

# From Promising Agent to Suspicious Francophile. Professor Stefan Węgrzyn and his Contacts With Professor Jean Charles Gille Through the Lens of the Polish (counter) Intelligence (1958-1976)

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**Abstract:** This paper examines how the Polish communist intelligence service attempted to recruit professor Stefan Węgrzyn, who was a prominent specialist on automatic control and computer science in post-war Poland. Eventually, Węgrzyn's refusal to cooperate with the Polish spy agency, together with his profound relationship with French scientist and servomechanism expert Jean Charles Gille, made them both targets of surveillance orchestrated by the communist security apparatus.

In the broader context of human-intelligence studies, this case study involves the problem of moral ambiguity. We experience informative examples of scientists, who often – not only during the Cold War – have had to choose between commitment to the rules of the academic world, along with its openness and transparency on the one hand, and patriotism including an ethos of secrecy for the sake of the homeland's prosperity, on the other hand.

**Keywords:** Cold War, Poland, scientific espionage, counterintelligence

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*Thesis*

The current paper explains how the Polish communist security service attempted to recruit professor Stefan Węgrzyn for its own operational goals. Professor Stefan Węgrzyn was at the time one of the most prominent and influential specialists on automatic control, servomechanism and computer science, in post-war Poland. He was a professor at the Silesian University of Technology (Politechnika Śląska) in Gliwice, member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), and professor *honoris cause* of the Université de Sherbrooke Quebec. The reasons for the security service's interests in Węgrzyn's career were his deep and long-term developed relationships with distinguished French scholars, - most of all with Jean Charles Gille, who was involved in the military research programs in France and in a broader sense in NATO.

Nowadays the historian is able to reconstruct the process of surveillance on both Węgrzyn and Gille, launched by the Polish intelligence and counterintelligence branches of the security apparatus, thanks to disclosure of case files and operational records of the political police of the Polish People's Republic (Służba Bezpieczeństwa - SB). My investigation aimed at finding evidence confirming possible Węgrzyn's and Gille's entanglement in the operations of NATO intelligence services. I explored files produced by Polish security services and based my conclusions on the analysis, memos and reports written by the officers during a period of time stretching from late '50s to mid '70s.

In this case study there are several general characteristics regarding the political police under communism that need to be stated. The thesis is three-fold: on the one hand we can observe the paranoia of the communist security apparatus trained to harass, oppress and intimidate citizens due to ideological reasons. On the other hand, we encounter quite a pragmatic approach of the counterintelligence service responsible for safeguarding the intellectual resources of Polish People's Republic (PPR) against the uncontrolled brain-drain practiced by the western governments and multinationals. Finally, we discover the activity of the Polish intelligence service, charged by the Polish government with the mission to gather illicitly scientific-technical data for the purposes of Polish R&D and industry.

This part of the intelligence work was in turn the result of strategic embargo on dual-use components, know-how and technically advanced devices, that had been imposed by the US administration and its allies, united in the Coordinating Committee for the Multilateral Export Controls – CoCom (Mastanduno 1992). Strictly controlled, by US and CoCom, sales of commodities, raw materials, components, equipment or blue prints, created “space” for intelligence operations. All those intellectual goods and know-how that could not be acquired officially in the West had to be acquired

clandestinely, according to the *modus operandi* worked out in Moscow already during the 40s and shared with Polish colleagues (as well as with remaining partners in Warsaw Pact) during the 50s and 60s. Basic tools of intelligence were black market purchases, bribing greedy clerks or employees of western multinationals, sometimes blackmailing people or using various manipulating methods.

Although there are two leading actors in this story, we can postulate that only the biography and social environment of Węgrzyn is well known, due to the documents produced by the security service. On the contrary – Gille remains in the shadow, partly because I did not have access to the archives in France or Canada, partly because his possible ties to French or US intelligence services would be very difficult to prove, since the records of those institutions are still classified, as the files of KGB are as well. This last trace matters, as it was exactly the KGB that informed the Polish colleagues about the Frenchman's possible espionage activity.

Poland and the remaining Eastern European countries of the former Warsaw Pact (not including the Russian Federation and most of the former USSR republics) make exceptions worldwide regarding the declassification of confidential, secret and top-secret files. It is good to keep this in mind while studying the intelligence and security services. The scope of the disclosure procedure with regard to former communist institutions initiated in Poland in the late '90s, and in Germany even earlier, and – to a smaller scale – in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, is unprecedented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (perhaps a comparison could be made to the case of the Third Reich security service RSHA after 1945, but with many restrictions). Though the contemporary "CIA-history project" complies with the release of precise selected documents from the Cold War period, it in fact reveals "secrets" which often – especially when talking about the espionage in the field of computers – have not been secrets anymore for a long time now, as they were discussed in memoirs (wrote by former CIA or FBI employees), in the newspapers' articles (published up to date by investigative journalists) or in scientific journals (Lindsey 1983; Weyhrauch 1986; Weiss 1996; Cain 2005).

Crucial facts and explanations on espionage operations in the area of science and technology, run by the intelligence agencies on both sides of the Iron Curtain (but mainly by USSR and its allies) are provided by extensive historical studies of Anglo-Saxon and Russian authors (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000; Chertoprud 2002; Maddrell 2006; Macrakis 2008).

The broader context of intelligence studies raises the problem of moral ambiguity. We encounter informative examples of scientists, who often - not only during the Cold War – have to choose between the commitment to the rules of academia, along with its openness and transparency on the one hand,

and patriotism including the ethos of secrecy for the sake of the homeland's prosperity, on the other.

In a strict sense, this story contributes to our knowledge about scientists under communism. It was the time when the scope of their freedom was dramatically reduced by the *raison d'État*, and this applied to both sides of the Iron Curtain. One well-known, emblematic case study for the divergence between personal beliefs and commitment to the state was the Soviet spy-ring operating in US and Great Britain during and after the Second World War. Klaus Fuchs, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and many others who sympathized with USSR and communism and thus spied on the US atomic bomb program, later became icons of the scientific-technical espionage going on throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

My analysis involves a technological background as well. However, this time it is not about military use of uranium and plutonium particles, but about dual use of cybernetics and algorithms (today we call it simply ITC). We observe how one of the most advanced disciplines of science – i.e. automatic control/cybernetics – spread across the Iron Curtain attracting young engineers at the universities and R&D-facilities in the PPR. Although living in a different socio-political world, they were enthusiastic about the apparently unlimited possibilities of the human mind, much in the same way as their colleagues in the West (Maksimov, 2018).

Theoretical foundations for the military applications of automatic control were worked out in the USA already during the Second World War, among mathematicians and engineers. In the postwar years those considerations contributed significantly to the concept of “electronic battlefield.” Exactly in 1949, when Węgrzyn defended his MA at Silesian University of Technology, some 10 thousand kilometers westwards, at MIT, theoretical works on SAGE (Semi Automatic Ground Environment) started. A new field for computers emerged. Next to the pure calculations for scientific purposes, there were now new performances possible, such as identifying, tracking and visualizing targets in air and space (anti-ballistic and anti-atomic defense), programmed for the computing machines (Edwards 1996). Along with the miniaturization of structures in general (from vacuum tubes via transistors, up to the integrated circuits in the late '50s) and the reduction of energy consumption by computers, their embedment in missiles and in guiding systems became applicable and since the '60s even indispensable for keeping the pace in the arms' race. Simultaneously, many other fields for computer equipment emerged, such as big data storage and processing, communication (including cryptography) and “computer numerical control” (CNC) of production in almost every branch of industry. Finally, in the '80s, computers aided design and manufacturing.

Within this context I would like to point out an exciting moment in the history of Polish scientific-technical intelligence (STI), that almost perfectly

coincided with the first attempts to recruit Węgrzyn by an officer of the security service. Polish intelligence operating in the field of industrial espionage suffered probably its biggest disaster in early 1961, as its talented chief, colonel Michal Goleniewski, betrayed communist Poland and escaped to Germany and then the USA, becoming one of the most spectacular and devastating defectors of the entire Cold War period. Coincidentally, there was also a second defector that must be mentioned here, not because of his line of work for Polish intelligence, but because of the location he was assigned to – Paris, France. Captain Władysław Mróz was a high ranking, so called illegal officer, i.e. a spy not affiliated to the Polish embassy or consulate (where normally spies were working undercover as councilors or attachés) and thus operating without diplomatic immunity. In the late '50s he disclosed to the French counterintelligence (Sûreté Générale, DST) around 20 high valued agents recruited by Polish intelligence in France, mostly very devoted to communism-socialism and with ties to prominent French politicians. His activity was however detected by the Polish counterintelligence and he was assassinated in October 1960 in the outskirts of Paris (Bagieński 2017 vol. 2, 291-295, 349-354).

There is finally in the background the French-Polish rapprochement during the tenure of Charles de Gaulle as a French President (1959-1969) and the combined tenure of the duo composed of the first secretary of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) Władysław Gomułka and Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz (1956-1970) (Pasztor 2003). In 1961 an agreement between the French Embassy in Poland and the newly established PPR Committee for the Foreign Economics and Scientific-Technical Cooperation was signed, resulting in setting up the Centre de Documentation Française Scientifique et Technique in Warsaw. Subsequently, in 1965 France and Poland signed an agreement on cultural and scientific-technical exchange. In 1962 barely 20 Polish scientists went for research to France, but there were already 100 of them by 1968. French-Polish cooperation culminated in 1967 during de Gaulle's visit in Poland. There were also tangible economic and scientific effects of the French connections. In the late '60s the Thomson company agreed to sell advanced dual-use items (transistors and other equipment for cable communication) to Poland, ignoring the CoCom embargo imposed on these categories of know-how<sup>1</sup>.

The political context outlined above is meant to enable us to better understand the ambience in which both our actors were developing their relationship during the late '50s and throughout the '60s. France started to play a significant role in the Polish foreign trade and in Poland's access to western high-tech. Simultaneously, thanks to the Goleniewski case, NATO countries had been alerted about the sophisticated human intelligence methods applied by the East to obtain access to Western technical achievements. Therefore, Węgrzyn and Gille contacts on the one hand were supported by the détente

and overall relaxation and on the other hand impeded by the organic mistrust slumbering beneath the official surface. I reconstructed successfully a large part of the “Węgrzyn-Gille” story – at least regarding the factual aspect – due to the excellently preserved archival material: case files of security services, counterintelligence and intelligence services. I will be referring to these files in the endnotes as follows:

1. AIPN [Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw]: files of intelligence service;

2. AIPN Ka [Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance – Regional Branch in Katowice]: files of security service and counterintelligence.

Moreover some other archival sources were explored in order to collect additional information:

3. APS [Archive of the University of Technology in Gliwice], personal files of Stefan Węgrzyn;

4. NARA [National Archives and Records Administration College Park/MA]: background documents.

### *The Birth of a Promising Agent*

Stefan Węgrzyn was born in 1925 in Kraków, but later (1930) moved with his parents to Borysław, in eastern Poland (today Ukraine), probably because of his father’s work as chemical engineer. Borysław was then a pillar of the Polish Oil Industry. Stefan was attending elementary school in Borysław and high school in Lwów. He stayed in that region during the war time both under the Soviet occupation (1939-1941) and under the German occupation that followed in 1941-1944. During the latter period he worked for Railways, and for some time cooperated with the Polish Underground (Armia Krajowa). After the liberation by the Soviet Army he started his studies at the Faculty of Electricity at the Lwów Technical University, but soon, along with thousands of others, was resettled from the Eastern Territories (lost by Poland to USSR) to the recently obtained former German Western Territories. Here in Gliwice (Gleititz) he continued his study at the Technical University, established in 1945<sup>2</sup>.



Young S. Węgrzyn. Source IPN

Węgrzyn gained his doctoral degree in 1951 at the age of 26. In 1955 he started to work for the Institute for Basic Problems of Technique in the Polish Academy of Sciences.

He launched a research project on the theory of communication. In the second half of the '50s, Węgrzyn participated in numerous international conferences abroad – in Czechoslovakia, Italy, USSR, West Germany and Hungary. He was then frequently coming into contact with foreign scholars. Presumably at some of those events he approached, or he was approached, by French scientist Jean Charles Gille. Shortly thereafter Węgrzyn received an invitation from the French company Société d'Électronique et d'Automatisme (SEA), that since its establishing in 1948 was intensively developing control systems as one of the pioneering enterprises on the European continent. The company was also cooperating with another one of the big players of the emerging French computer market, Bull and Thomson (Cortada 2012, 112-124)<sup>3</sup>. Interestingly, at the beginning of the '50s SEA's specialists designed calculating machines for the French foreign intelligence services (Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage SDECE) for cryptographic purposes<sup>4</sup>.

The major goal of the fellowship granted to Węgrzyn was to accomplish his second Ph.D. thesis on physics and defend it, this time in France<sup>5</sup>. His scholarship in France made Węgrzyn for the first time an interesting candidate to recruitment by intelligence service. Warsaw Central assessed Węgrzyn as a promising source in the area of STI. Therefore, before his first trip to France in October 1958, Węgrzyn was approached by the intelligence officer Julian Szczygieł, lieutenant of the Division VI of I Department in the Ministry for Internal Affairs, a unit responsible for STI. In 1960, Szczygieł was assigned to the undercover intelligence station at the Polish embassy in Brussel, where he served until 1965 working along the STI-line (Bagieński 2017 vol. 2, 503).

Węgrzyn agreed to share interesting material regarding the technology and research programs of SEA (after his return to Poland), however he was unequivocally negative about any kinds of mediation between French colleagues he was going to meet during his fellowship and Polish intelligence's officer codename "Paweł" on the French soil. "Paweł" was lieutenant Witold Dominiak who served in French station of STI in 1956-1961. Węgrzyn refused to meet the latter at all (Bagieński 2017 vol. 2, 517). He admitted that he understood the need of STI, although he expressed at the same time his concerns regarding his future career in case his ties to intelligence would have been discovered by the French counterintelligence<sup>6</sup>. Despite this reluctance and despite collecting some negative reports with regard to his political views, security service accepted his scholarship and permitted Węgrzyn to travel abroad, hoping to maintain this connection and develop it in the future.

Meanwhile, Węgrzyn did not waste his precious time in France. He managed to establish close ties to numerous leading French scientists dealing with automatic control, which was at that time a worldwide blooming science discipline.

*Prodigy Child?*

After returning to Poland in 1959, Węgrzyn was asked for reports on his one-year long stay in France. In the Headquarters of the Polish intelligence service special attention was then paid to his most important friend, Jean Charles Gille (also Gille-Maisani). Quickly it turned out that Gille was a recognized expert on missiles guiding systems<sup>7</sup>. He participated in the project of the antitank missile MGM-21A MCLOS - Manual Command to Line of



Young J.Ch.Gille. Source IPN

Sight – a weapon that subsequently was produced by Nord Aviation (later Aérospatiale) as SS-10 (NATO signature). The research project was supervised by another interesting person - colonel Jean-Marie Bastien Thiery. In 1963 Thiery organized the assassination of General de Gaulle and failed. Subsequently he was prosecuted and executed in the same year. Gille was one of the witnesses during the trial. Furthermore, Gille's scientific projects on automatic control and bionics were sponsored and financed by the US Air Force and Canadian government<sup>8</sup>.

Gille was born in 1924 in Trier (Germany), where his father served as military in the French Army occupying Rheinland as a result of the First World War. In the course of investigation undertaken by the Polish intelligence, counterintelligence and security services, some intriguing biographical facts, as well as relevant abilities of Gille came out.

In the first half of the '40s (probably in 1943) Gille graduated from École Polytechnique as engineer and continued his studies at Sorbonne University. In the second half of the '40s (perhaps in 1946) he moved to the USA for studying automatic control's applications in aircrafts at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After having returned to France, approximately at the turn of the '40s to '50s, he started to lecture at the prominent École Nationale Supérieure de l'Aéronautique (ENSA) in Paris (established in 1909) and at Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches de Toulouse (CERT)<sup>9</sup>. Sometimes during the '50s he was conducting research at Università degli Studi di Napoli, receiving an additional Ph. D. in medical sciences. In the mid-60s he abandoned France for good for Université Laval Quebec where he stayed until the end of his career (Gessing 1996)<sup>10</sup>.

Gille was promoted to colonel presumably during his duty at ENSA, which functioned as a military school. The French professor was doubtlessly

multi-talented – he studied and then lectured aeronautics, automatic control and bionics. He authored a textbook translated to many languages titled “Feedback control systems: Analysis, synthesis, and design,” published in the McGraw-Hill series related to control systems engineering. He also spoke several foreign languages fluently, including Polish.

His exceptional intellectual capabilities find confirmation in the complexity and diversity of problems he tackled throughout the rest of his career. During the ‘70s and ‘80s he shifted from automatic control and bionics toward psychology and psychiatry, publishing on the psychology of handwriting, as well as works dedicated to the analysis of various poets’ (Gille-Maisani 1977) and composers’ handwriting styles (Gille-Maisani 1978). He even published an impressive analytical work on the famous Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, translated to Polish (Gille-Maisani 1987a) and several other books<sup>11</sup>. Gilles’s “Psychologie de l’écriture: Suite à l’abc de la graphologie” has been reprinted several times (first time in 1984, recently in 2008), and translated to Italian and English (Gille-Maisani 1987b).

#### *Gathering Intelligence on Węgrzyn and Gille*

In January 1960, Węgrzyn went to France for the second time, again without any of the usual objections coming from suspicious security services and without any commitment toward the intelligence services. He successfully defended his doctoral thesis receiving his doctoral degree from the University of Toulouse. Węgrzyn managed also to establish new connections. Among those there was another interesting scientist - Jean Gilbert Lagasse, who worked for the Energy Laboratory in Toulouse. In the course of 1960 and 1961 Węgrzyn was striving to organize visits of his friends in Poland as a kind of reciprocity for the French generosity. Presumably he again did not encounter any substantial obstacles<sup>12</sup>.

We may assume that the intelligence service was then totally devastated by the treason of colonel Goleniewski (see above), but starting in 1961 STI began to recover and – very cautiously – extend its spy-network. Between the years 1957-1963 STI provided the Polish “clients” in industry and R&D approximately 100 solutions annually, covering crucial branches of economy: energy, mining, metallurgy and machine industry, communication, electronics and computer science, chemical industry including plastics, pharmacy and oil, gas and coal chemical processing<sup>13</sup>. Though no accurate data exists on the financial benefits brought by industrial espionage for the Polish economy during this early stage of STI’s development, we now know that for instance in the year 1971 STI-operations helped to save some 50 Million USD and by 1989 it was already ten times more, going from nearly 20 employees and

approximately 150 sources in 1960 up to nearly 140 officers and several Hundreds informants worldwide in 1989<sup>14</sup>.

In October 1961, Gille and Lagasse arrived in Poland. They were accompanied by Pierre Vidal, an assistant of Lagasse who lived in Poland for the entire academic year 1961/1962, working as a fellow for Węgrzyn's Institute in Gliwice. Finally, Adam Bukowy – an assistant of Węgrzyn, went to France for the academic year 1962-1963. In 1962, Węgrzyn became contract (assistant) professor at Politechnika Śląska and also went to France for the third time<sup>15</sup>.

It is difficult to point out when exactly the STI chief decided to try again to recruit Węgrzyn, but as late as the summer of 1962, the counterintelligence launched another procedure to gather information on Węgrzyn, on both his private environment and work place. Several personal sources in Gliwice and Warsaw were asked about the talented scientist. SB (security service) also unofficially interrogated the Dean of the Faculty of Electricity. Moreover, new secret collaborators who had direct access to Węgrzyn were recruited<sup>16</sup>.

In the beginning of 1963, Węgrzyn traveled to France for the fourth time. By that occasion the Polish professor was presented to another distinguished scientist – René Jean Boudarel, who was employed at the Institute for the Atomic Research in Paris. The two men found quickly a common language and got acquainted. Subsequently Węgrzyn invited his new colleague to attend the PAN (Polish Academy of Sciences) conference in Jabłonna in October 1963<sup>17</sup>.

In July 1963 the KGB informed its Polish counterpart about the possible Gille's involvement into the cooperation with French foreign military intelligence service. According to the KGB estimations during the IFAC (International Federation of Automatic Control) conference in USSR in 1960, Gille was secretly capturing pictures of military facilities, downloading ground samples and finally contacting a French military attaché. Therefore suspicion turned to be relevant for both Polish and Soviet security, since Węgrzyn initiated talks with Soviet scholars from Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN) in late 1963, pushing on broadening the Polish-Soviet cooperation and scientific exchange in the area of automatic control<sup>18</sup>.

Meanwhile Węgrzyn went to the International Federation of Automatic Control (IFAC) conference in Basel (Switzerland), that took place at the turn of August and September 1963. He presumably met there for the first time captain Sergiusz Gromotowicz – an intelligence officer from Warsaw HQ, who was working undercover in the Polish Embassy in Bern during 1960-1961 (Bagieński, 2017 vol. 2, 500). Gromotowicz was visiting the conference staying disguised as a Polish manager. As a result of some more or less incidental conversations with Węgrzyn, captain Gromotowicz came to the conclusion that the recruitment of the Polish scientist had to be attempted again

immediately. In the memo addressed to his commander he pointed out several basic traits of Węgrzyn that made him a promising candidate, especially his brilliant mind and wide contacts in the international scholars' society. Among disadvantages, there was however noted Węgrzyn's reluctance towards political issues and his indiscernible engagement for communist or patriotic ideas. Furthermore, Węgrzyn was described as hotheaded (impulsive), eccentric, and megalomaniac<sup>19</sup>.

In the autumn of 1963, Węgrzyn's flat and phone were wiretapped. His mail was already screened by the security service since February 1963<sup>20</sup>. Węgrzyn received the code name "Dalmer," while Gille was called "Laser" in the secret police's documents.

### *The Failed Recruitment of "Dalmer"*

Despite Węgrzyn's capability to be an agent with huge prospects, captain Gromotowicz was aware of the professor's reluctance (or at least distance) toward SB and considered various options of recruitment. The one based on the so called "kompromaty" (i. e. material useful in blackmailing) was rejected on the early stage of procedure. The questioning of the secret collaborators staying close to the young scientist proved that Węgrzyn was an honest employee, eager to help colleagues by solving mathematical or technical problems and refused payment even though his solutions helped others gain money.

Another scenario i.e. recruitment, based on the illicit or morally condemned sexual behavior, was also abandoned, since no evidence indicating ambiguous contacts with women or homosexuality were found. One may however doubt whether the investigation in that direction was run at all. The suspicions regarding Węgrzyn's homosexuality was expressed only once in the security service's reports<sup>21</sup>. There were some indications to bolster such a hypothesis. Both Węgrzyn and Gille were single, without families (or at least there were no mentions at all concerning Gille's family) and their friendship was apparently very deep and lasted for a long time, including mutual visiting and endorsement in scientific careers (both received Doctor Honoris Causa thanks to the mutual supporting steps taken by Węgrzyn in Poland and Gille in France).

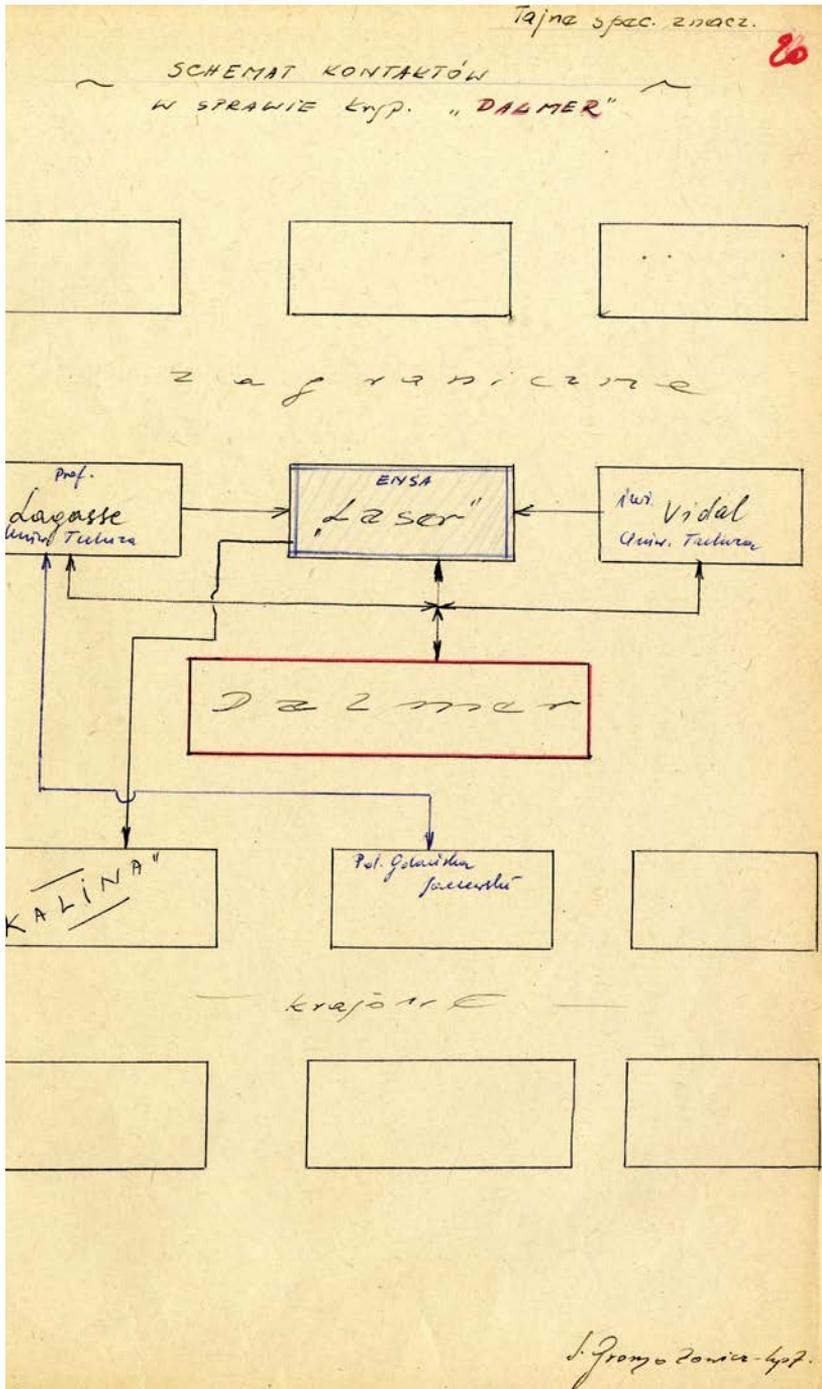
Anyway, Gromotowicz took into account that Węgrzyn might have not agreed to the cooperation, and in such a case scenario he considered addressing the Ministry for the Higher Education with a request to ban foreign travels for Węgrzyn. The actual reason for that kind of severe measures was however not the possible refusal of cooperation with Polish STI, but the possible betrayal of national interests (i.e. disclosure of technical data on scientific projects) in favor of the French intelligence<sup>22</sup>.

In January 1964, Węgrzyn took over the Chair of Theory of Regulation in the freshly established Faculty of Automatic Control of the Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice, the first such faculty countrywide. Exactly at that moment he was (in a certain café in Warsaw) formally enlisted as a secret collaborator of Polish intelligence by captain Gromotowicz. Węgrzyn accepted regular debriefings with the officer of the Polish intelligence. The reason why Węgrzyn eventually agreed can be only hypothesized. One can assume that he was simply afraid of possible refusal of passport/travel abroad permission, that would de facto mean the end of his international foreign career, and therefore decided to try to come to a compromise with the SB, and keep providing the security services at least some apparently harmless information on his French friends and his job. First talks referred indeed to his overall knowledge of French colleagues and were fruitful from the intelligence service's point of view. Węgrzyn told Gromotowicz that he had received a proposal for lecturing at a certain Canadian University. Furthermore, he also mentioned that he had been approached by the US Navy officials with the proposal of joining the group of international scholars working on various mathematical solutions applied in automatic control<sup>23</sup>.

In February 1964, Węgrzyn visited France for the fifth time, attending the Ph. D. defense of his former fellow, Pierre Vidal. After his return to Poland, he met Gromotowicz and shared some information from the trip. He also admitted that the research facilities in Paris and Toulouse he had visited are involved in some military projects referring to missiles guiding systems for the French Army, but only in the theoretical dimension (without R&D works). He reported about establishing a new contact - with Dr. Jacques Richalet from ENSA (Richalet came to visit Poland in 1965)<sup>24</sup>.

During the following debriefings with Gromotowicz in the summer of 1964, Węgrzyn shared with the officer another intriguing information, namely that sometime in his past Lagasse had been perceived as a candidate for the position of French cultural attaché in Moscow, but he had not been appointed eventually<sup>25</sup>. In autumn 1964, Węgrzyn informed Gromotowicz that in some power-plants in France and Belgium additional jet engines were installed, in order to maintain energy production in case of destruction of other facilities during the warfare<sup>26</sup>.

Eventually in the early 1965, the chief of the Division VII (scientific-technical intelligence/until 1961 named Division VI) of the intelligence service, colonel Adam Krzysztoporski (who became later in the '80s deputy minister of internal affairs), ordered Gromotowicz to convince the Polish professor to make a more intense effort and collect more detailed and sensitive data on his foreign friends. Moreover, Węgrzyn was going to be charged with concrete tasks aimed at acquisition of know-how of so called non-destructive methods for testing, examination, inspection and evaluation of material (NDT).



Wegrzyn map of contacts sketched by captain S. Gromotowicz around 1960. Source IPN.

Following debriefing did not leave Węgrzyn anymore with free maneuvering space and was a turning point in his contacts with the intelligence services. From now on, he had to take a decision whether to be or not an agent and at the same time to choose whom he wanted to stay loyal to. Eventually, Węgrzyn definitely refused further contacts with intelligence representatives and immediately withdrew from further collaboration<sup>27</sup>.

After a few failed attempts to reestablish the broken contact with Węgrzyn, Polish security apparatus launched surveillance-operations, which lasted for more than ten years. According to a new hypothesis of the Polish counter-intelligence branch, which took over the case files of both professors, Gille could have been an agent of the French military intelligence trying to recruit Węgrzyn and penetrate deeper into the Polish scholar's society as well as R&D institutions<sup>28</sup>.

For some short period of time, Gromotowicz believed that a third approach to Węgrzyn was still possible. He was therefore continuously tracking Węgrzyn's activity without undertaking any precaution measures against him, as for example requesting a ban by security services for his travelling abroad. In 1966, some interesting news about Węgrzyn and his French connection emerged. Secret collaborators reported that at the PAN conference on automatic control, artificial intelligence and bionics in Jabłonna, there were two guests from France, both bearing military ranks. SB did not however – for unknown reasons – investigate that story<sup>29</sup>. Eventually in the autumn 1967, Węgrzyn's case was passed on from the intelligence branch to the counterintelligence branch, and in the beginning of 1968 transferred to the department responsible for the surveillance on universities, journalists, artists and intellectuals. The reason was simple: the regional branch of that department of the Ministry for Internal Affairs had an extensive network of secret collaborators among the employees of the Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice and respectively among the PAN scientists, and thanks to those assets was able to track down almost every move of Węgrzyn<sup>30</sup>.

Already during 1968, agents managed to collect negative opinions expressed by the colleagues and subordinates of Węgrzyn in his Institute. Węgrzyn was blamed for his authoritarian rule and even scientific incompetency<sup>31</sup>. One should be cautious about such allegations, which could sometimes be symptoms of pure envy or spitefulness.

### *Tracking the "Laser" in Poland*

Together with the second approach to Węgrzyn in 1963, the intelligence started to collect data on Gille. Warsaw Central (Division VII of the First Department) set up an appropriate case file and until 1969 it was considering

Gille's recruitment an option, for the purpose of scientific-technical intelligence. It however dropped this idea, reaching the conclusion that he had been somehow entangled in the western intelligence community.

In 1970, Węgrzyn was personally visited by the chief of regional security service and warned not to move too far in his ties with his French colleague, who – as the SB chief surprisingly straightforward admitted – could have been a spy. The reason for the visit was an upcoming fellowship of Gille in Gliwice. What was even more peculiar, the SB chief refused to install wiretap in Węgrzyn's telephone – a



J.Ch.Gille under observation. Source IPN, 1970]

measure that was requested by the counterintelligence branch before Gille's visit. Simultaneously, the same measure (i.e. wiretap) was applied against the other researcher from Węgrzyn's institute who was familiar with Gille – dr Olgierd Palusiński. Palusiński received his Ph. D. at Lille University in 1968. His visits to France were obviously results of Węgrzyn's excellent connections. Interestingly, in 1976 Palusiński left Poland for the US and was then employed as an Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering at University of Arizona<sup>32</sup>.

Gille came to Gliwice for the first time in 1961 – as mentioned above. He visited Poland for the second time in 1963 (officially invited by the Automatic Institute of PAN), then again in 1964 (invited by the Polish Society for Cybernetics), and in 1967 (to receive *Honoris Causa* from Silesian University of Technology – probably as reciprocity for granting Węgrzyn with *Honoris Causa* from the Lille University same year). The fifth trip took place in 1969 and included consultations on a joint research project, that he prepared together with Węgrzyn and Vidal. On that occasion, Gille participated in talks with the representatives of the Institute for Metallurgy in Gliwice and

witnessed the habilitation of Dr. Ryszard Gessing – another Węgrzyn’s colleague in the Faculty<sup>33</sup>.

After his arrival to Poland in 1970, Gille’s phone was put under surveillance in his hotel apartment. Furthermore, he was constantly observed by the employees of the division “B” (observation) of SB, who also captured pictures of him. There was also a hidden video camera planned to be installed in his apartment, but the documents that could confirm such a step are missing<sup>34</sup>.

According to final SB estimations, during his half-year research-stay in Poland in 1970, Gille did not leave any hard evidence of intelligence gathering. There were barely presumptive evidences that could possibly confirm his ability to take advantage of the tradecraft. For instance, according to an SB analysis, he was deliberately putting cakes’ crumbs on the notebooks and paper sheets in apartment, that were discovered during the secret search by the security service, a method applied by spies to detect any unauthorized activity in their rooms (also used in bookcases, desks etc.)<sup>35</sup>.

### *Losing Interest in the Suspicious Francophile*

In the ‘70s, SB focused more on possible negligence or embezzlements in Węgrzyn’s run institute, instead of following the investigation trail of his possible treason and cooperation with the French intelligence. There were a couple of minor abuses tracked down that might have discredited Węgrzyn. For example, when the professor went for lecture to Novosibirsk (USSR) in 1971, somebody denounced Węgrzyn’s alleged misuse of computers at Silesian University of Technology and in PAN. According to a certain informant, expensive computers were used for improper goals. SB ignored this information<sup>36</sup>. Same happened to the allegedly suspicious case of purchasing of Iris-80 computers, produced by the French-American joint venture of CII and IBM. The deal was intensively lobbied by Węgrzyn and the French Embassy in 1973. SB’s sources claimed Węgrzyn had some financial benefits from the transaction<sup>37</sup>. The professor was also ineffectively accused of mismanagement during the implementation of the governmental project “Automatization of production processes,” which he supervised as a leading expert<sup>38</sup>. SB did not try to charge Węgrzyn and eventually terminated his surveillance in 1976.

Despite all those doubts, Węgrzyn was twice awarded with the Medal for Merit, in 1975 and in 1976, the first time for his contribution to the development of the Polish Navy, the second time for his achievements in the area of arms industry of PPR. Unfortunately, the precise justification of those honors is not clear. Presumably, it was classified because of state security reasons<sup>39</sup>. In the second half of the ‘80s, intelligence officers borrowed Węgrzyn files from

the Archive of Ministry for Internal Affairs, but no operations were confirmed on his person after 1976.

In 1977, Węgrzyn received *Honoris Causa* from the Université de Sherbrooke Quebec. In 1977 and in 1983 he was granted prominent honors in France as well. His friendship with Gille continued, as well as their mutual visiting<sup>40</sup>. The culmination of their scientific cooperation came in 1987, as Węgrzyn, Vidal and Gille presented a joint paper at IFAC session in Munich, and then in 1990 they published their research in Springer-Verlag *Developmental systems: at the crossroads of system theory, computer science, and genetic engineering*.

Węgrzyn died in 2011 in Gliwice, Gille already in 1995, in Quebec City.

### *Lesson Learned. Conclusions and Intriguing Questions*

The poor quality of security service's work and unsatisfied outcomes of surveillance seem nowadays astonishing and embarrassing. After a lecture of Węgrzyn's or Gille's case files we do not know any significant details regarding the personal lifestyle of them both, for example referring to addictions, free time occupations, friends and family environment, political or philosophical views.

Węgrzyn's case study shows convincingly that the revenge or punishment for disobedience towards the security service might not have been a rule in the communist state. Though security services often demanded cooperation in the form of at least sharing information, in most cases there was no harm done to the scholars for refusing to cooperate. This is a conclusion based on an extrapolation of analysis of over a dozen cases I and other researchers have scrutinized so far. Unfortunately, nowadays the communist security apparatus in PPR, especially the one that functioned after the significant relaxation of the regime in the post-1956 period, is often demonized and its influence exaggerated.

There is a lot of evidence found in documents produced by security services that those scholars who were ready and eager to cooperate, were later supported during their submissions to scholarships and received travel-grants abroad. So one can talk about a sort of discrimination in their favor and corruption resulted from the interests of the security services. Nonetheless, the broadly shared opinion that the scientists who wanted to go abroad had to decide either to cooperate with the security service or to renounce to travel is generally false. An average scholar who went out to UK, France or West Germany agreed indeed to cooperate, but he did not contribute to the knowledge of intelligence significantly, because he usually shared only open source information, often very banal, and later used to refuse to continue his cooperation.

Obviously, one must admit that regarding the Węgrzyn case more research is needed. At least Gille's adventure at MIT and Harvard and his early stage of career in the French Military have to be clarified in detail. Moreover, the Soviet-connections of the Gille case require further examination in both Russian and French security service's archives, which sounds quite impossible nowadays, due to the fact that they remain secret. Was colonel Gille really going to recruit professor Węgrzyn for the French intelligence? And if so, did he succeed?

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