operation Denver”, carried by the secret services of *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*, KGB, with the direct support of the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, Stasi, and the *Komitet za dържавna sigurnost*, KDS. From the numerous testimonies, from the previously inaccessible archival documents, and thanks to recent scientific studies in this regard, this work will subsequently focus on the analysis of the relationship between the numerous state and police intelligence services of the Soviet Bloc involved in this type of “active measures”, and how they spread internationally, what was their real purpose and the results achieved by these operations in the delicate context of the last decade of the Cold War.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations in English

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BfDI	Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information
BStU	Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service
BWC	Biological Weapons Convention Treaty
CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CHEKA	All-Russian Extraordinary Commission
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COMDOS	Committee for Disclosing the Documents and Announcing the Affiliations of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and Intelligence Service of the Bulgarian National Army
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CzCP	Czechoslovak Communist Party
DAW	German Academy of Sciences of Berlin
DGI	Cuban Interior Ministry's Directorate of Intelligence
DM	Deutsche Mark
EIR	Executive Intelligence Review
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GKChP	State Committee on the State of Emergency
GPU	State Political Directorate
GRU	Main Intelligence Directorate
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Viruses
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
HVA	Main Directorate for Reconnaissance
ID	International Department
IID	International Information Department
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan
KDS	Committee for State Security of People's Republic of Bulgaria
KGB	Committee for State Security of Soviet Union

KhAD	Ministry of State Security of People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
LG	Literaturnaya Gazeta
MfS	Ministry for State Security of the former German Democratic Republic
MGB	Ministry for State Security of the Soviet Union (1946-1953)
MIRV	Multiple Independently targetable Re-entry Vehicle
MOR	Monarchist Association of Central Russia
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKVD	People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union
NVA	National People's Army of the former German Democratic Republic
PCI	Italian Communist Party
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PGU	First Chief Directorate
PSI	Italian Socialist Party
RYAN	Nuclear Missile Attack Secret Operation
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SDI	Strategic Defence Initiative
SED	East German Communist Party
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
StB	State Security of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
TASS	Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union
UN	United Nations
URANIA	Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge of the GDR
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WHO	World Health Organization
WPC	World Peace Council

## Abstract

Il presente lavoro ha lo scopo di analizzare e comprendere uno degli approcci offensivi che l'URSS e i servizi segreti di intelligence sovietici hanno adottato durante il periodo dopo la *détente* tra la fine degli anni Settanta e la fine degli anni Ottanta. L'espedito più utilizzato erano le cosiddette "misure attive", *aktivnye meropriyatiya*, con le quali si intende delineare tutte le operazioni eversive tramite le quali il l'Unione Sovietica poteva avere un'influenza in materia politica sugli altri paesi, e più precisamente quelli facenti parte del Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Queste operazioni venivano attuate attraverso canali ufficiali, mediante l'uso dei media tradizionali da parte del governo, e non ufficiali, come ad esempio *pamphlet*, trasmissioni radio clandestine, associazioni non governative e culturali. Disinformazione scritta e orale, controllo dei media e della stampa nei paesi esteri, utilizzo e/o instaurazione di *front organizations*, *agents of influence* e collaboratori "non ufficiali" sono alcuni esempi di "misure attive".

Partendo dall'analisi del concetto di "misure attive" nel panorama delle relazioni internazionali, la tesi prenderà in esame un caso specifico di campagna di disinformazione verificatosi agli inizi degli anni Ottanta riguardante un'operazione segreta, nome in codice "Operazione Denver". L'operazione fu opera del "Dipartimento A" del Primo Direttorato Centrale, *Pérvoye glávnoye upravléniye*, dei servizi segreti del *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*, KGB, con l'aiuto diretto della sezione *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung*, HVA, del *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, MfS o Stasi, operativa nella Repubblica Democratica Tedesca, e del *Komitet za dáržavna sigurnost*, KDS, operativo nella Repubblica popolare di Bulgaria. Il "Dipartimento A" era la sezione responsabile ad attuare manovre e iniziative a discapito di governi anti-sovietici o anti-comunisti, creando campagne di disinformazione influenzando e persuadendo governi e cittadini stranieri, le cosiddette "misure attive". Dallo studio è emerso come questi tre corpi d'intelligence sovietici cooperassero per portare avanti una campagna di tale portata in tutto il mondo e di come agissero in simbiosi per contrastare e indebolire gli Stati Uniti, e in generale i paesi del Blocco Occidentale. Il caso è diventato celebre a livello mondiale per la sua vasta gamma di forze impiegate e per il coinvolgimento di numerose figure non strettamente politiche e, non necessariamente, sotto il controllo diretto dei servizi segreti. Jakob e Lilli Segal, due biologi tedeschi, inconsapevolmente contribuirono alla diffusione di false informazioni riguardo la creazione intenzionale del virus dell'HIV nella base militare a Fort Detrick nel Maryland da parte del governo statunitense; Dan Rather, conduttore televisivo statunitense, citò

il caso nella trasmissione CBS Evening News nel 1987 scatenando una reazione a catena di pubblicazioni nelle testate giornalistiche occidentali riguardo il caso di Fort Detrick. Questi due eventi sono il perfetto esempio dell'uso di canali non ufficiali da parte del KGB in quanto presentano tesi favorevoli alla loro causa, come nel caso Segal, oppure in quanto garantiscono una certa visibilità a livello internazionale, come nel caso del servizio della CBS Evening News.

Dal 1986 gli attriti tra il presidente del Partito Comunista dell'Unione Sovietica (PCUS), Michail Gorbačëv, e il capo dei servizi segreti del KGB, Viktor Chebrikov, non vennero a mancare: il primo intento ad introdurre riforme come *glasnost* e *demokratizatsiya*, il secondo a continuare le azioni di spionaggio e controspionaggio ed evitare che le nuove riforme mettessero in cattiva luce l'agenzia. Il KGB cominciò ad agire sempre più autonomamente, spesso in contrasto con le decisioni del PCUS, poiché convinti che il presidente e il partito stavano "occidentalizzando" l'Unione Sovietica e gli Stati Uniti ne avrebbero approfittato della sua vulnerabilità. Sostituito successivamente da Vladimir Kryuchkov, persona molto vicina a Gorbačëv sin dal 1985, cercò di migliorare i rapporti e di portare l'immagine del KGB più in superficie dimostrandone gli intenti pacifici e collaborativi anche all'Occidente, oltre che ai rapporti interni con il Partito Comunista. Dal 1989 in poi però la situazione precipitò portando Kryuchkov e altre figure di spicco del KGB a dover contrapporsi nuovamente alla politica del presidente, stanchi di dover sottostare alla nuova, pericolosa, politica del Cremlino, e dopo il ritiro delle truppe sovietiche dai paesi Baltici nel disperato tentativo di fermare le rivolte per l'indipendenza del 1991 e il tentato colpo di Stato dell'agosto dello stesso anno, la spaccatura diventò netta.

Uno degli aspetti più interessanti e di prezioso valore storico, politico e sociale della dissoluzione del compatto e impenetrabile sistema sovietico e che poi ha permesso ai successivi studi di delineare con chiarezza la storia e far luce su speculazioni che hanno caratterizzato quasi ottanta anni di storia dell'Unione Sovietica è stata l'apertura al mondo occidentale degli archivi di stato e l'accesso ai documenti segreti sovietici. Nonostante alcuni archivi fossero già prima del 1991 accessibili agli studenti e ricercatori stranieri, in modalità estremamente limitata, per scopo esclusivamente didattico e sempre regolati da archivisti sovietici incaricati di rifiutare e respingere le richieste, il grande cambiamento avvenne quando, durante tutto il periodo post-sovietico a partire dal collasso dell'URSS, documenti "top secret" e provenienti dall'Archivio del Partito Centrale (TsPA) vennero resi pubblici e accessibili senza limiti e restrizioni. Questo fece sì che la massiccia quantità di informazioni presenti nei preziosi

documenti potesse rispondere alle domande che fino ad allora studiosi, storici e ricercatori si erano posti sin dai primi anni Venti. Questi documenti trattavano di piani militari, industria bellica e prototipi, ma non solo, anche di repressione politica, propaganda, statistiche sulla popolazione, attività nei gulag e tutto il periodo staliniano. Per quanto riguardava invece la documentazione relativa alla polizia di stato e di intelligence l'accessibilità rimase parzialmente limitata, in quanto questo tipo di entità non cessarono di esistere e tutt'oggi, quelle che furono il *Narodnyj komissariat vnutrennich*, o NKVD, e il *Komitet Gosudarstvennoj Bezopasnosti*, o KGB durante il periodo sovietico, operano sotto il nome di *Federal'naja služba bezopásnosti Rossijskoj Federácii*, tradotto in *Servizio federale per la sicurezza della Federazione russa*. Seppur alcuni studi antecedenti all'apertura degli archivi da parte del governo statunitense e della CIA riguardo questo fenomeno erano già stati avviati, come alcune relazioni scritte sulle "misure attive" risalenti al 1981 e la nascita di gruppi "anti-misure attive" come *Active Measures Working Group* durante la presidenza di Ronald Reagan, e grazie anche all'apertura di archivi degli stati satellite, è stato possibile ottenere un'esaustiva quantità di informazioni riguardo tutto il periodo sovietico, permettendo di sviluppare e di concludere studi prima incompleti. Molti di questi studi si sono cimentati negli ambiti e discipline riguardati la storia della Russia e dell'Unione Sovietica in cui erano presenti lacune e hanno aperto un universo completamente nuovo ai ricercatori di tutto il mondo per poter finalmente comprendere cosa si celava dietro la "cortina di ferro" e l'ideologia sovietica. Riguardo quest'ultima, su cui si basava tutta la strategia e la politica del Cremlino, sono riemerse vicende con una prospettiva nuova, quella sovietica, permettendo di fare chiarezza e di studiare da un punto di vista diverso la storia dell'Europa del ventesimo secolo, ma non solo, anche quella della Russia come nazione.

Basandosi sulle testimonianze di molti dei disertori dei servizi segreti sovietici o facenti parte del regime in generale che hanno acconsentito volontariamente a dare il loro contributo tramite interviste e pubblicazioni scritte, come nel caso del dossier Mitrokhin, che illustrava tutte le attività illegali messe in atto dall'URSS e il KGB durante la Guerra Fredda, ed interviste, come quella di Oleg Kalugin, ex generale maggior del KGB e, dopo il 1991, ex deputato al Parlamento russo, la tesi cercherà di dare delle risposte su quali fossero realmente gli obiettivi delle "misure attive" da parte dell'Unione Sovietica, focalizzandosi principalmente nell'ultimo decennio della Guerra Fredda, chiamato anche da alcuni storici, *Second Cold War* o *New Cold War*. Il periodo caratterizzato da forti ripercussioni interne, come già citato, da una nuova minaccia nucleare, dalla guerra in Afghanistan e dalle ideologie contrapposte delle due superpotenze, cela anche un'intensa guerra "sotterranea" da parte del regime sovietico. Appoggiandosi alla



letteratura scientifica già esistente, articoli di stampa dell'epoca, al materiale archivistico disponibile e la storia in generale della Russia come nazione, questo lavoro cercherà di dare un contributo scientifico agli studi preesistenti in materia, con un approccio diverso e originale, cronologicamente ordinato, e presentando non solo i fatti così come si sono verificati ma rivelandone le motivazioni intrinseche e ideologiche che ha permesso all'Unione Sovietica di vivere, o sopravvivere, per quasi un secolo.

## Introduction

The last decade of the Cold War, starting from the end of the *détente* between the Soviet Union and the United States around 1979 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, faced a new phase of tensions. What brings to the attention was how the Soviet Union, along with the Soviet secret services, had continuously conducted political influence, at any stage of the Cold War, collecting secret and confidential information and conducting campaigns aimed at ideological and military expansion. Part of political warfare, i.e., those strategic manoeuvres that aim to counter an opponent on the political level, the main theme of the thesis is the “active measures”, which can be defined as all the subversive operations through which the Soviet Union was able to have an influence in political affairs on other countries, and more precisely those belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement, explaining what their function was, how they were planned by the Eastern Bloc secret services and put into practice to defeat the enemy on several fronts. In addition to studying their characteristics, it is also important to expand on how they were perceived internationally and how they could be stopped, focusing on some examples of active measures, on which a substantial amount of evidence and historical events are based, clarifying and analysing their aspects through the tools of international relations.

The work consists of three main chapters, the first chapter is the historical context, which will examine the period from 1979 to 1991, forming the background to the main theme, and explain in detail what the Committees for State Security of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc were and what role they played in the examined decade.

After a relaxation that lasted almost fifteen years, thanks also to the Helsinki Accords in 1975, the Soviet Union’s decision to invade Afghanistan cost dearly to the balance that had previously been created. During late 70s, the Soviet Union was suffering on the military and economic level due to the economic stagnation, but with the sudden surge by the United States in rearmament and in the war industry, the condition in the Soviet Union worsened because of the investments in the war industry at the expense of primary goods production and the other sectors of the economy. The second part of the first chapter focuses on Soviet secret services, mainly the KGB and MfS (Stasi), explaining their internal structure and which departments dealt with active measures and related activities during the Cold War. It will also present in detail the main secret services of the Soviet Bloc states. Since 1986 in fact, the friction between the president of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the head of the KGB secret services, Viktor Chebrikov, was not lacking. The KGB and MfS began to act more and more autonomously, often in contrast with the decisions of the CPSU, as they were convinced that the General Secretary and the

CPSU were “westernizing” the Soviet Union and the United States would take advantage of its vulnerability. From 1989 onwards the situation worsened, leading Kryuchkov and other leading figures of the KGB to have to oppose the president’s policy again. Anticipated by the first free elections of the Eastern Bloc states throughout 1990 and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred on December 26<sup>th</sup> 1991. After the failed putsch to overthrow the presidency of Mikhail Gorbachev, with the aim of preventing the Soviet Union from transforming itself into the already anticipated Union of Sovereign States and decentralizing its power, Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin became the president of the newly formed Russian Federation.

After dealing with this aspect, the second chapter deals with the main theme, first by giving an explanation of what political warfare is in general and then by shifting its attention to what active measures are, explaining their origins and the different uses they have had during their existence, finally dwelling on the period examined by the thesis. It will also clarify how they spread and through which means they reach their goals, such as disinformation finds access to newspapers and the media and how the concept of “useful idiots” was born.

The third and final chapter will provide the study of a specific active measures, codenamed “Operation Denver”, which aimed to discredit the United States by spreading false allegations about the US creation of HIV as a bioweapon at Fort Detrick, Maryland. The goal was to spread disinformation in the media and instigate existing conspiracy theories regarding the possible artificial creation of HIV. In the United States, rumors were already circulating in the early 1980s regarding the Pentagon involvement in the manufacturing of a bacteriological weapon to eliminate gay people, African Americans, and drug addicts. The conspiracy theories and the rumours within the US society created strong uncertainty and fear, promoting the surfacing of social movements, especially among gay communities and African Americans.

This writing is made by using different types of materials. Starting from the scientific literature concerning the Soviet and Eastern European secret services and the historical framework, the first chapter is written through the consultation and reading of Soviet Union history and Cold War history handbooks, along with articles published in scientific journals such as the *Journal of Cold War Studies* and *Soviet Studies*, that further specifically target the 1980s. As regards the second chapter, the use of scientific literature was exclusive, as delicate topics such as the active measures must be treated with the aid of sector and specific studies, but also but also relying on some primary sources concerning government investigations and some original newspaper articles at the time of the events. In the third chapter, support to primary sources is completely necessary, in order to directly analyse, from a personal point of view, the historical

facts and the example analysed by the thesis. Studies at the general level are present, but there is still little clarity and heated debate, also motivated by limited availability of primary sources. Although some archives were already accessible to foreign researchers before 1991 but always regulated by Soviet archivists in charge, the great change occurred when, during the entire post-Soviet period since the collapse of the USSR, “top secret” documents were made public and accessible without limits and restrictions. But as for the documentation relating to the state police and intelligence, accessibility remained partially limited, and, in the case of the Stasi archives, partially destroyed. From the opening of the archives of the satellite states, it was possible to obtain an exhaustive amount of information about the entire Soviet period, allowing the development and conclusion of previously incomplete studies. Thanks to the contribution of COMDOS, The Committee for Disclosing the Documents and Announcing the Affiliations of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and Intelligence Service of the Bulgarian National Army, over the past decade, it has been possible to collect new top-secret information about the activities of the KGB, but also of the Stasi and other secret services of the Eastern Bloc. Given the role that Sofia had towards Moscow, many of the documents were literally “copy and paste” of documents in the archives of the KGB and the Stasi. Valuable documents, concerning the joint actions with the MfS and the KGB made it possible to conduct cross-studies and trace facts and events that had previously remained unanswered. “Operation Denver” is one of these studies. Due to the partial destruction and manipulation of the documents present in the Stasi archives by some archivists who, to bury the evidence of East German crimes, tore up, counterfeited and transferred the documents to other Soviet satellite state archives, the COMDOS turned out to be a treasure. In any case, Operation Denver continues to remain the subject of debate among scholars. The role of the Stasi and the Bulgarian secret services continues to remain a mystery, questioning their role during the AIDS disinformation campaign. The role of Jakob Segal and the KGB is not clear either, raising hypotheses as to whether or not there was a connection with Moscow and the secret services in implementing the disinformation. Recently, “Operation Denver” gained popularity, being misrepresented by the media as “Operation Infektion”, but helping to resume the debate among experts in European studies regarding the role that the various actors involved in the disinformation campaign have assumed. This work will try to clarify some aspects and provide a complete picture of the events that characterized the last decade of the Cold War, focusing on what were the objectives of Moscow and why the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth was a failure, both for the Soviet Union and the scientists who supported it.

# CHAPTER I

## The Soviet Union in the Last Decade of the Cold War

### *Historical Background*

Due to the weakening caused by the Vietnam War, the United States along with the Nixon administration, were forced to start a stretch political approach, even in the face of a Soviet nuclear arsenal that now had squared the American one. Following the SALT I and SALT II treaties signed between the two superpowers during the 1970s, which limited the use of nuclear weapons, and the 1975 Helsinki agreement, which provided for new considerations regarding Soviet Bloc European borders and human rights, the mutual targets had deviated from the imminent nuclear war to a “friendly cooperation”. Perceived differently by the two powers, the period of détente for the Soviet Union was not so different and did not change so much the attitude of the country in the international framework and in relations with the United States. For the Soviet Union was a time of “detachment”, as it was for the United States. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Carter’s aggressive doctrine, the issue of Jewish migration and the crisis in Poland, the so-called “friendly cooperation” could only fade and start a new, and last, phase of the Cold War. From 1979 to 1985, with the aforementioned invasion of Afghanistan to overthrow the government of Hafizullah Amin which undermined the stability of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union in the last years of Leonid Brezhnev’s presidency was going through a phase of stagnant economy, due to military industry, which in turn caused a serious crisis in the agrarian sector, the fuel of the entire Soviet machine.

After the two short windows of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko as General Secretary at the Kremlin and tensions with the Carter administration, the turning point came with the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary. The new leader grew with a completely different background than his predecessors, with more open and critical mindset towards the Soviet system. Since 1985, the year of his appointment as General Secretary, Gorbachev introduced reforms with the aim of reviving the economy and restoring socialist discipline while working on relations with the West and the United States. With a more loyal and sincere attitude, the new leader approached and collaborated with the United States to end

the nuclear arms race and the Cold War, improving relations and giving up the rivalry between superpowers. Compared to the old Kremlin policy, Gorbachev dedicated himself to the question of human rights and the sphere of influence in the Third World, withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan. However, his policy proved to be a double-edged sword. His “obsession” with the West, the desire to end the Cold War and the timid domestic reforms led to irreversible rifts within the Soviet Union until its final collapse that ended almost 80 years of Soviet history.

### *The End of Détente*

The popularity of the word *détente* increased during the Cold War giving a global definition of the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States from the second half of the 1960s to the late 1970s. A reduction in tensions between East and West and the recognition that a nuclear war would have been fatal for all of humanity are certainly the reasons that lead to accept a “generic” and “universal” definition of the concept of *détente*. What needs to be clarified is the fact of that the two counterparts used differently the concept of *détente*.

In the Soviet view, the *détente* offered a plan on which to conduct diplomatic policies without the constant threat of a reaction from the United States that could lead to war, but at the same time using it as a policy instrument to achieve their own interests. In context, the Soviet Union therefore did not stop pursuing its own ends, did not stop being hostile towards the United States and was inclined to be friendly only “formally”.<sup>1</sup>

From the point of view of historical contextualization, researchers have asked themselves about when the process of the Cold War “relaxation” began and who did the first move, so as to be able to temporally place the “*détente* era”. Being a process per se, it is not easy to define a precise starting point, in fact, for some researchers the Soviet Union showed the will to decrease tensions with the West with the Malenkov’s speech in August 1953 while others credited the Helsinki accords in 1975 to birth of *détente*.<sup>2</sup>

Led by General Secretary Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev in 1970s, the Soviet-American relations saw an undeniably more relaxed and agreement-prone phase. In fact, the Kremlin also saw the *détente* as a sort of reward for having managed to equalize the American arsenal and therefore for having set the “balance of powers” to their advantage. But this was a wrong assumption

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<sup>1</sup> Ulman, Adam B., *Détente under Soviet Eyes*, in “Foreign Policy”, Autumn, 1976, No. 24, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> White, Brian, *The Concept of Détente*, in “Review of International Studies”, Jul., 1981, Vol. 7, No. 3 p. 167.

because on a qualitative level the Soviet stockpile remained behind the American one and aware of this discrepancy, they tried to balance it with quantity.<sup>3</sup>

Born in part from the issue of Soviet Jewish emigrants in the Soviet Union and human rights movements in Europe and the United States, another occurrence that allowed the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States to be pursued peacefully in the early years of 1970s were major social and cultural changes. The significant costs of permitting the Jews to leave the country were claimed by the Soviet authorities through “exit taxes”, which consisted in paying a fee as compensation for having received an education during their “stay”, did not pass unnoticed by the Jewish community which protested by launching campaigns against anti-Semitism, both in United States and in the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> This episode, along with internal problems in the United States, forced the two sides to cooperate to settle the “human rights” issue, which was then discussed again in the Helsinki accords in 1975, which is probably the best reference example of the détente period.

The attitude of Leonid Brezhnev also played a key role in maintaining the period of détente before its end. Prone and ambitious to be remembered as a man of peace,<sup>5</sup> Brezhnev was impervious to internal protests and proposals in the Kremlin of his conservative colleagues and averse to “open policy”. Brezhnev constantly sought dialogue with the United States, and the Politburo, to carry out his idea of peace. All this can be summed up with the famous Vladivostok Summit Meeting on Arms Control on November 23 and 24 in 1974 between Brezhnev and the President of the United States Gerald Ford. Despite the meeting did not lead to an agreement, it paved the way for the future SALT II of 1978, as it demonstrated the willingness, albeit uncertain, of Secretary General Brezhnev to reach an agreement and recognize the enormous economic cost of the nuclear arms race.

Despite his health and the opposition of some Politburo figures regarding the “excessive concession” by the Soviet Union, the meeting seemed to have finally paid off, but once the President returned home had to face dissent from the senators and the Democratic Party. With the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act which went into effect in January 1975, the Soviet Union found itself severely limited in the international trade with the United States, causing strong resentment and disappointment in Brezhnev’s expectations of peace.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Zubok, Vladislav M., *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2007, p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> Ivi, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> Ivi, p. 231. Zubok refers to the *Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 516, March 9, 1975.

<sup>6</sup> Ivi, p. 246.

All of this aside, on August 1, 1975, the Helsinki Final Act was signed by USSR and United States, together with others 33 countries, which prevented the use of force and the inviolability of borders, the improvement of relations between West and the Soviet Bloc, compliance with international laws, the question of human rights and respect for fundamental freedoms. The signing was a great success for the détente, it was the result of numerous debates and meetings aimed at improving relations and eliminating an imminent nuclear threat, but at the same time it also outlined the beginning of its deterioration and acted as the launchpad that led to the emergence of new tensions, especially regarding the Third World.

Since late 1950s, the Third World constituted an important sphere of influence for the Soviet Union for the idea of expanding Communism outside Europe to eliminate the capitalist threat. In turn, the anti-colonial leaders of the Third World admired the Soviet Union, along with its ideology, and saw the Communism as a means for countering the colonial exploitation of the capitalist world.<sup>7</sup> The resentment created by colonialism and the failure to find a dialogue with the West forced the leaders of the African continent to turn their gaze to the Soviet Union and ask for support from the Kremlin, as it is the only other alternative for international assistance. Furthermore, in the early 70s, according to Andropov, Western experts, aware of the Soviet intervention in Africa, did not see it as a threat but rather a “consolidation of results already obtained”, encouraging Moscow to engage in the African question free of negative repercussions.<sup>8</sup> If, on the one hand, there was the ideological impulse, which brings to a “success” in the Third World, on the other, domestic socio-economic factors played an important role in the Soviet Union domestic policy.

On the social level, the Brezhnev “little deal”, a sort of informal and unwritten social pact, which provided for reforms at the micro-economic level, promoting political and economic freedom, and tolerating private businesses and consumerism,<sup>9</sup> improved greatly relations with the Soviet embassies in Africa, creating important paid and prestigious positions.<sup>10</sup> On the economic level, after the oil crisis in 1973, the Soviet Union had a great advantage over the export of gas and oil, which allowed it to finance the “African campaign” and the military industry.

In spite of the opening to the international market and the financial growth, the Soviet economy could exclusively count on the export of oil and raw materials while it massively imported

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<sup>7</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 247.

<sup>8</sup> Westad, Odd Arne, *Moscow and the Angolan Crisis, 1974-1976: A New Pattern of Intervention*, in: “Cold War International History Project Bulletin”, Winter, 1996-1997, Issues 8-9, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Millar, James R, *The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism*, in “Slavic Review”, Winter, 1985, Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 695.

<sup>10</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 250.



goods and machinery from the West, along with meat and grain.<sup>11</sup> The financial resources deteriorated further by the subsidies and “bonuses” introduced with Brezhnev “little deal”. Stubborn to maintain his détente and his “peace mission”, Brezhnev between 1977 and 1979 devoted himself to diplomacy in Europe, seeking a dialogue, above all, with France and West Germany. Despite the benefits that the Eastern Bloc could derive from its neighbours in Europe in mainly economic terms, disagreements on the military level, caused in part by the rigidity of Soviet policy and, on the other, by the distrust of the United States towards the Kremlin, influenced the decisions that Brezhnev in the following years was forced to take, starting with the controversial invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup>

The détente caused a change in the lives of Soviet citizens, more open to the world of consumerism and Western goods, to jobs that allowed fruitful stays abroad and to the cynicism of the new generation, who were increasingly detaching themselves from the myth of staunchness of Soviet society to the rest of the world. Furthermore, with the “borders matter” in the Helsinki Final Act, the Soviet Union “softened” its presence in the Eastern bloc, causing the Kremlin to become uninvolved in the Warsaw Pact allies matters and exclude them from Moscow’s reforms and affairs. Apart from this, there was also an unbalanced economy among the states of the Soviet Bloc caused by Moscow’s scarce economic support which left them no choice but to lean on the Western market.<sup>13</sup>

In parallel, after Jimmy Carter’s victory in the US elections as President of the United States in 1976, US-Soviet relations with the Ford-Brezhnev “peaceful style” changed drastically. The first symptoms of the future Carter doctrine manifested themselves in the president’s new foreign policy, intended to replace the “old agenda” in a more aggressive, less concessive diplomacy, focused on nuclear disarmament and human rights.<sup>14</sup> The road to SALT II became intractable. Carter’s proposal for the “new détente”, which according to Senator Jackson had to “reflects our own values and our own security interests” was not well received by Brezhnev and his colleagues, which caused Vladivostok’s efforts to be fruitless.<sup>15</sup> Carter’s deep-cuts proposal would have put the Soviet military position at a further disadvantage, and the pressure on the human rights issue became a wound Carter continued to rub salt in, with which they

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<sup>11</sup> Zubok, Vladislav M., *Chapter 5 Soviet foreign policy from détente to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, in: Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III, Endings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 95.

<sup>12</sup> Ivi, pp.104-105.

<sup>13</sup> Ivi, pp. 97-98.

<sup>14</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 254.

<sup>15</sup> Njølstad, Olav, *Chapter 7 The collapse of superpower détente, 1975–1980*, in: Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III, Endings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 143.

could have created dissensions even in society within the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the situation in Africa became increasingly competitive, with the Cuban-Soviet expansion in Ethiopia and South Yemen, the Carter's administration began to doubt about a possible expansion towards the Middle East.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the "coup de grace" came when the Kremlin learned that China and the United States had established diplomatic relation, aimed at preventing possible Soviet influence in Iran.<sup>17</sup> Despite the worsened condition of US-Soviet relations, SALT II was signed at the Vienna Summit in 1979, which banned the new missile programs and provided for the reduction of MIRV missiles to equal numbers between the two superpowers. Left without ratification, the treaty was the last hope for the supporters of "peaceful cooperation", but did little to stop the decaying process of the now forgotten détente, from which, six months later, it saw its definitive end with the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops.

### *Tensions and The Second Cold War (1979-1985)*

The decision to intervene in Afghanistan cost dearly to the stability of US-Soviet relations. The Carter administration was shocked, so much so as to withdraw SALT II, extinguish favourable economic and trade programs with the Soviet Union, and initiate a new military plan, soon known as the "Carter doctrine".<sup>18</sup>

The USSR's ties with Afghanistan date back to the mid-1950s, with Mohammed Daoud Khan as Prime Minister, who, nourished by a strong nationalism, wanted to reform and modernize the country, through a centralization of power and the re-establishing of the borders with neighbouring Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> To rise to power, Daoud needed foreign political and military assistance, which could not count on the West, committed to Iran, an important source of oil and gas, and Pakistan, member of the British Commonwealth of Nations and thus an ally in the Cold War.

Under the Nikita Khrushchev's leadership, the Soviet Union at the end of the 1950s accepted Afghanistan's requests for aid and support in the "Pakistani dispute", providing a substantial contribution in economic and political terms. Over the following 20 years, Afghanistan became

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<sup>16</sup> Njølstad, *Chapter 7 The collapse of superpower détente, 1975–1980*, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> Ivi, p. 148.

<sup>18</sup> Brands, H.W., *The World in a Word: The Rise and Fall of Détente*, in "Rhetoric and Public Affairs", Spring, 1998, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> Saikal, Amin, *Chapter 6 Islamism, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*, in: Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III, Endings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 122.

a full-fledged ally of the Kremlin, the Afghan military being trained according to the Soviet model, along with the supply of weapons for the army and cooperation in intelligence activities. For the Soviet Union it was a valid reason to demonstrate their mission of “peaceful coexistent” and to expand the Soviet anti-capitalist ideology, thus preventing a possible inclination for the middle Eastern country towards the West.<sup>20</sup> Despite the soviet bound settled by Daoud, a fragmented political system of different ideologies and aims took shape in Afghanistan during the 1960s. Three main opposition groups emerged: a pro-soviet Marxist-Lenin faction, the radical Islamist group and, the Daoud’s agents, against the monarchy.<sup>21</sup> The latter prevailed, Mohammed Daoud Khan came to power with a coup in 1973, proclaiming Afghanistan a republic and wiping out the king’s democratic influence. Regarding domestic policy, the new autarch banned the constitution and all political activities, persecuting the Islamists and acting in the name of “modernity and progress” while, regarding foreign policy, tried to reduce dependence on the Soviet Union by seeking a rapprochement with Libya and Saudi Arabia, with the aim of obtaining economic incentives, and with Egypt, to befriend Washington.<sup>22</sup> Despite the US disinterest in the Afghan leader’s moves, Daoud continued his political agenda until, after a meeting requested by Brezhnev in the Kremlin, Moscow, alarmed by Daoud behaviour, urged the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan to rise up against him. After the 1978 coup known as Saur Revolution, the Soviets tried to establish a socialist state, but the inexperience and the internal dissident of the PDPA, accompanied by continuous clashes between revolutionary leaders, were an obstacle to the sense of unity and cooperation that Moscow demanded.<sup>23</sup> This internal dissension was distinguished in the factions of the Khalq and the Parcham. The Khalq under the leadership of the founder of the PDPA, Nur Mohamad Taraki, inspired by the Stalinist purge, began to persecute the Parcham. The latter were more moderate and believed that the country was unable to sustain a Lenin-style revolution as Afghanistan was industrially underdeveloped. In 1978 together with his lieutenant Hafizullah Amin, Taraki was “admonished” by Moscow through Boris Ponomarev, in a covert operation, and Brezhnev subsequently signed a mutual friendship and cooperation agreement with Taraki, in which he was informed that there was no intention to intervene with Soviet troops.<sup>24</sup> Aware of the fact that an invasion would have cost all the efforts made so far in terms of détente and the upcoming Vienna Summit, Brezhnev and his colleagues in the Kremlin refused several

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<sup>20</sup> Saikal, *Chapter 6 Islamism, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*, p. 123.

<sup>21</sup> Ivi, pp. 124-125.

<sup>22</sup> Ivi, p. 126.

<sup>23</sup> Gompert, David C., Binnendijk, Hans, and Lin, Bonny, *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn Book*, Santa Monica, RAND, 2014, p. 131.

<sup>24</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 260.

times the requests for intervention from the Afghan leaders. The straw that broke the camel's back was the murder of Tarik at the hands of Amin on October 9 1979. Brezhnev was totally horrified from it that the troika Ustinov, Andropov and Gromyko became convinced that it was time to intervene and "save" the Afghanistan, unmanageable by the PDPA alone.<sup>25</sup> Amin had to be removed. Andropov persuaded Brezhnev with the fact that the Americans were planning to deploy short-range missiles in Western Europe and reassured him that the so-called invasion would pass for an "aid intervention" requested by Amin himself; in addition, some false news about Soviet troops in Cuba spread by the United States, totally changed the reluctant climate in Moscow. In late December, Soviet troops began to occupy major cities in Afghanistan, patrolling lines of communications and borders. The forecast was an invasion that would last twelve months, but the situation degenerated further with the disastrous blitz to kill Amin. Soviet troops got bogged down in Afghan disorder, increasing hostility from both the country and international communities, the United States first.<sup>26</sup> To aggravate the "brief invasion", the United States, having felt called into question, started a counter-intervention strategy against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> Washington, fearing that the Soviet Union through Afghanistan would penetrate the Persian Gulf and affect Western oil reserves, threatened the use of force if Soviet troops pushed further. From a military perspective, the United States established new friendly agreements with Pakistan, which was an important strategic advantage to provide American support to rebel groups in countering Soviet troops. The Carter administration not only attacked on a military level, but promoted an international diplomatic campaign to prevent the support of other countries towards the USSR.<sup>28</sup> To fix the "damage" and maintain the détente in Europe, the Soviet Union proposed to host the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. Finally, 66 countries boycotted the Olympics by not participating, others countries competed under the Olympic flag in protest or by not participating in the opening ceremony.

Immediately after the Olympics, protests and strikes sparked by the Solidarity Movement in Poland against the Communist regime.<sup>29</sup> Born in 1980 as a channel of protest for the discontent of workers who suffered from low wages and increasingly high prices of basic goods, the Solidarity Movement, supported by intellectuals, blue collar workers, and according to the KGB, the Polish Catholic Church and the Vatican, also reflected the general situation that the

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<sup>25</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 262.

<sup>26</sup> Saikal, *Chapter 6 Islamism, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*, p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Ivi, p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> Zubok, *Chapter 5 Soviet foreign policy from détente to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, p. 105.

Eastern Bloc was experiencing.<sup>30</sup> Protests in Belarus, Ukraine and the Baltic regions, on the Polish model, took hold as a domino effect. In addition to Poland, the whole of Eastern Europe was hit by the stagnant economy that the Soviet Union was experiencing, stressed by the enormous costs in Afghanistan and the sanctions imposed by the Carter doctrine.<sup>31</sup>

Reluctant and aware of the consequences that yet another invasion would bring, the Kremlin decided not to intervene with the armed forces, as it did in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Hungary in 1956, but to pressure the Polish leader Stanislaw Kania to resolve the riots, placing soviet tanks and troops along the borders and “staging” an imminent invasion. Failing to carry out the mandate commanded by Moscow, the last hope was to replace Kania with Prime Minister General Wojciech Jaruzelski. In October 1981, the Politburo finally decided not to invade Poland and commanded Jaruzelski the task to impose martial law in order to stop the Solidarity Movement and the protests, despite his request for an intervention by the Soviet troops.<sup>32</sup> However, martial law was imposed in December of the same year and remained in force until mid-1983, the leaders of the Solidarity Movement were arrested and riots on Polish ground subsided. This obviously did not leave the Polish economy unscathed, which despite the aid provided subsequently by the Soviet Union, found itself in free fall.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the strong resentment against the Communist regime was not eradicated, proving that the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact allies was no longer a bloc united by a strong and common ideology as it was after the World War II.

Parallel to the events in Poland, the Kremlin had to confront Reagan’s aggressive doctrine. Ronald Reagan became the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America on January 20, 1981, after winning the election against Jimmy Carter. His conservative and anti-communist nature were already noticed in his campaign for the elections, intent on launching a real “crusade” against the Soviet Union, punishing it severely on the economic level and resorting to an accelerated rearmament of the US arsenal to increase defence, in order to pressure the Kremlin. In its defence the Soviet Union attempted to stir up anti-nuclear movements in Western Europe and in the United States and improve relations with the neighbouring People’s Republic of China, condemning Washington’s policy of deteriorating US-Soviet relations.<sup>34</sup>

Prior to Brezhnev’s death on November 10, 1982 at the age of 75, the figure of Yuri Andropov was well known and influential in Brezhnev’s leadership. Head of the KGB since 1967 he had

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<sup>30</sup> Gompert, Binnendijk, Lin, *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars*, p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> Zubok, *Chapter 5 Soviet foreign policy from détente to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, p. 105.

<sup>32</sup> Gompert, Binnendijk, Lin, *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars*, p. 144.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, p. 147.

<sup>34</sup> Zubok, *Chapter 5 Soviet foreign policy from détente to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, p. 108.

an ambiguous and controversial personality and was in charge of many crimes committed by the KGB and its departments during his office. His ability to spread disinformation and even persuade his own colleagues at the Politburo was a “skill” he inherited from his years in the soviet secret service.<sup>35</sup> Morbidly suspicious of the United States, he repeatedly denounced Washington’s preparations to launch the first attack on the Soviet Union. A year before Brezhnev’s death, Andropov, consulting with Ustinov and Gromyko, stated that he was planning a secret operation, later codenamed RYAN<sup>36</sup>, with the KGB and the GRU<sup>37</sup> to stop the non-existent attack.<sup>38</sup> Surprisingly, Andropov was much more self-confident than his predecessor, his experience was able to provide him with the intelligence to realize that it was necessary to completely reform the country, starting from eliminating the corruption in the bureaucracy and among the “elders” in the Politburo.<sup>39</sup> Elected as General Secretary two days after Brezhnev’s death on November 12, 1982, Andropov’s leadership lasted barely 15 months due to kidney cancer that led to his death in February 1984. During his office, a few episodes occurred that led to a new peak in US-Soviet tensions, which some historians have referred to as the Second Cold War, or the New Cold War. The Reagan administration criticized Washington’s past attitude towards the Soviet Union. The Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, according to Reagan, had allowed the Soviet Union to grow militarily and illegitimately expand. In addition, the containment policy of Nixon, Ford and Carter was a failure at the expense of the United States, which came out weakened at the military level, lost the patriotic sentiment and set self-imposed limits in favour of the détente in economic terms.<sup>40</sup> Reagan’s goals were clear. Economically, the United States had the means and the capacity to be able to sustain an accelerated rearmament and therefore to be able to afford a future “offensive” on the Soviet Union, it was enough simply to use the resources until then unemployed. The Soviet Union was experiencing a critical phase and was ideologically vulnerable, by playing on the pressures they would have obtained satisfactory results.<sup>41</sup> By increasing its arsenal, the United States would have induced the Soviet Union to do the same, further aggravating its economic situation. This went hand in hand with Washington’s assumption that the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc were dependent on the capitalist market

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<sup>35</sup> Kenez, Peter, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (1999), New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 243.

<sup>36</sup> *RaAetno-Yadernoye Napadenie* (“Nuclear Missile Attack”).

<sup>37</sup> Main Intelligence Directorate.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew, Christopher, Mitrokhin, Vasili Nikitich, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, New York, Basic Books, 1999, p. 213.

<sup>39</sup> Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, p. 244.

<sup>40</sup> Cox, Michael, *Whatever Happened to the 'Second' Cold War? Soviet-American Relations: 1980-1988*, in “Review of International Studies”, Apr., 1990, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 159.

<sup>41</sup> Ivi, p. 160.

and thus by imposing blocs they would kill two birds with one stone: The Eastern Bloc would have had shortage of resources from the West and, at the same time, they would have withdrawn from Afghanistan and would not have undertaken further “expansionist campaigns”.<sup>42</sup>

After attempting to impose an embargo on the construction of the “Urengoi-Western Europe”, an oil pipeline system that would provide more revenue to the Soviet Union, Reagan initiated the “Strategic Defence Initiative”, SDI, in March 1983.<sup>43</sup> The intense psychological pressure translated into several CIA operations undertaken in the seas of northern Europe up to the Baltic Sea to intimidate and test the Soviet Union by inducing it not to take further positions and to recognize Washington’s military superiority.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile in Afghanistan, the Reagan administration financed Pakistan and rebel groups, establishing relations with the ISI, the Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan, and providing weapons and support to the *mujahedin*, who were organizing the Afghan resistance. Much of the CIA aid was distributed by the ISI to the Islamic radical Hekmatyar, who repeatedly tried to act independently and according to his purposes. A group of volunteers came forward to join the resistance, among them the young Osama Bin Laden, and *madrasas* schools were set up to train Pakistani students to take part in the war.<sup>45</sup>

The Soviet Union in all this turmoil responded with caution. Yuri Andropov launched campaigns to eliminate some corrupt officials in the Kremlin in the name of discipline and attempted to track down those within the Soviet Union who could pose a threat to the regime and have secret contacts abroad.<sup>46</sup>

As far as foreign policy is concerned, the USSR defended itself by relying on the *détente*. By backing the *détente*, Moscow would get the consensus of the Western US allies in Europe, as if a war broke out, they would be in a serious position. Furthermore, many traders were opposed to Reagan’s economic warfare of imposing trade blocks on Eastern Europe as they had many economic benefits by maintaining the relations with the East. Finally, the call from the Kremlin moved social democratic groups that opposed military spending and NATO members who feared Reagan would lose consensus from supporters of the *détente*. The Soviet Union also criticized the fact that US rearmament spending would aggravate the international economy, as it would lead in the long run to inflation and huge deficits at the expense of international market

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<sup>42</sup> Cox, *Whatever Happened to the 'Second' Cold War?*, p. 161.

<sup>43</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, pp. 270-271.

<sup>44</sup> Schweizer, Peter, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, New York, The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Saikal, *Chapter 6 Islamism, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*, p. 131.

<sup>46</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 273.

stability. Needless to say, it found the support of the Third World, in which a strong resentment towards Washington's hegemonic aims was in line with the Soviet view.<sup>47</sup>

The United States seized the opportunity by promoting a hate campaign and proving that the Soviet Union was an "evil empire", when on September 1, 1983, the Boeing 747-200 of the Korean Air Lines, was shot down by the Soviet air defence forces, mistaken for a US RC-135. The same evening a few hours earlier an actual US RC-135 flew over the ocean, but kept out of Soviet airspace. The purpose was to monitor Soviet missile tests. What caused controversy was the fact that despite the intervention of Major Osipovich, in charge of making contact and warning the plane to withdraw, the Soviets barely tried to identify the plane. Osipovich, aboard his Sukhoi Su-15, a Soviet interceptor fighter, approached the Boeing 747 after some vain attempts to "draw attention". Not being a war plane, he could not pick up the radio frequencies of Soviet stations and he could not respond to Osipovich's "warnings". In any case, without being sure of his identity, the Major was told to open fire and teared down the Boeing, with its 269 passengers.<sup>48</sup> The news of the accident immediately spread around the world and only after a week of denial, the Soviet Union admitted the mistake.

The last months of Andropov's life were severely affected by the disease. From September 1983 until his death, on February 9, 1984, Andropov continued to perform his duty from the hospital bed demonstrating a strong dedication to the motherland and a willingness to bring the Soviet Union back to stand out. The day after his death, Konstantin Chernenko, by the last will of Yuri Andropov, came to power as Secretary General. His presidency, like that of his predecessor, lasted two months less, spending all the time in his dacha, as he was another terminally ill and kept alive by machinery that supplied him with oxygen.<sup>49</sup> A rather irrelevant and absent General Secretary, Chernenko's presidency was important for the building of alliances among the party and political maturation of the then Secretary of the Central Committee, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev. Due to Chernenko's health condition, military and foreign policy were under the direct control of Ustinov and Gromyko while at the Politburo meetings, Gorbachev replaced the ill General Secretary. This allowed him to gain experience and consensus among his colleagues and to pave the way for his future presidency. Although the Stalinist nostalgia spread among the old people of the party and the feeble opposition to the

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<sup>47</sup> Cox, *Whatever Happened to the 'Second' Cold War?*, p. 163.

<sup>48</sup> Sell, Louis, *From Washington to Moscow: US-Soviet Relations and the Collapse of the USSR*, London, Duke University Press, 2016, pp. 137-138.

<sup>49</sup> Ivi, p. 137.



proposals of the “newcomers”, one by one they slackened off, arising a new political caste that would accompany the last years of the Soviet Union’s life.<sup>50</sup>

### *The Gorbachev Era (1985-1991)*

In the United States, Ronald Reagan obtained his second term with almost 3/4 of the votes in November 1984, demonstrating the effectiveness and popular consensus of the anti-Soviet policy adopted in the early 1980s. Despite the assumptions by radicals that the Second Cold War would have continue, the years during his second term proved otherwise. Reagan’s doctrine saw long-term results. By continuing to press the Soviet Union and launching a “never-before-seen” military and technological rearmament, the United States awarded a superior and unrivalled position. On the other hand, the Soviet Union would not have been able to sustain a rearmament of that calibre, bringing it to a position of accommodation, adopting a reforming domestic policy, and giving up its hold in the Third World as well.

On an economic level, the Soviet Union did not suffer from rearmament or embargoes imposed on the Eastern trade. On the contrary, the awareness of not being able to bear the military costs and the clandestine trade with Western Europe to overcome the restrictions imposed by the Eastern Bloc, were a lifesaver for the Soviet economy in the 1980s. One of the main reasons was the pre-existing, enormous, debt between the Eastern Bloc states to Moscow, compounded by the lack of bank loans from Western Europe, along with the devaluation of the dollar and the drop in the price of oil.<sup>51</sup>

The great turning point came with the rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev on March 11, 1985. Much younger than his predecessors, the new leader remained in a certain way on the same line attempted by Andropov: economic reforms and the restoration of discipline. Born in 1931, Gorbachev was the first General Secretary to be born and raised in the Soviet Union. This allowed him to understand what were the true problems that plagued the entire Soviet system, not limiting himself to blaming “external factors” as his predecessors did. After graduating from Moscow University with a law degree, Gorbachev became first secretary of the Stavropol regional party in 1970, where he met Boris Yeltsin. Eight years later he passed the Central Committee secretary in charge of agriculture. It was at this time that Gorbachev cultivated his alliance within the Politburo, giving full support to Brezhnev’s policy. Andropov was also on

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<sup>50</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 277.

<sup>51</sup> Cox, *Whatever Happened to the 'Second' Cold War?*, p. 164.

his side and kept him under his guidance, seeing him as a promising politician and making him quickly climb the ranks of the Central Committee.

When Andropov was “forced” to elect Chernenko General Secretary of the CPSU before his death, Gorbachev became Secretary of the Central Committee, in which he already gave voice to his ideas of peace and dialogue with the West to solve internal problems.

Some Western scholars and assistants very close to Gorbachev have noted some traits in common with Nikita Khrushchev. Both with a strong tendency to reform, closeness to the people, optimistic and critical of the past, the new leader shared the defunct de-Stalinization reform initiated by Khrushchev between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s. As opposed to Khrushchev’s “combative” and impatient attitude, Gorbachev was quiet and patient, always acting in a methodical way and seeking dialogue even with opponents, building consensus and approval among them. His peaceful nature also surfaced in military politics, always against the use of force and the deployment of the troops. In particular, his attachment to the figure of Lenin emerged, in which Gorbachev personified himself, reflecting the “project” to reform Communism and his “blind optimism” in believing the people around him. Gorbachev believed that with his reforms the Russian people had immediately followed him and rekindle the sense of collectively that had characterized soviet society thirty years earlier. His “new thinking” was in a sense too far ahead for the society that was going through an ideological and economical breakdown.<sup>52</sup> His numerous trips abroad and dedication to reading books, including by Western philosophers and socialists, allowed him to develop what will later was labelled as “new thinking”. Despite the difficulty of making his ideas tangible and implementing reforms, Gorbachev’s “acceleration” (*Uskoreniye*) could basically be summed up in two points: ending the Cold War, hence the rivalry with the United States, and making the Eastern Bloc more closely with the capitalist world, to save its economy. Unlike Stalin’s strong repulsion to Westernism, Gorbachev was tolerant of Western culture and allowed him to act as a “Western politician”, condemning stereotypes towards United States and the West.<sup>53</sup>

Gorbachev in his first public speeches achieved great success, both among the members of the Politburo and among the people, finally seeing a real leader, fresh of ideas and determined to make changes. Gorbachev in the first months resumed the policy already started during the Andropov-Chernenko’s interregnum, but substantially changing its “speed” of implementation,

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<sup>52</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 314.

<sup>53</sup> Ivi, p. 318.

*acceleration*, starting with the downsizing of offices within the Central Committee and the corruption from the “middle-level” leadership in the provinces.<sup>54</sup>

One of his first goals was to place his supporters and closest officers to the top positions of the Central Committee, replacing the “elders” of the party and weakening the positions of the more conservative opponents. Viktor Chebrikov, head of the KGB, and Central Committee secretaries Yegor Ligachev and Nikolai Ryzhkov, were immediately promoted members of the Politburo, along with his friend Boris Yeltsin as head of the Moscow party organization in December.<sup>55</sup> Finally, Gromyko, who supported Gorbachev’s rise and was part of the troika with Ustinov and Andropov, was inconvenient to the new leader as a foreign minister and was replaced by Edvard Shevardnadze, the chief of the Georgian party organization. At the same time, in recognition, Gorbachev rewarded Gromyko for his long service.<sup>56</sup>

Parallel to the “cleansing”, Gorbachev’s domestic policy focused on the backward and stalled economy. The new secretary general understood that the greatest problem of the Soviet economy was the technological underdevelopment, the result of years of opposition to capitalism and the closure to the Western market. Although the quality of life had already seen barely perceptible improvements from Khrushchev and Brezhnev years, Gorbachev pushed on the same “disciplinary reform” as Andropov, applying it in industry and work. Needless to say, as already mentioned, the Russian people had no incentive to give up absenteeism and work harder for the same salary, constituting a dead end for “Gorbachev’s acceleration” and making the solution converge once again towards the foreign policy.<sup>57</sup> Still on the domestic level and connected to the question of discipline, the problem of alcoholism emerged. Russian citizens were compulsive consumers of vodka, alcohol deteriorated their health and reduced work efficiency and productivity, along with crime and indiscipline. The evident state of discontent of the Soviet people was underestimated again and an anti-alcoholism campaign was introduced, whose reforms further worsened the economy, affecting home production of wine, raising the prices of vodka and cutting down the economic income favoured by alcohol.<sup>58</sup> The Soviet economy even before Gorbachev was facing a trade deficit and an increase in foreign debt. Oil exports declined and the price fell more and more during Gorbachev’s first two years. By 1987, the USSR had to fall back on price increases and taxation, maneuver that Gorbachev rejected in order not to ruin his image.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, p. 248.

<sup>55</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 172.

<sup>56</sup> Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, p. 248.

<sup>57</sup> Ivi, p. 249.

<sup>58</sup> Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, p. 250.

<sup>59</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 299.

As already mentioned, Gorbachev's foreign policy focuses on the principle of reconciling relations with the West, the only strategy to be able to effectively implement internal reforms and improve the economic situation of the Soviet Union. The "new thinking" became the new approach to foreign policy, there was a need to downsize international relations with the United States, getting the USSR out of its isolation. Edvard Shevardnadze was a limitation to this approach, not so much for ideological friction, but for the total inexperience in the diplomatic field. Gorbachev entrusted him in 1987 with Aleksandr Nikolaevich Yakovlev, Soviet ambassador to Canada and head of the Central Committee Department of Ideology and Propaganda, whose stay in the American continent,<sup>60</sup> allowed him to support Gorbachev's "new thinking" and to implement *perestroika*, based on the reading of literary works by Western economists.<sup>61</sup> Where Gorbachev had failed to reform the country and the economy, his greatest success was in foreign policy. Unlike his predecessors, Gorbachev simply accepted the fact that the United States military power could not be matched. This made the Soviet Union think in terms of coexistence, not rivalry. The solution was to let go of the Third World and to improve diplomatic relations with the West, re-establishing *détente*. Despite the opposition of some officers at the White House, Ronald Reagan, after an exchange of letters with Gorbachev during the summer and the unilateral suspension of Soviet nuclear tests, agreed to meet personally to talk about arms control in Geneva in November 1985. Gorbachev's main interest was to discuss about the Strategic Arms Defence, SDI, which could have created new tensions in the future, to focus on reducing nuclear weapons and, to recognize Soviet geopolitical ambitions in the Third World. Given the similarity with Brezhnev's proposals of the 70s, the meeting was a failure, even if the plan of "nuclear weapons reduction" was accepted without objection. Washington still did not trust Moscow, fearing it was yet another game to achieve its own interests, and wanted to see new changes in Afghanistan and in the question of human rights. The United States continued to exert pressure, stepping up espionage activities and covert operations against the KGB and the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup> The CIA's aggressive operations under the Reagan administration turned the tide, damaging Soviet apparatus and gaining intelligence from KGB deserters, spies, and increasingly advanced technology installed inside the Soviet Union and in Moscow. An escalation of arrests by both sides of undercover agents of the CIA and the KGB began. On August 23, 1986, a member of the UN Secretariat, Gennadi F. Zakharov, was arrested by the FBI, on suspicion of being an undercover KGB agent. With no diplomatic immunity, the KGB

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<sup>60</sup> Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, p. 300.

<sup>61</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 198.

<sup>62</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 287.

agent could not be released at Moscow's request. Seven days later, on August 30, Nicholas Daniloff, US correspondent for the magazine *News and World Report*, was arrested by the KGB, on suspicion of working for the CIA. Accused by the Pentagon of being a hoax to set up an exchange between the two arrested, US Secretary of State George Shultz, initially ruled the trade out. Gorbachev accused Washington of using the case to deliberately exacerbate US-Soviet relations while Reagan ordered the expulsion of 25 UN-based Soviet diplomats. Given the alarming situation, Gorbachev, on Shevardnadze's advice, proposed to Reagan to discuss the case and nuclear arms reduction in London or Iceland. Daniloff was released on September 29 and sent to Frankfurt while twenty-four hours later Zakharov would have departed the United States to reach the Soviet Union. This allowed the Reykjavik Summit between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev between 11-12 October 1986.<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, Soviet troops became more aggressive, using artillery on rebels and civilians alike, raking cities and mining paths and roads, making it increasingly difficult for the *mujahedin* to oppose and face the Soviet army.<sup>64</sup> Since his rise, Gorbachev had intended to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, aware of the economic cost that the war in the Middle East entailed and against his "use of force" policy, but it took almost five years to see the troops withdraw from the "Bear Trap".<sup>65</sup> The Soviet military wanted to preserve the honour and were sceptical of withdrawing from Afghanistan, as it would be humiliating and would have exposed the "futility" of the confrontation and the victims. Gorbachev on the other hand, wishing to elevate the issue as an international issue, found no support from the United States in establishing a government other than the Islamic fundamentalist one.<sup>66</sup> On the contrary, the United States in 1986, together with Saudi Arabia, provided full support to *mujahedin* in Afghanistan, contributing the "global confrontation" and stirring up opposition as it was back in 1970s. Powerless in the face of Soviet air firepower, Mort Abramowitz, director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, after an inspection in Afghanistan and becoming aware of the situation, asked the Pentagon to provide the rebels with the a man-portable surface-to-air missile, the Stinger FIM-92. Upon initial refusal in January 1986, Ronald Reagan together with the Pentagon consented to its limited and controlled distribution to the *mujahedin*. This allowed to take down the HINDs and to be able to turn the tables on Soviet

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<sup>63</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, pp. 223-225.

<sup>64</sup> Ivi, p. 206.

<sup>65</sup> Brown, Archie, *Chapter 12 The Gorbachev revolution and the end of the Cold War*, in: Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III, Endings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 255.

<sup>66</sup> Ivi, p. 256.

troops.<sup>67</sup> In 1986, Moscow replaced Karmal with Mohammed Najibullah, chief of the Afghan secret police, KhAD, erected by KGB, but did little in spite of his policy of solidarity and reconciliation, both about internal unrest in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and to come to agreements with the *mujahedin*.<sup>68</sup>

Another consequence was *glasnost*, "openness", a reform that arose from a desire to constructively criticize the Soviet system and promote the intellectual freedom lost with the Stalinist era. The criticisms had to come from the Russian people and had to be accepted by the leadership, introducing freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Gorbachev promoted *glasnost* because he himself believed in the intellectual freedom and, bringing the problems to "public discussion", could have help the system work better. From 1986, intellectuals, writers and philosophers who had previously been expelled from Moscow, imprisoned or exiled, were able to return to the capital and to their own lives and, to freely voice their thoughts and criticisms. Many Russian movies and books that were previously banned now were able to see the light and reach everyone. While the *perestroika* failed, the social reforms were successful among the Soviet citizens, who were able to breathe again after years of oppression. Although it could have been a step forward so far, this revealed the limits of the Soviet civil society, bringing out also a host of intellectuals opposed to the new reforms and consequently creating a system with distinct and opposing ideologies, unsuitable for the sense of ideological unity professed since Lenin, and finally, making the people aware that the Soviet Union was falling apart.<sup>69</sup>

On October 11, 1986, the long-awaited Gorbachev-Reagan Summit was held in Reykjavik. The meeting, although it did not lead to any conclusion, is considered the turning point to the end of the Cold War, setting the foundations for future INF and START treaties on nuclear arsenal reduction. Gorbachev was more concessive than Soviet leaders ever did in the past, surprising even himself who considered the proposals made by the General Secretary a "gift". However, on October 12, the negotiations between the two leaders resulted in a heated and discordant debate. Mistrust and suspicion began to arise between the respective specialists and when an agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons finally seemed to have been reached, Gorbachev demanded also the cancellation of the SDI, finding negative feedback from the other side and leaving both sides empty-handed.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 207.

<sup>68</sup> Saikal, *Chapter 6 Islamism, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*, p. 131.

<sup>69</sup> Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, p. 257.

<sup>70</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, pp. 225-229.

Gorbachev did not give up and was determined to conduct his policy of global interdependence with the capitalist world. Given the spirit of the General Secretary, it was difficult for colleagues and opponents at the Politburo to anticipate what his belief was leading to. After Reykjavik, Gorbachev was increasingly determined to want to change the Soviet Union and its approach to the West. His “support” for Third World countries, Poland and, the war in Afghanistan were simply the result of procrastination. Gorbachev realized that if the Soviet Union could not be the one to compromise the United States, so it had to be its NATO allies. To allow this, the General Secretary proposed to release Andrei Sakharov, a Soviet dissident, imprisoned and confined for supporting the protests for the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, as a demonstration of respect for the issue so dear to the United States of human rights and freedom. Along with this, from 1987 the KGB collaborated and began to reduce arrests, limiting themselves to blackmail and intimidation of Soviet people.<sup>71</sup>

On December 8, 1987, it was the turn of the signing of the INF Treaty in Washington, on condition of Reagan’s “zero option”. A three-year decommissioning limit was set for all of the Soviet-US nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres, item by item monitored and verified by the mutual exchange of information and updates regarding the technical characteristics and their location.<sup>72</sup>

On May 28, 1988, it was Reagan’s turn to land in the Soviet Union for his first summit in the “evil empire” hoping to sign the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I). The meeting was rather peaceful, the two presidents showed great understanding and respect, but not before July 1991 the treaty could be signed. However, On December 7, 1988, in the famous speech given by Gorbachev to UN General Assembly, which presented significant cuts in the military arsenal and the reduction of the Soviet troops in Eastern Europe and in the borders with China, along with radical changes in human rights, affirming and recognizing the freedom of the individual and, so, describing “new thinking”, marked the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, unleashing a series of internal turmoil that would have brought the Soviet Empire to collapse.<sup>73</sup>

The last three years before the “peaceful collapse” were marked by radical changes within the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. The decentralization reforms in the Gorbachev era allowed and contributed to fuel the independent and nationalist movements of the various Soviet

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<sup>71</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 298.

<sup>72</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 233.

<sup>73</sup> Ivi, p. 240.

Socialist Republics and the “negotiated revolution” of the Warsaw Pact members Polish People’s Republic, Hungarian People’s Republic and People’s Republic of Bulgaria.

Since the crisis of 1980, Poland has remained in limbo, divided by the Jaruzelski government and the Solidarity Movement, which continued to operate “illegally” and with the support of CIA. Over the course of the decade, Jaruzelski became aware of the weakness of his position and had to start negotiation procedures with the Movement, in order not to cause riots and protests again. About 3/4 of the Polish citizens were clearly in favour of the Solidarity, who were asking for a negotiation with Jaruzelski.<sup>74</sup> In April 1989, the Solidarity Movement was recognized as a full-fledged opposition party and participated in the elections on June 4 of the same year, which included an elected president and a bicameral parliament with real political power.<sup>75</sup> Solidarity’s victory was overwhelming, however fearing an armed intervention from Moscow, the new party did not want to risk destabilizing Poland. A month later Jaruzelski was elected president as he did not find rival candidates due to the abstentions of Solidarity, but Gorbachev, pushed by the new policy and the new relations established with the West and not wanting to undermine the image of the Soviet Union again, allowed the formation of the new government under the leadership of Tadeusz Mazowiecki.<sup>76</sup>

Following the same Polish model, the Hungarian reformers put forward the idea of giving power to the opponents. Since the Hungarian uprising, repressed by Soviet troops, from 1956 onwards, János Kádár was the chief of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party. Despite the devotion to Moscow, Kádár implemented economic and social reforms, deviated from the repressive and closed policy of the other states of the Eastern Bloc. With the advent of Gorbachev, Kadar resigned in 1988 and was replaced by Karoly Grosz, who failed to placate more radical reformists who wanted to follow the same path adopted by Poland. Pozsgay, one of the most popular radical reformists, decided to take advantage of the situation of “helplessness” in which Moscow found itself and denounced the Soviet repression of 1956. After the election results in Poland, the opposition parties in Hungary also demanded free elections. Given the delicate position, HSWP had to accept the condition, and as for Poland, Gorbachev allowed the change of leadership, as long as Hungary did not revoke the alliance with Moscow.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Lévesque, Jacques, *Chapter 15 The East European revolutions of 1989*, in: Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III, Endings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 316.

<sup>75</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, pp. 255-256.

<sup>76</sup> Lévesque, *Chapter 15 The East European revolutions of 1989*, pp. 317-318.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi, pp. 319-323.



Bulgaria followed the same fate, but in a more peaceful way. Bulgaria was the closest and most influenced ally of the Soviet Union since the end of World War II. Todor Zhivkov led Bulgaria since 1954 under his dictatorship, cunningly preserving his power and strengthening his position over the years. Needless to say, in the late 1980s, many Bulgarian politicians and leaders wished to overthrow the Zhivkov dictatorship and join the revolutions that were taking place within the Soviet Bloc. Petar Mladenov, Foreign Minister, together with a team of reformists, held a “golpe” meeting at the Politburo on November 9, 1989, in which Zhivkov was forced to accept his resignation the following day.<sup>78</sup>

Isolated and left to its economic collapse, the German Democratic Republic found itself involved in a strong emigration by East German citizens to the West. Made it impossible by the presence of the Berlin Wall, the migratory mass found a breach through Hungary, which since 10 September 1989 had opened its borders towards Austria. Unfortunately, the GDR was still living under Honecker’s repressive policy, with the Stasi still operating at full capacity and arresting dissidents. Protests and demonstrations began in major cities, but were not suppressed by the armed forces, despite the order to open fire if necessary. The initial, timid opposition of the members of the Politbüro to Honecker soon strengthened and forced his resignation on October 18, 1989. Egon Krenz, Honecker’s right-hand man, replaced him, but failed to appease pressure from the East German citizens, who were reluctant towards him.<sup>79</sup> On November 7, the SED, under pressure from Prague, which saw a huge crowd of refugees amassed at the West German embassy, was forced to craft again new emigratory transit and temporary travel. Two days later, the transit controlled by East-West Germany was allowed, promulgated by a text that was to come into force the following day but for a delay in communication it was mistaken for the same day. An excited and uncontrolled mass of East German citizens poured into the wall demanding the crossing. The armed forces on guard did not oppose and the wall was demolished by the citizens themselves, causing the SED to collapse with it.

The fall of the Berlin Wall contributed to a surge towards the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as it ignited popular uprisings and nationalisms. The fragile stability achieved in Poland and Hungary was now completely wiped out, while the possibility of a united Germany and part of NATO was already being discussed. Czechoslovakia, for its part, was shaken by the events between East Germany and West Germany. As there was no opposition party, as in the other cases, some veterans of the Prague Spring were still alive and could rise again against the CzCP,

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<sup>78</sup> Lévesque, *Chapter 15 The East European revolutions of 1989*, pp. 330-331.

<sup>79</sup> Haftendorn, Helga, *Chapter 16 The unification of Germany, 1985-199*, in: Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III, Endings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 338-339.

the Czechoslovak Communist Party. After a student demonstration against the Communist Party, which was brutally repressed by the police, Václav Havel, a member of the Charter 77 group, set up in 1975 to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords, formed the Civic Forum opposition group. Pushed to come to an agreement, Prime Minister Adamec met with the Civic Forum, but his proposals were rejected. Forced to leave Prague for the meeting in Moscow with the Warsaw Pact leaders, the CzPC found itself weakened and after Gorbachev expressed his noninvolvement, Adamec resigned on December 7. A new non-Communist government was formed in late 1989 with Havel as president, declaring to continue to pursue international duties under the Warsaw Pact.<sup>80</sup>

Parallel to the unrest in Czechoslovakia, Romania also had the strength to oppose the dictatorial regime of Ceausescu. Numerous riots broke out in Bucharest and in Timisoara. On December 21, during a Ceausescu speech, a riot broke out under the building of the Central Committee which resulted in a real civil war between the revolted citizens and the armed forces. However, the following day, a mass of rioting workers marched towards the Central Committee building, Ceausescu was forced to flee, boarding a helicopter to leave Bucharest. Victor Stănculescu took power while the Ceausescu spouses were arrested by the police who had now joined the rioters. On December 25, in a “trial”, they were shot and footage of their trial was broadcast throughout Romania and Western Europe.<sup>81</sup>

In the Caucasus, the rise of nationalisms between the Armenian and Azeri populations triggered strong ethnic tensions and rivalries as early as 1986, subsequently leading to the outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1992. After the Sumgait pogrom against the Armenian minority in 1988, the Soviet Union was forced to intervene on March 1 to resolve the unrest. What happened in the next two years was an escalation of tensions between the two ethnic groups, which despite Moscow’s efforts in appeasing the violence and mediating to find a compromise, led to war.<sup>82</sup> Similar clashes occurred in the summer of 1989 in the Fergana Valley between the Uzbeks and the Meskhetian Turks, demonstrating the then indifferent and disinterested Soviet presence towards its sphere of influence.

In 1988, the Baltic States claimed independence from Moscow and the Soviet Union. Occupied since the World War II by external powers, the Baltic States never felt they belonged to the Soviet Union and in the three republics as early as 1987, non-party movements were born in support of Gorbachev’s perestroika, concealing requests for independence. Towards the end of

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<sup>80</sup> Lévesque, *Chapter 15 The East European revolutions of 1989*, pp. 324-327.

<sup>81</sup> Ivi, pp. 327-330.

<sup>82</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 244.

August on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, a human chain linking the people of the three republics represented the ever-stronger desire to obtain independence which was peacefully joined by the Supreme Soviets of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, which demanded economic independence and declared their respective official languages in the three states.<sup>83</sup>

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Gorbachev in an apparently reassuring public speech, linked the event to the “triumph” of *perestroika*. In fact, Gorbachev was deeply concerned about the situation and knew that Krenz would not be long without the support of West Germany and the United States.<sup>84</sup> On November 28, 1989, Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of West Germany, presented a ten-point plan that provided for the unification of Germany through free self-determination and through multi-party elections, sparking discontent on Moscow part, which was not ready for a unification that would have led to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. However, the plan was backed by Washington and at the Malta Summit on December 1-2, Gorbachev highlighted the ten-point plan as a forced attempt to “swallow” East Germany. Bush assured the General Secretary that he would not take advantage of the situation, but Gorbachev preferred to leave the matter to the future. However, the meeting turned out to be a success, the two leaders had a surprising harmony and Bush reiterated his full support for *perestroika*, showing that the relations between the Eastern and Western blocs had entered a new historical phase, leaving the tensions, rivalries and, the Cold War behind.<sup>85</sup>

The position of the new US President George H.W. Bush was fundamental in the last years of the Cold War and the Soviet Union. The Bush administration had “got rid” of officials blinded by Reagan’s doctrine for the sole purpose of defeat the Soviet Union, and was made up of pragmatic conservatives, such as Secretary of State James Baker, skilled and capable of confronting the 1989 Eastern European revolutions.<sup>86</sup> Unlike Reagan, George H.W. Bush never harboured any suspicions about Gorbachev, understanding the situation that the leader was experiencing, supporting *perestroika*, which would lead the Soviet Union to democratization, rather than the collapse of the entire system and the possibility that the Soviet nuclear arsenal could remain “unattended”.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 245.

<sup>84</sup> Ivi, p. 264.

<sup>85</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, pp. 328-329.

<sup>86</sup> Ivi, p. 243.

<sup>87</sup> Fischer, Beth A., *Chapter 13 US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush*, in: Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III, Endings*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 282.

In late February 1990, US President Bush, along with Baker and Kohl, agreed to begin negotiations to reunify Germany and secure its entry into NATO. It provided a “2 + 4” form, the two German states on one side and France, Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union on the other. After the meeting with Gorbachev and Kohl, the first free elections in East Germany will be held on March 18, with the overwhelming victory of the CDU, led by Kohl himself. It was now evident that the citizens wanted the unification, and now even East Germany shared the idea of a reunited Germany aligned with the West. Moscow categorically opposed it, motivating the fact that a reunited Germany should remain neutral, economically linked to the Soviet Union, with untouched borders and that only after a probation period could a possible independent sovereignty be discussed.<sup>88</sup> What happened in Gorbachev’s visit to Camp David on May 31 was a series of proposals made by the United States to win Gorbachev’s backing, including speeding up negotiations on strategic arms reductions, elimination of the rivalry between NATO and the members of the Warsaw Pact and finally a review of NATO’s military strategy, which included cuts and more controls. Together with other proposals, such as economic loans from West Germany, the financial relief of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the former GDR with the conversion to the Deutschmark and the waiver of Atomic Biological Chemical weapons, in a subsequent meeting between Kohl and Gorbachev, the latter agreed and recognized the right of the united Germany to be able to choose his appliance to NATO, leading to the signing of the Treaty on German Unity on August 31, 1990 and on September 12, 1990, to the signing of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany in Moscow, which contained all of the formal obligations undertaken by any party with respect to German unification.<sup>89</sup>

Back in the USSR, Boris Yeltsin was gaining political ground. After Gorbachev established the Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union in 1989, the first real expression of democracy in the Soviet system, Yeltsin won with almost 90% of the votes in Moscow in 1989, marking the beginning of his rise to power. On the very day of the fall of the Berlin Wall, alarmed Gorbachev called the second Congress of People’s Deputies to discuss domestic issues. Sakharov put forward the proposal to abolish the law that made the CPSU the only active party in the Soviet Union, but it was denied by Gorbachev himself. This episode sparked further resentment from the “neo-democrats” who were rising up against Gorbachev. After Sakharov’s death, which made Yeltsin their unrivaled new leader, the following months were marked by the political confrontation between the aspiring “democrat” and the trembling Gorbachev.

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<sup>88</sup> Haftendorn, *Chapter 16 The unification of Germany, 1985-1991*, p. 347.

<sup>89</sup> Ivi, p. 352.

Yeltsin aimed for a “democratic state of law” organized in a multiparty system within a federal union, while Gorbachev continued to pursue his policy of timid and ineffective reforms.<sup>90</sup> The Soviet economy was in free fall. The “Five Hundred Days” plan carried out by a group of radical economists was the last chance to revive and reform the Soviet economy. It included a series of astounding economic and monetary reforms, but which could not be implemented in a centralized and failed system like the communist one. Although initially Gorbachev and Yeltsin agreed to carry out the plan, lastly, at the request of the General Secretary, the plan was discarded, fearing to betray the values of socialism. The unexpected decision cost him dearly. After an attempted murder against him and the opposition of the military who blamed him for the chaos, Gorbachev ironically fell victim to his power, re-establishing censorship and strengthening his position, pushing himself to use force in Vilnius and sending Soviet paramilitary troops to suppress the revolt in January 1991.<sup>91</sup> This event did nothing but strengthen the figure of Yeltsin in the eyes of public opinion and his supporters, in which Gorbachev even tried to get rid of him in the Russian Congress in March by intimidating him with armed troops outside the Kremlin. Congress protested Gorbachev’s manoeuvre who was forced to withdraw his troops in order not to lead to another repression like in Vilnius. In the same month Gorbachev, through the *Vsesojuznyj referendum*, the referendum on the future of the Soviet Union, sought the consent of public opinion. It turned out to be a flop. Only four republics respected the indications given by Gorbachev, with the additional option in Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan of the “Declaration of State Sovereignty” and for the “establishment of the role of President of the Russian RSFS” in Russia. Armenia, Moldova, Georgia (with its independent region of Abkhazia) and the Baltic states refused to hold a new referendum, as they held their own independence referendum without Moscow’s support in early March. In any case in Russia the results proved to be in favour of the union but at the same time supported the request to popularly elect a new Russian president. Respecting the public will, the first democratic presidential elections for the Russian republic was held on 12 June 1991. Boris Yeltsin won with 57% of the vote, bringing Gorbachev’s candidate to his knees. On 1 July, after the events in Lithuania and the participation of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary in the Gulf War in support of NATO, the official protocol for the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was signed in Prague, after only six members remained in the alliance. Bush’s visit to Moscow on July 31, 1991 was the last Summit between the Soviet Union and the United States and included the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, later known

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<sup>90</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 278.

<sup>91</sup> Ivi, p. 285.

as START I. The meeting also demonstrated Washington's willingness to preserve the Soviet Union. While respecting the rights of self-determination in the Baltic region and Caucasus republics, the Bush speech in Kiev was a way to reinforce the now crumbling Gorbachev and to warn of the "danger" of independence from the Soviet Union, which could have led to local despotism.<sup>92</sup>

On July 29-30 in Novo-Ogarevo, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Nazarbaev, the president of Kazakhstan, met to discuss the date for the signing of the Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics Treaty. August 20 was brought forward and, on August 4, Gorbachev left for a vacation in his dacha in Crimea. Vladimir Kryuchkov, chief of the KGB, met with some trusted officers of the CPSU, with the commander of the Soviet Airborne forces, Pavel Grachev and, some generals who had participated in the repressions in Vilnius to discuss the fate of the Soviet Union in a last attempt. The conspirators wanted to carry out a coup to overthrow the government of Yeltsin and Gorbachev, as with their democratic reforms they had worsened the economic situation, betrayed the values of Communism and led to separatist sentiment of most of the Soviet socialist republics. On August 18, the "Gang of Eight", the State Committee on the State of Emergency, Gennady Yanayev, Valentin Pavlov, Boris Pugo, Dmitry Yazov, Vladimir Kryuchkov, Oleg Baklanov, Vasily Starodubtsev and Alexandr Tizyakov, implemented the plan. Gen. Igor Maltsev went to Foros, where Gorbachev's dacha was located, and forced his isolation. Meanwhile in Moscow, the other coup leaders gave the news that Gorbachev had to stay in his dacha for "health reasons", and proclaimed a state of emergency, putting Yanayev as president. In Moscow the troops supporting the coup surrounded the "White House" where Yeltsin and the officials of the Russian parliament had taken refuge. Protestants and armed forces in support of Yeltsin united in defence of the building, until Yeltsin himself climbed atop a tank, condemning the attempted coup by calling a general strike. Finding no support, the coup attempt was a failure. In the early hours of August 21, troops on the orders of Gromov and Grachev, who backed Yeltsin, did not attack the White House, and after the last desperate rejected attempt by the KGB forces to infiltrate the building using *spetsnaz* troops, GKChP leaders rushed to Foros to persuade Gorbachev, who refused to talk with them.<sup>93</sup> The coup d'état favoured the disintegration of the Soviet Union, in fact, during the days of August, the Baltic Republics proclaimed their independence, causing a domino effect in the following weeks which were also followed by Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>92</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 292.

<sup>93</sup> Dunlop, John B., *The August 1991 Coup and Its Impact on Soviet Politics*, in "Journal of Cold War Studies", Winter, 2003, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 94-127.

After the coup the Communist party had vanished and had ideologically changed, the special forces and the KGB were still standing but were severely demoralized while the centralized economy was completely demolished. Upon his return to Moscow, Gorbachev was deeply humiliated by the events and by Yeltsin, who publicly urged him to resign and sign a document suspending the activity of the Communist Party. It was also speculated that Gorbachev initially “supported” the coup and that he did not have the coup leaders arrested immediately. While Gorbachev tried to maintain the “union”, Yeltsin worried about the economy, vaguely taking inspiration from the Five Hundred Days plan and making proposals to revive the economy. On December 1, 1991, through Ukrainian popular referendum with a result of 92% of votes in favour of independence, Ukraine, the last hope for Gorbachev, bid farewell to the Soviet Union.<sup>94</sup> A week later the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus (Yeltsin, Kravchuk, and Shushkevich) secretly met to form the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Belavezha Accords, which formally expressed the cessation of the USSR’s existence, was ratified by the Supreme Soviet of the Russian SFSR on December 12, 1991. The Alma-Ata protocol, which included the previous two agreements and specified that the Russian Federation was formally the successor of the Soviet Union, was signed on December 24 by President Boris Yeltsin and handed over to the UN Secretary General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. The next day, at Christmas, Gorbachev left the Kremlin. On New Year’s Eve, the Alma-Ata protocol was approved by the UN Council without opposition. On January 1, 1992, the Soviet Union no longer existed.

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<sup>94</sup> Sell, *From Washington to Moscow*, p. 315.

# CHAPTER II

## Soviet Active Measures

As anticipated in the first chapter, the Soviet Union has fought since the beginning of the Cold War with unconventional strategies, unable to sustain a conventional war.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, the United States found itself faced with a new way of waging war, to which initially the US government could not respond except with a containment counter-offensive, more aggressive or less, depending on the administrations that succeeded, from the end of World War II up to the 1970s, in the White House.

### *Political Warfare*

Angelo Codevilla defines *political warfare* as “the marshalling of human support, or opposition, in order to achieve victory in war or in unbloody conflicts as serious as war”.<sup>96</sup> By “marshalling of human support”, Codevilla intends obtaining consent and influencing people to gain political support, even among opponents. This definition can be confused with that of *propaganda*, which is one of the *means* employed by political warfare. According to Paul A. Smith *On Political War* (1989), *political warfare* is “the use of political means to compel an opponent to do one’s will”.<sup>97</sup> By *political means*, Smith intends to consider all those hostile interactions between the government of a state and one, or multiple, targets such as government, military and population of another state.<sup>98</sup> Following Smith’s words, political warfare can be placed side by side with the use of force, economic pressure, diplomacy, and all those means that require the use of coercion, *psychological warfare*. Political warfare, however, can be masterfully conducted through the exclusive use of images and words, namely *propaganda*.<sup>99</sup> The

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<sup>95</sup> *Conventional warfare* is a form of warfare between states that employs direct military confrontation to defeat an adversary’s armed forces, destroy an adversary’s war-making capacity, or seize or retain territory in order to force a change in an adversary’s government or policies, definition provided by US Department of Defence, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC)*, Version 1.0, 11 September 2007, p. 7.

<sup>96</sup> Codevilla, Angelo M., *Political Warfare* in: Frank R. Barnett, Carness Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the US Approach*, New York, DIANE, 1989, p. 77.

<sup>97</sup> Smith, Paul A. Jr., *On Political War*, Washington DC, National Defense University Press, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*.



effectiveness of political warfare lies in gaining the support and consensus of opponents, whether they are among the population or at the top of the rival state.

As for *propaganda*, sociologist Jacques Ellul states that propaganda manifests itself in both forms, both overt and covert, and most of the time in its hybrid and combined form of the two. Overt, or “white”, propaganda is open and above board, it does not hide its origins and sources from which it arises, it does not hide its means and ends, making the population aware that the propagandist is trying to influence them and obtain their consent.<sup>100</sup> The sources on which “white” propaganda is based are external or from “outside” the propagandist, they can be a single person as well as a group of people, thus giving a public and verified characteristic on the nature from which it refers and from which it develops its model.<sup>101</sup> In addition to “white” propaganda and “black” propaganda – sources are obscured and is based from the “inside” of the propagandist – there are two other aspects of propaganda according to Smith. Propaganda of the *word* through which hostile political thought is conveyed through newspapers, propaganda slogans and, in general, information channels and the media. Propaganda of the *deeds* such as the transfer of military troops, armed intimidation, subsidies to a foreign communist political party, and all those activities that aim to elicit a subjective political reaction or response from the target that the propagandist wants to influence.<sup>102</sup> Both forms of propaganda can be confused with public diplomacy which is not political warfare.

What must be taken into consideration is consistency. Despite the use of deception and disinformation in order to astutely secure the political support of the opponents, it is necessary that, after having recanted their state, the opponents feel they belong to the same political line that led them to change, maintained by reasons that mirror the political object of the war and not of deception.

Following Codevilla’s words, the mere use and exploitation of the means of political warfare, overt and covert, do not define political warfare. Funding for foreign revolutionary groups, the use of agents of influence, and propaganda, do not imply that a particular state is making use of political warfare. The basis on which the war develops must be solid, and a good politician knows this. The plain, and incompetent, application of the means of political warfare not only fails to achieve victory in war, but even leads to a bloody and futile outcome. Therefore, in

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<sup>100</sup> Ellul, Jacques, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, New York, Vintage Books, 1973, p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> Becker, Howard, *The Nature and Consequences of Black Propaganda*, in “American Sociological Review”, 1949, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 221.

<sup>102</sup> Smith, Paul A. Jr., *On Political War*, Washington DC, National Defense University Press, 1989, pp. 7-8.

order to bring political warfare to success, a political plan, militarily and economically capable, is required, involving domestic policy, international action and diplomacy.<sup>103</sup>

The “solid” political plan, the *political object*, is defined by Clausewitz’s *On War* (1832) as the origin from which a war is waged, “the original motive for the war”.<sup>104</sup> The political object defines the military objective and, at the same time, the effort required to bring it to fruition; if the political object provides an incongruent military objective, the latter must be adapted according to the former, and not vice versa. Thus, the political object is the end, war is the means by which the end is reached.<sup>105</sup>

No wonder Lenin was impressed with Clausewitz’s work. In Lenin’s *Philosophical Notebooks* (1933) clear references to Clausewitz’s doctrine emerge. The socio-economic aspect of the nature of war attracted not only Lenin but also Engels and Stalin, which integrated with the principles of the class struggle of Marxist theory, they were able to justify the war against capitalism at the international level in relation to questions concerning war as the “continuation of politics by other means.”<sup>106</sup> The resemblance between Clausewitz and Marx is to be found first of all from the German idealism in which they both raised. Despite the philosophical training of Marx compared to that of Clausewitz, the experience in the military field of the latter influenced the development of the theories that will then be elaborate in his works. In *On War* (1832) Von Clausewitz’s “revolutionary” sentiment revealed the desire to elevate the status of the regimental officer, who reflects total obedience - true war - to the political creed in war.<sup>107</sup> What attracted the attention of a group of intellectuals and founders of the Soviet Union was therefore the similarity with the Marxist ideology, which sought change through revolution, politics to shake the masses and to wage war, characterizing then the Soviet Union offensive approach adopted during the Cold War and making the United States and NATO unprepared in the face of the massive use of political warfare means. Favoured by the situation of political disorientation and scattered demoralization in Eastern Europe after World War II, the Soviet Union established Communist regimes in the name of anti-fascism in the various satellite states

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<sup>103</sup> Codevilla, *Political Warfare*, p. 78.

<sup>104</sup> Carl von Clausewitz was a Prussian regimental officer and later a military theorist, who matured his philosophy of revolutionizing warfare on his return from the Russian Campaign in Prussia against the invasion of Napoleon I in 1813. His military experience allowed him to observe that French military success stemmed from his revolutionary nature, from the popular state, and from the political foundation that France owned. Prussian politics even after Napoleon’s defeat remained entirely concentrated in the hands of the king. Clausewitz’s desire was to be able to reform military strategy and assimilate it to politics, approaching the concept of “true war” rather than “real war”.

<sup>105</sup> For a brief introduction on the political aspect of war, see: Von Clausewitz, Carl, *Book One: On the Nature of War*, in: Von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War* (1832), New York, Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>106</sup> Donald E. Davis, Walter S.G. Kohn, *Lenin’s Notebooks on Clausewitz*, Normal, Illinois State University, 1967, p. 189-194.

<sup>107</sup> Keegan, John, *A History of Warfare*, New York, Vintage Book, 1994, p. 17-9.

and, under its influence, the Kremlin ensured an ideological and territorial compactness, placing the political bases to be able to face the subsequent war against the West.

In the 1940s, the term “political warfare” had not yet been adopted and recognized by Western terminology. Events in the first half of the twentieth century gave no reason for Western historians, military officers and scholars to study this type of approach to warfare. The First World War quickly abandoned the political object, resulting in a war for war’s sake.<sup>108</sup> During the Russian Civil War from 1918 to 1922, Bolshevik “Red Terror” carried out by Cheka was a political warfare expression that certainly did not involve the West.<sup>109</sup> World War II saw only Nazi Germany and Axis allies, and the Soviet Union at the domestic level, employing political warfare, through overt propaganda and covert political techniques. The democratic character of Western governments, first of all that of the United States, could not host repressive policies and subversive actions, exclusive features of dictatorial regimes.

However, from the events following the World War II and from the assertive political position taken by the Soviet Union immediately after 1948 in contrast to the Marshall Plan, the United States broadly recognized the existence and use of the political warfare means. Thanks to a group of US government officials and the birth of the CIA approved by the Truman administration in contrast to the growing political influence that the Soviet Union had in Europe in December 1947, the United States in turn had to adopt counter-political maneuvers to ensure that countries like Italy did not fall into the hands of Communism. Focusing on the Italian case, the United States through the CIA provided economic support in Italy, launched a propaganda campaign against Communism and involved the Catholic Church to prevent the PCI and PSI from being elected. Given the success of election of Alcide De Gasperi’s Christian Democracy party, the United States realized the effectiveness of overt and covert operations in terms of the political influence they had on the European states. With the advent of the Cold War, the CIA’s next target soon became the Soviet Union. In “The Inauguration of Political Warfare” paper by the State Department’s chief of policy planning, George Frost Kennan, “political warfare” was first introduced in Western terminology.<sup>110</sup> In the paper, Kennan presented *political warfare* as:

“the logical application of Clausewitz’s doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such

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<sup>108</sup> Ivi, p. 21.

<sup>109</sup> *Vserossíyskaya chrezvycháynaya komíssiya*, “All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Profiteering and Corruption”. Cheka was the first Soviet secret police established in December 1917, born to repress the counter-revolutionaries to the October Revolution.

<sup>110</sup> Corke, S.-J., *George Kennan and the Inauguration of Political Warfare*, in “Journal of Conflict Studies”, 2006, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 101-120.

operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (i.e., Marshall Plan), and “white” propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of “friendly” foreign elements, “black” psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.”<sup>111</sup>

In the fifth point of the same paper, Kennan outlined that “there are two major types of political warfare - one overt and the other covert. Overt operations are the traditional policy activities of any foreign office enjoying positive leadership, whether or not they are recognized as political warfare.”<sup>112</sup>

On the basis of Kennan’s paper it emerges that political warfare is based on two main branches, in which it distinguishes an “overt way”, which constitutes all those openly public operations aimed at politically influencing a specific state, an entity or a group of people for securing an alliance, and a “covert way”, which encompasses all those operations of “illegal” nature carried out by the secret and intelligence services, which tend to hide and deny the direct responsibility of the state involved in such operations from international attention.

Despite the difficult categorization of the activities and operations typical of political warfare in the overt and covert branches, often used together, in a hybrid form and perceived differently by international actors, the *overt* techniques in political warfare are all those political actions that make use of political alliance, financial support, ideologically and politically interdependent governments, economic measures and overt – white – propaganda, up to the use of the army and paramilitary organizations to intimidate and persuade.

The modern concept that might come closest to the vast and blurred category of overt techniques is that of *soft power*. Coined in the early 90s by professor Joseph Nye, soft power, over the years, from a theoretical concept has become a real practical tool, especially in the context in which the use of force and coercion is contrary to the democratic liberal political agenda.<sup>113</sup> Starting from the analysis of the meaning of “power” and the changes in terms of “national security” goals, which no longer aimed at security in military terms but in economic and, ultimately, ecological goals, Nye demonstrated that in an era in which coalitions were no longer reduced to two opposing parts and the rise of new actors in world politics, a country or a state wins the support and alliance of another state or a coalition by shaping their preferences with an agenda – cultural attraction, ideology, and international institutions – that invites and

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<sup>111</sup> Kennan, George Frost, *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare*, 269 Policy Planning Staff Memorandum, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 273, Records of the National Security Council, NSC 10/2. Washington, May 4, 1948.

<sup>112</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>113</sup> Nye, Joseph S., *Soft Power*, in “Foreign Policy”, Autumn, 1990, No. 80, pp. 153-171.

spontaneously attracts them, feeling belonging to or in agreement with the political lines adopted.<sup>114</sup>

Public diplomacy is used to reach these goals. According to Nye, in reference to Leonard Mark, public diplomacy, wrongly attributed to propaganda, is all those efforts aimed at building an alliance based on trust and understanding between two states or among the foreign population of a state, or more generally, to non-governmental dimensions of society. Unlike propaganda which has a purely subversive connotation, public diplomacy is conducted on an honest and nonsubversive way. Furthermore, public diplomacy is conducted through “day-to-day” communication, essential for building a long-term relationship, strategic communication, through advertising campaigns and therefore also through propaganda, and finally through the promotion of cultural and academic exchanges.<sup>115</sup> Although the nature of public diplomacy could be traced back to that of political warfare, it is not a form of political warfare. Public diplomacy is a “form of international political advocacy” and might mistakenly fall into the category of overt political warfare but the lack of subversion makes it a distinct tool from political warfare. However, this does not prevent its use in conjunction with political warfare.<sup>116</sup> *Coercive diplomacy* is political warfare.<sup>117</sup> According to Jakobsen, coercive diplomacy is the use of military threats and/or limited force to support the negotiation process typical of diplomacy. Where the latter cannot succeed alone, the support for the use of symbolic force allows an agreement to be reached with the adversary without escalation. Coercive diplomacy is based on Jeremy Bentham’s concept of carrot-stick, which combines the use of force and military threat, *stick*, with positive inducements or reward, *carrot*, in order to influence rather than defeat the opponent.<sup>118</sup>

During the Cold War, the “power of attraction” found a preference for use by the United States and the Soviet Union over an armed conflict, which we well know, would have led to disastrous consequences. After the end of World War II, Moscow promptly made use of these soft power resources but soon realized that, given the strong influence the United States was having in Western Europe, it could not help but settle for methods that fall into the modern category of *hard power*. The Soviet Union spent a lot of financial resources and energy to carry out its “own” public diplomacy, which promoted cultural exchanges, internships, support for anti-

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<sup>114</sup> Nye, Joseph S., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York, Public Affair, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>115</sup> Ivi, p. 107-109.

<sup>116</sup> Smith, *On Political War*, p. 7.

<sup>117</sup> Carnes, Lord, *The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy*, in: Frank R. Barnett, Carness Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the US Approach*, New York, DIANE, 1989, p. 18.

<sup>118</sup> Jakobsen, Peter Viggo, *Coercive Diplomacy* in: Costas M. Constantinou, Pauline Kerr and Paul Sharp, *The Sage Handbook of Diplomacy*, SAGE, 2016, p. 476-478.

nuclear and pacifist movements. The USSR also invested in sports, art and education, as well as science and the military industry. The Soviet purpose was to give the external impression of having an opposing, but at the same time, better stand than the capitalist one in the international framework.<sup>119</sup> The United States gained more spontaneous and voluntary support in the post-World War II period than the Soviet Union, probably facilitated by the position taken during the war as “saviors” and by the more efficient and extensive influence it had over allies in Europe who looked more towards a democratic and capitalist future than socialist and communist one. Beyond the countries that were liberated by the Red Army during the last year of the Nazi invasion and, as demonstrated, in Italy and France with the defeat of the Communist parties, Soviet influence was limited, ensuring the United States the Western Europe. It is no coincidence that the United States preferred Kennan’s containment policy towards the Soviet Union over a more aggressive policy than the latter. Despite the birth of the CIA and the provision of secret aid in Europe, Washington during the Truman administration, aware of its political, economic and military superiority, therefore limited itself to “containing” the Soviet expansion in Europe, underestimating the Soviet potential in terms of political warfare.<sup>120</sup>

The other branch presented by Kennan is that of political warfare conducted in a *covert* way. Covert operations are a broad category as they incorporate other “covert-like” activities that should be treated and studied separately such as clandestine operations, psychological operations and unconventional warfare, with similar characteristics but different in nature. However, covert operations according to the CIA definition of “covert action” can be generally defined as activities that aim to influence governments, events, organizations or people in support of foreign policy in a way that is not directly attributable to the sponsor state, which may deny its involvement.<sup>121</sup> It is improper to attribute this definition to the covert operations undertaken by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, as these activities did not respect a “dogma” or model, but rather combined more techniques and more elements with each other in the battle against Washington. Moreover, given the recent nature of these categorizations in the field of military strategy and political warfare and the heated debates still present today, the two superpowers certainly could not follow a shared doctrine or philosophy on how to wage a political, psychological and clandestine warfare. Without pushing the reasoning about which category is more appropriate to define Soviet-style covert operations, a common concept

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<sup>119</sup> Jakobsen, *Coercive Diplomacy*, p. 74.

<sup>120</sup> Hanhimäki, Jussi M., *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Second Edition), London, Routledge, 2014, p. 225.

<sup>121</sup> Rudgers, David F., *The Origins of Covert Action*, in “Journal of Contemporary History”, Apr., 2000, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 249-262.

recognized by both superpowers was that of *plausible deniability*. The plausible deniability was first coined by the CIA in a paper to the National Council 10/2 of June 18, 1948, in which it explained that the responsibility for a well-planned covert operation was not attributable to the sponsor government by any unauthorized person and that ultimately, if questioned, enjoyed an alibi that disclaimed its involvement.<sup>122</sup> Despite the Western nature of the term, the Soviet Union based covert intelligence activity on the same premise, using active measures as the main vehicle for spreading covert operations, overlapping them with overt operations and propaganda.<sup>123</sup> It should be noted in any case that plausible deniability is not a constant in covert operations, and it is more correct to speak of non-acknowledged intervention. Assuming that plausible deniability summarizes all covert operations undertaken during the Cold War is wrong. Although most of the operations are likely to be discovered, and therefore to question their plausibility, this does not prevent them from continuing their course, even from “uncovered”. The key also lies in the ambiguity. The opportunity that covert operations created to communicate via a secret channel without going into conventional warfare was essential to the maintenance of a “fictitious” war that prevented the Cold War from breaking out. Finally, there is to consider the “narcissistic” aspect of the actors involved who, by being uncovered, had the advantage of attributing credit to themselves and of proving themselves capable of organizing intelligence covert activities and excelling in espionage.<sup>124</sup>

To conclude, political warfare is a vast category that still hardly outlines all the measures undertaken by a state or a government to destabilize an enemy politically and ideologically. Many of these activities overlap and mix to increase their effectiveness or range of involvement, alongside economic warfare, guerilla warfare and so on. Political warfare, summarizing what has been said in the previous pages, encompasses political action, attributable to overt operations which also includes coercive diplomacy, military intimidation and overt propaganda, and *covert operations*, or covert political warfare, which in reference to the Soviet Union can be summarized within the spectrum of “active measures”, and includes covert propaganda, disinformation, forgeries, agent of influence operations and paramilitary assistance.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Cormac, Rory, Aldrich, Richard J., *Grey is the new black: covert action and implausible deniability*, in “International Affairs”, 2018, Vol. 3, No. 94, p. 482.

<sup>123</sup> Ivi, p. 484.

<sup>124</sup> Ivi, p. 488-9.

<sup>125</sup> Carnes, Lord, *The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy*, p. 18.

## *The Concept of Subversion*

Soviet political warfare is essentially based on the principle of subversion of Leninist ideology. The voracious reading of writings on political war such as Clausewitz, Sun Tzu and Machiavelli as well as Marx, Engels, and Plekhanov, favoured the development of Lenin revolutionary spirit and his recognition of war as a political end. Lenin firmly believed in the use of subversion to overthrow the government, taking interest in two fundamental guidelines based on the economic, moral and military *support of dissidents* within the state to be subverted and *propaganda of agitation* as the initiation of the subverting process.<sup>126</sup>

According to Lenin, propaganda is many ideas for a few; agitation few ideas for many.<sup>127</sup> Although *propaganda of agitation* was not a new phenomenon for Lenin, exasperatedly used in the World War I by the Allies, it was conducted unaltered by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War but in a more aggressive form. Therefore, the “agitation of the masses” is the foundation for subverting the state, which must however be completed with the use of force. The propaganda of agitation in addition to being used by the revolutionary group or party, as in the case of the October Revolution, can be implemented by the government of a state itself to bring for instance a nation into war or installed a revolutionary course of action as Hitler in the World War II did.<sup>128</sup> Propaganda of agitation must produce effects in the short term, its revolutionary and explosive nature does not allow it to be conducted for too long otherwise it would cool the heated spirits of the revolutionaries who sacrifice their lives and efforts to fulfil the promises that propaganda itself professes. Since 1930, the Soviet Union had conducted, according to Ellul, *propaganda of integration*, in order to consolidate the social body within the state. The more the people conform to a certain behaviour and the more homogeneous and uniform the mass is, the greater the power of a nation will be. The more people feel part of a society that works thanks to them, the more effective the objective of the propaganda of integration will be. Unlike propaganda of agitation, propaganda of integration therefore aims to strengthen and preserve the social system that was created after a revolution through subtle and subversive methods.<sup>129</sup> The Soviet Bloc, as well as the United States, have made constant use of propaganda of integration within their spheres of influence, first of all preserving absolute ideological control over the masses, and later in support of West-East conflict in the Cold War.

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<sup>126</sup> Beilenson, Laurence W., *Power Through Subversion*, Washington DC, Public Affairs, 1972, p. 81.

<sup>127</sup> Smith, *On Political War*, p. 23.

<sup>128</sup> Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitude*, p. 71.

<sup>129</sup> Ivi, pp. 74-75.



Lenin's adaptation of *internal subversion* – internal to the government in power to be overthrown – and *external subversion* – from a nation in support of dissidents from another nation who want to overthrow their government – is the pillar of subsequent development of Soviet political warfare.<sup>130</sup> The Lenin Adaptation, as Beilenson defines in *Power Through Subversion*, is nothing more than the modification, or adaptation, of the three strategies of traditional external subversion according to Lenin's aims. Lenin's subversion essentially takes up the old form but adapting it to the needs that the Communist ideology required. The avoidance of offensive war to preserve the "subversion base" – Soviet Union –, subversion as the chief tool rather than war and, finally, the use of internal subversion with constant support from the "subversion base" to accomplish the mission of global communism, were the fundamental adaptations that Lenin made in his plan to conquer the world.<sup>131</sup>

The *Soviet subversion model*, which will take off after the World War II and which will prove to be a total success with the crushing of Prague Spring in 1968, was first described in detail in four phases by Yuri Bezmenov, a Soviet defector and journalist at Novosti Press Agency, the biggest and most powerful propaganda, espionage and ideological front of the KGB. According to Bezmenov in *Love Letter to America*, ideological subversion is "turning a stronger force against itself".<sup>132</sup> The four stages that make up the subversion with the aim of transforming the United States of America into a Communist state are: demoralization, destabilization, crisis and normalization. This type of approach takes the United States as an example because as a host for democracy, it would allow the widespread infiltration of a plurality of different and opposing ideologies, including the Communist one. In the first stage of the subversion process, Bezmenov mentions the *active measures*, a term of Russian origin that denotes that type of activity that includes overt and covert propaganda, "agent of influence", manipulation of mass demonstrations and media, but also activities that do not concern the information channel such as sabotage, assassinations, use of paramilitary groups, infiltrations etc.<sup>133</sup>

*Demoralization* is the first stage that the subversion must pursue; it is irreversible and produces the expected effects on average after 15-20 years. The stage of demoralization is based on the "education" of a new generation of young people from a particular country to be subverted. Demoralization is ineffective if practiced on an adult population, which has already reached intellectual maturity, and, for this reason, the preferred target is that of a new group of people

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<sup>130</sup> Beilenson, *Power Through Subversion*, p. 139.

<sup>131</sup> Ivi, p. 139.

<sup>132</sup> Bezmenov, Yuri, aka Tomas Schuman, *Love Letter to America & World Thought Police* (1984), DAST, 2016, p. 27.

<sup>133</sup> Bezmenov, *Love Letter to America*, p. 30.

who, exposed to ideological subversion during their growth towards adulthood, are ideologically suitable to be manipulated.<sup>134</sup>

In the first stage the subverter operates simultaneously on three levels of demoralization: the level of ideas, the level of structures and the level of life. According to Bezmenov, the level of ideas is based on the influence of religious beliefs and faiths, the main vehicles that allow people to be “drugged” and lead them to act on blind obedience and to conduct martyrdom for the values they believe in. In addition to religion, the same method is applied in the field of education and instruction, through cultural exchanges, the massive distribution of Soviet literature and the infiltration of “agitators” within university structures.<sup>135</sup> Other vehicles of ideas are the media and mass cultures, such as fashion, music, art and cultural elements in general which potentially let the Communist ideology pass undisturbed.

The structural demoralization is the level where the subverter strikes to discredit the protective forces and the police, through the encouragement of the individual to adopt an anarchic and nonconformist behavior against the law and the political institutions, up to conflicts within society and among ethnic groups. Finally, demoralization operates on the cultural level and lifestyle of the individual, demonizing the activities of daily life as “unhealthy” and promoting socialist culture as the best alternative.<sup>136</sup>

*Destabilization* is the transitional stage between the preparation and the overthrow of government, lasting about 2-5 years. This second stage of the subversive model is the result of the long stage of demoralization that leads the population to have total distrust of state institutions and the government, now actively part of politics and organized in “citizen’s committees” with more and more political power. The government, losing ground, implements drastic manoeuvres in the economic, social and administrative fields that further worsen the situation, paving the way for socialism. Finally, after having generated international isolation and external support for the new internal dissidents by the “subversion base”, the government itself is preparing for the third stage.<sup>137</sup>

*Crisis* is the shortest stage in which dissidents take part in the action and carry out the revolt against the government. The crisis can manifest itself either through civil war and armed intervention from the “external base” or through the establishment of an emergency

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<sup>134</sup> Ivi, p. 31.

<sup>135</sup> Ivi, pp. 34, 39.

<sup>136</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>137</sup> Bezmenov, *Love Letter to America*, pp. 52-53.

government, whose leader is an elected dissident who enjoys unlimited powers and undisturbed “Sovietizes” the institutions.<sup>138</sup>

*Normalization* is the final stage in which the new government, to avoid a civil war due to the natural residual spotty opposition, orders “sweeps” conducted by the new state police to eliminate the remaining internal opponents, social movements are banned, the press imprints itself with propaganda and censorship, the new Soviet-style morality is imposed and international order is restored.<sup>139</sup>

Bezmenov’s subversive model is thus the evolution of Lenin’s developed concept of subversion, applied in all four means of statecraft and laying the foundations for Soviet political warfare during the Cold War. Until the 1980s, given the covert and secret nature of this approach, it allowed the Soviet Union to weave its own web and expand its network of influence worldwide undisputed, consolidating its power in the eyes of the West and the United States. The main mission of the Soviet Union, as already mentioned, was stability. Through the consolidation of both domestic and foreign security, the CPSU conducted systemic indoctrination and subversion within the Eastern Bloc by state apparatuses, such as the Committee for State Security, which through its numerous departments kept the entire Soviet system glued, and at the same time directing its scopes towards the Third World and the international framework in order to establish itself internationally and expand its dominion which would have served to guarantee the primal desire of the “classless world”.

### *Active Measures Defined*

Soviet political warfare made use of active measures in all determinants of national power, based on Bezmenov’s model of subversion and Lenin’s ideology. To better understand the case that will be treated in chapter three, it is necessary to focus on the *information* channel among all four social determinants of national power. This statement does not mean that the active measures have been used only on the information channel, but that for consistency in the study of the case it is necessary to deepen it more than the other three.

The number of definitions and attempts to define “active measures” is large and contradictory. The reason why the West failed to define and understand active measures, ensuring the success of the Soviet offensive policy during the Cold War until the 1980s, is explained by Anatoliy Golitsyn:

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<sup>138</sup> Ivi, p. 54.

<sup>139</sup> Ivi, p. 55.

“the West and its intelligence services have never understood strategic political disinformation because they have never fathomed Soviet political strategy. They have recognized only Soviet ‘active measures’ - that is, tactical disinformation - which they have understood only in terms of their own covert operations.”<sup>140</sup>

In fact, according to National Security Act Sec. 503(e), the CIA covert operations, or *Covert Actions*, were considered as:

“an activity or activities of the United States Government to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States Government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly”.<sup>141</sup>

Given the nature from which active measures arise, the most coherent and appropriate definition is certainly that provided by the personnel who subjectively worked within the KGB and the CPSU and had the opportunity to plan, manage and implement their use. According to the Dictionary of Counterintelligence of the Dzerzhinsky Higher School of the KGB, 1972, the Soviet academy that prepared and educated future intelligence and secret service personnel, *active measures* are:

“counterintelligence actions that allow to penetrate the enemy’s plans, prevent his unwanted steps in advance, mislead the enemy, intercept his initiative, and disrupt his subversive actions”.<sup>142</sup>

Furthermore, according to the dictionary definition, active measures are offensive in nature and make it possible to reveal and suppress hostile activity at the earliest stage of its occurrence, to force the enemy to reveal himself, to impose his will on him, to force him to act in unfavorable conditions and in the direction necessary for the counterintelligence bodies.<sup>143</sup>

Former KGB Maj. Gen. Oleg Kalugin in a 1998 interview with CNN states:

“not intelligence collection, but subversion: active measures to weaken the West, to drive wedges in the Western community alliances of all sorts, particularly NATO, to sow discord among allies, to weaken the

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<sup>140</sup> Golitsyn, Anatoliy, *The Perestroika Deception: Memoranda to the Central Intelligence Agency*, London, Edward Harler, 1998, p. 131.

<sup>141</sup> Legal Information Institute, *National Security Act of 1947, 50 U.S. Code § 3093 - Presidential approval and reporting of covert actions*.

<sup>142</sup> *Контрразведывательный словарь*, “Dictionary of Counterintelligence”, Moscow, 1972, “Мероприятия активные” (active measures) definition.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibidem*.

United States in the eyes of the people of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and thus to prepare ground in case the war really occurs. To make America more vulnerable to the anger and distrust of other peoples".<sup>144</sup>

With this definition Oleg Kalugin highlights the close relationship between all Soviet foreign political activity and the "Main Enemy", *glavnyy protivnik*, the United States, emphasizing the opposition between socialism and capitalism, which are irreconcilable by nature.

Bezmenov compares *active measures* to the process of establishing "control over the masses" of Machiavelli and Sun Tzu, defining them in his model of "ideological subversion" i.e., "the process of changing the perception of reality in the minds of millions of peoples all over the world".<sup>145</sup>

Ladislav Bittman, former intelligence officer of the Czechoslovak secret service, the State Security of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, *Štátna bezpečnost'* (StB), who defected to the United States after the events of the Prague Spring in 1968, defined *active measures* as:

"clandestine operations designed to extend Soviet influence and power around the world. As the offensive instrument of Soviet foreign policy, they systematically disrupt relations between other nations, discredit Soviet opponents, and influence the policies of foreign governments in favour of Soviet plans and policies".<sup>146</sup>

Furthermore, Bittman adds that the term "active measures" finds a difficult place in Western terminology, first because the term encompasses a multitude of activities that secret services such as the CIA sharply separate and conduct differently (especially regarding "illegal" activities), second because the Soviet Union perceives its political object as a homogeneous offensive tool, which exploits "peaceful means" - public diplomacy - to destroy and damage the target rather than promote and improve its position, and third because active measures are designed to produce results for a long-term objectives and are part of the "peaceful coexistence" process.<sup>147</sup>

Vasili Mitrokhin in *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook* proposes two definitions of *active measures*:

"agent-operational measures aimed at exerting useful influence on aspects of the political life of a target country which are of interest, its foreign policy, the solution of international problems, misleading the adversary,

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<sup>144</sup> CNN, *Inside the KGB an interview with retired KGB Maj. Gen. Oleg Kalugin*, Cold War Experience, Number January 1998.

<sup>145</sup> Bezmenov, *Love Letter to America*, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> Bittman, Ladislav, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View*, Virginia, Pergamon-Brassey, 1985, p. 43.

<sup>147</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, p. 43.

undermining and weakening his positions, the disruption of his hostile plans, and the achievement of other aims”,<sup>148</sup>

and by KGB external Intelligence:

“agent-operational measures directed at exerting influence on the foreign policy and the internal political situation of target countries in the interests of the Soviet Union and of other countries of the socialist community, the World Communist and National Liberation Movement, weakening the political, military economic and ideological positions of capitalism, undermining its aggressive plans, in order to create conditions favourable to the successful implementation of the Soviet Union’s foreign policy, and ensuring peace and social progress”.<sup>149</sup>

From the suggested definitions it can be deduced that active measures are the main instrument on which Soviet political warfare is based, in which it concentrates all the determinants of national power and reduce them into a single strategic weapon. To summarize the previous definitions, *active measures* are offensive manoeuvres that aim to destabilize an opposing government or nation, isolating it from its alliances and causing a process of internal “self-destruction” that opens the way for the establishment of a socialist government.

### *Active Measures Origins*

Active measures originate from the evolution of the primordial political activities of the Bolshevik party during the October Revolution. During the Russian Civil War and the takeover of the Bolshevik, there were numerous covert operations of political influence and propaganda-agitation to eliminate the opponents of the revolution. The active measures were the result of a political, cultural and ideological maturation of Russia political activities since the First World War. The practical application of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the development of the concept of the “correlation of forces” were the basis that led to the development of active measures at the end of the World War II. Political influence, propaganda and ideological expansionism through subversion were not new to the Soviet Union. Nazi Germany made excessive use of the means of political warfare during the 1930s, which matched, if not surpassed, those of the newly born Soviet Union. The establishment of Cheka as party police

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<sup>148</sup> Mitrokhin, Vasili, *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer’s Handbook*, London-New York, Frank Cass & Co., 2002, p. 13.

<sup>149</sup> Ibidem.

in the service of the Bolsheviks to repress the counter-revolutionaries and the Whites through torture, murder, extortion and persecution were familiar in the history of Russia. The Russian empire, in the early 1900s, used the *Okhrana*, the Tsarist Secret Police, or “The Guard”, to conduct clandestine activities within the empire, using undercover agents to monitor economic activities and successfully practiced both disinformation and forgery, such as the fabrication of the anti-Semitic “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”.<sup>150</sup> Although it is wrong to assume that these activities were the same as the ones implemented during the Cold War, some common features lead to the presumption that active measures originate from this type of political activities.

According to Andrew and Mitrokhin, one of the best-known cases of early Soviet disinformation campaign was “Operation Trest”, conceived by Cheka’s founder and mastermind of the Red Terror, Felix Dzerzhinsky. Pursued for six years by Cheka’s successor GPU, the State Political Directorate, the deceptive campaign realized the plan of creating the phony Monarchist Association of Central Russia, MOR, in order to attract anti-Bolsheviks and White emigrants to join and subsequently executed by the GPU.<sup>151</sup> In addition, Operation Trest also marked a period of intensification and refinement of the intelligence activity of the Soviet secret services, with the massive use of strategic and political deception that resounded beyond Russian borders and alerted foreign governments.

The Third Communist International, Comintern, founded in Moscow in 1919 as an organization to promote socialist international expansion, support nationalism parties to overthrow Western imperialism influence, and encourage the growth of indigenous communist movements, was the first formal promoter and implementer of Soviet political warfare outside its “subversive base”.<sup>152</sup> Main tool promoting the concept of “correlation of forces”, in which, unlike the “balance of power”, does not aim at the coexistence of two opposite systems, the Comintern used active measures until 1943 due to the peak of the World War II and after Trotskyists, previously expelled from the Soviet Union, founded the Fourth International in 1938 in opposition to the bureaucratization of Third International. In any case, the Comintern remained the main executor and principal of the disinformation campaign and active measures until the end of the 1930s, albeit working closely with the Central Committee of the Communist Party and NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB.

During the Second World War, the management shifted to a close collaboration between the NKVD, the former Cheka, and the GRU, the Main Intelligence Directorate. Collaboration with

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<sup>150</sup> Agursky, Mikhail, *Soviet Disinformation and Forgeries*, in “International Journal on World Peace”, 1989, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 13.

<sup>151</sup> Andrew, Mitrokhin, *The Sword and The Shield*, p. 34.

<sup>152</sup> Hanhimäki, *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, p. 64.

the intelligence directorate was necessary because, during the World War II, disinformation campaigns concerned real military and psychological strategies, being conducted by the Soviet Army officials and military intelligence personnel themselves. Given the events of the war and the growing Nazi threat, in 1941 the USSR established the Central Staff of the Partisan Movement in support of the agents of the two Committees, which conducted activities regarding sabotage, espionage and assassination behind Nazi enemy lines.<sup>153</sup>

Immediately after the events of the World War II, the Soviet active measures faced two phases. From the end of the war until 1948, the European states spontaneously embraced and welcomed the communist ideology as political alternative in opposition to Nazi-fascism, allowing the birth of new Communist parties in almost all European nations. The way to extend socialist influence in Europe through the use of secret services and local support of the new parties was unhindered. At the beginning of the Cold War, active measures were finally able to increase in intensity, range and objectives. The new KGB installed police and intelligence secret services on all occupied nations at the sole and exclusive service of the Kremlin, strengthening its influence in Europe and towards the Third World.

From 1950 onwards the KGB, together with the secret services of the Soviet states, among which the Stasi, MfS, and the Bulgarian KDS, conducted worldwide disinformation campaigns, forgeries and terrorism against the United States and NATO, up to erecting Directorates which dealt exclusively with active measures in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovak, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania.<sup>154</sup>

### *Organizational Structure*

The implementation and direction in conducting active measures after 1978 is based on the cooperation between three main bodies of the Central Committee of CPSU, the International Department (ID), the International Information Department (IID) and the Committee for State Security (KGB). The supreme decision was entitled to the Politburo, which includes the General Secretary, the head of the KGB and some elite and prominent members of the Communist Party.<sup>155</sup>

The *International Department* was one of several bodies that made up the Central Committee of CPSU. Arising from the ashes of the Comintern, dissolved by Stalin in 1943, the International

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<sup>153</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, p. 36.

<sup>154</sup> Ivi, p. 37.

<sup>155</sup> Shultz, Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, p. 19.



Department was initially ruled by Yuri Andropov. After becoming ambassador in Hungary in 1956, Andropov was replaced by secretary of the CPSU and member of Soviet Academy of Sciences, Boris Ponomarev.<sup>156</sup> In 1957 the Foreign Affairs Department, after being split into three different bodies with distinct functions, was replaced by the International Department, which remained the only main apparatus to conduct operations of liaison and support to foreign non-ruling and ruling Communist parties and front organizations. The means at its disposal and the independence that the International Department acquired were superior to that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which after the separation no longer enjoyed the same functions it had previously, depending strictly on the decisions of the Politburo. The ID through Soviet embassies abroad pursued information and political gathering activities, contacting local front organizations and persuading national movements to conduct propaganda operations. In addition, the International Department established contacts with similar departments also within the Soviet Bloc and welcomed a large number of academics and researchers from the Academy of Sciences who arranged to publish the international periodical *World Marxist Review* in which it openly provided guidance to pro-Soviet readers and Communist sympathizers.<sup>157</sup> Through the front organizations, both national and international, the International Department conveyed active measures secretly and extensively all over the world, creating a dense network of connections and allies directly dependent on Moscow. The incitement through propaganda, international brochures and the economic and ideological support of the pacifist and revolutionary movements outside the borders of the Eastern Bloc put the Soviet Union in a position of superiority, at least ideological, over the United States and the West.

The *International Information Department* was the body directly responsible for coordinating and improving the efficiency of the Soviet foreign propaganda and domestic propaganda concerning foreign affairs, through the combined use of official and unofficial information channels.<sup>158</sup> Before the establishment of the International Information Department, propaganda and related activities were carried out by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, which was heir to the old Agitprop established by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War.<sup>159</sup> According to Levchenko, a KGB officer, the new body had no major responsibilities beyond providing ideas on overt propaganda activities. The International Information Department

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<sup>156</sup> Shultz, Richard H., Jr., Godson, Roy, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*, Virginia, Pergamon-Brassey, 1984, p. 22.

<sup>157</sup> Schapiro, Leonard, *The International Department of the CPSU: Key to Soviet Policy*, in "International Journal", 1977, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 43-44.

<sup>158</sup> U.S. Senate, *Hearings Before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on Soviet Active Measures*, 97th Congress, 2nd session, Washington DC, Government Printing Office, 1982, p. 220.

<sup>159</sup> Barghoorn, Frederick, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1964, p. 244.

suffered from the same dependence that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had on the decision-making power of the Politburo, which did not leave autonomy and free will, and at the same time enjoyed rather limited personnel both in number and in quality.<sup>160</sup> Ruled by Leonid Zamyatin, former director of TASS, the news Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union, which together with the unofficial press agency RIA Novosti, constituted the main propaganda and information vehicle in the service of the Soviet Union, the IID worked in close coordination with all media that the Central Committee had at its disposal. In addition to the two most important news agencies, the Soviet propaganda machine also found an opening in foreign and regional radio broadcasting. The 24/7 short-wave Radio Moscow, with over 80 languages, was the largest and most efficient radio broadcasting for the international audience, flanked by regional radio for the Eastern Bloc, and the Radio Peace and Progress which broadcasted in the Third World. Pravda, together with the World Marxist Review, were prestigious journals that had wide international success, as well as being the main pass for manipulation and disinformation against the West.<sup>161</sup>

The *Committee of State Security*, KGB, was established in 1954, headed by Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov, from the former Ministry of State Security, MGB. The most notable directorate of the KGB was “The First Chief Directorate”, which dealt with external intelligence and foreign operations, while the other directorate dealt with other specific assignment and disciplinary sector. KGB was the intelligence and counter-intelligence agency and the internal security police force with its independent military apparatus.<sup>162</sup> Main promoter of active measures, together with the International Department and the International Information Department, the Committee of State Security was involved throughout the course of the Cold War to conduct overt and covert operations against the United States and the West and to indoctrinate and recruit personnel among the population. The KGB was the most powerful coercive weapon in the service of the General Secretary of the CPSU, with which it ensured the party’s internal security and eliminated its opponents. An extensive number of departments and directorates branched out within the First Chief Directorate.<sup>163</sup> Prior to the appointment of Yuri Andropov as chief of the KGB, the first department that conducted active measures was Department D, which stood for *Dezinformatsiya*, “disinformation”, which coincided with the primordial activity of active measures. After the Prague Spring and the growing prestige of

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<sup>160</sup> Shultz, Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, p. 26.

<sup>161</sup> Ivi, p. 29-30.

<sup>162</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, p. 19.

<sup>163</sup> Gordievsky, Oleg, Andrew, Christopher, *KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*, New York, Harper Perennial, 1991.

Department D, it was renamed “Service A” by Yuri Andropov, becoming the most powerful and effective department of the KGB.<sup>164</sup> The Committee of State Security within the organizational structure for the implementation of active measures served as a means to finalize the covert operations, which the other two departments could have not directly achieved alone. The GRU, Main Intelligence Directorate, was the department that dealt with military intelligence, paramilitary operations, military support for terrorist groups and sabotage missions. The GRU was the military intelligence body of the Soviet Army and operated parallel to the KGB. Although they operated as two separate and distinct organizations, the GRU frequently supported militarily the KGB operations.

### Active Measures Operational Structure (after 1978)

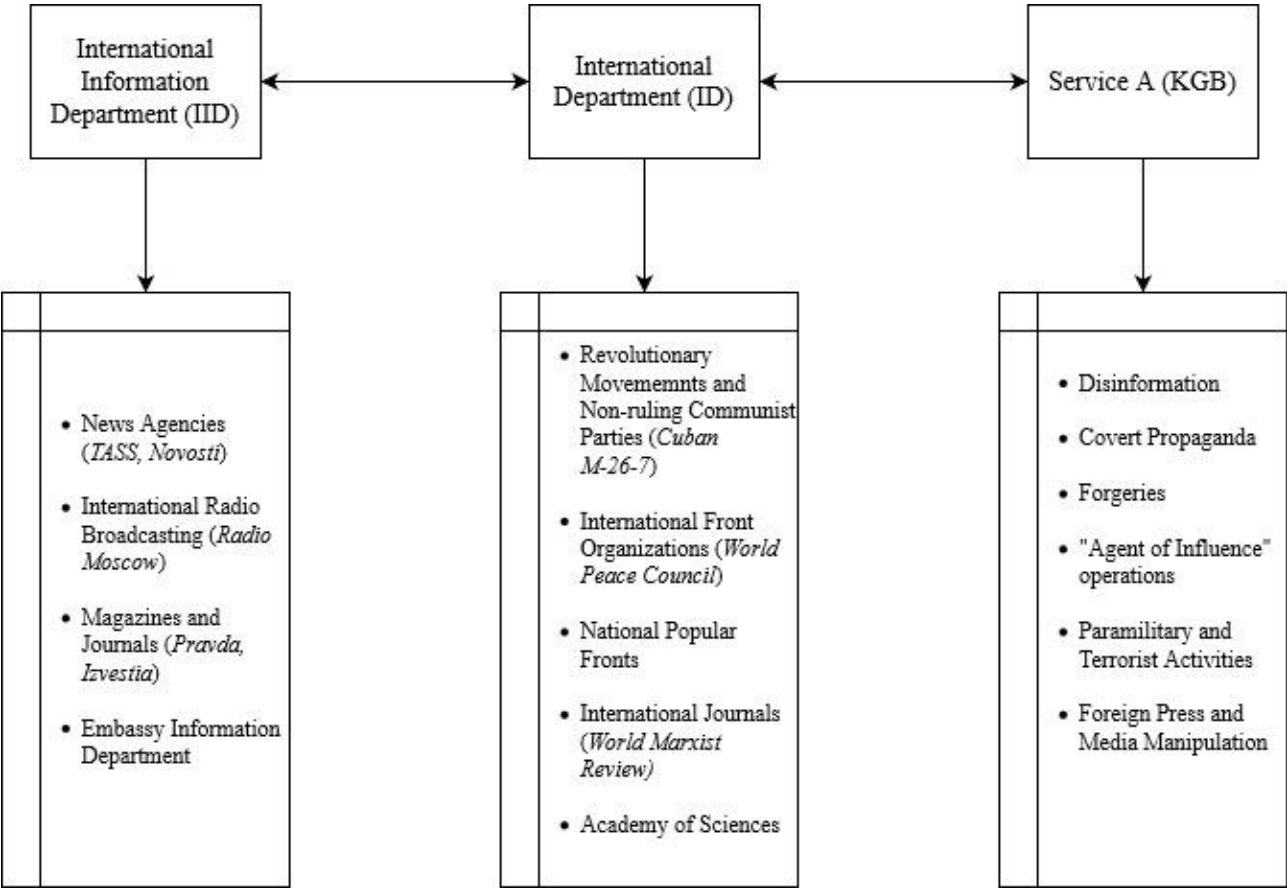


Chart 1; Source: Shultz, Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, Chart I, p.

<sup>164</sup> Shultz, Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, p. 33.

## *Disinformation*

*Disinformation* was one of the most powerful and efficient means adopted to conduct active measures by the triad KGB, International Department, and International Information Department. According to Bittman, disinformation is the kind of activities that aim to deceive the enemy through the use of false information, in order to influence a specific individual, part of the population or a government to conduct researches and activities based on them.<sup>165</sup>

A term broadly confused by the US media and journalists with misinformation, disinformation is differentiated by the *deliberate* dissemination of false stories or the distortion of events in favour of the position of the one who conducts it. Otherwise, misinformation is the genuine misinterpretation and diffusion of incorrect information, caused by an oversight or basic ignorance. The relationship between the two terms is that disinformation as a result can create a state of misinformation and confusion that can accompany and make more effective the subversive intent underlying the former. Disinformation uses a wide range of techniques ranging from forgeries and rumours, to the purchase of foreign mass media and the exploitation of papers and pamphlets by unaware academics and researchers.<sup>166</sup>

In *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, Bittman refers to disinformation as a game with specific rules. The disinformation “game” has three roles that constitute three determining factors in the outcome and effectiveness of the disinformation process. Logically, disinformation involved two counterparts, the *operator*, the one who plans the operation, and the *adversary*, the one who undergoes. The operator and the opponent normally constitute two opposing governments, respectively, but also single individuals and authorities. A third key element of the disinformation is the *unwitting agent*, or “useful idiot”, the one who, unaware of the operator’s activity, is the vehicle on which disinformation passes. The operator, through the exploitation of the unwitting agent, indirectly attacks the adversary. The unwitting agent can be an individual, an academic, a politician, an authority, or even another government, preferably from developing countries, who through pamphlets, papers, public speeches or the dissemination of false information, to which they have been previously, or in another moment, subjected, naively attacks the opponent, without realizing the exploitation of his position by the operator. The adversary can also exchange the unwitting agent as the operator, which becomes the target of the countermeasure advanced by the adversary, creating a vicious circle of attacks and

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<sup>165</sup> Bittman, Ladislav, *The Deception Game: Czechoslovak Intelligence in Soviet Political Warfare*, New York, Syracuse University, 1973, p. 20.

<sup>166</sup> Bittman, Ladislav, *The Use of Disinformation by Democracies*, in “International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence”, 1990, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 249.

counterattacks between the two. A third possible disinformation scenario is the direct attack of the operator on the adversary without the use of an unwitting agent, with the consequence that the adversary, if the operation is masterfully orchestrated, does not realize the attack and considers the situation his own mistake. Finally, a scenario can occur in which the operator simultaneously attacks the adversary and the unwitting agent, in the hope that another exchange of attacks and counterattacks will arise between the latter.<sup>167</sup> For a disinformation campaign to be successful it must be based on reliable sources. Creating an unreliable and phony story could be revealing and easily detectable. The nature from which disinformation arises must be reliable and partially correspond to reality. In writing, for example, an article in the media exploited by the perpetrator, there must be almost all of the verifiable, reliable and demonstrable information in order to gain the reader's trust. Once the plausible structure has been created, one can proceed with the reasoned insertion of the false or distorted information.<sup>168</sup>

The exploitation of media from developing countries and of a certain prestige are the key to making disinformation operations even more effective. The anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist attitude of the Third World countries tends to approve more this type of bogus publications and to promote their diffusion all over the world, but not only, radical left movements, even within democratic countries such as the United States tended not to ascertain the veracity of such information and to use it as a means of attack and protest against its government. The aim of disinformation is to create instability within the United States and its allies, concealing the position and direct responsibility of the Soviet Union and the secret services of the Eastern Bloc.

### *Forgeries*

According to the definition in the *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook*, forgeries, or false documents, fall into two categories. Intellectual forgeries, i.e., “documents that have been drawn up by a person who is authorized to do so using correct procedures, but knowingly incorporating false data”, and physical forgeries, i.e., “completely fabricated documents, or a genuine document has been partially altered by the erasure or addition of words or by doctoring in order to create a forgery”.<sup>169</sup> Closely related to disinformation, forgeries were

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<sup>167</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>168</sup> Bittman, *The Deception Game*, p. 21.

<sup>169</sup> Mitrokhin, *KGB Lexicon*, p. 267.

used in support of active measures and were one of the oldest methods used by the Soviet Union to influence public opinion and undermine an opponent's reputation.

From the early days of the Bolshevik regime, forgeries were used to discredit opponents and create divisions within the population and counter-revolutionaries. With the same logic, during the 50s and 60s, the forgeries aimed to condemn the United States and NATO as the main instigators of war. According to Godson and Shultz, the forgeries prior to the 1970s aimed to label NATO as a threat to world peace, creating fake documents signed with the names of U.S. Departments and CIA report to reveal false plans for the conquest of the Third World. Since the mid-1970s, Soviet forgeries aimed primarily at destabilizing Western countries' alliance with the United States, creating disagreements within NATO, and labelling the United States as exploiters of politics and harms the economy in Western Europe.<sup>170</sup>

The forgery of the U.S. Army Field Manual (FM 30-31B) was one of the most famous case. Published by a Turkish newspaper in 1975 and then distributed in more than twenty countries around the world including the United States, the manual was composed of detailed instructions for implementing an anti-communist domestic policy in the United States, in order to trigger the leftist movements and lead the US government to crack down on any protests by force or policy implementation.<sup>171</sup>

Another example of forgery by the Soviet Union is President Ronald Reagan's letter to King Juan Carlo of Spain mailed to Spanish journalists and to all delegations, except the US one, of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1981. The letter declared US opposition to Spain's NATO access as a clear attempt by the Soviet Union to ruin relations between Spain and the United States.<sup>172</sup>

### *Agent of Influence*

The use of agents of influence was usually the responsibility of the KGB and allowed to effectively implant the Soviet view within parties, government organizations, mass media, newspapers and universities. The range of action of agents of influence was certainly not limited to these sectors, probably reaching all corners of society and administrations, but the documentation and sources in this regard are scarce and poorly documented.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Shultz, Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, pp. 149-153.

<sup>171</sup> Barron, John, *KGB Today: The Hidden Hand*, New York, Reader's Digest Press, 1983, p. 258.

<sup>172</sup> U.S. Senate, *Hearings*, p. 95.

<sup>173</sup> Shultz, Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, p. 32.

An *agent of influence* is an operator under intelligence instructions provided by the KGB who uses his public and political position to influence politics, public opinion, the course of events and, in general, the sectors in which he operates.<sup>174</sup> Agents of influence are divided into KGB agents in disguise, witting agents and unwitting agents, or “useful idiots”. *Useful idiots* were widely exploited by the KGB to implement active measures and disinformation, as they guaranteed indirect involvement and who, in turn, operated in total autonomy and unaware of the favour they provided to the Soviet Union. These unwitting agents could be university students in cultural exchange in the Soviet Union, who were bombarded by Soviet propaganda and on their homecoming were influenced enough to oppose the policies of their own government, or scientists and scholars conducting research that could be exploited by the KGB and the Soviet Union to ruin and discredit the reputation of the United States and NATO. In addition to useful idiots, the KGB also recruited staff and witting agents from foreign journalists, researchers and politicians. The goal was to collect sensitive information, vulnerabilities, irregularities and opinions from prominent people and politicians in order to use them as a weapon of blackmail and defamation. Blackmail and sex scandals was the favourite modus operandi of KGB agents to ruin reputations within governments and institutions.<sup>175</sup>

### *Front Organizations*

*Front organizations* were the main vehicle through which to convey and implement active measures by the International Department. Front organizations served as an indirect means of conducting the Soviet Union’s extensive political offensive. Through ideological persuasion and by spreading the principles of Marxism-Leninism internationally, the preferred “victims” were those politically neutral movements, preferably of young people, who were discredited and socially alienated from their local government. A wide range of peace and anti-nuclear movements, but also opposition and revolutionary parties were indispensable to the goals of Soviet foreign policy. The strong appeal that socialist ideology had towards these groups was significant. Whether they were affiliated with the Soviet Union, or did not share the Communist ideology, this did not matter to the Kremlin. The aim was that these movements weaken democratic governments from within, starting the process of subversion so dear to the Soviets.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Mitrokhin, *KGB Lexicon*, p. 3.

<sup>175</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, p. 61.

<sup>176</sup> Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, p. 65.

After the establishment of the World Peace Council (WPC) in 1949 and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in 1945, a series of international front groups took root on the same model of international cooperation, peace and support to the Soviet Union. The most notables were the World Federation of Democratic Youth, Women’s International Democratic Federation and Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization. Through deception, these organizations conveyed and bridged Soviet foreign policy and propaganda, keeping the Moscow in a position of indirect responsibility but at the same time considered a carrier of peace and unity.<sup>177</sup>

### KGB First Chief Directorate Structure

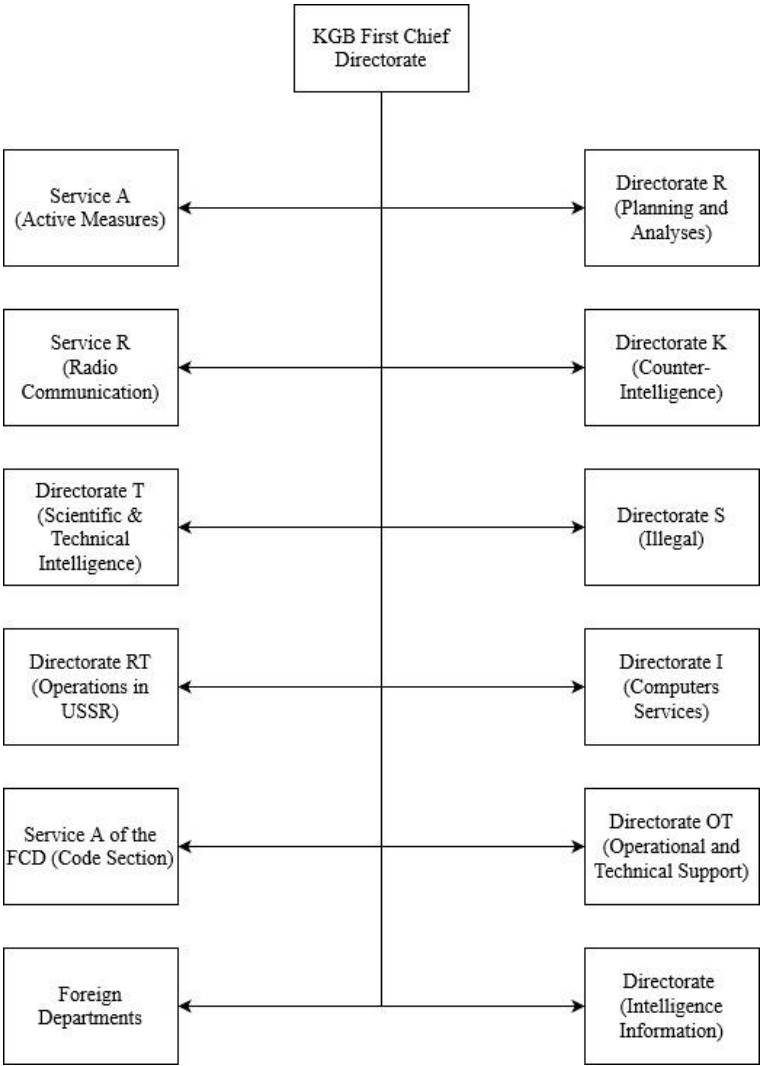


Chart 2; Source: Andrew, Mitrokhin, *The Sword and The Shield*, Appendix D, p. 5

<sup>177</sup> Shultz, Godson, *Dezinformatsia*, p. 24.



## Main Directorate for Reconnaissance HVA (MfS)

The KGB enlisted the support of the various state police and intelligence services of the Eastern Bloc states during the course of the Cold War. The close cooperation allowed them to move in symbiosis and to conduct large-scale intelligence and espionage operations. Active measures, in addition to being conducted through the departments described in the previous pages, were implemented by the local intelligence services concerned. East German Ministry for State Security, MfS, was together with the KGB one of the most efficient and with the largest personnel. The number of fulltime employees of the MfS was around 100,000 in the last years of the GDR.<sup>178</sup>

The Main Directorate for Reconnaissance, HVA, was the Stasi's foreign intelligence organization, and broadly corresponded to the First Chief Directorate of the KGB. The close relationship between the KGB and HVA involved the continuous exchange of information regarding foreign intelligence, which was sent by the latter in copy to the KGB officers. HVA was not required to inform Moscow solely regarding documents dealing with relations with neighbouring West Germany and information produced by the provincial departments of the MfS that did not concern important matters. In addition to this task, the HVA functioned as a permanent surveillance over the activities of the neighbouring FRG and was mainly involved in resolving issues in West Germany while the KGB was occupied with the United States. Finally, in addition to providing new agents and personnel to the KGB, HVA conducted covert operations with great success against West Germany, which, in turn, was unable to penetrate the impermeable shield of the MfS.<sup>179</sup>

The HVA's department which assisted Service A of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB on conducting active measures operations was the *Department X*. Established in 1966, the main task of the Department X was disinformation. Department X was involved in spreading false information and accusations towards West Germany in the hopes of destabilizing its position and ruining its reputation within NATO. The preferred theme was accusing officials and members of the West German Establishment of being former Nazis and criminals, in an attempt to expose the leaders and prominent people in the FRG to domestic unrest and distrust. Following the model of Soviet disinformation, Department X based its stories and forgery on true facts. In 1966, the disinformation campaign against Chancellor Kurt Georg

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<sup>178</sup> Joachim Gauck, *Die Stasi-Akten Das unheimliche Erbe der DDR*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1991, p. 61.

<sup>179</sup> Childs, David, Popplewell, Richard, *The Stasi The East German Intelligence and Security Service*, London, Palgrave, 1996, p. 125-6.

Kiesinger of being a former member of the Nazi party was indeed accurate. In addition, Department X conducted campaigns aimed at showing inability to administer West Germany and its direct involvement in US expansionism in the Third World.<sup>180</sup>

### HVA Structure

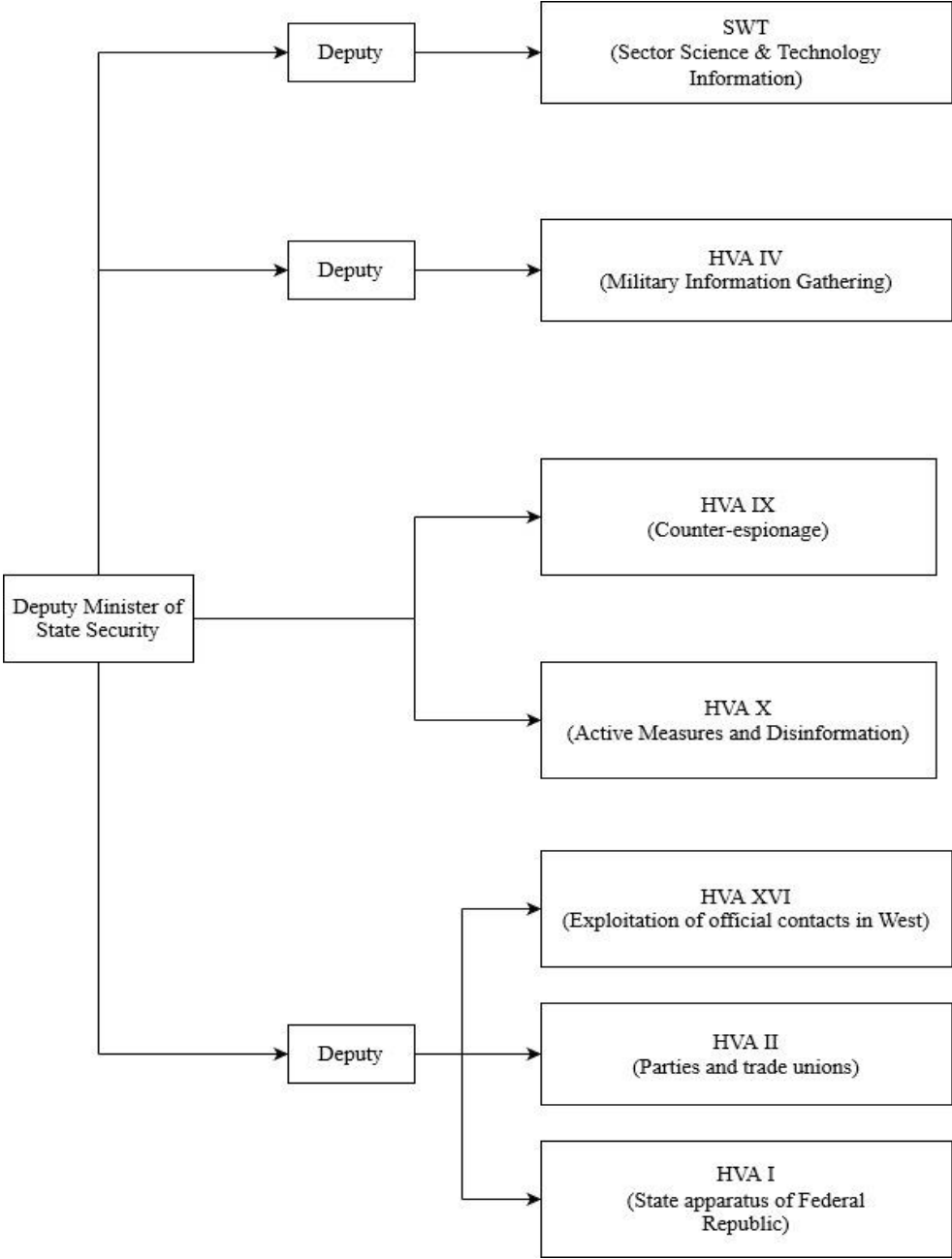


Chart 3; Source: Childs, Popplewell, *The Stasi*, Figure 6.1, p. 164.

<sup>180</sup> Childs, Popplewell, *The Stasi The East German Intelligence and Security Service*, p. 154.

## First Main Directorate of Bulgarian State Security (PGU)

The Bulgarian Committee for State Security, KDS, was the most trusted intelligence body in the Eastern Bloc of the Soviet Union. Structurally, the KDS was similar to the other intelligence services and, with numerous directorates and departments that dealt with specific functions, was considered the “younger brother” of the KGB. In 1947, the Bulgarian Politburo decided to establish the Third Department within the State Security as a new unit dealing with foreign intelligence. Ruled by Hristo Boev, a Bulgarian officer, the Third Department gained notoriety and prestige during the Cold War. With Turkey and Greece joining NATO in 1952, the threat on the southeastern borders became pressing and the Third Department changed its name to First Main Directorate (PGU). The PGU was re-administered and improved by implementing new recruitments and directing economic funds from the KGB and the Kremlin. The main activities were to keep Turkey, Greece, Albania, Yugoslavia and the neighboring countries of Bulgaria under constant surveillance. Not only did the new directorate deal with foreign intelligence, but also with emigration and support in the implementation of active measures. From the mid-1960s, the PGU alongside the KGB and MfS in operations in the Third World and against the United States, especially China and Arab countries.<sup>181</sup>

As a demonstration of the organizational level of the PGU-DS, in 1973 Newton Briones, head of the active measures department of the Cuban Interior Ministry’s Directorate of Intelligence, DGI, visited Sofia to learn and collect information about the administration of the active measures and disinformation department of the PGU, *Department Eight*, in order to prepare a statute for the implementation of active measures.<sup>182</sup> It emerges from a document for the Cuban allies signed by the head of Department Eight of the First Main Directorate of Bulgarian State Security, Dimo Stankov, that the main activities of the Department towards Turkey and Greece were to create internal dissensions and to raise anti-NATO feelings, through economic, social and military disinformation.<sup>183</sup> Until the mid-1970s, Department Eight was limited to following the directives of Service A of the KGB, focusing mainly on Greece and Turkey. His total subordination to the Service A ensured the trust and technical support of the KGB, but at the same time his servility limited the activities of the Bulgarian intelligence, constantly under

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<sup>181</sup> Znepolski, Ivailo, *History of the People's Republic of Bulgaria: The Regime and Society*, Sofia, Ciela Soft and Publishing, 2009, p. 230.

<sup>182</sup> COMDOS, *Държавна сигурност и страните от Латинска Америка 1944-1991*, Dossier Commission, 2018.

<sup>183</sup> Ibidem.

scrutiny and judgment.<sup>184</sup> The PGU, with its Department Eight, therefore had to account for every activity to the KGB and conduct the operations jointly, proving to be limiting for Bulgarian interests but effective for the interests of the Soviet Union.

### PGU Structure

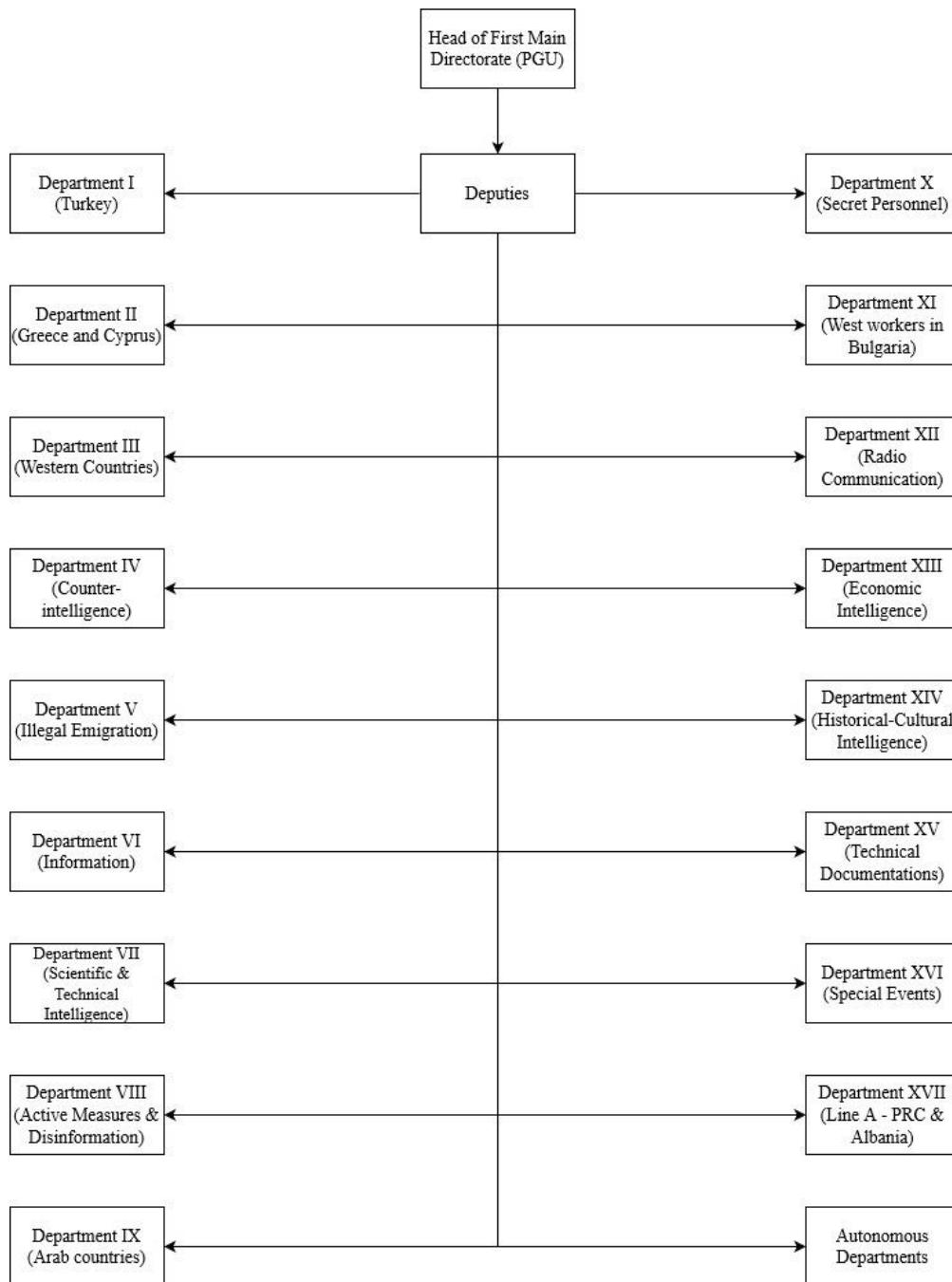


Chart 4; Source: Created by Author

<sup>184</sup> Nehring, Christopher, *Die Zusammenarbeit der DDR-Auslandsaufklärung mit der Aufklärung der Volksrepublik Bulgarien. Regionalfilialen des KGB?*, Heidelberg University, 2016, p. 241.

# CHAPTER III

## Operation Denver

Operation “Denver”, popular known as “Operation INFEKTION”, is a famous disinformation campaign against the United States carried out by the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1987. The campaign was implemented by the secret services of the Eastern Bloc, KGB, MfS and KDS, with the support, albeit to a limited extent, of the StB, and had fairly consistent media coverage and notoriety, especially in the Third World and Europe. The actors directly and indirectly involved in this particular case of active measure were in large number autonomous or barely aware of the Kremlin’s plans of tarnish the image of the United States, favouring in any case a growing development of the campaign and producing outcomes that, effective or not, were evident. The campaign’s goal was to discredit the United States by accusing US government of having fabricated the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) as a bacteriological weapon.<sup>185</sup>

As extensively discussed in the first chapter, the Soviet Union during the Second Cold War found itself in a period dictated by an internal crisis, the international scrutiny drew by the invasion of Afghanistan and the new reforms implemented by Gorbachev. The growing pressure of Ronald Reagan, promoted by the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), became the main objective for the Soviet Union to counter. Under the “peace offensive” and the abrupt reforms of Gorbachev, the KGB and the secret services of the Eastern Bloc intensified the active measures program to be able to face Washington and prevent the United States from starting an unsustainable rearmament for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union’s efforts in the last decade of the Cold War, moved by the residual inertia of nearly 40 years of opposition between East and West, proved almost irrelevant in the multitude of changes and events that swept the world since the 1980s. What appeared to be an active measure studied and masterfully planned, waned towards the end of 1987, affected by social, political and economic changes within the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.

In the first part of the chapter, the historical events that characterized the AIDS disinformation campaign from 1983 to 1987 will be presented in chronological order, in order to define in advance, the issues and the actors involved. In the second part of the chapter, the conflicting

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<sup>185</sup> The Boston Globe, *KGB Planted Story Tying US to AIDS, Russian Says*, “The Boston Globe”, March 19, 1992, p. 1.

opinions of some researchers will be dealt with regarding the role that the actors involved in the campaign have assumed, while at the same time trying to take a position on the conclusions already reached by these scholars.

### *Origins of the AIDS Disinformation Campaign*

On July 17, 1983, Indian newspaper *Patriot*, published the article “AIDS may invade India: Mystery disease caused by US experiments” which reported that the United States had caused the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic with the artificial creation of the HIV as a bacteriological weapon that presumably would get out of hand.<sup>186</sup> The article not only charged the Pentagon with the AIDS epidemic, which was afflicting part of the American population, but at the same time it warned of a possible “next proving ground”, namely Pakistan, which would quickly spread the virus to India as well.<sup>187</sup>

From *Figure 1* it is possible to see the box in which the source of the article is cited, an anonymous letter sent to the editorial office of the *Patriot* from “a well-known American scientist and anthropologist”. The article also mentions AIDS cases in Great Britain, caused by imported transfusions and blood donations from the United States, and evidences about some cases among Haitian immigrants dating back to 1978, finally mentioning that the HIV is spread mostly among homosexuals and drug addicts. At the time, the article did not have much international response and remained an isolated case.<sup>188</sup> Originally, the purpose of the article was related to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979. Pakistan, as described in the first chapter, an ally of the United States, served as the US headquarters for sending aids to the *mujahedin*. The USSR, through the use of forgeries and false allegations, tried to remove its label of “invader” and to divert attention internationally by accusing the United States of not being in compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention treaty (BWC) which entered into force in 1975. Linked to the *Patriot* article, in early 1982, the Soviet Union accused the United States through numerous distorted stories of conducting experiments and developing biological weapons at a research center that functioned as a bacteriological warfare facility in Lahore, Pakistan.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> *Patriot*, *AIDS May Invade India: Mystery Disease Caused by US Experiments*, “*Patriot*”, July 17, 1983, p. 1.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>188</sup> Boghardt, Thomas, *Operation INFEKTION: Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign*, in “*Studies in Intelligence*”, 2009, Vol. 53, No. 4, p. 6.

<sup>189</sup> U.S. Senate, *Hearings*, 1982, p. 55.

Figure 1: "AIDS may invade India"<sup>190</sup>

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# AIDS may invade India

Mystery disease caused by US experiments

NEW YORK:

AIDS, the deadly mysterious disease which has caused havoc in the US, is believed to be the result of the Pentagon's experiments to develop new and dangerous biological weapons.

Now that these menacing experiments seem to have gone out of control, plans are being hatched to hastily transfer them from the US to other countries, primarily developing nations where governments are pliable to Washington's pressures and persuasion.

Some American experts believe that Pakistan may become the next proving ground for these experiments. If this happens, there will be a real danger that AIDS may rapidly spread to India with the grave consequences to the people of the country.

WHO representatives point out that AIDS may soon become problem number one, since so far there are no effective cures to fight it.

The British mass media has pointed to the blood plasma imported from the US as the cause of AIDS, which is spreading in the British Isles where more than 15 patients have been hospitalized, with half of them now dead.

As a result, France and Holland, which use large quantities of American blood donations, have stopped importing such blood. Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark are now considering similar measures.

In recent months, there has been a marked increase in the incidence of this hitherto unknown disease, the so-called Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is caused, or so scientists suspect, by a new highly pathogenic virus which ravages the immune system of a human being, making him practically defenceless against any infection. Once the AIDS virus penetrates the human organism, it does not become the "killer" but rather acts like a time bomb. The immune system destroyed by it can no longer resist diseases even such as the virus flu. As a result, one ~~can~~ ~~often~~ ~~later~~ ~~grave~~

A well-known American scientist and anthropologist, in a letter to Editor, Patriot, analyses the history and background of the deadly AIDS which started in the US and has now spread to Europe. The writer, who wants to remain anonymous, has expressed the fear that India may face a danger from this disease in the near future.

forms and in most cases leads to death.

AIDS has recently been registered in as many as 16 countries, primarily in those which import American blood donations. For some of the countries the disease has already become extremely dangerous.

The first signs of AIDS appeared in 1978 with an outburst of this disease in New York

among immigrants from Haiti. At that time, however, no one seemed to bother to pay any serious attention both on the part of the local authorities and the US public at large. In 1980 there was another sign of AIDS and again in New York. This time in addition to Haitian immigrants the disease struck local Americans, primarily drug addicts and homosexuals. By February 1983, AIDS had affected large sections of the American population and had been registered in 33 states. New York accounted for 49 per cent of all the cases that had been officially registered in the US by that time.

Concerned American citizens and organisations began to wonder why does AIDS, just like some other previously unknown diseases such as bizarre pneumonia or the so-called Legion-

continued on page 7 col. 2



SUNDAY, JULY 17

## Guerillas And Gorillas

Understanding the reasons why even after a century of political independence the Latin American countries have both their politics deformed and their economy distorted will help to have a better idea of the problems which any post-colonial society faces, writes M. P. Kavalam.

## Ramdan In Dubai

Perhaps at no time of the year does Dubai come to the fore as a Muslim city than at Ramdan. For the Arabs, the months of fasting apart from being a deeply religious occasion assumes almost a festive air, writes Rashmi Taneja.

OTHER FEATURES : Public View, Nostalgia, Encounters, Thinking One-dimensionally, Short Story by Bandana Majumdar, Education, Mirros/Windows, Film-focus, Culture Watch, Sports...

<sup>190</sup> The article was originally printed in Patriot, New Delhi, July 1983. According to United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, the Patriot was a left-wing Indian daily based in New Delhi and established by the KGB in 1962 as an outlet to promote disinformation campaigns. The Patriot was already notorious at the time for being a vehicle for Soviet disinformation. Eastern Bloc press and media regularly inserted or quoted stories previously published by the KGB in the Indian newspaper.

Allegations of the US non-compliance with the bioweapon's treaties were nothing new to the Soviet Union. Since the entry into force of the Geneva Protocol in 1928, which prohibited the use of bacteriological methods of warfare, the Soviet Union after World War II accused the United States several times regarding the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons.<sup>191</sup>

During the Korean War in the early 1950s, unsubstantiated accusations by the Soviet Union accused the Pentagon and the CIA of working in preparation for a biological war and of being involved in the spread of dengue fever bacteria in Cuba and of helping the South Africa in the creation of an "ethnic weapon" that afflicts only black population. These allegations created numerous internal debates in the United States and were republished between 1982 and 1983 by *Pravda*, *Novosti Press Agency* and the Soviet Army Newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, citing the CIA's use of biological weapons in Vietnam, Cuba and other Third World countries.<sup>192</sup>

During the summer of 1985, *Krasnaya Zvezda* and *TASS* published an article about an alleged bacteriological "superweapon" that would ensure US world hegemony while in August *TASS* cited in an article three British scientists who, the previous year, accused the United States to develop biological weapons for research and medical purposes.<sup>193</sup>

During the spring of 1985, in conjunction with the International Youth Year, a pamphlet entitled "Jamaica: Attention AIDS" appeared in numerous international airports. The pamphlet claimed to be from the German Section of Moral Majority which did not actually exist. Written in elementary French, the pamphlet warned travelers of the danger of traveling to Jamaica and Haiti in order to discourage Western supporters in participating in the International Youth Conference and World Youth Festival which was to be held in Kingston, Jamaica, in April. Although not closely related to "AIDS as a US biological weapon" disinformation campaign, the pamphlet stated that the virus was contagious even among newborn and non-homosexual young people, again highlighting the "unhealthy" US influence.<sup>194</sup>

Despite the signing of the Soviet Union at the Biological Weapons Convention treaty in 1972, in 1980 the United States accused the Soviet Union of not complying with the treaty and of carrying out illegal biological warfare programs in the city of Sverdlovsk, Urals. In fact, in 1979, an anthrax epidemic struck the city killing 64 people, exposing the Soviet Union to strong

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<sup>191</sup> United Nations, *1925 Geneva Protocol, Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare*, Office of Disarmament Affairs.

<sup>192</sup> Leitenberg, Milton, Zilinskas, Raymond A., Kuhn, Jens H., *The Soviet Biological Weapons Program: A History*, London, Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 413.

<sup>193</sup> United States Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. 35.

<sup>194</sup> United States Department of State and Catherine Kanner, *Active Measures: A Report on the Substance and Process of Anti-U.S. Disinformation and Propaganda Campaigns*, Washington DC, Department of State Publication, August 1986, pp. 65-67.



controversies regarding its compliance with the treaty.<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, from 1981 to 1982 the Soviet Union was accused of using chemical agents, *trichothecene mycotoxins*, in Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan in the so-called “Yellow Rain” phenomenon.<sup>196</sup>

AIDS, as a bacteriological weapon created by the Pentagon, was part of a much broader Soviet disinformation campaign plan. After accusations by the US government regarding possible activities and non-compliance with the agreements on the prohibition of development and the stockpile of biological and toxin weapons (BWC) by the Soviet Union, the disinformation campaign aimed to disrupt the United States sensible domestic situation.<sup>197</sup>

Figure 2: “Jamaica: Attention AIDS”<sup>198</sup>



As well as internationally, the Soviet Union took advantage of the opportunity to destabilize and demoralize the US domestic political-social situation through the publication of articles promoting conspiracies that existed before the article in the *Patriot*. The KGB, along with the

<sup>195</sup> Guillemin, Jeanne, *The 1979 Anthrax Epidemic in the USSR: Applied Science and Political Controversy*, in “Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society”, 2002, Vol. 146, No. 1, pp. 18-36.

<sup>196</sup> Leitenberg, Zilinskas, Kuhn, *The Soviet Biological Weapons Program*, p. 450.

<sup>197</sup> Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> “Jamaica: Attention AIDS” French pamphlet provided by United States Department of State and Catherine Kanner, *Active Measures*, pp. 66-67 (The original source is not available).

Soviet Union, never relied on totally unfounded stories. As illustrated in the second chapter, disinformation had to take real and pre-existing rumours and consequently distort them in order to be inserted, cited or reported by the Western media. Although at first glance most of the articles ended up being forgotten, or publicly recognized as Soviet orchestration, the strategy of “repetition” proved effective most of the time.<sup>199</sup>

From the publication of the *Patriot* article until 1985, the Soviet Union remained silent about “AIDS as a US biological weapon”. At the same time, the AIDS epidemic gained in popularity and began to create social turmoil within US population. According to Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from October 1980 to May 1981, five homosexuals’ men were treated “for biopsy-confirmed *Pneumocystis pneumonia* at three different hospitals in Los Angeles, California”.<sup>200</sup> The AIDS crisis that hit the United States since the early 1980s saw the emergence of strong social crises within American society. Since the case of the five patients suffering from the “rare lung cancer”, newspaper articles had gradually begun to appear declaring more infections, especially among the gay community. According to an article published in July 3, 1981, by the *New York Times*, 41 cases of “rare cancer” among gay men had been reported in the previous 2 years killing 8 people.<sup>201</sup> In the following months, cases were also cited in Africa, especially in Uganda and some cases among immigrants from Haiti.<sup>202</sup> Despite evidence that the disease was also widespread among drug users and heterosexuals, the virus was closely linked to homosexuals and to sexually opportunistic and promiscuous behaviour.<sup>203</sup> Charley Shively, a gay activist known for his radical attitude and founder of the newspaper *Fag Rag*, wrote in an article for the *Gay Community News* that the CDC has been conducting experiments on hundreds of black men since the 1930s regarding the effects of syphilis in the Tuskegee study conducted by the US Public Health Service, also citing various articles claiming that the US government and CIA had “imported” the HIV and was responsible for its spread in American society. Finally, Shively linked the past “punitive function” of syphilis against sexual liberties to the AIDS to repress homosexuals, African-Americans and drug users.<sup>204</sup> According to Douglas Selvage, Shively made these allegations based on the

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<sup>199</sup> United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. 29.

<sup>200</sup> Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, *Pneumocystis Pneumonia Los Angeles*, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>201</sup> New York Times, *Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals*, “New York Times”, July 3, 1981.

<sup>202</sup> Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, *Opportunistic Infections and Kaposi's Sarcoma among Haitians in the United States*, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>203</sup> The New England Journal of Medicine, *An outbreak of community-acquired *Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia*: initial manifestation of cellular immune dysfunction*, “The New England Journal of Medicine”, 1981, 305, pp. 1431-1438.

<sup>204</sup> Shively, Charley, *The CDC-CIA-AIDS Political Alliance*, in “Gay community News”, July 9, 1983, Vol. 10, No. 50, p. 5.

testimony reported in the 91<sup>st</sup> US Congress in 1969 by Donald MacArthur who claimed the possibility of artificially developing a pathogen to which natural immunity could not be developed by human organism.<sup>205</sup> MacArthur hypothesized that in 5-10 years the project could have been realized despite the approximate cost of 10 million dollars, stating that the interest was not lacking, but that in reality it would not have gone beyond the hypotheses.<sup>206</sup> These claims were overwhelming evidence to any person wishing to bring charges against the US government about the outbreak of epidemics and the spread of “mysterious” diseases used as offensive and defensive weapons. A decade later, the AIDS epidemic matched MacArthur’s words, providing a rational justification about the AIDS epidemic and becoming soon a political and moral issue. On the one hand, the conservative criticism towards the gay community that assumed a sexually dangerous behaviour, and on the other, AIDS as a chance for “gay liberation” to assert sexual freedom in a conservative and homophobic society.<sup>207</sup>

According to Thomas Boghardt, historian of the International Spy Museum, the Soviet Union resumed its disinformation campaign in the mid-1980s due to tensions over the growing AIDS epidemic that was rapidly spread not only in the United States and Africa, but also in the Eurasian continent.<sup>208</sup>

In fact, HIV did not spare the Soviet Union which registered the first case of AIDS infection reported by Dr. Viktor Zhdanov, director of the Ivanovsky Institute of Virology in Moscow, in 1986. According to Zhdanov, the case concerned a 14-year-old girl who was infected by a blood transfusion in 1975 and who was diagnosed with AIDS in 1984.<sup>209</sup> Another case involved a “promiscuous bisexual translator” returning from Tanzania infected 22 of his male sexual partners who in turn infected three women, one of whom gave birth to an HIV-positive child.<sup>210</sup> Zhdanov, in contrast to his fellow Soviet scientists, was one of the few Soviet virologists as early as 1985 to support the thesis that the AIDS virus could not have been man-made. Between 1985 and 1986, Zhdanov stated in numerous interviews with the Soviet press that HIV was not a “recent” virus but that it had a much longer history. On June 29, 1987, in an interview with *Novoye vremya*, Zhdanov reaffirmed his statement by embracing the thesis, shared by many

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<sup>205</sup> Selvage, Douglas, *Operation “Denver”: The East German Ministry of State Security and KGB’s AIDS Disinformation Campaign, 1985-1986*, in “Journal of Cold War Studies”, 2019, Vol. 21, No. 4, p. 80.

<sup>206</sup> U.S. Congress, *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of The Committee on Appropriations House of Representatives, 91<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session*, 1969, p. 129.

<sup>207</sup> Minnicino, Marla, *AIDS in America Political battles rage in major cities*, in “Executive Intelligence Review”, October 18, 1985, Vol. 12, No. 41, p. 62.

<sup>208</sup> Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, p. 6.

<sup>209</sup> Twigg, Judyth L., Talbott, Strobe, *HIV/AIDS in Russia and Eurasia Volume I*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 14.

<sup>210</sup> Ivi, p. 10.

other Western scientists, that HIV had natural origins and was similar to a virus existing among monkeys.<sup>211</sup>

In 1985, Pyotr Nikolayevich Burgasov, USSR Deputy Minister of Public Health, stated that AIDS was a dangerous disease but that in the Soviet Union it was “unnatural” and that the irresponsible behaviour, from which the infections arose, was tolerated only in the West.<sup>212</sup> The presumption that the Soviet Union could not have hosted a “Western ill” and its opposition to recognize the contagions that were also afflicting the Eastern Bloc was part of the Soviet propaganda machine to state that the Soviet Bloc was devoid from social problems. The Soviet society in reality was not exempt from homosexuality, promiscuous behaviour, sex workers and drug addicts, who were marginalized by Soviet institutions. The existence of these “deviant” groups was buried by the Soviet propaganda, resulting in a state of confusion and widespread fear among the Soviet citizens.<sup>213</sup> Ironically, the Soviet Union’s willingness to prevent the epidemic in its own country was hampered by its own socialist policy. Although the propaganda acted to safeguard internal security, keeping millions of citizens in the dark, the will to tackle the HIV in part turned into the urge to find the scapegoat that justified AIDS cases within the Soviet Bloc.

Some rumors also began to spread in Western Europe. On January 17, 1985, West German Professor Erika Hickel, affiliated with *Die Grünen*, the West German Green Party, at a meeting in the *Bundestag*, stated the possibility that some AIDS agents could have been accidentally created in laboratory, supporting the claims of a 1984 article in the *Wechselwirkung*, in which the origin of HIV was assumed to be a combination of RNA tumor viruses or other retroviruses. Along the same lines, articles in *Der Spiegel* written by West Berliners suggested that the HIV was created by the US government to “get rid” of homosexuals.<sup>214</sup>

Given the epidemic in the West and US social tensions, the Soviet Union once again found the way to vilify the United States in connection with the “lab creation of the HIV”. According to Warren J. Hamerman, chairman of the National Democratic Policy Committee, “the entire chain of command within the World Health Organization (WHO) responsible for AIDS surveillance programs and information was under explicit Warsaw Pact command”. Hamerman was referring to the Soviet Dr. Sergei K. Litvinov, whose role was “to coordinate all AIDS work globally for the WHO in Geneva”. According to *EIR*, once again, the Soviet Union’s

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<sup>211</sup> United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. 37.

<sup>212</sup> Trud, *Portrait of an Insidious Enemy*, “Trud”, October 6, 1985; translated in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 37(40):27, cited by Twigg, Talbott, *HIV/AIDS*, 2007.

<sup>213</sup> Twigg, Talbott, *HIV/AIDS in Russia and Eurasia Volume I*, p. 10.

<sup>214</sup> Geissler, Erhard, Sprinkle, Robert Hunt, *Disinformation squared: Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success?*, in “Politics and the Life Sciences”, 2013, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 8.

privileged position within the WHO gave the Kremlin's anti-Western propaganda a great advantage to pursue its own goals against the United States. Furthermore, in the article Hamerman accused the Soviet Union of covering-up the AIDS cases in the Soviet Bloc and in East Germany, implying that the disease concerned only the West.<sup>215</sup> In support to Hamerman's allegation of the WHO being controlled by the Soviet Union, *EIR* reported an interview with British venereologist Dr. John Seale, who had recently conducted extensive studies in tropical areas, in the article "AIDS and Security". When asked, "Is there any Soviet angle to the spread of the disease?", Seale responded by saying that the Soviet Union could and would have exploited the AIDS epidemic as a "less messy and self-destructive weapon" than the nuclear one and then, thanks to socialist policy, the Eastern Bloc would have prevented the spread of the epidemic behind the Iron Curtain. Seale continued by saying that the Soviet Union would have benefited indirectly from the AIDS epidemic by conveniently encouraging "permissive attitude toward drug abuse, homosexual promiscuity, and various bizarre forms of heterosexual anal sex" in the West.<sup>216</sup> To the question "What is our understanding of the way an AIDS infection proceeds?", Seale unwittingly laid the foundations for the future development conspiracy theories regarding the origin of AIDS. Dr. Seale claimed, not setting aside the possible natural origin, that the HIV could have been created by adding a gene to the retrovirus Visna, a virus which, being genetically similar to the HIV, causes death from progressive pneumonia as in the case of AIDS.<sup>217</sup> This added an important scientific element in addition to the "conspiratorial" one that the Soviet Union had brought forward with the *Patriot* article, lastly inspiring numerous other scientists and researchers to develop new theories about the artificial nature of the HIV.

In response to Hamerman's allegations, on October 30, 1985, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (LG), the Soviet weekly newspaper, published an article entitled "Panic in the West, or What is Hiding behind the Sensation Surrounding AIDS?" that explicitly cited the 1983 *Patriot*'s letter and made new accusations against the United States government regarding the outbreak of AIDS. The author of the article, Valentin Vasilevich Zapevalov, in the wake of the *Patriot* article, reiterated the role of the US government as the creator of the virus in the laboratory at Fort

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<sup>215</sup> Hamerman, Warren J., *The Soviet are covering up the deadly AIDS pandemic*, in "Executive Intelligence Review", October 25, 1985, Vol. 12, No. 42, p. 26. The *Executive Intelligence Review* is a weekly magazine founded in 1974 by the American political activist Lyndon LaRouche. The EIR has been the subject of numerous controversies as it made accusations about the Centres for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) of being ruled by both the KGB and CIA and of covering-up their roles in the deliberately spread of the AIDS epidemic.

<sup>216</sup> Grauerholz, John M.D., *AIDS and the security of the Western World*, in "Executive intelligence Review", October 18, 1985, Vol. 12, No. 41, pp. 54-55.

<sup>217</sup> Ivi, p. 57.

Figure 3: "Panic in the West, or What is Hiding behind the Sensation Surrounding AIDS?"<sup>218</sup>

30 октября 1985 года ◆ № 44 (5058)

# ЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ЖИЗНЬ

## ПАНИКА НА ЗАПАДЕ, ИЛИ ЧТО СКРЫВАЕТСЯ ЗА СЕНСАЦИЕЙ ВОКРУГ AIDS

### ВЕРСИЯ

**ВОТ УЖЕ** который месяц на Западе царит возмущение в связи с таинственной болезнью, все больше принимающей размах эпидемии. С титульных листов газет и журналов кричат раздраженные души аршинные заголовки, в которых неизменно присутствует слово AIDS. Пенатагон множество фотографий жертя этого недуга, интервью со светилами медицины. Их ответы стандартны: много загадочное, инферно, как и чем лечить пациситов, нужно подождать к выводам...

Между тем болезнь не ждет. По данным Всемирной организации здравоохранения (ВОЗ), она пришла уже в США, Канаду, Англию, Францию, Бельгию, Голландию, Данию, ФРГ, Норвегию, Австралию, государства Африки, Латинской Америки. Только в Соединенных Штатах AIDS унес 6 тысяч жизней. Именно из США, кстати, он и пошел гулять по свету. На об этом чуть ниже, скорее в самом начале.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), или СПИД («Синдром приобретенного иммунного дефицита»), отличается по всей вероятности, к тем болезням, которые вызываются скрытыми или «спящими» вирусами. Ученые-медики предполагают, что скорее всего это новый высокопатогенный вирус, поражающий иммунную систему человека и делающий его практически беззащитным перед любой инфекцией. Сам по себе он не является губительной, но выполняет функции своего рода «бомбы замедленного действия». Под его влиянием (патентный, или инкубационный период может длиться от 3 месяцев до 5 лет) разрушается иммунная система оказывается не в состоянии противостоять даже с такими болезнями, как вирусный грипп. В результате любое заболевание протекает крайне тяжело и в большинстве случаев заканчивается смертельным исходом. Как отмечается в докладе Национального института аллергических и инфекционных заболеваний США, опубликованном журналом «Ю. С. Нью энд Уорлд рипорт», количество таких случаев у больных AIDS достигает 50 процентов, что превышает летальность столь опасных болезней, как холера, черная оспа.

Помимо губительного AIDS, ...

в Калифорнии, Флориде, Луизиане. Но и это не все. В ходе исследований, проводившихся тем же центром, была установлена прямая связь между увеличением заболеваемости туберкулезом (на 5 процентов в первые 6 месяцев с. г.) и распространением AIDS, который, ослабляя защитные способности организма, создает особенно благоприятную среду для активизации туберкулезных бактерий. В научном мире Запада уже сейчас складывается мнение, что через несколько лет AIDS выйдет в США на первое место по количеству смертельных случаев, оставив позади сердечно-сосудистые и раковые заболевания.

из ставшего достоянием печати секретного документа Пентагона, «зараженные индивиды» должны были разнести бактерии более чем по 200 городам Соединенных Штатов. В результате экспериментов в ряде районов США вспыхнули эпидемии, погибли многие американцы.

Известно также, что военное ведомство США совместно с экспертами из Англии неоднократно проводило испытания вирусом опасной заболевания, наркотиков и психохимических веществ на пациентах клиник, добровольцах, заключенных, наркоманов. Достаточно назвать программы (всего их более 150) «Синяя птица», «Артур Швайлер», под личиной которого в 1960 году он вылетал в

территорию других стран под видом открытия там медицинскими лабораториями различного профиля. До сих пор слышно эхо скандала с такой лабораторией в пакистанском городе Лахоре, где выводились определенные виды комаров и других насекомых, заражавшихся затем опасными заболеваниями типа желтой лихорадки, американского энцефалита Сен-Луи (см. «АП», № 5, 1982).



На снимках из журнала «Тайф» — американцы — жертвы AIDS: секретарша из Вашингтона, семья из Пенсильвании, молодой солдат.



Форт-Детрик (штат Мэриленд) — один из центров Пентагона по разработке биологического оружия.



Недавно вскрылись новые факты связи этого центра с Пентагоном. Западная печать похваляла читателей, что на авиабазе США в Торрежоне (сперный пригород Мадрида) накапливается огромное количество химического и биологического оружия. Ученые ядовитых складов уже правдами и неправдами в Европе, но никаких мер принято не было.



<sup>218</sup> Zapevalov, Valentin Vasilevich, *Panic in the West, or What is Hiding behind the Sensation Surrounding AIDS?*, "Literaturnaya Gazeta", October 30, 1985. According to Martin C. Portman, CIA's Operation Directorate officer, "The New Times [*Novoye vremya*] and the Literary Gazette [*Literaturnaya Gazeta*], two Soviet publications, have been used by the KGB's active measures service and the International Department as a mechanism available for this type [disinformation] of activity". U.S. Senate, *Hearings*, 1982, p. 21.

Detrick, Maryland, detailing how the virus spreads and citing the first cases among Haitian immigrants and homosexuals.<sup>219</sup>

Zapevalov went on to reaffirm that the epicentre from which the epidemic had started was “the result of the latest monstrous experiment” by the CIA and the Pentagon, supporting his hypothesis with proved facts. In addition, Zapevalov exhumed stories based on documents declassified by the Church of Scientology that involved the Pentagon and the CIA in the secret development of weapons for inducing sickness and weakened microorganisms of dangerous viral illnesses, and, in general, in the illegal testing of drugs and torture on unsuspecting and unwilling individuals, namely the MK-Ultra.<sup>220</sup> Not getting a response from the Western press, another article titled “Why the USA Press is Silent?” showed up in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, mocking the silence of Washington and Western press as a defensive manoeuvre in case of Pentagon’s activities exposure.<sup>221</sup>

Arthur A. Hartman, US Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1981 to 1987, wrote a letter to the editor chief of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Aleksandr Borisovich Chakovskiy, on November 15, 1985, claiming that in “Panic in the West” article, Zapevalov did not provide the date or issue number of the article in the *Patriot* that appeared in 1983. Furthermore, Hartman criticized the veracity of the information as a “deliberate deception” by the Soviet press, questioning the existence of the *Patriot* article after his personal investigation into the archives of the Indian editorial. The letter finally ended up denouncing the entire Soviet media apparatus in allowing the publication of unfounded accusations, requesting that his words be published as a letter-to-the-editor.<sup>222</sup> The request was never satisfied.<sup>223</sup>

On November 22, The *EIR* translated and published Zapevalov’s article with the title of “Text of admissions by the Russians”, preceded by a remark by Hamerman in which he praised in a laudatory tone that “the devastating accuracy of the *EIR* cover story on the Soviet direct role in managing the Western coverup on AIDS, through the Russian Dr. Sergei K. Litvinov, assistant director general of the World Health Organization in Geneva” was directly attacked by the Zapevalov’s article.<sup>224</sup> On November 30, *Amsterdam News*, an African-American newspaper

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<sup>219</sup> According to *Soviet Influence Activities*, from 1943 to 1969, Fort Detrick was the US Army’s Biological Warfare Research and Development Centre. From 1969, the facility was turned over into a research centre for cancer treatment and implemented in research for AIDS cure, no longer conducting biological warfare activities.

<sup>220</sup> Zapevalov, Valentin Vasilevich, *Panic in the West, or What Is Hiding behind the Sensation Surrounding AIDS?*, “*Literaturnaya Gazeta*”, October 30, 1985.

<sup>221</sup> *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, *Pochemu mlochit pressa SShA*, “*Literaturnaya Gazeta*”, November 13, 1985, p. 2, and Selvage, Douglas, *Operation “Denver*”, p. 84.

<sup>222</sup> United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, pp. 48-9.

<sup>223</sup> Selvage, Douglas, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 84.

<sup>224</sup> Hamerman, Warren J., *Soviets attack LaRouche for expose of AIDS cover-up*, in “Executive Intelligence Review”, November 22, 1985, Vol. 12, No. 46, pp. 6-7.

based in New York, reported an interview in the “Link AIDS to CIA Warfare” article with Dr. Nathalien S. Lehrman presented as a “prominent physician” who claimed that the AIDS epidemic in some areas of Africa was the result of repeated bacteriological and chemical experiments done by the CIA over the years. Lehrman in the interview cited an article published in 1980 by the *New York Times* which stated some activities of a CIA scientist in Zaire, who would have used some biological substances to incapacitate, or even assassinate, Zaire Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba.<sup>225</sup> The newspaper was later criticized by Lehrman himself for distorting his words which, given the nature of his statements and the topics covered by the newspaper, the editor may have used to promote the US “ethnic weapon” conspiracy theory.<sup>226</sup> On December 11, 1985, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published an article based on an interview with a Soviet virologist Director of the Research Institute of Poliomyelitis and Encephalitis of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR, Professor S. Drozdov, who declared perplexity about the nature of HIV, not excluding its possible artificial manufacturing.<sup>227</sup> Nine days later, the London-based communist newspaper, *Morning Star*, published the anonymous article “AIDS Germ Warfare Fear”, which reported that the New Zealand AIDS Foundation had received a letter with similar claims to Professor S. Drozdov’s and that, in the end, Dr. Seale had supported the hypothesis that the origin of HIV was attributable to its artificial creation in the laboratory.<sup>228</sup> On December 26, Seale’s new revelations were broadcast worldwide on *Radio Moscow World Service*.<sup>229</sup> According to Selvage, in the first regional conference on “AIDS in Africa” held in Brussels in December 1985, some Western scientists came up with reports and theses based in part on the “simplistic” hypothesis of virologist Myron Essex according to which HIV originated in Africa and had been transmitted from green monkeys to human beings. The thesis was rejected by a group of African researchers as “unfounded” and “lacking in concrete evidence”.<sup>230</sup> On May 17, 1986, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, published an article entitled

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<sup>225</sup> Browne, Zamgba J., *Link AIDS to CIA Warfare*, “Amsterdam News”, November 30, 1985, p. 12.

<sup>226</sup> In the early 1980s, the AIDS disinformation campaign was part of the broad Soviet “Chemical and Biological Warfare campaign” regarding the US noncompliance with the Biological Weapons Convention disarmament treaty signed in 1972 by illegally use chemical, toxic and bacteriological weapons. In addition to allegations of producing the AIDS virus as a biological weapon, the Soviet accused the US government of supporting the Afghan resistance with chemical weapons and of cooperating with South Africa and Israel in developing an ethnic weapon. Claims such as Lehrman’s, later reinforced by his assumptions about HIV spread as a toxin among the African population, were widely shared by African-Americans groups. The Soviet and Third World media, parallel to the AIDS issue, were relentlessly publishing and broadcasting allegations about diseases created specifically to eliminate “non-white groups” in Africa and in the Middle East with the support of South African and Israeli local governments.

<sup>227</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 7.

<sup>228</sup> *Morning Star*, *AIDS Germ Warfare Fear*, “Morning Star”, December 20, 1985, p. 5.

<sup>229</sup> United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. 48 and Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 10.

<sup>230</sup> Selvage, Douglas, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 94.



“AIDS: More Questions Than Answers” reporting the AIDS International Symposium in Brussels and criticizing the claims of Western scientists as “racist and misleading”.<sup>231</sup> In addition to Seale, two Californian brothers, Robert and Theodore Strecker, developed a similar theory, but to which they added details that bordered on the absurd. According to a letter written in September 1986 to the editor of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Robert Strecker stated that HIV was a heterodimer recombination of bovine leukaemia virus and Visna virus.<sup>232</sup> During the second half of the 1980s, Robert Strecker released a 96-minute video lecture, becoming known in the United States for being a promoter of conspiracy theories. In the video Robert Strecker stated that, in addition to resuming the origins of HIV as a combination of the bovine leukaemia virus and Visna virus, the HIV “could be carried by mosquitoes, there was no vaccine, condoms would not prevent AIDS because the virus could be spread through saliva, there were at least six different AIDS viruses in the world” and which was ultimately manufactured at Fort Detrick under the supervision of the WHO and Soviet infiltrated agents in the National Cancer Institute and US National Institutes for Health.<sup>233</sup>

The Seale’s revelation, along with the other conspiracy theories, social movements and self-proclaimed discoveries by researchers all over the world, were the launching pad for numerous theories about the artificial origins of HIV, and ultimately, who created it and what its purpose was. In late 1985, Soviet AIDS disinformation articles were published internationally in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, France, India, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Sweden and United Kingdom.<sup>234</sup>

According to Selvage, two main strains of AIDS as US biological weapon conspiracy theory coevolved in early 1986. The first promoted by the theories proposed by LaRouche’s *EIR*, supported by the Streckers and Seale, while on the other hand the theory, that the KGB and the Soviet Union supported, albeit not directly, promoted by the East German couple Jakob and Lilli Segal, who theorized the origin of HIV from a combination of the Visna virus and the human T-cell lymphotropic virus type 1 (HTLV-1).<sup>235</sup> The Segals theory will be the one studied in the following pages, evaluating and questioning the roles assumed by the actors involved in the AIDS disinformation campaign.

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<sup>231</sup> Literaturnaya Gazeta, *AIDS: More Questions Than Answers*, “Literaturnaya Gazeta”, May 17, 1986, p. 15.

<sup>232</sup> Strecker, Robert B., *Aids virus infection*, in “Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine”, 1986, No. 59, pp. 559-60.

<sup>233</sup> Strecker, Theodore A., Robert B., *This Is A Bio-Attack Alert*, The Strecker Memorandum, March 28, 1986.

<sup>234</sup> United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. 46.

<sup>235</sup> Selvage, Douglas, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 89.

## *Jakob Segal and the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth*

John Seale, in June 1986, received a letter from a retired East German biology professor, Jakob Segal, who claimed that, in agreement with Seale's view, HIV was a combination of the human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I (HTLV-I) and the Maedi-Visna virus.<sup>236</sup>

Jakob Segal was born to Lithuanian parents in 1911 in St. Petersburg, Russia. His family moved in 1919 to Königsberg, East Prussia. Upon graduation, Segal studied biology at universities in Berlin and Munich and began serving in the *Roter Studentenbund* and the Communist Party of Germany. Under Nazi Germany in 1933, Jakob moved to France as a Lithuanian citizen. In Toulouse, Jakob met his future wife and assistant, Lilli Schlesinger, who by marriage acquired Lithuanian citizenship. During the Nazi invasion of France, the Segals entered the French resistance. At the end of the World War II, Jakob and Lilli moved from France to East Berlin, being Lithuanians and therefore Soviet citizens. In East Germany, Jakob awarded the professorship of Biology at Humboldt University of Berlin while Lilli earned a doctorate in agriculture and helped Jakob in his future researches. Jakob worked three years in Cuba and one year in Mexico, finally retiring in 1971. In 1985, still interested in research and biology and with the advent of AIDS, Jakob prepared his first report in November 1985 regarding the HIV origin.<sup>237</sup>

From August 26 to September 6, 1986, the report prepared by Jakob Segal and Lilli Segal appeared in an abridged version in photocopied brochures with the title "AIDS: USA Home-Made Evil, NOT out of Africa" at the 8th Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Harare, Zimbabwe.<sup>238</sup> The brochure was a summary of the pamphlet prepared by the Segals together with Dr. Ronald Dehmlow entitled "AIDS - Its Nature and Origins". The brochure reiterated, scientifically and exhaustively, the thesis supported by Jakob Segal, criticizing Gallo and Montagnier discoveries, along with Essex's studies and accusing the latter of spreading "false myths" to clear the charges against Fort Detrick and the US government.<sup>239</sup> In "AIDS - Its Nature and Origin", Jakob stresses the issue of "genetic manipulation". According to Jakob, at Fort Detrick, the manipulated pathogen was

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<sup>236</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 10.

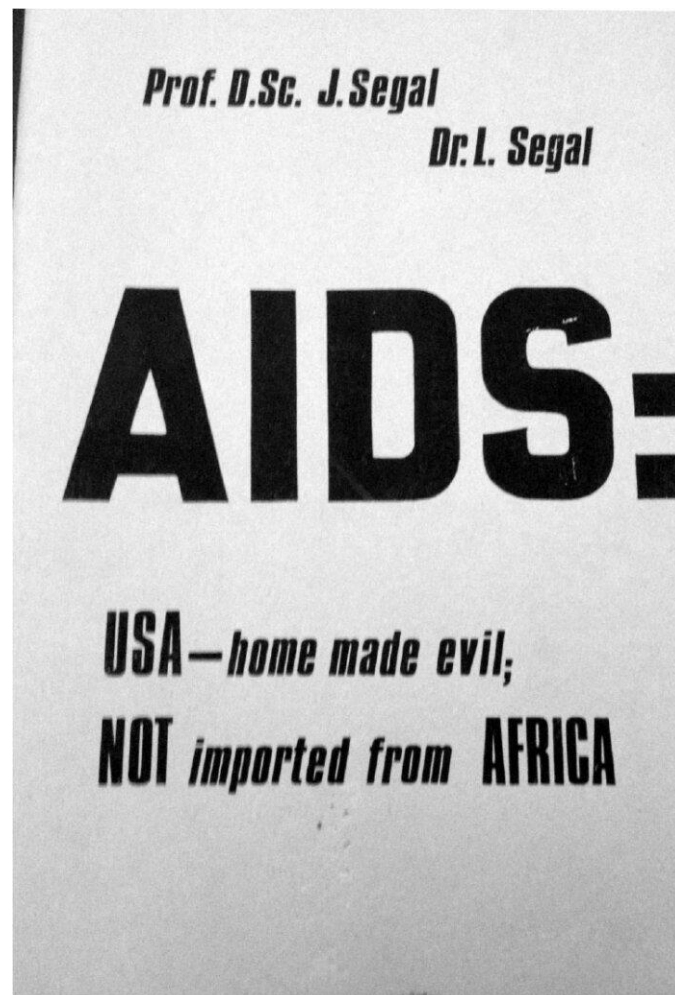
<sup>237</sup> Höxtermann, Ekkehard, *Segal Jakob*, in "Neue Deutsche Biographie", 2010, Vol. 24, pp. 159-160 (Online Version).

<sup>238</sup> According to Geissler and Springle, the brochure was delivered from the GDR to Harare by an unknown intermediary, called "Maria", who would have contacted a Cameroonian doctor, Yalla Eballa, for further instructions. Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 84, Note 247.

<sup>239</sup> Selvage, Douglas, Nehring, Christopher, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit und die AIDS-Desinformationskampagne des KGB*, URN-Verlinkung BF informiert 33, 2014, p. 37.

injected into prisoners, promising them freedom if they survived. Following the Jakob study, the test must have been done around 1977. Due to the long incubation period and therefore the alleged “failed test”, the prisoners would have then been released as promised and would have shown the first symptoms of the disease in the early 1980s. Moving on, Jakob stated that the Essex “legend” was not scientifically proven and lacked evidence. Jakob also continued criticizing the “African origins” of the virus and finally concluding the pamphlet by stating that “the assumption that AIDS is the product of the preparation of the biological warfare can therefore be quite plainly expressed”.<sup>240</sup>

Figure 4: Front cover of The Segals “Harare Brochure”<sup>241</sup>



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<sup>240</sup> Segal, Jakob, Lilli, and Dehmlov, Ronald, *AIDS – Its Nature and Origin*.

<sup>241</sup> Photograph by Douglas Selvage. Source: Kramer, Mark, *Lessons From Operation “Denver,” the KGB’s Massive AIDS Disinformation Campaign*, “The MIT Press Reader”, May 26, 2020. The “Harare Brochure” was distributed to the attendees of the 8th Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in Harare, Zimbabwe, between August 26 and September 6, 1986. This version was purchased by Douglas Selvage from an online used-book store in the United States. See Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 82, Addendum.

The brochure after the NAM Summit in Harare, achieved modest success and was welcomed by the Zimbabwean local press, which published several articles with reviews and summaries of the Segals study.<sup>242</sup> The pamphlet began to acquire notoriety in Africa and in the Third World countries, while at the end of 1986 it began to be distributed only in Western Europe, as the *Partei- und Staatsführung* of the GDR prohibited its distribution because the Segal report was still an “hypothesis”.<sup>243</sup>

According to Geissler and Sprinkle, the East German professor began to distribute his report in early 1986. Jakob Segal, being an East Berliner, at first, sought support for his theories in a West German molecular biologist and Professor of Genetics at the University of Cologne, Benno Müller-Hill. Müller-Hill rejected Segal’s hypotheses, writing in an exchange of letters that “DNA manipulation was not supported by evidence”.<sup>244</sup> Despite the Müller-Hill’s rejection, Segal turned elsewhere and, on March 12, 1986, sent copies of his paper in Japan and West German, in which he explained his theories. Segal’s paper, apparently, even found a place in a book about the origins of the AIDS virus by West German Professor Volkmar Sigusch. In August, Segal also sent a copy to California, which drew the attention of the US State Department for countering the Soviet disinformation. Some copies also went into the hands of East Berliners who received them personally from Segal, or illegally from West Germany.<sup>245</sup>

The day after the close of the NAM Summit in Harare, on September 7, 1986, Jakob became confident about his thesis and wrote to Sigusch again. In the letter Jakob informed Sigusch that he wanted to update the draft previously sent for the book with some notes regarding the “II International AIDS Conference” held in Paris in April, in which disputes and disagreements arose regarding the treatment of the virus and its nature.<sup>246</sup> But in the meantime Volkmar Sigusch had changed his mind regarding the integration of Segal’s thesis in his book, fearing it would have implicated “involvement in political affairs”. The myth of Segal was however mentioned, but edited by Sigusch himself and by referring to Seale instead of Segal.<sup>247</sup>

The major contribution to Segals thesis was finally made by the article published on October 26, 1986, by *Sunday Express*, the London-based newspaper, entitled “AIDS Made in Lab Shock” in which it reported an interview with Jakob Segal by Alfred Lee receiving immediate worldwide attention. The article not only quoted Segal’s theory, but also added the allegations

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<sup>242</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 96.

<sup>243</sup> Geissler, Erhard, Sprinkle, Robert Hunt, *Were our critics right about the Stasi? AIDS disinformation and disinformation squared after five years*, in “Politics and the Life Sciences”, 2019, Vol. 38, No. 1, p. 42.

<sup>244</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 19.

<sup>245</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>246</sup> Altman, Lawrence K., *The Doctor’s World: Despite Wide AIDS Cooperation a Feud Holds Center Stage*, “New York Times”, July 1, 1986.

<sup>247</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 22.

of Seale and the Streckers. The *Sunday Express* article was reprinted by the media around the world, under the incredulous eyes of the Kremlin. Roy Godson, for the *Washington Post*, wrote that “within hours, newspaper, radio, and television stations from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic to the Pacific gave considerable coverage to the story”.<sup>248</sup> *La Stampa Sera* ran a front-page article on October 27, 1986, entitled “Did man create the AIDS virus?” reporting that within four months John Segal would publish a report on his research in which “he explains that the AIDS virus was created by accidentally combining the Maedi-Visna virus and the bovine leukemia virus in the laboratory”.<sup>249</sup> A month earlier, Lilli Segal had provided a copy of the manuscript to the US ambassador to the GDR, J.M. König who had subsequently visited the Segals’ apartment. In fact, Kathleen Bailey, head of the US State Department for countering the Soviet disinformation, seeing the Segal manuscript as a “ploy” by the Kremlin to defame Fort Detrick and the Pentagon, instructed two diplomats from the US Embassy in East Berlin to contact the Segals, with the alleged purpose of reporting “errors” in their pamphlet. In the West, and especially in the United States, the Segals were seen as agents who cooperated with the Kremlin and the secret services to spread disinformation about the HIV origins. Jakob Segal’s role has long been debated, but insufficient evidence and post-Soviet claims by Segals have led to the conclusion that the couple had developed their own theories based on the “totally deranged story of the Green Monkey”, likely influenced by early claims from doctors like Seale and the *Patriot* article.<sup>250</sup> In the following months numerous articles reported, quoted, and republished interviews with Jakob Segal and the “AIDS as US bioweapon” thesis. In late 1986, over 50 countries reported the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth in their local press.<sup>251</sup>

Simultaneously with the peak of the AIDS disinformation campaign, the Reykjavik Summit between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev was held between 11-12 October 1986, which was considered a turning point to the end of the Cold War. Ironically, on October 31, *Pravda* took part in the wave of media scandal articles about the Fort Detrick myth, first, republishing an article from the Irish press and, five days later, publishing the iconic disinformation political cartoon by D. Agaev, who drew an American scientist handing out a test tube of HIV in the form of swastikas to a US military officer who, in turn, hands a wad of dollars in exchange.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Godson, Roy, *Commie Bigs Say AIDS Is US Plot for Control*, “The Washington Post”, January 25, 1987.

<sup>249</sup> *La Stampa*, *L'uomo ha creato il virus dell'Aids?*, “La Stampa”, No. 288, October 27, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>250</sup> Das Bundesarchiv, *Jakob Segal to Piechocki*, SAPMO, Das Bundesarchiv, NY4516/vorl.K.12., July 16 1987

<sup>251</sup> United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. 46.

<sup>252</sup> *Pravda*, *Virus SPID sozdal Pentagon?*, “Pravda”, No. 304, October 31, 1986, p. 5.

On November 1, 1986, Jakob Segal drew the attention of Stefan Heym, an East German journalist, known to the Soviet Union and the GDR as a dissident and critic of the oppressive behavior of the soviet leaders. Having collaborated with the United States during the Second World War in the Normandy landings and subsequently moved to Prague in protest against the Korean War, Heym became citizen of the GDR, but was constantly monitored and harassed by the Stasi.<sup>253</sup> Before *Der Spiegel* published several articles including “AIDS Eltern gesucht”, published on November 9, 1986, which criticized Segals’ allegations of HIV manufacturing in US laboratories, Heym interviewed Jakob in his apartment on November 8, 1986.<sup>254</sup> This pushed *Der Spiegel* to refuse to publish Heym’s interview in the following days, which would have contradicted the magazine stance. Heym leaned on *Quick* and *Die Zeit*, but received the same answer. Heym’s stubbornness paid off three months later, when *Die Tageszeitung*, a Berlin based left-wing independent newspaper also known as *taz*, published “AIDS man-made in USA” Heym’s interview with Segal on February 18, 1987, receiving good media coverage, both in East and West Germany, with radio and television commentaries.<sup>255</sup> Heym’s latest effort was to organize a debate on June 8, 1987 at West Berlin’s Technical University between Segal and Meinrad Koch, then head of the Department of Virology of the Robert Koch Institute, in opposition to Segal’s theories.<sup>256</sup> Although Segal had achieved a certain notoriety and the media around the world published and replicated his Fort Detrick thesis, among scientists and doctors, even within the Soviet bloc, the awareness that Segal’s theory was untenable predominated in the face of the progress that scientific and medical research on AIDS was conducting. According to Geissler and Sprinkle, the GDR’s Ministry of Health supported the theory promoted by Luc Montagnier regarding the natural origins of HIV since the “AIDS in Africa” conference held in Brussels in 1985. This theory was widely shared among the citizens and scientists of the Soviet bloc, later proved by the statements of the head of the Main Department of Hygiene, Dr. Helmut Theodor, in which he explained the fact that the virus was most likely transmitted from the monkey to human. After Jakob Segal published his first article “Where does AIDS comes from?” in the Soviet newspaper *Moscow News* on April 26, 1987, the article came into the hands of the GDR’s Ministry of Health in September 1987, a day before the AIDS meeting in Moscow, with notes about its “dangerousness”. The notes were made by the Deputy

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<sup>253</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 52.

<sup>254</sup> *Der Spiegel*, *AIDS Eltern gesucht: Wer hat das Aids-Virus unter die Menschen gebracht? Die CIA? Das KGB?*, „Der Spiegel“, Nr. 46, November 9, 1986.

<sup>255</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 59.

<sup>256</sup> Ivi, 59.

Figure 5: “Пентагоновские СПИДциалисты”<sup>257</sup>



<sup>257</sup> Cartoon by D. Agaev for Pravda, *Virus SPID sozdal Pentagon?*, “Pravda”, No. 304, October 31, 1986, p. 5. “Пентагоновские СПИДциалисты”, (lower left) transliterated *Pentagonovskie SPIDtsialistii* is a wordplay in Russian obtained by combining the first letters of the word *Spetsialistii* with the Russian acronym for AIDS, *SPID*. The caption at the top is translated in “The AIDS Virus, for which no cure has yet been found, according to some Western scientists, was created in the laboratory of the Pentagon. (From the newspapers)”. The feet in the cartoon probably refer to dead people while in the “thought balloon” above the test tube “Вмрус СПИД”, means “AIDS Virus”. See Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 119 and United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. i-ii.

Minister of Health in which he reiterated the “non-involvement” in Segal’s theories.<sup>258</sup> This, along with other findings by Geissler and Sprinkle, might prove the fact that the GDR, which cooperated internationally to fight AIDS, including with the United States, rejected from the start the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” thesis.

Regarding the Soviet Union, the disengagement in the AIDS disinformation campaign probably ran in line with Gorbachev’s policy to improve relations with the United States and the West. While frequently publishing articles about the role of the United States in creating HIV, in July 1987, the Soviet Union adopted the Ministry of Education’s “State Program for the Prevention of the Spread of AIDS”. Due to the economic situation in the late 1980s, the Soviet AIDS educational program was rather poor, merely distributing a disproportionately fewer “educational” brochures to the number of citizens, the establishment of the *Anti-SPID* newspaper and a 15-minute television program broadcast by *Moscow Television*.<sup>259</sup> Despite these timid maneuvers to inform and prevent infections, Soviet policy severely limited discussions about sexuality and transmission. Ignorance among citizens, and also among doctors and health institutions, prevented the correct approach in dealing with the AIDS epidemic, causing confusion, marginalization and fear between the infected patients and healthy people. The state police even avoided slums and high-risk individuals, such as thugs, thieves, and drug addicts, scared of contracting HIV. Moscow, aware of the situation, began to turn to the international support of researchers and doctors, including the United States, which in turn complained about the incompetence of the health institutions in the Soviet Union, which limited cooperation to fight the AIDS epidemic in the Eastern Bloc.<sup>260</sup>

On October 23, 1987, Secretary of State George P. Shultz and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev met in the Kremlin to discuss strategic arms reductions, also trespassing on US-Soviet relations and the Iran-Iraq war.<sup>261</sup> When Schultz presented the “AIDS disinformation” issue, Gorbachev was overwhelmed as if he was unaware of the facts.<sup>262</sup> Given the close relationship between CPSU and the KGB, Gorbachev might have been fully aware of the AIDS disinformation campaign, but probably did not think it would have had such a significant impact on the issue of nuclear disarmament between United States and Soviet Union.

On October 30, a week later, *Izvestia* published an article written by the Soviet Academy of Sciences categorically repudiated the myth of HIV-from-Fort-Detrick, but ironically the same

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<sup>258</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 42 and Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 45.

<sup>259</sup> Twigg, Talbott, *HIV/AIDS in Russia and Eurasia Volume I*, p. 17.

<sup>260</sup> Ivi, pp. 17-20.

<sup>261</sup> Gorbachev, Mikhail, *Memoirs*, New York, Doubleday, 1995, p. 441.

<sup>262</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 27.



day *Sovetskaya Rossiya* repeated the AIDS disinformation myth defending the freedom to publish different visions in the press.<sup>263</sup> The sporadic newspaper appearance of the AIDS disinformation myth continued until the summer of 1988 especially among the Third World media, but the Soviet press stopped publishing such claims in early 1988 with the last documented radio broadcast featuring a speech by Jakob Segal regarding his theory and without critical comment from the host service.<sup>264</sup> For the Soviet Union, the issue of nuclear disarmament became of vital importance. After Ronald Regan threatened to blow up the Moscow summit meeting if Gorbachev would have continued to allow the Soviet press to publish AIDS slander, the KGB decided not to contribute further in spreading the myth.<sup>265</sup> However, during 1987, over 90 newspapers around the world published the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth, while in the Soviet Union alone it appeared more than 30 times among newspaper articles and radio broadcasts.<sup>266</sup>

Figure 6: Professor T.V. Holosova, Doctor of Medical Sciences, with a leaflet published to promote AIDS prevention in Soviet Union, 1987<sup>267</sup>



<sup>263</sup> Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, p. 16.

<sup>264</sup> Ibidem.

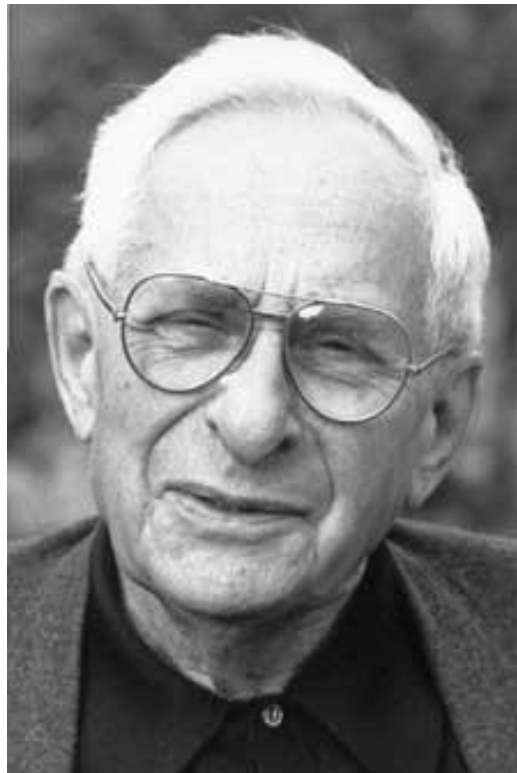
<sup>265</sup> Selvage, Nehring, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit und die AIDS-Desinformationskampagne des KGB*, p. 103.

<sup>266</sup> United State Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities*, p. 48.

<sup>267</sup> Photo by Roman Poderni, TASS Photo Chronicle. Source: Karliner, Diana, *SPID i molot [AIDS and the hammer]*, “Kommersant”, August 25, 2017.

Until his death in 1995, Jakob Segal continued to support his thesis and accuse the United States of manufacturing HIV in the laboratory at Fort Detrick, jealously defending his role as the sole creator and propagator of the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick theory and consequently rejecting any allegations regarding possible cooperation with the Soviet Bloc intelligence services. The reasons why Jakob and Lilli Segal persisted in carrying on the myth were not entirely clear. According to Geissler and Sprinkler and based on interviews, Lilli allegedly claimed that the reasons for supporting such allegations were that the United States had to be stopped from taking over the world and that a vaccine was not found due to the artificial origin of the virus while Jakob claimed that the admission of having created the HIV would have destroyed the US economy.<sup>268</sup> Selvage and Nehring added that Jakob Segal was probably influenced by McArthur's testimony made in 1969, who considered the idea of creating a pathogen in the US laboratory as a biological weapon, which Segal translated into German in his book "AIDS - die Spur führt ins Pentagon" published in 1990.

Figure 7: Jakob Segal<sup>269</sup>



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<sup>268</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 77.

<sup>269</sup> Rote Fahne, *Neuer Wirbel um den Ursprung von HIV/AIDS*, "Rote Fahne", Nr.53/04, December 30, 2004.

## *The debate over the role of the Soviet Bloc secret services in AIDS disinformation campaign*

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the state archives of the former Eastern Bloc countries have been the subject of voracious study and long-awaited research to shed light on nearly 80 years of Soviet Union history. Due to the isolation and secrecy that characterized Soviet politics, both domestically and abroad, the Soviet Union during the Cold War raised numerous questions that remained unanswered until the early 1990s. Thanks to the contribution of some Soviet dissidents who, due to the repressive politics in their countries, decided to leave Moscow permanently, it was possible to collect the first evidences, albeit not scientifically proven, of what was happening behind the Iron Curtain. Although the archives of the former KGB, now FSB, became limited accessible, the archives of the other former Soviet socialist republics were made accessible in the respective processes of dismantling the Soviet regime. Some archives remained intact, like the Bulgarian one, while others were initially transferred, and in the case of those of the Stasi, largely destroyed. The first study that emerged regarding the Soviet AIDS disinformation campaign was in 2009 by Thomas Boghardt, a senior historian at the U.S. Army Centre of Military History, who at the time was historian at the International Spy Museum in Washington.<sup>270</sup> In his article “Operation INFEKTION: Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign”, Boghardt, based on the 1992 revelations of Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer in their book “Auftrag Irreführung: Wie die Stasi Politik im Westen machte”, along with personally conducted interviews and archival sources, described the Soviet AIDS disinformation campaign, reconstructing the facts and updating the report written by the United States Department Of States in August 1987. In 1992, a former KGB officer, Yevgeny Primakov, in an article in the Russian *Izvestia* and then translated in *The Boston Globe*, admitted that the KGB was behind the Fort Detrick myth, also mentioning KGB involvement in the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in 1981, but without however mentioning the Stasi or the Segals in the disinformation campaign.<sup>271</sup>

Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer, two former officers of the HVA, declared in their book that the Stasi, more precisely HVA Department X, was directly involved in the disinformation campaign and that they had directed the Segals in spreading the myth. Boghardt supported these statements.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Wilson Center, *Thomas Boghardt Biography*.

<sup>271</sup> The Boston Globe, *KGB planted story tying US to AIDS, Russian says*, “The Boston Globe”, March 19, 1992.

<sup>272</sup> Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, 2009.

A subsequent study was published in 2013, by Erhard Geissler and Robert Hunt Sprinkle, who in “Disinformation Squared: Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success?” concluded that the claims made by the two former HVA officers were an attempt to spread “disinformation about disinformation” to reward the HVA as main propagator of the myth.<sup>273</sup> Erhard Geissler is Professor of Genetics at Max Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine, Berlin-Buch, and was director of the Institute of Microbial Genetics at Rostock University and head of the Department of Virology, Central Institute of Molecular Biology, Academy of Sciences of the GDR. Under the GDR, Geissler conducted research in microbial genetics and tumour virology, becoming involved in biological disarmament during the 1980s. Robert Hunt Sprinkle is Doctor of Medicine at the University of Cincinnati and Associate Professor of Public Policy at the University of Maryland.<sup>274</sup> According to the two authors, “Disinformation squared” was mainly based on archival sources provided by the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic, BStU, which was responsible after German reunification for collecting and archiving Stasi documents, and The Committee for Disclosing the Documents and Announcing the Affiliations of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and Intelligence Service of the Bulgarian National Army, COMDOS. Geissler and Sprinkle also consulted the *Bundesarchiv*, which featured private estate of Jakob and Lilli Segal, and the Political Archives of the Foreign Office. The unprecedented access to the archives and the consultation of secondary sources, such as transcribed interviews and other historical material, led to the conclusion that the KGB, with the *Patriot* article, was the first to ideate the “AIDS manufactured at Fort Detrick” allegation and that subsequently the Segals had carried out, independently and honestly, their own thesis, discrediting the statements made by Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer regarding the “Stasi success” in 1992.<sup>275</sup>

In 2014, Douglas Selvage, Research Associate at the Institute for History of the Humboldt University in Berlin, and Christopher Nehring, Academic Director of German Spy Museum, wrote a monograph in German published by the BStU, in which they reconfirmed the claims of the two former HVA officers, rejecting the conclusions previously reached by Geissler and Sprinkle. In “Die AIDS-Verschwörung Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit und die AIDS-Desinformationskampagne des KGB”, Selvage and Nehring highlighted the role of the Segals as *unbewussten Multiplikatoren*, “unconscious multipliers”, at the service of HVA X to spread the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth, based on Jakob’s past as *inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*,

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<sup>273</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 34.

<sup>274</sup> See Note in Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>275</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 4.

“unofficial collaborator”, on behalf of the Stasi who registered him as a secret informant from 1959 to 1962 under the name of “Hae(c)kel”.<sup>276</sup> The study conducted by Selvage and Nehring also brought to light the role, not only of the HVA X, but also of other departments of the HVA such as the HVA SWT, responsible for the Sector Science and Technology Information (see chart 3, chapter 2), which apparently gave advice to Jakob Segal in support of his theory and to which they joined the “third author” mentioned in “AIDS - Its Nature and Origins”, Ronald “Nils” Demhow.<sup>277</sup> Ultimately in their study, in line with Geissler, Sprinkle, and also Boghardt, Selvage and Nehring confirmed that the KGB was forced to abandoned the AIDS disinformation campaign in late 1987 and recognized the initial marginal role assumed by the other Soviet Bloc secret services, but they also came to the conclusion, in disagreement with the Geissler and Sprinkle “Disinformation Squared” study, that the Stasi took the lead beyond the 1987 on spreading the myth of “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick”, playing a more active role, and directing the Bulgarian PGU-DS and the Segals under the active measures plan codenamed “Operation Denver”.<sup>278</sup>

In 2016, Christopher Nehring conducted a study, written in over 500 pages, entitled “Die Zusammenarbeit der DDR-Auslandsaufklärung mit der Aufklärung der Volksrepublik Bulgarien: Regionalfilialen des KGB?”, focusing on the cooperation between the foreign intelligence secret services, HVA and the Bulgarian PGU-DS. After the opening of the Bulgarian archives, COMDOS, many documents of the Stasi, which were transferred there, were finally available for consultation. Although almost 90% of the Stasi documents were destroyed, the remaining part was transferred to the Bulgarian archive, allowing to expand the studies on the Soviet bloc secret services “cooperation”, but at the same time not giving further revelations on the function, structure and activities of the secret services of the GDR. The study, as Nehring admitted in the introduction, was severely limited by the “Bulgarian view” which could not give any further information about the Stasi, and even the KGB, as distinct individual bodies. Despite the cross-study, very little has emerged in addition to the information already obtained in previous researches regarding the AIDS disinformation campaign, other than giving a new point of view from the Bulgarian colleagues, who contributed in a small part to “Operation Denver”. However, in conclusion, Nehring wrote a masterful work on the joint active measures between HVA, PGU-DS and KGB conducted throughout the Cold War, also

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<sup>276</sup> Selvage, Nehring, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*, p. 45.

<sup>277</sup> Ivi, p. 148.

<sup>278</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 123.

dedicating a chapter to the AIDS disinformation campaign.<sup>279</sup> What emerged in the chapter was a confirm of the previous study conducted together with Selvage, but was enriched by details regarding the role of the PGU-DS and the activities conducted by the HVA to spread the AIDS disinformation campaign.<sup>280</sup>

In recent years, with the growing popularity of the term “fake news” in the digital age and the rumours about Russian interference in the 2016 United States presidential election to facilitate Donald Trump’s victory, the terms “active measures” and “disinformation” gained so much popularity that the *New York Times* in 2018 released a documentary entitled “Operation InfeKtion: How Russia Perfected the Art of War”. In the first part of the documentary, “Meet the KGB Spies Who Invented Fake News”, the story of “AIDS as a US biological weapon” was briefly told, complete with interviews with famous Soviet dissidents, such as Ladislav Bittman, Yuri Bezmenov and Stanislav Levchenko, and with former US officer, Kathleen C. Bailey, who at the time headed the Interagency Active Measures Working Group, set up in 1981, under the Reagan administration, to counter growing Soviet disinformation.<sup>281</sup> The documentary, albeit quite concise, popularized the disinformation case to a wider and less specialized audience.

However, the debate regarding the role of the Soviet secret services in the AIDS disinformation campaign did not die out after the publications of Nehring and Selvage.

Geissler and Sprinkle published in *Politics and the Life Sciences* a new article in the spring of 2019 that took up their “Disinformation Squared” from 2013, re-addressing the questions posed and reconfirming, based on the conclusions reached by Selvage and Nehring in 2014, that the Stasi played a marginal role and the Segals acted in total autonomy.<sup>282</sup>

In the fall of 2019, Douglas Selvage published in the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, “Operation Denver The East German Ministry of State Security and the KGB’s AIDS Disinformation Campaign, 1985–1986 (Part 1)”, with which he summarized and updated the conclusion reached, both individually and with Nehring, regarding the role of Soviet secret services, the unwitting and witting agents and the events that framed the AIDS disinformation campaign, such as conspiracy theories and public reaction. However, being a first part, the article includes only the period from 1983 to 1986, anticipating in the conclusions a second part concerning the

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<sup>279</sup> Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit der DDR-Auslandsaufklärung mit der Aufklärung der Volksrepublik Bulgarien. Regionalfilialen des KGB?*.

<sup>280</sup> Ivi, pp. 201-207.

<sup>281</sup> Adam B. Ellick, Adam Westbrook and Jonah M. Kessel, *Operation InfeKtion: How Russia Perfected the Art of War*, “New York Times”, November 12, 2018.

<sup>282</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, 2019.

more active role of the HVA and the PGU-DS between 1987 and 1989.<sup>283</sup> The second part has not yet been published.

Despite the few authors who have undertaken the study in this particular historical event, the debate on who really conceived and led the AIDS disinformation campaign still remains open. As stated by the authors themselves in their publications, the general lack of interest in reconstructing the history of the satellite secret services of the former Soviet Socialist Republics and of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement is largely due to the scarce and confusing documentation in the archives. In addition, after 1990 many of the former officers and operators working in the Soviet satellite archives maintained their position, hindering the dissemination of documents and making them unreachable. Many of the documents were destroyed, others hastily transcribed, modified or lost. Former employees disappeared and moved, becoming untraceable for any interviews and questions. Unlike the KGB and Stasi archives, the satellite state archives were not coherently catalogued, often not grouped by theme, mixed up and even undated.

The Stasi documents, especially those concerning HVA and the NVA, the National People's Army, during the Peaceful Revolution of 1989/1990, were literally torn apart by Stasi personnel, to hide the truth about illegal and surveillance activities to the detriment of the citizens of the East Germany. According to the BStU, the number of pages destroyed was 40 to 55 million pages. With the employment by citizens in the archive and the replacement of former archivists, it allowed to stop the process of destruction and to start a recovery program since 1990. According to an BstU estimate, about 1.5 million pages of Stasi records have been reconstructed in 20 years. In June 2021, however, the responsibility for the reconstruction and archiving of the Stasi documents by the BStU will be transferred to the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, BfDI, which has promised continuity in the restoration of the documents and the activities conducted by the BStU.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, 2019.

<sup>284</sup> BStU, Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, *The Reconstruction of Torn Documents*.

## *Operation “Denver” or “InfeKtion”*

The question regarding the correct “codename” attributed to the AIDS disinformation campaign is still subject to misinterpretation and inaccuracy from the media. Starting from this brief consideration, it is necessary to clarify the correct denomination.

Typing on Google “Operation Denver”, the results are exhausted in a dozen web pages, most of which are quotations from the article “Operation Denver” written by Douglas Selvage and the monograph *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*. On the contrary, by typing “Operation Infektion”, thousands of search results related to online articles, YouTube videos and posts on social networks appear. This might suggest that the correct term to define the AIDS disinformation campaign is “Infektion”, but, ironically, it is just a case of misinformation. “Operation Infektion” appeared for the first time in the book written in 1992 by Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer, *Auftrag Irreführung: Wie die Stasi Politik im Westen machte*, to define with a codename the alleged AIDS disinformation campaign conducted by the Stasi. Boghardt reported the claims of the two former HVA officers, who were probably confused or simply finding it thematically consistent as a denomination. Boghardt, trusting the claims in *Auftrag: Irreführung*, ultimately named his article “Operation INFEKTION”.<sup>285</sup> Operation “Denver”, first appeared from a Stasi top secret document obtained by Nehring and translated by Selvage, “Plan for common and coordinated active measures of the intelligence organs of the MOI of the PR of Bulgaria and the MfS of the GDR for 1987 and 1988” dated September 3, 1986, and coinciding with the NAM Summit in Harare.<sup>286</sup> Despite the naming mistake, intentional or unintentional, by Bohnsack and Brehmer, an alleged Operation “INFEKTION” did indeed exist. Totally unrelated from promoting AIDS as a biological weapon, the “active measure” was a joint secret operation between the secret services of the Eastern bloc included activities to jam Western radio broadcasts of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which HVA X also took part in.<sup>287</sup> Nowadays, “Operation Infektion” is wrongly attributed to the AIDS disinformation campaign by the media and internet, probably used as a reference to HIV “infection” or to refer to disinformation as an “infectious disease” affecting public opinion. In any case, “Denver” is the correct name with which the Stasi registered the active measure concerning the AIDS disinformation campaign.

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<sup>285</sup> See Note 43 in Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, pp. 8 and 21.

<sup>286</sup> COMDOS, (CDDAABCSSISBNA-R), f. 9, op. 4, a.e. 670, p. 112.

<sup>287</sup> Oberst Geyer, HV A/IX: Bericht, 18.2.1976; BStU, MfS, ZAIG Nr. 22570, Bl. 217–222, hier 218; MfS, Entwurf: Plan der gemeinsamen bzw. abgestimmten aktiven Maßnahmen für 1984, 23.8.1983; Archiv bezpečnostních složek [Archiv der Staatssicherheitsdienste, Prag – ABS], A.č. 81282/117, Bl. 64–70, hier 69 f. quoted by Selvage and Nehring in *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*, 2014, p. 35.



## *KGB as the perpetrator of the AIDS disinformation campaign*

The KGB has certainly played a significant role in the AIDS disinformation campaign. In the previous pages, the events that favored the spread of the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth have been extensively treated, highlighting the consequences that the *Patriot* article has triggered during the first half of the 1980s. However, it must be specified that the KGB was the *perpetrator* of the AIDS disinformation campaign, but not the *creator* of the study that led to the evolution of the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth.

The KGB, straight out of the “deception playbook”, took rumors and theories already circulating about AIDS epidemic. Whether the disinformation campaign was an active measure with much broader ambitions or an isolated case in support of other active measures, it is not possible to establish it, given the scarce, almost non-existent, documentation in this regard. The Soviet Union and the KGB, according to the limited available sources, took a rather detached attitude during the campaign, limiting themselves in reproducing articles and monitoring the events. But the fact remains that the Soviet Union, with the KGB, must be credited as the first perpetrator of the AIDS disinformation campaign.<sup>288</sup>

Primakov’s 1992 revelations, along with other references in monographs by Soviet dissident such as Mitrokhin, Bittman and Gordievsky, hinted that the KGB and the Soviet Union were behind the campaign, probably reporting it by hearsay.<sup>289</sup> Experienced Western observers, examining the *Patriot* article and its syntax, came to the conclusion that the article was written by a non-native English speaker, and comparing it with other documents known to be Soviet forgeries, they found that the text of “AIDS may invade India” was undoubtedly the result of yet another Soviet disinformation attempt.<sup>290</sup>

Probably the only archival source available regarding the involvement of the KGB in the disinformation campaign is a memorandum obtained by Christopher Nehring, as noted in his monograph, sent by the KGB to his “Bulgarian comrades”, dated September 7, 1985.

In the memorandum, the KGB informed Bulgarian colleagues regarding the events between the publication of the *Patriot* article, albeit not directly mentioning it, and the conspiracy theories that arose at the turn of the first half of the 1980s. In addition to providing other information regarding the non-compliance by the United States in the BWC, the memorandum in the first part gave a brief account of the AIDS epidemic that was sweeping over the United States,

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<sup>288</sup> Selvage, Nehring, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*, p. 21.

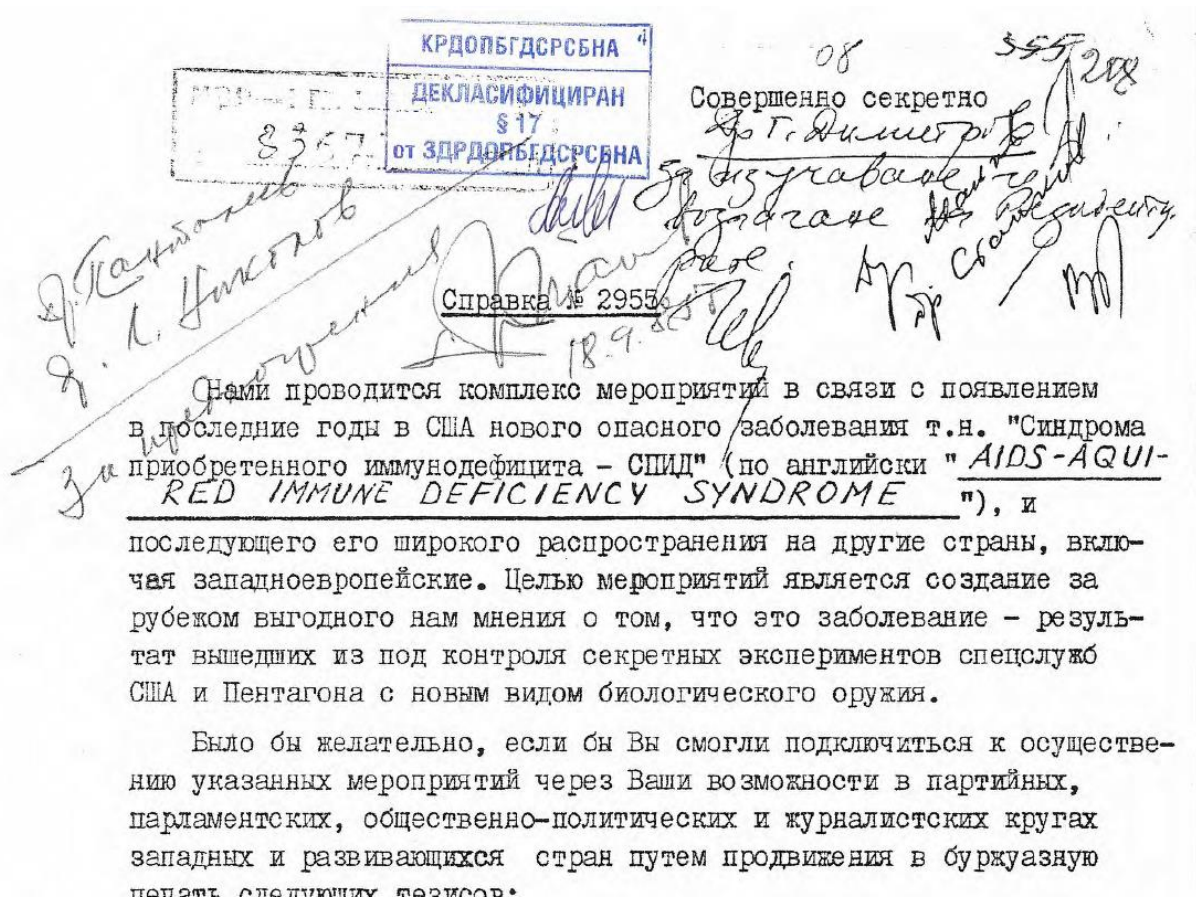
<sup>289</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, pp. 23-28.

<sup>290</sup> Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, p. 6.

providing numbers and statistics regarding the number of infections. In the second part, the document concluded by repeating the claims made in the *Patriot* article, again not mentioning it, regarding Fort Detrick.<sup>291 292 293</sup>

On the basis of the document, it is clear that the KGB was involved and that was implementing “active measures”. On the other hand, the memorandum was still in the form of a request to the Bulgarian secret services, and therefore excluded their active role in the campaign at the end of 1985. Neither the Segals nor the Stasi were mentioned.

Figure 7: First page of the original document “Memorandum no. 2955”<sup>294</sup>



<sup>291</sup> COMDOS, KGB, Information No. 2955 (russ.), 7.9.1985, COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9. op. 4, a.e. 663, Bl. 208 f.

<sup>292</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>293</sup> Selvage, Nehring, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*, p. 21-22.

<sup>294</sup> COMDOS, KGB, Information No. 2955 (russ.), 7.9.1985, COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9. op. 4, a.e. 663, Bl. 208 f., KGB “Memorandum Nr. 2955”, “The Soviet KGB seeks to create a favourable opinion for us abroad through active measures connected with the appearance of AIDS in the United States. The KGB also claims that the US Department of Defense is behind the rapid spread of the AIDS disease”.

In a second memorandum, also obtained by Nehring, whose hypothetical date is the end of 1987, the KGB again informed the Bulgarian secret services about the AIDS disinformation campaign and the results obtained.<sup>295</sup> The text is an extract, probably Nehring has extrapolated only the part concerning AIDS, as there are references to the SDI and in general to active measures concerning biological and chemical weapons. The memorandum was an account of the active measures conducted from 1985 until the date of its creation regarding the spread of the myth of HIV-from-Fort-Detrick, which was the result of “a first phase” of joint efforts by the KGB, the East German secret services, Stasi, and the Czechoslovakian, StB.<sup>296</sup> As Geissler pointed out, the KGB did not claim to be the “creator of the myth”, but rather exalted the joint operations between the Soviet secret services in the contribution to propagate it, properly mentioning the leading role of Jakob Segal and the Third World countries media in the campaign’s success.<sup>297</sup>

Figure 8: Second page of the original document “Memorandum no. 2955”<sup>298</sup>

3. Косвенным свидетельством причастности Пентагона к работам с вирусом СПИД является то, что именно военные достигли наиболее существенных результатов в борьбе с болезнью. Военные медицинские центры США, включая “USAMRIID - US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES” в Форт-Детрике, штат Мериленд (FORT DETRICK, MD), в строжайшей тайне разработали довольно эффективные методы раннего выявления заболевания, его лечения на этом этапе и соответствующие лекарственные средства. Это позволит ограничить распространение СПИД в армии США, резко снизить число смертельных исходов, что, естественно, влияет на боеспособность солдат. В то же время Пентагон не торопится делиться своими достижениями в этой области с гражданскими медицинскими учреждениями, т.к. именно на больных СПИД, находящихся в гражданских больницах, специалисты Пентагона изучают результаты заражения людей вирусом СПИД.

Ваши соображения и возможные предложения просим сообщить нам в срочном порядке.

"07" сентября 1985 года

18109-85  
вниманию  
наши  
размножено в 4 экз.

Размножено в 1 экз.  
Исправлено по с. 154  
к-м оригинала  
София 19.09.1985



<sup>295</sup> COMDOS, *Information Nr. 2742 (russ.)*, 1987; COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9, op. 4, a.e. 675, Bl. 156–159.

<sup>296</sup> COMDOS, *Information Nr. 2742 (russ.)*, 1987; COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9, op. 4, a.e. 675, Bl. 156–159.

<sup>297</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 37.

<sup>298</sup> COMDOS, *Information Nr. 2742 (russ.)*, 1987; COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9, op. 4, a.e. 675, Bl. 156–159.

In addition to this, the Bulgarian secret services still had not actively taken part in the campaign. The KGB again requested Sofia's participation, but this time in conducting operations in Turkey to spread anti-American sentiments and prevent the installation of SDI missile bases. On the basis of the latter, in the last part of memorandum it is clear that Moscow's target had changed since 1985 and that the active measures had to take a "practical" and "political" turn in preventing the installation of US missile bases in NATO countries bordering the Soviet Union, such as Greece and Turkey; role that belonged to the Bulgarian secret services.<sup>299</sup>

According to Selvage, new archive sources from COMDOS revealed that the KGB helped in the distribution of brochures at the NAM Summit in Harare in September 1986, but this does not confirm that the KGB was the creator of the myth, whereas Jakob Segal began working on his own theory in the early 1980s.<sup>300</sup> According to Geissler and Sprinkle, the myth led by Jakob Segal and the disinformation campaign led by the KGB "shared some features" but not the same motivations. On the one hand the KGB considered the myth as a geopolitical advantage for the Soviet Union, on the other Jakob Segal considered the myth as a geopolitical crime by the United States.<sup>301</sup> After the KGB and the Soviet Union abandoned the campaign, Jakob Segal continued undaunted in his fight against the "nonbelievers", against the United States. Furthermore, Segal has always jealously defended his theory, repeatedly denouncing its illegitimate accreditation by former intelligence officers. During the interviews Jakob repeatedly stated that he had not been persuaded or directed by anyone.<sup>302</sup> After the worldwide acceptance that HIV had natural origins, Segal in order to "save his reputation" could have blamed the Soviet Union as propagator and creator of the myth. The Soviet Union was dissolved, the Eastern Bloc no longer existed, but this did not prevent the former East German biologist Jakob Segal from holding onto his belongings, the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth. Sufficient evidence therefore shows that the KGB was responsible for the AIDS disinformation campaign, that "AIDS may invade India" was the endeavour of journalists and translators hired by the Soviet secret services and that towards the end of 1987, on the orders of the Kremlin, AIDS disinformation campaign had to be shelved.

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<sup>299</sup> COMDOS, *Information Nr. 2742 (russ.)*, 1987; COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9, op. 4, a.e. 675, Bl. 156–159.

<sup>300</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, p. 109, note 165.

<sup>301</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 54.

<sup>302</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 77, notes 177-428.

## *The Role of the Stasi and Bulgarian secret services in the AIDS disinformation campaign*

The last point to clarify is to who belonged the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth between Jakob Segals and the Stasi. Whether Jakob Segal was the only creator of the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth, or whether he was partially influenced or even manipulated by the Stasi, is not a negligible question.

As already mentioned, Jakob Segal was a staunch and loyal communist to Moscow and was already a member of the Soviet Communist Party during his period in Paris after the end of World War II and before his AIDS research. Having moved to East Berlin, Jakob, under the codename “Haeckel”, was recruited by the Stasi and assigned to the responsibility of an intelligence officer, *Führungsoffizier*, named Captain Kairies in 1955. Given his attitude, contrary and in disagreement with the other scientists of the German Academy of Sciences of Berlin (DAW), in a letter to Moscow, Captain Kairies, decided to transfer Jakob Segal under the supervision of a KGB officer, causing Jakob Segal to sever ties with the MfS in 1962.<sup>303</sup> With the reunification of Germany and the consequent dissolution of the USSR, in 1992 the AIDS disinformation campaign re-emerged after *Panorama*, a German television news, broadcast a program that reported the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth as a joint KGB-Stasi secret operation.<sup>304</sup> In support of the “debunking”, Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer added their testimony confirming the HVA Department’s involvement in leading the disinformation campaign, which Boghardt accurately reported in 2009. These “revelations” have sparked the interest of authors such as Geissler and Selvage in verifying the accuracy of these claims, conducting studies subsequent to Boghardt’s to shed light on the true role that the actors involved in the AIDS disinformation campaign have assumed. The controversial relationship between Jakob Segal, as an unofficial collaborator, and the Stasi in the late 1950s and early 1960s raised numerous questions about involvement, and even on the leading role of the MfS in conducting the AIDS disinformation campaign after the KGB had shelved it in 1988. Despite the roles of the KGB, the conspiracy theories, and the medical research have found common ground in the studies conducted over the past decade, the debate over the role of the MfS, together with the Bulgarian KDS, still remains heated.

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<sup>303</sup> Zuhn, Regional Administration Berlin VI/4: *Reasons for opening up/discontinuation* January 15, 1962, BStU MfS Nr. 1459/62, p. 72 provided by Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 24-25, notes 154-155.

<sup>304</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 28.

According to Selvage and Nehring, Jakob Segal began his “AIDS research” before the Soviet Union revived the *Patriot* article on October 30, 1985, but, at the same time not ruling out the possibility that the KGB might somehow have pushed him.<sup>305</sup> By December of that year, the Segals had completed the study.<sup>306</sup> Although the 1983 *Patriot* article may have somehow not been taken into consideration by Jakob, this did not exclude the possibility that between the summer and December of 1985, the article published by *Literaturnaya Gazeta* “Panic in the West” could have influenced his study.<sup>307</sup> Geissler and Sprinkle, based on the Segals’ private estate consultation, report that Jakob repeatedly claimed that he began the study in the summer of 1985 provoked by the “scientifically totally lunatic” Green Monkey thesis, and not by the KGB or the Stasi.<sup>308</sup> They also added that on October 3, 1985, Jakob Segal sent a note to Harry Mehner, an officer of the SED, in which he remarked that Fort Detrick was the “research centre” where the United States had created the HIV.<sup>309</sup> Selvage cited a letter by Jakob Segal sent to Benno Müller-Hill on December 2, 1985 in which he (Jakob) mentioned the *Patriot* and *Literaturnaya Gazeta* articles.<sup>310</sup> Given the date, Jakob may have simply cited the articles in comparison with his upcoming study, yet not proving that there was an intrinsic bond between the Segals and the Soviet Bloc secret services.

The first evidence regarding the potential involvement of the Stasi in the disinformation campaign can be found in the “Memorandum no. 2742” sent by the KGB to Bulgarian “comrades” in 1987, in which, as already mentioned in the previous subchapter, the sender wrote “a number of measures related to the given problem have been underway since 1985, together with our German, and to some degree, our Czech colleagues”.<sup>311</sup> Although Geissler and Nehring rightly pointed out that this statement did not constitute a relationship between Segal and the secret services, Selvage and Nehring in turn rightly remarked that the Stasi was as involved as the KGB in conducting active measures regarding the disinformation campaign by the end of 1985.<sup>312</sup> But alone this proves again that Jakob Segal was not initially influenced, neither by the KGB nor by the Stasi, and developed his own theory based on his experiences. Lilli Segal in a statement to the US Embassy in East Berlin confessed that her accusations regarding the creation of the virus in the laboratory at Fort Detrick were inspired by URANIA

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<sup>305</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 96.

<sup>306</sup> Selvage, Nehring, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*, p. 50.

<sup>307</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, 2013, p. 31.

<sup>308</sup> Ivi, p. 32.

<sup>309</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 38.

<sup>310</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 96, note 105.

<sup>311</sup> COMDOS, *Information Nr. 2742 (russ.)*, 1987; COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9, op. 4, a.e. 675, Bl. 156–159.

<sup>312</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 97.

Society.<sup>313</sup> URANIA was the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge of the GDR. At the head of the URANIA Biology Section was Erhard Geissler, who in 1984 expressed concern about the potential of molecular engineering in creating toxic and biological warfare agents.<sup>314</sup> Despite the concerns, Erhard Geissler in 1988 publicly criticized the myth and in the course of the AIDS disinformation campaign he clashed several times with Jakob Segal about the myth, never supporting it.<sup>315</sup> Jakob Segal was probably further influenced by URANIA, but this did not mean that the myth originated within the Biology Section, as Lilli stated.<sup>316</sup>

According to Selvage, the Stasi became involved around November 1985. Based on a handwritten note found in the BStU, KGB officer Vitalii Lyamin, responsible for coordinating joint operations with HVA X and the Department for domestic agitation and propaganda, requested that all known Western press reactions to Zapevalov article were to be provided. Being the supervisor of both the Department responsible for propaganda and the HVA X, responsible for active measures and disinformation, Lyamin would have informed the latter to seek further support among East German scientists on the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth.<sup>317</sup> The department suitable for this type of operations was the HVA SWT, Sector of Science and Technology Information, which registered, under the leadership of the officer Dieter van de Sand, the “Wind dossier”, concerning the protection of GDR scientists involved in the AIDS research, genetic engineering and biotechnology from external attacks.<sup>318</sup>

In early 1986, Jakob began contacting editors and other scientists to publish his manuscript. According to Jakob himself, Hermann Axen, chairman of the Central Committee’s Commission for International Affairs of the SED, helped and directed him in publishing his research outside the GDR. Selvage and Nehring cited a source that came from a *Führungsoffizier*, Axel Theisinger, who in turn referred to the words of an unofficial collaborator, “Nils”.<sup>319</sup> “Nils” was Ronald Dehmlow, the third co-author along with Segals of “AIDS - Its Nature and Origins”. Jakob Segal might have overstated or lied about cooperation from “above”, since the SED considered his thesis untenable. On the other hands, Ronald “Nils” Dehmlow reported Jakob’s own words to trust to Theisinger. Being alongside during the composition of “AIDS - Its Nature and Origins”, Ronald Dehmlow allegedly provided material in secret to HVA VII, in charge of counterintelligence.<sup>320</sup> Despite Dehmlow’s later denials, HVA SWT commissioned him to

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<sup>313</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 32, notes 234-214.

<sup>314</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>315</sup> Selvage, Nehring, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*, p. 85.

<sup>316</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 32, notes 234-214.

<sup>317</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 98 notes 111-112.

<sup>318</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 98 notes 111-112.

<sup>319</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 41, note 51.

<sup>320</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 39.

follow and assist Jakob Segal in drafting his thesis in July 1986.<sup>321</sup> By late spring of 1986, Jakob Segal drew the attention of the HVA SWT, which began to monitor the Segals mail.<sup>322</sup>

During the summer of 1986, the Stasi supervised the distribution of Jakob Segal's drafted manuscript, but was unable to obtain a copy despite having been circulating since January.<sup>323</sup>

According to Selvage, by the summer of 1986, the HVA SWT would have contacted Jakob Segal at least once, providing him with "directives".<sup>324</sup> It is not clear whether Jakob followed the directions or simply ignored them, the fact is that at this point Jakob must have inevitably been aware that the Stasi was monitoring him and that he was object of their interest.

In contrast to Jakob claims regarding his non-involvement with the Stasi, Geissler and Sprinkle concluded that on one particular occasion Jakob had indeed cooperated with the Stasi.<sup>325</sup> After the first visit by US diplomats Köning and Sandford to the Segals' apartment on September 12, 1986, which caught Stasi officers unprepared, a second visit was agreed between the two diplomats and the Segals. According to König words, the second meeting took place in a restaurant in East Berlin, but "Jakob telephoned the London tabloid, the *Sunday Express*, and described our very pleasant table chit chat as an interrogation by the CIA". The Stasi reported this by preparing in advance for the meeting.<sup>326</sup>

At the early stage, the real purpose of the Stasi activities remains unanswered. According to Geissler and Sprinkle, the Stasi until the end of 1986 monitored Jakob Segal to prevent him from being contacted by foreign agents and for state-security reasons.<sup>327</sup> His approach to Stefan Heym and two visits from the US Embassy in East Berlin to the Segals' made HVA personnel suspicious and convinced that the East German retired biologist would undermine GDR security.<sup>328</sup>

On the other hand, Nehring and Selvage support the fact that the Stasi was conducting the "active measures" requested by the KGB regarding the implementation of the AIDS disinformation campaign as stated in the "Memorandum No. 2742".<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, p. 101.

<sup>322</sup> Ivi, p. 101.

<sup>323</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 39.

<sup>324</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, p. 101.

<sup>325</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 51.

<sup>326</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 51, note 320. König told the story via a personal email exchange with Geissler in 2013.

<sup>327</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 40.

<sup>328</sup> In 2009 Borghardt reported the words of Bohnsack and Brehmer, who claimed that the visit made by two US ambassadors to the Segals' apartment was actually conducted by two undercover CIA agents. Both Selvage and Geissler proved wrong these claims, confirming that it was indeed a visit made by two US diplomats on behalf of Kathleen Bailey.

<sup>329</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, p. 102.



However, the conclusion of Geissler and Sprinkle seems the most convincing since, beyond the “Memorandum No. 2742”, there is no convincing evidence regarding a *contributory* involvement of the Stasi, nor of the Bulgarian PGU-DS, at least, in the early stages of the AIDS disinformation campaign.

In July 1986, “Operation Denver” was officially registered in the HVA files and a memorandum with place and date, “September 3, 1986, Berlin”, addressed to Bulgarian colleagues explicitly described the operation including “the GDR side will present you with a scientific study and other materials that prove that AIDS originated in the USA ...”.<sup>330</sup> In support of the document, Selvage reported the comment of a Bulgarian officer, Nikolov, who at a meeting between HVA X and the PGU-DS in mid-October 1986, confirmed “Operation Denver” as a new active measure conducted by HVA X regarding the “AIDS as the by-product of biological weapon of the USA”.<sup>331</sup> As Geissler and Sprinkle noted, “the GDR side *will* present you...” suggests that the Stasi, assuming its involvement since 1985, had not yet sent the “scientific material”, i.e. “AIDS - Its Nature and Origins”, to the colleagues of the PGU-DS. Indeed, Geissler continued, the Stasi probably did not yet have it, which sounded strange given the fact that the manuscript had been circulating for almost more than 6 months from Tokyo to California, and even during the NAM Harare Summit in September.<sup>332</sup> Whether or not they had the material, this does not exclude the fact that the Stasi, the HVA alone, or even only “three officers” of the HVA X, *were interested* in Segal’s manuscript and *were intended* to implement active measures regarding the AIDS disinformation campaign, which Geissler and Sprinkle ultimately ruled out.<sup>333</sup> In any case, the transition from *intention* to *active participation* is neither immediate nor taken for granted, therefore it is incorrect to assume that the Stasi actively contributed only on the basis of the “interest” or “intention” of some members of HVA X.

Selvage pointed out, according to new COMDOS revelations, that in early January 1987, HVA X delivered a copy of the “Harare brochure” to the PGU-DS to be used in support to the AIDS

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<sup>330</sup> Ivi, p. 103, note 137, COMDOS (CDDAABCSSISBNA-R), f. 9, op. 4, a.e. 670, p. 112.

<sup>331</sup> Ibidem, Note 139, Nikolov, Information, October, 7, 1986, p. 104.

<sup>332</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 49.

<sup>333</sup> According to Geissler and Sprinkle, only three HVA X officers were interested in the AIDS disinformation campaign within the MfS. The three officers were Colonel Dr. Rolf Wagenbreth, Colonel Wolfgang Mutz and Captain Hans Pfeifer and they sent the “scientific material” to Sofia not before June 29, 1987. The material, however, was not the result of an accurate assembly made by the departments of the secret services of the HVA but was instead a purchase from the bookstore. The volume that included *AIDS-Its Nature and Origins*, Heym interview with Jakob Segal, and Segal’s responses to his criticisms, was composed by Kuno Kruse, science editor of the *TAZ*. Kruse was opposed to Segal’s theories and included numerous critical articles in the volume that rejected the theory of genetic manipulation. According to Geissler, the three officers did not have time to carefully read the contents of the volume and nevertheless sent it to Sofia. On another occasion, the three officers sent additional material which, however, did not shake the PGU-DS’s disinterested attitude regarding the Operation Denver. See Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 50-51, notes 166-169.

disinformation campaign.<sup>334</sup> The Bulgarian intelligence services filed the active measure under the codename “Operation PANDEM”.<sup>335</sup>

Here again Geissler questioned the contribution of the HVA to the NAM Harare Summit in the distribution of the brochure containing an excerpt from Segals’ “AIDS - Its Nature and Origins”. According to the 2013 “Disinformation Square”, the Harare brochure appeared in four different versions. A version held by the US Department of State, probably the one that Lilli Segal delivered during the visit of the US Embassy diplomats. An undated draft paper in French found in the HVA VII files, which had credited only Segals as authors. A German version dated 1987 which corresponded to the one included in the volume by Kuno Kruse. A fourth version, always in German but slightly different, published in 1988 in the *Streitbarer Materialismus*, a scientific journal of the GDR.<sup>336</sup> Although Boghardt claimed that the “Harare pamphlet” corresponded to the “first version”, Geissler noted discrepancies that ruled out this trail.<sup>337 338</sup>

The answer came from the Selvage’s copy of the Harare Brochure “AIDS: USA Home-Made Evil, NOT out of Africa”.<sup>339</sup> The brochure corresponded to the one distributed in Harare (See figure 4, p. 83). Despite this, Geissler questioned the presence of KGB and Stasi officers in the distribution of the brochure at the NAM Summit between August and September 1986. Geissler relied on a letter written by Jakob Segal to a Cameroonian journalist, Dr Yalla Eballa on June 17, 1986, regarding a copy of the Segals study to be distributed during the conference (See note 244, p. 85). Also, by consulting the Segals’ private summer and interviewing Dehmlow personally, Geissler came to the conclusion that neither the Segals nor Dehmlow could have been present at the Harare Summit. Barring their direct involvement, Geissler also excluded the involvement of Stasi officials by interviewing former GDR diplomats and based on the fact that “AIDS was not discussed at all in Harare”.<sup>340</sup> These assumptions can hold up in part. According to Boghardt, reporting Bohnsack’s words, two Stasi officers in Harare were involved in the distribution of the brochure.<sup>341</sup> Geissler himself admitted that he was unable to interview them because they were dead, falling back on three East German reporters who were present at the conference; they claimed not to have seen any “suspicious activity” or AIDS related brochures.

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<sup>334</sup> Selvage, *Operation “Denver”*, p. 107.

<sup>335</sup> Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit der DDR-Auslandsaufklärung mit der Aufklärung der Volksrepublik Bulgarien. Regionalfilialen des KGB?*, p. 202.

<sup>336</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 35.

<sup>337</sup> Ivi, p. 37.

<sup>338</sup> Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, p. 22, note 53.

<sup>339</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 82, Addendum.

<sup>340</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 37.

<sup>341</sup> Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION*, p. 9, note 56.

The same answer was confirmed by three East German diplomats attending the conference.<sup>342</sup> In addition, there is no evidence regarding KGB activity. Despite these statements, reach the sole conclusion that neither the Stasi nor the KGB were present at the NAM Summit is incorrect. After all, they were undercover agents and, as such, could not have been easily detected. Furthermore, it is natural that GDR diplomats were not aware of the Stasi operations since the SED, and the East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health, as Geissler himself demonstrated, did not support Jakob Segal's thesis for fear it would have ruined the GDR's reputation on the AIDS issue.<sup>343</sup> Alternatively, Selvage questioned the "African journalist" theory by explaining that it was not possible to establish whether Dr. Yalla Eballa had completed the task of preparing the brochures.<sup>344</sup> Also, it should be noted that Jakob in the letter to Dr. Eballa referred to a "co-worker" (Dehmlow), who was omitted from the brochure. Selvage reported that Segal has agreed with Axen to "remove Dehmlow's authorship for propaganda reasons".<sup>345</sup> But again, Hermann Axen was not interested in Jakob Segal's thesis, at least in 1987, and, as already demonstrated, he (Jakob) lied, or exaggerated, about his relationship with Axen. Selvage proved his claims according to a report by Bulgarian intelligence officer Colonel Dimo Stankov dated November 22, 1986, adding the fact that the HVA had a residency in Harare, and that, together with Bulgarian collaborators, the HVA officers would have been able to distribute the brochures among the attendants.<sup>346</sup> In conclusion Selvage, consulting a letter sent by Lilli Segal to Benno Müller-Hill on August 23, 1991, discovered that the "publisher", who prepared and printed the brochures for the distribution at the NAM Summit in Harare, was an African journalist living in West Germany in 1986.<sup>347</sup> Comparing it with the Mitrokhin archive, the magazine for this alleged journalist was under the control of the KGB, and its publisher was registered under the name "Borisov".<sup>348</sup> An involvement of the KGB likely occurred too.

This analysis regarding the "Harare brochure" may in part reject the previously reached conclusion of "active participation" by the Stasi and the Bulgarian PGU-DS in the early stages of the AIDS disinformation campaign. The "Harare brochure" exists, but there is insufficient evidence that it was actually *distributed* by the KGB, the Stasi or an "African journalist" at the 1986 NAM Summit. The lack of evidence does not in itself constitute a valid "proof" for

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<sup>342</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 38.

<sup>343</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, pp. 41-48.

<sup>344</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, p. 108.

<sup>345</sup> Selvage, Nehring, *Die AIDS-Verschwörung*, p. 52.

<sup>346</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, p. 109.

<sup>347</sup> Selvage omitted the name of the African journalist, referring to him as the "publisher".

<sup>348</sup> Selvage, *Operation "Denver"*, pp. 108-109.

reaching a conclusion, but the fact that apparently only a couple of brochures have emerged over the years sounds rather unusual. To cover a hypothetical distribution of nearly ten days during the NAM Summit in Harare, at least the brochures must have been produced in a sufficiently large number.

From the come into play in 1985 until the KGB's abandonment of AIDS disinformation campaign in 1988, the HVA and PGU-DS have assumed a marginal, disorganized and limited effective role. The destruction of most of the documents in the former Stasi archives, especially those concerning the "Operation Denver", made it difficult to find a shared version among the scholars regarding the role that the Soviet Bloc secret services assumed during the AIDS disinformation campaign. However, the void filled by the opening of the Bulgarian archives COMDOS allowed to map the events that characterized "Operation Denver" and to shed light on the role of Jakob Segal and his myth, in relation to the West, public opinion and Soviet Union. As Nehring reported in his research regarding the joint operations between PGU-DS and HVA, until 1987 the "active measures" involving the AIDS disinformation campaign between Bulgarian and East German secret services were limited by the leading role of the KGB, especially as regards the Bulgarian side.<sup>349</sup> According to the "Memorandum no. 2742", the "AIDS issue" was to be used as a priority to counter the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) which consisted in "assisting the policy of the USSR in the field of military détente, unmasking the military threat from the USA with regard to other states of the Third World, and exposing the aggressive nature of NATO, the concrete plans and activities of this bloc".<sup>350</sup> Between 1985 and 1987, the PGU-DS played more than a marginal role, limiting itself to regional operations. The PGU-DS lacked advanced technology in order to be able to contribute, especially in the Third World, to the AIDS disinformation campaign. The failure to find Bulgarian scientists who supported Segal's thesis, coupled with the absence of AIDS cases among US soldiers in Turkey to blame, made the efforts of the PGU-DS inconclusive.<sup>351</sup> After the communication by the KGB in the "Memorandum Nr. 2742" that the objectives of the AIDS disinformation campaign had to assume a militarily strategic role, it was evident that the AIDS issue as an independent "active measure" would have been short-lived. As Geissler himself experienced, with the rise of Gorbachev, the Soviet Union became "less Soviet" and consequently the KGB less repressive, while East Germany took the opposite direction, with the Stasi being more aggressive.<sup>352</sup> In the AIDS issue, different interests arose between the KGB and HVA, which

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<sup>349</sup> Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, 2016, p. 202.

<sup>350</sup> COMDOS, *Information Nr. 2742 (russ.)*, 1987; COMDOS-Arch-R, F. 9, op. 4, a.e. 675, Bl. 156–159.

<sup>351</sup> Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, p. 203.

<sup>352</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Disinformation squared*, p. 29.

turned into the latter's obstinacy to fulfil the "Operation Denver" tasks, assuming the leading role and dragging the PGU-DS in support. However, Sofia's loyalty to Moscow prevented the HVA from finding an ally in the PGU-DS, pursuing the Operation Denver in contrast to the orders from the Kremlin. In turn the KGB, aware of the position, did not interfere, and the detached PGU-DS provided support to the HVA beyond 1988.<sup>353</sup>

The latest HVA noteworthy alleged effort was funding the distribution of a documentary movie, *AIDS – die Afrikalegende*, which would have been broadcast by *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* on January 3, 1989.<sup>354</sup> According to Captain Hans Pfeifer, one of the three HVA X's officers "devoted" to the AIDS disinformation campaign, in a meeting in 1988 for the provisions of new directives regarding "Operation PANDEM" in Sofia for the 1989/1990 years, the film was an idea of Department X. Pfeifer also announced to the PGU-DS that a book was being published with the help of the HVA in Nigeria in support to the Segal thesis.<sup>355</sup> In a final meeting with the PGU-DS, two months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Capt. Pfeifer announced that the results of joint AIDS disinformation operations was yet to come. The film was to be released only in Western countries and the Third World, and, according to Pfeifer words, it would have been sold by 10,000 DM in Europe and 5,000 DM in Africa and the Third World.<sup>356</sup>

In contrast to these statements and according to Geissler and Sprinkle, the documentary was not a Stasi initiative but rather the result of a production by two West Germans Heimo Claasen and Malte Rauch dating back to the end of 1986, when Claasen himself attended the NAM Summit in Harare and was impressed by the brochure. With the permission of East Germany, the two "directors" interviewed and filmed Jakob Segal as he presented his thesis in front of the camera. The film was reproduced in two versions, one German and one English. The German version lasted 43 minutes and according to Geissler, less than five minutes were dedicated to Jakob's interview. Of all the scientists showed in the documentary, only the Segals supported the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth and in the finale the narrator closed referring to the myth as a "legend". In the English version, *Monkey Business - AIDS: The Africa Story*, broadcast by British *Channel Four*, the myth found less space, probably due to the two directors' awareness of the absurdity of Jakob's thesis.<sup>357</sup> Whether the HVA was really involved or not in the realization and distribution of the documentary, the lack of evidences could not give an answer. Geissler and Sprinkle pointed out that Pfeifer was most likely overstating the issue by crediting

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<sup>353</sup> Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, p. 205.

<sup>354</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 51.

<sup>355</sup> Nehring, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, p. 203.

<sup>356</sup> Deutsche Mark (DM) Ivi, p. 205.

<sup>357</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 52.

yet another third-party effort as the endeavour of the Stasi. Pfeifer claimed that the Stasi contributed the sum of 40,000 DM, but the GDR was practically almost without funds before the fall of the Berlin Wall, assuming that the documentary was most likely financed entirely by *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* and *Channel Four*.<sup>358</sup> At this point, it is irrelevant whether the Stasi had contributed to the making of the movie, given the circumstances that the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc were undergoing with the “Peaceful Revolution”.

According to the analysis of the discoveries made by the research regarding the involvement of the Soviet secret services in the AIDS disinformation campaign, doubts about the role of the Soviet Bloc secret services are partially clarified by leads reconstructed through the consultation of archive documents, supported also by interviews, personal experience, hypothesis and even rumours. What can be said with certainty is that the KGB was the first initiator of the AIDS disinformation campaign. The reason that prompted the publication of the article in the *Patriot* in 1983 was most likely the result of an isolated case to spread disinformation inherent in the issue of the Biological Weapons Convention compliance.

The role of Jakob and Lilli Segal remained that of two retirees who had undertaken a study on the origins of HIV and developed a theory, which, inevitably, embraced the interests of the Soviet Union. Jakob Segal may have been influenced by his own ideology, the communist one, but at the same time he could have conducted his own study for purely scientific interest.

On the other hand, the Stasi and the PGU-DS performed their duty: to serve Moscow and preserve the interests of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Bloc secret services went hand in hand in every action involving internal security and covert operation for decades. The Soviet Union employed in every action all available forces, which in turn obeyed and acted accordingly. The Stasi, as a trusted ally, used all possible efforts to carry out its task even when the KGB itself slackened off. The PGU-DS proved to deserve the epithet of the KGB’s “younger brother”, as it was only able to contribute at the regional level, strongly depending on his “older brother”.

To sum up, the AIDS disinformation campaign was an active measure implemented by the KGB, which was in no way inferior to the others. As per the playbook, the KGB used a story already circulating, studied its possible developments and used it as a weapon against the United States. However, with the Reagan administration and the collapse of the détente between the Soviet Union and the United States, the Kremlin also faced internal conflicts. The *Patriot* article was published during the interregnum of Andropov and Chernenko and subsequently laid dormant until 1985. Mikhail Gorbachev’s change of direction channelled all the Eastern Bloc

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<sup>358</sup> Geissler, Sprinkle, *Were our critics right about the Stasi?*, p. 52.

concerns into nuclear disarmament to improve relations with the United States. To the astonishment of the KGB, the AIDS disinformation campaign found a supporter within the Eastern Bloc. Jakob Segal, a former biologist of Lithuanian descent and living in East Berlin with his wife Lilli, emerged from the crowd of conspiracy theories and biomedical researches, bringing with him a theory that coincidentally matched the interests of the Kremlin. The Soviet Union picked the opportunity and used it to reinforce its allegations regarding the US non-compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention. At the same time, Jakob Segal waged his personal war against the United States, without serving the leadership of the Soviet Union and avoiding being its “useful idiot”. The United States had to be stopped, and Jakob used the only weapon at his disposal, the myth of HIV-from-Fort-Detrick. Beyond his devotion to Moscow, Jakob Segal was waging his personal war against “nonbelievers” and the “scientifically lunatic stories” of scientists and researchers. His battle quickly became a personal matter to stop US imperialism. Realizing that his theory did not enjoy the approval of the GDR, and progressively of the Soviet Union, Jakob Segal aimed at the Third World, in which he achieved a modest success still alive today. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Jakob Segal did not stop fighting for his cause. He publishes several books and works until his death that occurred in 1995. The Stasi and the Bulgarian secret services found their place during the AIDS disinformation campaign, but were severely limited by a general disorganization and incompetence that forced themselves to prove that they were still relevant. The Stasi and the PGU-DS failed in their attempt to take control over Jakob Segal and manipulate his myth. KGB officers probably sensed as early as 1986 that the campaign would lead nowhere. From the little evidence that exists, the KGB “Memorandum No. 2742” is a testament about the failure of the Soviet Bloc intelligence services to accomplish his goals during the AIDS disinformation campaign. The praiseworthy tone used in the memorandum sounded like an attempt at self-reassurance, as if to pay homage to rather irrelevant activities jointly conducted with “German and Czechoslovakian colleagues” between 1985 and 1987. The fact that the KGB, along with the Stasi and PGU-DS, were unable to find scientists within the Soviet Union to support the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth and to take it beyond the borders of “conspiracy”, was proof of the large-scale failure of both the secret services and the Soviet Union to preserve their ideology and compactness within the Eastern Bloc during the last decade of the Cold War.

## Conclusions

The end of the détente between the Soviet Union and the United States and the tightening of relations in the last decade of the Cold War was largely due to internal changes involving the Soviet Union policy. After the period of stagnation during the Brezhnev era and the brief interregnum of Andropov and Chernenko, the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev prompted Kremlin policy to make a change towards “hybrid” Westernization, combined by the restoration of the discipline and Soviet ideology.

As demonstrated in the first chapter, the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries had been chasing the United States in terms of nuclear arsenal and war industry since the beginning of the Cold War. The détente was the consequence of an equalization in the military capabilities between the two superpowers, but also by the weakening that the United States suffered from the Vietnam War and the period of economic stagnation that hit the Soviet Union. These episodes, along with the escalation of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, turned into the desire of both sides to improve relations, to cooperate in economic terms and to ensure a peaceful, and diplomatically effective, future. The Kremlin, unlike the West, saw an opportunity to expand Communism in other countries by temporarily quelling the stifling US imperialist disposition through an apparently “open to dialogue” and peaceful foreign policy attitude. The Angola Civil War in 1975, the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Ethiopia in 1978, and the violations of human rights soon drew the curtain on the staged Moscow’s attitude. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Carter administration withdrew from SALT II, extinguished economic agreements with the Eastern Bloc and concentrated the armed forces in the Persian Gulf in defense of possible Soviet expansion through Afghanistan. To further aggravate relations, the Solidarity Movement in 1981 cornered Moscow in its decision to invade Poland to quell protests while Ronald Reagan won the elections in the White House, initiating an even more aggressive doctrine than his predecessor. With the death of Leonid Brezhnev, his desire to be remembered as a “man of peace” also died, taking over from the former head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov. The brief interregnum initiated by Yuri Andropov and subsequently ended with the death of Konstantin Chernenko, marked a period of internal reforms in the CPSU and the personnel of the KGB. The elimination of corruption within the party and the attempt to restore discipline were hampered by the growing pressure that Washington, together with the CIA, exerted on the Eastern bloc. In addition to this, the suspiciousness of the two leaders, the Soviet ideology and their health hindered the new reform plans within the Soviet Union, but at the same time allowed



a new group of young politicians to take prestigious positions within the Politburo and CPSU. During the 1980s, the escalation of confrontations between the Soviet Union and the United States in the *Second Cold War* resulted in the intensification of covert operations and intelligence activities. The CIA began to operate in support of anti-communist movements and rebel groups committed to fighting the Soviet invasion and communist regimes. The KGB, together with the secret services of the Eastern Bloc states, intensified the number of active measures to the detriment of NATO and United States, with the aim of preventing Washington in the installation of missile and military bases in Europe. With the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the CPSU in 1985, the Soviet Union found itself facing new internal changes dictated by the *perestroika* and *glasnost*' reforms, but at the same time by a plan that resumed the restoration of the Soviet discipline and ideology within the Soviet society. The juxtaposition of the two initiatives proved to be unsuccessful, highlighting the limits that Communism brought in opening up to capitalism and the Western world. The satellite states of the Eastern Bloc felt increasingly distant from Moscow, which ignored, with mutual detachment, the changes that were sweeping the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The whole Gorbachev's foreign policy was channeled towards nuclear disarmament and the end of the Cold War while one by one the states of the Eastern Bloc proclaimed their independence from Moscow between 1989/1990 in the "peaceful revolution". Limited by the "new thinking", unsuitable for Soviet ideology, Gorbachev accompanied the Soviet Union to collapse, unable to preserve its stability and compactness, while the KGB and the "elders" of the CPSU found themselves in a state of demoralization and general confusion.

The background provided by the first chapter made it possible to subsequently understand the concepts of "political warfare" and "active measures" introduced in the second chapter. Through the analysis of the concept of political warfare according to the Soviet view, the second chapter tackled, in a more technical language, the question of active measures. Thanks to the study and analysis of works written by scholars of military strategy such as Von Clausewitz, Machiavelli and Sun Tzu, alongside the works on Communism by Marx and Engels, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin developed his idea of political warfare. War motivated by the *political object*, the motive that stimulates an entire nation to fight and wage a war, was not recognized in Western terminology until the end of the World War II. From 1948, the Soviet Union and the United States found themselves in a position of complete disagreement, which they emphasize in the political and influential contention of the liberated European states. Thus, began covert operations and subversive measures by the Soviet Union to expand its influence in Europe, which in turn were opposed by the United States and NATO with the containment policy. Based

on Lenin's concept of subversion, in which he combined the moral and military support of dissidents with the use of propaganda-agitation as an initiation into the process of government overthrowing in the state to be subverted, the Soviet Union waged an ideological war against the West which, at the United States' opposition, turned into the Cold War. Within the Eastern Bloc, Soviet propaganda assumed an "integral" role, which aimed to "homogenize" the mass, prone to control and easily subject to persuasion, ensuring a "subversive base", the Soviet Union, that would have served as headquarters for the worldwide expansion of Communism. The weapon used by Moscow to be able to wage the ideological war was "active measures", i.e., offensive maneuvers that aim to destabilize an opposing government or nation, isolating it from its alliances and causing a process of internal "self-destruction" that opens the way for the establishment of a socialist government. During the Cold War, active measures were gradually perfected and exclusive departments were established to deal with their implementation, both within the KGB and the Soviet secret services of the satellite states. Since 1978, active measures have been implemented through the cooperation between three main bodies of the Central Committee of CPSU, the International Department (ID), the International Information Department (IID) and the Committee for State Security (KGB), which exploited means such as disinformation, front organizations and agents of influence to undermine the stability of the countries belonging to NATO and the United States.

After dealing with the organizational aspect and the methodology used to implement active measures and having presented the structure of the main Eastern Bloc AM departments involved, the third chapter finally introduced a specific case of disinformation. Disinformation which, differently from misinformation, deliberately spreads false stories or distorted version of events, was one of the Soviet Union's favorite methods of discrediting, weakening and undermining the United States global position to its own advantage. The riots and protests caused by the growing number of AIDS cases in the United States and the conspiracy theories about the origin of HIV at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s were the perfect compromise for the Kremlin to divert international attention from their engagement in the Third World and in the Soviet-Afghan War. After the exchange of accusations regarding non-compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention disarmament treaty signed by both superpowers in 1972, retired East German biologist Jakob Segal formulated his own theory about the artificial origin of HIV, manufactured by the Pentagon in the former military base at Fort Detrick, Maryland. The key role played by Jakob Segal was essential for Moscow in the AIDS disinformation campaign. The media around the world soon talked about the "HIV-from-Fort-Detrick" myth. Protests from gay and African-American communities demanded truth from the US government

and protection from AIDS while numerous scientists and biologists tried to develop a scientifically shared theory regarding the origins of HIV. In all this, the secret services of East Germany, the Stasi, feeling called into question, tried to appropriate the “HIV-from-Fort-Detrick” myth in the top-secret “Operation Denver”. But by the second half of the 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev, persistent in improving relations with the West, induced the KGB to concentrate its activities exclusively on preventing the installation of SDI missile bases in Europe. Proud of its status, the Stasi did not accept the “abandonment” by Moscow and the KGB and continued to carry out “Operation Denver” personally. Meanwhile, Luc Montagnier’s theory on the natural origin of HIV was widely accepted by scientists and doctors around the world, who were now engaged in containing the epidemic and treating people with AIDS in cooperation with the international community. In the Soviet Union and within the Eastern Bloc, no scientist supported Jakob Segal’s thesis nor the East German Ministry of Health nor the Communist Party. Despite this, Jakob Segal persisted in his fight against the United States while the Stasi tried to penetrate and change the course of events for the advantage of the Eastern Bloc, with almost no success, until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

By consulting digital archives, photos, transcribed interviews and videos, alongside the scientific literature of historians, researchers and doctors, two opposed views emerged during the analysis. On the basis of a first study conducted by Thomas Boghardt, inspired by the statements of two former Stasi officers, over the years other scholars have joined in the study of the AIDS disinformation campaign, stimulated by the exhumation of unpublished archival material following the opening of the archives of the former communist states of the Eastern Bloc. On the one hand, according to historians such as Douglas Selvage and Christopher Nehring, the Stasi would have played an important role, especially between 1987 and 1989 in conducting “Operation Denver” together with the Bulgarian PGU-DS; on the other hand, the biologist Erhard Geissler and Doctor Robert Hunt Sprinkle argue that Jakob Segal played a key role in the AIDS disinformation campaign and that the Soviet secret services would have limited themselves to a marginal role. Both positions provide compelling views based on accurate consultation of archival documents, interviews and analysis of historical material, but “enhancing” the role of the Stasi and the Bulgarian PGU-DS as the main perpetrator of the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth, at least from 1987 until the fall of the Berlin Wall, is approximate and erroneously credited. By comparing the two studies, it was possible to have a map of the events that occurred during the AIDS disinformation campaign which made it possible to evaluate the positions by contextualizing them to the historical period and enriching them with new approaches and points of view.

Did the conspiracy theories that developed among gay and African-American communities play a key role in the origin of the AIDS disinformation campaign? Yes, they did, the Soviet Union as with other active measures involving disinformation and forgeries, exploited already existing conspiracy theories and used them as a weapon to discredit the United States on the biological weapons issue.

Were the KGB and the Soviet Union the first initiators of the AIDS disinformation campaign? Yes, they were, and by all odds, with the publication of the article in the *Patriot*, and subsequent appearances in the Soviet media and Third World Communist countries supporting the accusation of AIDS as a biological weapon created by the Pentagon, they all had the “Moscow seal”.

Were Jakob and Lilli Segal the one and only creators of the thesis that supported the myth of HIV-from-Fort-Detrick? Yes, they were, despite having repeatedly proved to be inaccurate in reporting the events in their posthumous declarations to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is possible that they may have also been influenced during their study by the *Patriot* article, but it has been shown that their research probably dates back to around 1980, without the incitement of the Soviet Union or the secret services of the Eastern Bloc.

Did the Stasi, together with the Bulgarian PGU-DS actively contribute to the spread of the myth and the implementation of the active measures regarding the AIDS disinformation campaign? No, they did not, but it must be acknowledged that “Operation Denver” was a Stasi initiative and that its program of “myth manipulation” and implementation of active measures regarding AIDS disinformation campaign existed.

In conclusion, this thesis has provided an additional analysis regarding the last decade of the Cold War experienced by the Soviet Union, mainly focused on the role of the Eastern Bloc secret services and highlighting how internal conflicts affected the efficiency of the entire Soviet apparatus. By analyzing the events that characterized the AIDS disinformation campaign between 1983 and 1989, scholars and researchers questioned the effective role of the Soviet secret services in implementing this particular case of active measure. Through the debate on the actual role assumed by the KGB, the Stasi and the Bulgarian PGU-DS during the “Operation Denver”, the limits of a disunited and heterogeneous system pointed out the lack of interest in leading the fight against the United States, turned into the desire to end a conflict that had exasperated even the Kremlin. Soviet society was no longer the same as it was 30 years before, the new generations looked with envy towards the West and the sense of general weariness was reflected in the urge of the satellite states to break away from a “bloc” that was only held together by the ground. The rivalry towards the West and the United States during the last years

of the Soviet Union had turned into the sporadic appearances of combative personalities like that of the Segals and of the residual Stasi's will with its "Operation Denver", proving that the Soviet Bloc and Communism had not yet been defeated.

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