

## **The career trajectories in security apparatus of the Polish People's Republic A study in the social foundations of dictatorship.**

**(description for general audience)**

Secret police, along with political apparatus of a ruling party or administration, creates backbone of authoritarian regimes. Its pivotal role in Central and Eastern European communist regimes is well recognized. While it was extensively studied in general, truly little research have been dedicated to complete, statistical dissection of career patterns, that is going beyond certain biographies and descriptive case studies. From an institutional point of view, however, it is crucial to establish the channels of recruitment and promotion within this apparatus to fully understand 'physiology' of the regime.

The project aims at conducting large scale analysis of career patterns of secret police officers in communist Poland, thus explaining social and political processes that shaped the cadres of security apparatus of PRL and revealing how they were changing over time. The envisaged study will contribute both to our knowledge on the mechanism of the state violence and on the roots of the regime's social support. The uniqueness of the project comes not only from research questions it poses, yet also from methodology it employs. For the first time in the historiography of the 20th century big data will be harnessed to such an extent. Nearly one hundred thousand individual career paths spanning the period from 1944 to 1989 will be meticulously traced in search of patterns and models.