RESILIENT CONCEPTS OF THE SOVIET ACTIVE MEASURES PROGRAM: DISINFORMATION, DECEPTION, FORGERIES. CASE STUDY: 1968 INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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Abstract

At the present time, the active measures program is perceived as a new structural innovation, conceived by the security and intelligence services of the eastern side of Europe, without taking into account its historical and evolutionary side.

The hypothesis of the article is that disinformation, deception and forgery, resilient concepts of the Soviet program of active measures, were real, sophisticated instruments that generated strategic events in order to create advantages for the Soviets in the short, medium and long term in the European field of security and defence. I have been following the logical and heuristic aspects of the research hypothesis: logical because they are a coherent conception of the past which also has implications today; heuristic, because the research enrols new data and information in the scientific circuit, from recently declassified archival documents, in order to discover and prove the truth.

In the elaboration of the article, I considered the research of the relational process between disinformation, deception, forgery and the historical phenomena they generated.

Keywords: *security, active measures, intelligence, disinformation, deception, forgeries.*

Introduction

Active measures, designed by the Soviets, have been and are real sophisticated instruments that generate strategic events in order to create short, medium and long term benefits at the social, political, military, economic, informational level, etc. There is no universally accepted definition for the concept of active measures, but they include

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disinformation, subversion, influence, propaganda, undercover operations, deception, rumours, manipulation, provocation, forgeries, diversion, **maskirovka** (Pirnie, 1985, 1-22; Keating, 1981, 1-20; Mitrokhin, 2004, 64-58)[1], reflexive control, sabotage, penetration, discretization, and the means by which they are achieved. To describe the complexity of the means of achieving the active measures we used, as an integrating term, the Soviet active measures program.

The Soviet active measures program is a counterpart to the irregular or unconventional warfare. In order to bring the definition of the active measures program to the present, we argue that it describes military and non-military irregular/unconventional methods of hybrid warfare. To better understand the current implications of the active measures program, it is necessary to present a retrospective of hybrid warfare.

Defining concepts: disinformation, deception, forgery – resilient concepts of the Soviet active measures program

Resilience is a concept that does not have the same meaning everywhere, but is increasingly used. It is currently used in a wider range of areas, institutions and organizations. Nor is the vast field of security an exception, resilience being a term used in more and more security strategies. Resilience studies offer a wider spectrum of reflection. For example, Liisa Välikangas proposes a new vision of resilience, arguing that the trends were to see resilience as a "backup solution", as the ability to return to the status quo before a disturbing shock/phenomenon occurred.

[1] A traditional Soviet term used in military operations. Maskirovka is a term used to describe a "mix" of deception, hiding, simulation, disinformation, false demonstration, camouflage, all meant to hide the real position of the troops and mislead the enemy, leading to inaccurate plans, forecasts and conclusions. In the KGB jargon, maskirovka describes a larger set of intelligence/counterintelligence actions such as: camouflage in surveillance (maskirovka v naruzhnom nablyudenii), camouflage of clandestine radio communication (maskirovka konspirativnoy radiosvyazi), and camouflage of microdot (maskirovka mikrotochki) – it refers to a small text or image printed on a disc to prevent its detection.

Another definition of resilience is the ability of a system/ systems to cope with unpredictable changes (Chakravarthy, 1982, 35-44). Recent sources define resilience as "the ability to avoid, minimize, resist, and recover from unforeseen, natural or man-made situations produced under all circumstances existing at that time".

In our case, a possible definition of resilience with reference to the three elements of the Soviet active measures program may be the following: the capacity of a system (the Soviet active measures program – the initiating State) to ensure and maintain the core mission at an acceptable and functional level (the purpose for which it was created) following the occurrence/intervention of unforeseen circumstances/ disturbing factors (from the state that is targeted/attacked) and the return, reconstruction or renewal of the situation thereafter.

Disinformation

Disinformation was one of the most used means in achieving the Soviet active measures. Conceptual delimitation of elements that make up the apparatus of active measures becomes a difficult task to achieve in the context of using these terms incorrectly and without discernment.

Trying to develop a definition of disinformation is a complicated process. The difficulty arises, first of all, from the fact that "it has extremely fluid borders with intoxication, influence, propaganda, subversion, manipulation" (Hentea, 2004, 46).

Disinformation has been manifested ever since the earliest times, however the term itself can be placed in the Soviet space at the beginning of the 20th century (West, 2006, 89; Lerner and Lerner eds., 2004, 331-335). In 1923, Arthur Artuzov (Haslan, 2016, *passim*) set up an office for disinformation within the GPU (**Gosudarstvennoye politicheskoye upravlenie** – the Soviet State Political Directorate from 1922 until 1923), "deza" being subsequently taken over by Iosif Unsliht, whose activity was centralized on January 11, 1923 (Haslan, 2016, 35-38). In the specific Soviet terminology disinformation (**dezinformatsionnyye svedeniya «dezinformatsiya»**) refers to "selected information which is transmitted to an opponent to create a false image about certain events which he could use to make fundamental decisions". Also in Soviet terminology we find the term operative disinformation (**disinformatsiya operativnaya**) which refers to operational procedure consisting of providing the enemy with specific specially prepared information which will give a false picture of activity being undertaken by the counter-intelligence service (plans, forces, resources etc.) and may encourage the enemy to take decision which are advantageous to the counter-intelligence service (Mitrokhin, 2004, 193).

Disinformation started being used as early as 1959 as a term to define Soviet active measures (Parish, 2002, 93), which is not true since active measures refer to a wider range of elements, which has already been demonstrated.

Even though the KGB (**Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti** – USSR's Committee for State Security, 1954-1991) was coryphaeus in the field, the Soviets did not hold exclusivity of disinformation, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy being two of the disinformation craftsmen. During the Cold War, both camps (socialist and capitalist) practiced disinformation. For the French, disinformation was a "Intermittent or continuous action – using any means – that consists in misleading an adversary or favouring subversion in order to weaken it" (Cathala, 1991, 24), and for Anglo-Saxons disinformation meant "the process of presenting factual information in so as to induce the recipients to make the wrong conclusions" (Cole, 1998, 172).

The French took over the term "dezinformatsiya" in the 1970s, Vladimir Volkoff being the artisan of the field through his writings (Volkoff, 2007, 17). The "transfer" of disinformation from the security and intelligence services area to the mass-media area complicates things even further. Up to now, it has not been agreed that the concept should be given a definition of "wide use". In this sense, I argue that defining concepts is necessary, implicitly defining disinformation, but not in the sense of "forcing" a definition, but identifying in the previous definitions, starting from the general and going to specific, of the common elements and specific definitions.

Two of the disinformation theorists define it as "a manipulation of public opinion for political purposes, using information treated with distorted means" (Volkoff, 1999, 25) or a multitude of means aimed at destabilizing a state or a society without necessarily calling for armed forces (Cathala, 1991, 24). Vladimir Volkoff proposes an approach to disinformation involving three elements:

"- a manipulation of public opinion, meaning intoxication;

- distorted means, meaning propaganda;

- domestic or foreign political purposes, meaning advertising" (Volkoff, 1999, 25).

For other authors, disinformation is "any intervention on the basic elements of a communication process, intervention that deliberately changes messages to determine in the receivers certain attitudes, reactions, actions desired by a particular social agent" (Zamfir, 1998, 167). From a French perspective, disinformation seeks to "create a false reality so convincing that the opponent thinks it right" (Nord, 1971, 17).

Starting from the model proposed by the Soviets and from the implementation of the actionable measures, disinformation was raised to the rank of doctrine in the USSR (**Soiuz Sovietskih Soțialisticeskih Respublik** – The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1922-1991), whereby the entity who disinforms (the source/transmitter) transmits certain information (partially true) to the disinformed (receiver) (Volkoff, 2007, 16).

Disinformation is a long process that builds over time and shapes the consciousness of a segment of the population of a country or nation. Disinformation, as a long-term process, does not imply the action of persuading someone to believe what actually does not exist, but to provide hard or partially verifiable information supplemented by lies (Volkoff, 2007, 9-10).

Disinformation is a long-term doctrine/technique/process (Volkoff, 2007, 16; Hentea, 2005, 70-72) through which the disinformed is not deprived of information but rather false information is provided to it. The stages of disinformation are carefully planned, with every detail being carefully scrutinized. In order for a disinformation action to succeed, it must have thousands of hours worked back and rely less on the credulity or slowness of the masses or target group. Excessive disinformation actions are excluded to preserve the credibility of the author. The disinformation actions of the Soviet Union directed against both opponents and partners turned against the Kremlin in many moments, especially when the Western states withdrew from international organizations created and sustained by Moscow. Disinformation should be used cautiously, otherwise it may have unfavourable consequences for its initiator.

Disinformation has some defining features: creating a false reality or as far from the truth as possible, carefully planned and elaborate as for the disinformed (state, organization or person) to consider it viable; it must always be done with the precise purpose of protecting sensitive information; seeks to destabilize the opponent's logic by directly disinforming the sources so that the disinformed can no longer verify the accuracy of the information.

Deception

Deception is another element of active measures with more implications in the military area. Most of the deception studies are of American origin and refer to strategic military deception (Department of the Navy, 1980, *passim;* Idem, 1986, 28-46; US Air Force, 1987, *passim*), but the first reference to deception is made by Sun Tzu who said "all warfare is based on deception" (Tzu, 1963, 66).

Deception has been the subject of many analyses of the US Army since the late '80s, belonging mainly to the US Navy Department. In a material developed in 1981, deception was defined as "deliberate misrepresentation of reality done to gain a competitive advantage" (Daniel et. al., 1980, 5). The same material distinguishes two variants of deception that produce different effects and work in different ways.

"The less elegant variety, termed «ambiguity-increasing» or «A-type», confuses a target in order that he be unsure as to what to believe. It seeks to compound the uncertainties confronting any state's attempt to determine its adversary's wartime intentions. Contradictory indicators, missing data, fast-moving events, time-lags between data-collection and analysis, change all in habit accurate intelligence assessments. (...) In contrast to deceptions increasing ambiguity, there is a second more complicated category which we label the «misleading» or «M-type». They reduce ambiguity by building up the attractiveness of the wrong alternative" (Daniel et. al., 1980, 8-10).

John Dziak captures very well the role and place of deception over Russian history: “Strategic deception, whether military or political, has been an integral feature of the Slavic tradition. Mongol methods of warfare masterfully deflected enemy attention toward false threats, a lesson absorbed by their Muscovite vassals and, in turn, their tsarist successors. The mirage quality of Russian political deception is captured by Potemkin’s notorious «villages»” (Dziak, 1987, 3).

Other materials distinguish two large areas where the Soviets acted using deception as part of the active measures program. In the political field, where “political deception consists of efforts to influence the opinions of policy makers, opinion leaders and the general public in the West and the Third World” and the field of intelligence, where Intelligence deception is designed to affect an opponent’s military planning and warfighting capability. This type of deception is maintained through misdirection of the perceptions, products, and recommendations of intelligence analysts regarding Soviet intentions and capabilities in military and political affairs (Walters, 1988, 12).

In the USAF (United States Air Force) materials, the authors believe that the Soviets have a complete definition for the art of deception: “Strategic cover and deception is accomplished upon the decision of the Supreme High Command and includes a set of measures for security in preparing strategic operations and campaigns, and also for disorienting the enemy with respect to the true intentions and actions of the armed forces (...). Methods for accomplishing cover and deception include: concealment, feints, simulation, and fabrication of information using communications media, the press, radio, broadcasting, television, etc. (...). It is emphasized that cover and deception measures should be continuous and realistic” (US Air Forece, 1986, 52-58).

One of the first seriously developed materials to deal with the subject of deception as an active measure is found in Cynthia M. Grabo's “Soviet Deception in the Czechoslovak Crisis” study. The author makes a radiograph of the deception that the Soviets planned to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968. It is interesting Cynthia M. Grabo's perspective on the thin line of demarcation between reality and deception that the analyst will have to take into account in its materials. The work focuses on political, military, politico – military deception (Grabo, 1993).

Robert W. Pringle, author of the Soviet/Russian security and intelligence dictionary, defines deception as the term that denotes **maskirovka** (Pringle, 2006, 153), which I disagree with because **maskirovka** has a wider scope than deception, including other elements such as: camouflage, hiding, simulation, false demonstrations, and disinformation.

Barton Whaley, a prominent researcher and teacher in the field of studies and theories of the practice of deception and counter-deception defines deception as “any attempt – through words or actions – intended to distort the perception of reality of a person or group. And to keep things simple, a lie is any statement made with intention of deceiving” (Whaley, 2006, VII). Barton defines deception based on a typology of perception as follows: at the top of the pyramid is the perception that is divided into the wrong perception and correct perception. The wrong perception is subdivided into two subcategories: 1) induced by someone else, including deception (deliberate) and distortion (unintentional); 2) self-induced, comprising of self-deception and illusion (Whaley, 2006).

Forgeries

Forgeries were used by the Soviets to compromise people, local or central authorities, and even the domestic or foreign policy of the various target states. Forgeries (**falshivka)** refer to documents and are defined by the Soviets as follows: a report or false documents specifically designed on the basis of information that is known to be false, which is disseminated by mass propaganda to compromise the foreign or domestic policy of another state, the activity of its institutions or individuals (Mitrokhin, 2004, 139).

Mechanisms of implementing the soviet active measures program

The mechanism of cooperation for implementing the program of active measures followed this path: Department "D"/Service "A" (Watts, 2011, 302; Schoen and Lamb, 2012, 19)[2] worked with the Foreign Affairs Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC of the CPSU)/Foreign Affairs Sections of the Central Committees of the other communist parties in socialist countries, the Propaganda Section of the CC of the CPSU/Propaganda Sections of the other communist parties in socialist countries, the Soviet Academy of Science/Science Academies of the other socialist countries, the PGU (**Pervoe Glavnoe Upravlenie** – the First Main/Central Directorate – Foreign Intelligence, soviet espionage, 1954-1991) residences and the written and audio-visual press.

Within PGU residences, the mechanism of cooperation was provided by the "PR Line", which was in charge of economic and political information, military strategy and active measures (Mitrokhin and Andrew, 2003, 570; Idem, 2006, 454). According to a former officer of Service "A", who defected to the USA in 1979, the active measures program was not implemented outside the Soviet borders by Service "A" officers. Instead, this mission was given to the "PR Line" staff along with precise instructions. Also, Service "A" used to draft a bulletin which contained secret information. The bulletin was given to the members of the CPSU Politburo. It included specific details of certain active measures programs or other operations that were already successfully implemented (Barron, 1983, 449).

Department "D" also used to cooperate with the residencies of security and intelligence services of other socialist countries, the Foreign Affairs Sections and the Academies of Science of those respective states. However, no actions were ever performed outside of KGB orders (Knight, 1990, 286).

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[2] After the Second World War, the active measures program became more significant for the Soviets as special emphasis was placed on disinformation. For this reason, in 1959, Department "D" (Dezinformatsia) was established within the PGU and tasked with taking over and implementing all the active measures operations. There is conflicting data regarding the establishment of Department "D". Some sources support a version in which Service "A" (Slujba Aktivnik Meropriatil or the Service of Active Measures) became the successor of Department "D" (Dezinformatsia) in 1962. Other sources indicate that Service "A" became the successor of the Department "D" in 1971, at a time when the department included 700 officers and a KGB general was in charge of it.

Throghout the Cold War, the USSR had the advantage of receiving the support of powerful socialist parties in Western countries, especially France and Italy. The implementation of active measures was supported by Soviet advisers (Bittman, 1972, 45) placed in intelligence and military structures and the Cominform (1946-1956) (Duroselle, 2006, 352)[3]. After the dissolution of the latter, the same role was given to the Foreign Affairs Sections of communist and working-class parties in socialist countries. Between 1959 and 1965, the KGB "exported" its program of active measures to the other security and intelligence services of the WTO member states (Bittman, 1972, 142) except Romania.

The case of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSR)

Near the CSR occupation, the KGB suffers some transformations that cannot be neglected. Brezhnev's arrival at the head of the CPSU and the appointment of Andropov under the command of the KGB in May 1967 meant a change of USSR's actions in foreign policy. Brezhnev will not agree with Khrushchev's policy of "allowing" the socialist countries to move away from socialist dogma. It is an "ideological subversion" that Brezhnev and Adropov accused of being allowed by the old leadership. The Politburo, at Andropov's initiative, approved the establishment in the KGB of a directorate with five sub-directorates to fight against ideological subversion. In addition to the opening of new KGB offices internally, Politburo's P47/97-op decision entailed an increase in the total number of KGB staff to 2,250 employees, of which 1,750 officers and 100 officers appointed to the KGB at Lubianka. Changes have also been made to the KGB's XIth Department dealing with relations with the socialist countries. It had been an independent unit to the PGU and was reintegrated to Soviet espionage following another Politburo resolution adopted on 4 June 1968. Andropov mentioned that this was necessary as a result of the inefficiency of the XIth Directorate,

[3] It was founded on September 22th 1947. Its headquarters was in Belgrad. The Cominform had to ensure that links were created between European communist and working-class parties. It was designed like an "Information Office of Communist and Workers' Parties". The Cominform had lots of information on how the "popular democracies" were established.

whose activity degenerated to "simple protocol collaboration" without exchanging and processing important information and dealing only with the hosting of the homologous delegations from other socialist countries (Petrov, 2009, 146-147).

After 51 years since the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) member troops invasion of the CSR and the declassification of numerous archive funds, the event itself reveals that the USSR has taken active measures through disinformation, deception and forgery at least from middle July (the beginning of the troop mobilizations that preceded the actual invasion) in order to convey to the entire world and particularly to the CSR that there will be no invasion. In the preparation of the invasion a variety of means were used to implement active measures from the political-diplomatic channels to the KGB-GRU (**Glavnoe Razvedîvatelnoe Upravlenie** – the Soviet military espionage service or the Main Intelligence Directorate) security and information services. The most commonly used explanations of the Soviets for the upcoming invasion referred to the fact that the massing of troops at the CSR border was done only for manoeuvre. Masking preparations under the disguise of manoeuvres was a *sine qua non* condition of the invasion.

From my point of view, Cynthia Grabo best captures the importance, scale and mechanisms that preceded the invasion as part of active measures: "True military deception, as opposed to the various means described above, is the most difficult and complex of all types of deception to orchestrate, at least on a large scale. It is most commonly used when hostilities are already in progress, when it may be used with other deception measures to disguise the scale of a build-up, the date or place of attack, and/or to lead the enemy to believe that an attack is planned in one area when in fact it is not (...). The planting of false reports, through established intelligence channels or the diplomatic service, may be used as a part of the political or military deception methods described above. A military attaché is a useful channel for putting out a seemingly plausible explanation or disclaimer concerning a troop build-up, as is a diplomat to provide a false political story. These channels, along with the professional clandestine services, also may be used simply to flood the market with a mass of conflicting stories and reports. Particularly when reports are sensational but otherwise appear to have some authenticity, they can be a tremendous distraction. If the volume of such planted disinformation is large enough, the analytical system can be so overwhelmed by it that the truly reliable or useful intelligence may become lost in the mill" (Grabo, 1993).

The entry of WTO member countries' troops into CSR has also been facilitated from a different angle. The Czechoslovak army continued to send army officers to specialize in the USSR where they were subjected to the KGB-GRU recruitment, and the Czechoslovak military intelligence service was directly "subordinate" to the GRU (Suvorov, 1984, 34) and took part in the security and defence decisions taken inside WTO. The full integration of the Czechoslovak Army within WTO has led to a detailed knowledge of the Kremlin needed in order to prepare the invasion. Near the intervention, the Romanian security and intelligence services reported the existence of: «numerous troops and weapons concentrations along the northern border» and diplomats from the embassies of WTO member countries accredited in Bucharest «acted as covered agents, collecting information on Romania's internal situation» (Retegan, 2000, 192-193).

The various political leaders from the Kremlin have always been sensitive to the minor deviations from the ideological concepts that the USSR has implemented in Eastern Europe, and Czechoslovakia, a country with a democratic tradition, has been imposed a regime in flagrant contradiction with its history. The path of reforms that the CSR will follow in 1968, where the dominant element was the rehabilitation of victims during Stalin's leadership (started during Khrushchev's time), was rejected by Brezhnev (Petrov, 2009, 145).

The year 1968 has major implications for the security environment of Central and Eastern Europe. Within the Soviet sphere of influence there was a split that divided the European socialist world into two camps: in the first one there were Yugoslavia, Romania, Albania and Czechoslovakia, and in the second, the USSR, Poland, the Democratic Republic of Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria. In the case of the first camp, I highlight a few aspects: firstly, the common visions of Belgrade, Bucharest and Prague over some problems were not due to the same internal criteria and they had not evolved the same over time.

Yugoslavia, although it had adopted communism openly, remained an "unaligned" state with an open economy, and in which the West saw a possible ally. Romania had started on the path of reforms and promoted a foreign policy different from that of Moscow, and Czechoslovakia joined the process of economic, political, social reconversion. Secondly, the question arises whether Tito, Ceausescu and Alexander Dubček really believed that their countries were separate entities within the socialist camp, or the revival of a "Little Entente" was just another projection of the Soviet active measures program meant to provoke a counter-reaction from the other Kremlin partner countries.

The security and intelligence services of the USSR acted during the 1968 CSR events through the active measures program. The most used elements were disinformation, deception and forgery in order to present a false reality to the international public opinion a false reality, contrary to the existing one.

Romania was the only member country of WTO that firmly opposed the invasion because the manoeuvre violated two of the elements that Bucharest has been promoting since 1964: national sovereignty and the right to decide in domestic politics. The fact that in 1968, and a few years after, Romania was part of the plans of a possible invasion, it was a risk that the country assumed.

Conclusions

Whether it is Medieval Russia, Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation, history has shown that the relations of these expansionist state actors with the countries of Eastern Europe have been dominated, with some exceptions, by conflicts at the expense of cooperation. The expansionary tendencies of Medieval Russia / Imperial Russia / Soviet Union / Russian Federation can be explained by a strong sense of insecurity, visible today. Territorial expansion was the key to building a strong state and ensuring security for Russia, which has been reflected in its foreign policy since the interwar period. The logic of the "conquests" of the various states in Central and Eastern Europe is part of the "glacis / protection grid" tag, i.e. the building of security through territorial conquest, carried out in two stages: 1) 1939-1940 by signing the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact; 2) 1944-1949 through the Red Army conquests and the conscious giveaways of the Anglo-Americans. The Russian conquests "tradition" is rather the result of a feeling of insecurity to the detriment of security, even in the current form of the Russian Federation.

The Soviet active measures program has reached its goal in the case of Czechoslovakia. Disinformation, deception, forgery made it possible for WTO member countries troops to enter, except for Romania, although political and diplomatic channels often expressed that the USSR did not intend to do so. In other words, the program of active measures, another "tradition" of the USSR succeeded, until the very moment of the invasion, to offer another "reality" to international public opinion, that of non-intervention.

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