

EKATERINA NECHAEVA  
Università degli Studi di Siena  
and  
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

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**DOUBLE AGENTS IN THE INTELLIGENCE  
SERVICE UNDER JUSTINIAN  
EVIDENCES OF PROCOPIUS OF CAESARIA<sup>1</sup>**

*Abstract:* Evidences of Procopius of Caesaria show that certain changing occurred in the system of intelligence at his times. It seems possible to suppose that Justinian carried out a kind of a reform. Main accent was made on using “double agents”, by bribing the foreign ones. This method was used mainly towards Persia and marks a high level of development of intelligence services in both superpowers.

Espionage was a widespread and elaborated medium of information gathering throughout the whole of Ancient Greek and Roman history<sup>2</sup>. In the Late Antiquity intelligence also was one of the most important methods of military activity, diplomacy and foreign policy.

Although the topic of intelligence system was hardly an “open” one, we still possess considerably wide evidence for the problem<sup>3</sup>. One may divide those, who were involved in the spy activity in foreign

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge my special indebtedness to A. D. Lee who was so kind as to give in my full possession the following articles on the subject: A. D. Lee, 1) “Procopius, Justinian and the kataskopoi”, *Classical Quarterly*, 39, 1989, 569–572; 2) “Naval intelligence in Late Antiquity”, *L'information et la mer dans le monde Antique*, École Française de Rome, 2002, 93–112. I also want to express here my particular gratitude to B. Scardigli, L. R. Cresci, A. Gillett, A. Egorov and N. Zhizhina for their opinion, comments and criticism of the text and to D. Bratkin for his help in translating it into English.

<sup>2</sup> C. G. Starr, *Political Intelligence in Classical Greece*, Brill, 1974; J. A. Richmond, “Spies in Ancient Greece”, *Greece and Rome*, 45, 1, 1998, 1–18; G. Brizzi, “I sistemi informative dei Romani, principi e realtà nell’età delle conquiste oltremare (218–168 a.C.)”, *Historia*, 39, 1982, 176–282.

<sup>3</sup> The most important treatment of the subject to be found in:

A. D. Lee: 1) *Information and Frontiers. Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 1993; the author explores patterns, principles and system of foreign relations of Late Roman Empire, paying special attention to the issues of data collecting; a number of his articles treat the particular point more closely:

relations into several areas: military tactical reconnaissance and strategic intelligence; scouts; fixed-post spies, working in the enemy territory covertly; bribed inhabitants of the territory of adversary; deserters and traitors, those acting under the guise of merchants or diplomats. The terms used by our sources are various (*speculatores, exploratores, excursatores, procuratores, κατίσκοποι / σκοποί* etc.) and seem not to be consistently used<sup>4</sup>. The main purpose of every intelligent operation first of all was of collecting the information on different military questions. This relates to “professional” spies (scouts and resident “moles”) and also those who were “spies” along with their main duty (diplomats, merchants). “Military men paid close attention to the equipment, skills, tactics, and character of various enemies”<sup>5</sup>. Collection of ethnic, social and cultural information was of great importance, especially when it dealt with barbarian peoples. Such observations could be in some way reflected for instance in the late antique military treatises, which contain professional instructions of using the espionage and intelligence as well<sup>6</sup>. There are numerous

2) “Embassies as Evidence for the Movement of Military Intelligence between the Roman and Sasanian Empires,” *The Defense of the Roman and Byzantine East, Proceedings of a Colloquium held at the University of Sheffield in April 1986*, ed. by P. Freeman and D. Kennedy, *BAR IS*, 297 (ii), 1986, 455–461. 3) “Procopius, Justinian and the kataskopoi”...

R.C. Blockley: 1) *East Roman Foreign Policy. Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius*, Wiltshire, 1992. The second part contains a survey of the intelligence (pp. 132-133.). 2) “The Coded Message in Ammianus Marcellinus 18.6.17-19”, *Echos du Monde Classique, Classical views*, 30, 5, 1, 63–65. Which deals specially with military and political intelligence in the Roman World is: N.J.E. Austin, N.B. Rankov, *Exploratio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the second Punic War to the battle of Adrianople*, London, 1995, though it doesn't cover formally the late period still the authors often give analogies and examples from the 6-th centuries and even later.

See also S.N.C. Lieu Warwick, “Captives, Refugees and Exiles: A Study of Cross-Frontier Civilian Movements and Contacts Between Rome and Persia from Valerian to Jivian I”, *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East...*, II, 475–505 and especially 491–495, which treat the problem of spies.

<sup>4</sup> “Exploratores”, *RE*, Bd.7.2, coll. 1690–1693, 1909; “Nachrichtenwesen”, *RE*, Bd.16.2, coll. 1496–1541, 1935; “Spionage”, *Der Neue Pauly*, Bd.11, 2001; “Exploratores”, *Der Neue Pauly*, Bd.4, 1998; N.J.E. Austin, N.B. Rankov, *Exploratio...*, 12-60. Terminology is specially discussed by A.D. Lee and the author concludes that it “is of little help in trying to discern how they were organised”: Lee A.D. *Information and Frontiers...*, 171-172.

<sup>5</sup> Eric McGeer, “Intelligence, Military and Political”, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, Oxford, 1991, 1002.

<sup>6</sup> The problem of espionage is discussed in the following treatises: *Περί Στρατηγίας*, 42 - “περί κατασκόπων”, describing in details how to use a spy (ed. and tr. by G.T. Dennis, “The Anonymous Byzantine Treatise on Strategy”, *Three Byzantine Military Treaties*, Washington, 1985). If this treatise does in fact date back to the mid-6-th century and was written during the reign of Justinian, it shows

issues worthy of interest for an intelligence officer, which varied from the general political situation to the psychological features of the enemy ruler<sup>7</sup>.

What follows later is a commentary on the certain passages of Procopius of Caesaria, made in order to reconstruct the basic features of the intelligence service under Justinian I<sup>8</sup>.

Twice in the course of his text Procopius makes a lengthy digression, treating the issues of espionage in full (Procop. *B.P.* 1.21.11-17; Procop. *H.A.* 30.12-14). Not only these fragments provide evidence for the existence of the intelligence service as a well-established institution of the two super-powers of the world, i.e. Roman and Persian Empires, but they prove that the enemy spies were entices as well.

We are highly indebted to Procopius as our main source. He seems to be a true expert on the subject, since he used to serve as a consiliarius (Procop. *B.P.* 1.1.3; 1.12.24), then as an assessor (Procop. *B.V.* 1.14.3) of Belizarius. Moreover, he was entrusted with certain exploration missions (Procop. *B.V.* 1.14.3-15)<sup>9</sup>. Thus “he was in a good position to observe and to understand what was going on in the field, and ... he had a wide range of interests and knowledge, both military and non-military, modern and antiquarian, which fitted him for writing history...”<sup>10</sup>.

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that in this time the system of using covered spies was rather sophisticated (on this date see: G.T. Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military ...* p.2-3; B. Baldwin, “On the Date of Anonymous *Peri Strategikes*”, *BZ*, 81, 1988, 290-293). *Περί παραδρομής*. 2 - “περί τῶν καμινοβιγλίων καὶ κατασκόπων” (ed. and tr. by G.T. Dennis, “Skirmishing”, *Three Byzantine Military...*) *Ἀνωνύμου Βιβλίον τακτικόν*, 17 - “περί δοικατέρων καὶ κατασκόπων” (ed. and tr. by G.T. Dennis, “Anonymous Book on Tactics”, in *Three Byzantine Military ...*) *Mauric.Str.*, 2.11 - “περί κατασκόπων ἤτοι σκουλακτόρων”; 9,5 - “πῶς δεῖν σκουλκεύειν ἐχθροὺς καὶ πῶς δεῖ ἐξπλοράτορας ἤτοι κατασκόπους κρατεῖν λανθάνειν θέλοντας ἐν τῷ στρατῷ”. (*Das Strategikon des Maurikios*, ed. G.T. Dennis, Wien, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> About various aspects to be observed by a spying envoy see A.D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers...*, p.166-167), quoting an Arab treaty “Siasset namah”, based on the sources from the Sasanian period.

<sup>8</sup> The literature about Procopius is vast, see the most recent and important studies, where the references to the literature are to be found: J.S. Codoñer, “Prokops Anecdota und Justinians Nachfolge”, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 53, 2003, 50; “De Aedificiis: Le texte de Procope et les réalités”, *Antiquité Tardive*, 8, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> B. Rubin, “Prokopios von Kaisareia”, *RE*, Bd.23,1, coll.296-297; 411, 1957.

<sup>10</sup> J. Howard-Johnston, “The Education and Expertise of Procopius”, *De Aedificiis...*, 23.

Having said in his *Persian War* that it had been customary among the Romans and the Persian to maintain spies (*κατσκοποῖ*) at public expense Procopius notices: “Many of these men, as is natural, exert themselves to act in a spirit of loyalty to their nation, while some also betray their secrets to the enemy”<sup>11</sup> (*τούτων πολλοὶ μὲν εὐνοίᾳ, ὡς τὸ εἰκός, χρῆσθαι ἐς τοὺς ὁμογενεῖς ἐν σπουδῇ ἔχουσι, τινὲς δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἐναντίοις προΐενται τὰ ἀπόρρητα*) (Procop. *B.P.1.21.12*), and mentions a certain Persian spy who revealed to Justinian “many things which were taking place among the barbarians”. Hearing this Roman emperor lavished the spy and persuaded him to go back to the Persians and to bring them misinformation about the Hun’s intention to come on the Roman side (Procop. *B.P.1.21.11-17*)<sup>12</sup>.

Procopius writes that Justinian had “already a proof of the man’s truthfulness to him” (*πεῖρῖν τε ἤδη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀληθείας πέρι ἐς αὐτὸν ἔχω*) (Procop. *B.P.1.21.14*), and thus we may suppose that this was not the first occasion of this Persian working for the Roman emperor. One can also presume that he was recruited by Romans, but it is also possible that he could keep on serving for Persia, thus being a double agent.

In *Secret History* Procopius again tells about the system of foreign intelligence in the Roman Empire and Persia. One cannot but notice that the first lines of the two discourses by Procopius almost coincide. Then however Procopius returns to the main topic of his *Secret History*. He condemns Justinian, by imposing on him the guilt of destruction of the whole Roman intelligence system. Procopius says that Chosroes increased the salaries of his spies and knew about all Roman agenda. Justinian in his own turn has reduced these expenses, finally Lazica was captured, since the Romans haven’t got the precise information on the Persian affairs (Procop. *H.A.30.12-14*). Still, two passages about *κατάσκοποι* don’t contradict each other. *Secret History* is a critique of Justinian, which would be impossible in the *Wars*. Procopius seems to have inserted this particular episode in order

<sup>11</sup> Here and further I quote from Procopius as translated by H.B. Dewing, *Procopius, History of Wars*, Loeb Classical Library, vol.1, London, 1979, 197–199. The most important words and passages are also quoted in Greek.

<sup>12</sup> B. Rubin gives such a commentary to this episode: “die Geschichte ist, wenn nicht wahr, doch gut erfunden; die Spionagetätigkeit der beiden Grosstaaten war in Krieg und Frieden sehr rege... Für diesen Zweck waren natürlich viel-sprachliche Eingeborene der armenisch-kaukasischen Durchgangsländer besonders geeignet...” (B. Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Justinians*, Bd. II, Berlin, 1960, 502.). This episode gives no clues to the nationality of the agent. He worked for the Persians and, perhaps, was of the Caucasian origin, but there is no strong reason to doubt the historicity of the whole story.

to add some more clandestine information to the data of the *Bella Persica*, which was a general aim of the *Secret History*<sup>13</sup> (Procop. *H.A.* 1.2-3). But even while speaking about the system of intelligence in the *Persian War*, Procopius doesn't provide an example of a Roman "super-agent", but on the contrary describes a bribed enemy one.

It seems likely that in the time of Justinian the foreign intelligence was a bit redirected: allocations were generally made for recruiting double agents instead of maintaining the existing Roman residents. Chosroes may have provided greater budget for a wider combination of aims, while his Roman counterpart preferred "targeted investment" into particular spies. In this case one may expect some East Roman agents to be bribed by the Persians (which would be the natural development of the story)<sup>14</sup>, while Justinian worked with some of his paid agents on the Persian side. In some reason Procopius could consider this method ineffective, especially perhaps against his own background of practical worker (Procop. *B.V.* 1.14.3-15). Unfortunately, nothing is known about any particular spy operation Procopius may have participated in, apart from the above-mentioned. Thus following J. Howard-Johnston, we should not conclude that intelligence was among the spheres of Procopius' agenda as a member of Belizarius' stuff<sup>15</sup>.

Another episode from the Persian war could be taken into consideration, i.e. that of 547/8<sup>16</sup>. It was the year when Chosroes sent an envoy named Isdigousnas, accompanied by 500 Persians, to the city of Dara under the pretence of a diplomatic mission. Their aim was to set on fire in the buildings at night (Procop. *B.P.* 2.28.31). But this

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<sup>13</sup> Concerning the story of the *Secret History*, its being written and published, see: A. Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century*, London, 1985; J.S. Codoñer, "Prokops Anekdota und Justinians Nachfolge...", 47-53; G. Fatourros, "Zur Prokop-Biographie", *Klio*, 62, 1980, 522; G. Greatrex, "The dates of Procopius' works", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 18, 1994, 101-114; J.A.S. Evans, "The Dates of Procopius' Works: A Recapitulation of the Evidence", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 37, 1996, 301-313.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the situation with *arcani* in Britain. This special group "whose job was to move about among neighboring peoples to the north and report any sign of trouble... was disbanded in 368-369 after it was alleged that they had succumbed to an unsurprising occupation hazard: accepting bribes in return for passing information to the enemy" A.D. Lee, "Espionage", *Late Antiquity, a Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. by G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar, Cambridge, 2000, 431.

<sup>15</sup> J. Howard-Johnston, "The education and expertise ...", 23.

<sup>16</sup> On the date of the mission see: "Isdigousnas Zich", A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. III, Cambridge, 1992 (later *PLRE* -III), 722.

attempt was unsuccessful<sup>17</sup>. After this failure the Persian went to Constantinople under the pretext of the envoy (Procop. *B.P.*2.28.38). Procopius was indignant at the fact that despite all that he had planned Isdigousnas was received by Justinian “with more friendliness and ... with greater honour than any of the other ambassadors of whom we know... For if anyone should count up the money expended and the gifts, which Isdigousnas carried with him when he went away, he will find them amounting to more than ten centenaria of gold” (Procop. *B.P.*2.28.43-44).

This Isdigousnas was sent by Chosroes on five separate embassies to the Romans<sup>18</sup>. The second one took place in 550-551<sup>19</sup>, and in the *Gothic Wars* Procopius is again shocked by the fact that “...Isdigousnas, in possession of money such as no envoy ever carried, and having become ... the wealthiest of all the Persians, departed on the homeward way, for the Emperor Justinian had honoured him in a signal manner and presented him huge sums of money before his dismissal”<sup>20</sup>. At the same time Procopius points out that Isdigousnas was the only ambassador who had no experience of being guarded in any way and with his numerous company enjoyed complete freedom throughout his mission, this doubtless was against common practice<sup>21</sup> (Procop. *B.G.*4.15.19-20).

According to Procopius Isdigousnas spent about 10 months in Roman land. We can suppose that he could hardly leave before just because had got no permission from Justinian<sup>22</sup>. It is quite possible

<sup>17</sup> Persians failed this time because a certain Georgios, Roman by birth and an alleged Roman, a planted informer among the Persians, has warned Romans in advance (Procop. *B.P.*2.28.31). This person is of special interest (on him see also: “Georgios 4”, *PLRE*-III, 514): since he was among the confidants of Belizarius to whom he opened his secrets (τῶν ἀπορρήτων αὐτῷ κοινωνοῦντα) (Procop. *B.P.*2.19.22), not long before that episode with Isdigousnas he had deserted to the Persians (αὐτόμολος) (Procop. *B.P.*2.28.31) and then, as we see, became a “mole”. One can also suppose that he should have brought certain information, maybe a false one, to the Persians as well.

<sup>18</sup> “Isdigousnas Zich”, *PLRE*-III, 722.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 723.

<sup>20</sup> Translation by H.B. Dewing, *Procopius. History of the wars*, Loeb Classical Library, vol.5, London, 1978, 213-215.

<sup>21</sup> Procopius gives a list of things usually prohibited for the envoy in order to prevent their spy intentions. We have many evidences of this practice (e.g. *Men.* 6.1; 23.9. Here and further - the numeration of fragments by Menander according to R.C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, Liverpool, 1985)

<sup>22</sup> Such a practice was also usual: the diplomats couldn't return back home before they were allowed to do it. Sometimes they had to stay for a rather long period of time (eg. *Men.* 23.9; Procop. *B.P.* 2.4.16-26; 2.5.27; *Amm.Marc.* 17.5.15; 17.14.1-3; *Pocop. B.G.* 2.22;).

that the true reason behind all these gracious receptions lay in a wish to keep him in the capital of Eastern Roman Empire, not to let him bring certain information home too early, or to make him see the things, Romans would like Persians to know. Maybe an attempt to recruit that diplomat could have been undertaken while he was staying in Constantinople. The phrase by Procopius that Isdigousnas became one of the richest persons among the Persians is of course too compromising. In such situation one can suppose that the Persian king would be suspicious about the loyalty of his grandee. Yet, it seems important to stress that this text reflects Procopius' own point of view. The sums of money spent by Justinian on that diplomat seem to Procopius to be excessive. He may have known about the alleged recruiting of the envoy and didn't support Justinian's policy in that aspect. Furthermore, Procopius was displeased with the results of the treaty concluded by Justinian and the Persian envoy<sup>23</sup>.

If we accept the "recruiting" hypothesis, we can easily explain the strange favour of the emperor to the potential saboteur, and particular indignation of Procopius. This maybe another piece of evidence that Justinian preferred to hire foreign spies instead of training his own ones. The case of Isdigousnas is very complicated anyway. He was a member of a very noble family<sup>24</sup>. His position at the Persian court was high and he was the main representative of the shah Chosroes at the East Roman court<sup>25</sup>. As A.D. Lee notes "members of the Persian nobility, with whom the king is known on occasion to have consulted in reaching decisions, including those of foreign policy"<sup>26</sup> could also provide the Romans with the information on Persian affairs.

And of course it would be very seductive for the Romans to have such an infopreneur. Naturally the special treatment that Isdigousnas has received at the court of Justinian may have been treated as the evidence against the Persian envoy. We know that after the first mission of 547/8 AD, Braducius a translator, who accompanied Isdigousnas to the Eastern Empire, was executed by Chosroes, suspected of treason since Justinian had treated him too good (Procop.

<sup>23</sup> A.A. Chekalova, *Prokopij Kesarijskij, Vojna s persami, Vojna s vandalami, Tajnaja istorija*, Moskva, 1993 (Commentary 182 to Procop. *B.P.* 2, 28.44) supposes that a special Procopius' indignation because of the expense on this embassy could be caused by the fact that when Belizarius went to Italy for the second time he was not supplied enough.

<sup>24</sup> A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Copenhagen, 1944, 105.

<sup>25</sup> "Isdigousnas Zich", *PLRE-III*, 722-723; E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, vol. II, Paris, 1959, 503-04; N. Garsoïan, "Byzantium and the Sasanians" *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. III (1), Cambridge, 1983, 574.

<sup>26</sup> Lee A.D. *Information and Frontiers...*, 177.

*B.G.4.11.9-10*). Procopius also mentions the fact that Isdigousnas himself was suspected by the Romans of causing the downfall of Braducius (*Procop. B.G.4.11.9*).

So why was Isdigousnas above suspicion? Was he involved in an even more complicated game? It is natural to suppose that the Persian side was also interested in the information the envoy could collect during his stay in the Roman Empire. At the same time he could have transmitted the information, which Persia was willing to pass to the Romans. It is well-known that sometimes the envoys were permitted – or even forced – to see certain things the hosts wanted their guests to be sure about, such as the perfect armies, military steadfastness etc. (*Men. 18.6*; *Pocop. B.P.II.4.16-26*; *2.5.27*; *Men. 10.3*). Since the receiving side was always keen in influencing the envoy and his **a8toÿja**, one may suppose that the ambassador of the highest rank could have been instructed how to keep his adversaries “well (= mis) -informed”, if necessary<sup>27</sup>.

The whole story of Isdigousnas is very uncertain, Procopius seems to stick to his individual opinion on the case, but he doesn't provide the full description and even satisfactory information, instead he uses the language of hints and discontent both about Justinian and Isdigousnas<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> We have numerous evidences of the espionage activities under the diplomatic umbrella (E.g. *Amm.Marc. 18.2.2.*; *Procop. B.V. 1.7.5 -10*; *Amm.Marc. 18.6.17-19*; See also: N.J.E. Austin, N.B. Rankov, “Exploratio...”, 16-25; A.D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers...*, 166-170). And of course the envoys could be a source of the information for both sides. Menander reports the treachery of an Avar envoy, who was bribed by a Roman general and reported the secret avar plans to the Romans (*Men. 5.4*). As an analogue, possibly hardly close, one can remember a fruitless attempt to bribe envoys of Attila to organise a plot against him (*Prisc. 11-15*, the numeration of fragments according to R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, Liverpool, 1983). Strictly speaking this example is another case, but the use of the bribed agents seems to be the characteristic feature of the East Roman foreign policy.

<sup>28</sup> B. Rubin notes that “Isdigousnas muss ihm aus den verschiedensten Gründen unsympatisch sein”, but does not explain the reasons of that special attitude. (B. Rubin, “Prokopios von Kaisareia”, *RE*, Bd. 23.1, coll.510.26, 1956) Other diplomatic missions were undertaken by Isdigousnas: in 557 he negotiated an agreement ending the fighting in Lazica (*Agath. Hist. 4.30.8-9*); in 561 he met Petrus at Dara, where they discussed Armenia and Lazica and negotiated the fifty-year peace (*Men. 6.1*). “Isdigousnas Zich”, *PLRE-III*, 723. In 567/8 he negotiated with Roman envoy John in Persia and managed to trick him (*Men. 9.1-2*). Then he was sent on his last mission to Romans, but fell ill en route and died in a depression when learned that his journey would have no positive result and that his embassy would not succeed. The fortuneless envoy John, who was sent to inform Isdigousnas that he was not to be received in Constantinople, dies soon after that too. (*Men. 9.3*). Unfortunately, this evidence gives us no more information to solve the problem of secret mission of Isdigousnas, though even the circumstances of his death seem to be rather strange and shady.

It seems that in the Late Antiquity, perhaps in the time of Justinian especially, the intelligence systems of both super-powers of the epoch (Rome and Persia) were so advanced, developed and sophisticated that such a kind of double-agent games and misinforming each other was a regular thing. And finally success in war and foreign policy greatly depended on the virtuosity in playing this game.

A.D. Lee also examines the famous fragment of the *Secret History*<sup>29</sup>. He compares that fragment, where Procopius treats the loss of Lazica, which followed Justinian's neglect to the *κατάσκοποι* (Procop. *H.A.*30.12-16), with another one, in which Procopius describes in details, how this territory was lost by the Romans. Chosroes gathered the army and made his preparations for the inroad, "not disclosing the plan to the Persians except those alone to whom he was accustomed to communicate his secrets, and commanding the envoys to tell no one what was being done; and he pretended that he was setting out into Iberia, in order to settle matters there; for a Hunnic tribe, he kept saying in explanation, had assailed the Persian domain at that point". When the spies sent by Belizarius tried to obtain the information they failed to find the truth and passed the misinformation to their general (Procop. *B.P.*2.15.35-16.4).

A.D. Lee points that "Procopius provides two very different explanations for the loss of Lazica". According to the *Secret History*, "Justinian was responsible by virtue of his having abolished *κατάσκοποι* as a result of which the Romans had no forewarning of Persian moves. According to the account in the *Wars*, it was not the absence of *kataskopoi*, but rather their being misled by deliberate Persian disinformation"<sup>30</sup>. A.D. Lee also notices that the evidence by Procopius about total elimination of *κατάσκοποι* contains exaggeration<sup>31</sup>, which is certainly so and one shouldn't take Procopius' rhetorical exclamation too seriously as the evidence of absolute abolishment of the whole institute of secret services.

Thus, one should not make the opposition between the two passages about the loss of Lazica too harsh. They are not "very different explanations" of the same fact, on the contrary one elucidates the other. Roman spies didn't manage to find out something and Persian counterespionage won the game. That shows, according to Procopius, that Roman system was in a poor condition and Chosroes'

<sup>29</sup> A.D. Lee, "Procopius, Justinian and the *kataskopoi*...", 569 – 572.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, 570.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, 571.

methods proved to be more successful. We have some more evidence on the Persian methods of data protecting and deceiving the Romans. Agathias gives us another example of this practice of deceiving the enemy, used by the Persians. Persian commander made a show of being fatally ill. Plan was kept a profound secret and wasn't open even to the closest friends. Thus, the Roman spies, who were deceived by the rumors, submitted this misinformation to their masters (Agath. *Hist.* 2.19). Ammianus Marcellinus tells us that it was very difficult for the Roman spies to collect information on Persian affairs. Both Roman spies and Persian deserters were ignorant about the future, because upon the Persians, who worshiped the god of silence, nobody was informed about the military plans except those who were trustworthy and able to keep silence (Amm. Marc. 21.13.4). This is a natural practice indeed for a state to hide its secrets, but, as it seems from the fragments quoted, Persians were perhaps more successful in this art than others.

Having compared the two fragments by Procopius, A.D. Lee concludes that "it seems reasonable to suggest that *κατάσκοποι* were not in fact disbanded completely but rather that their numbers were reduced... If this were the case, such a reduction would be reflected in less thorough cross-checking and confirmation of intelligence reports, which in turn would account for the ease with which Chosroes misled the Romans as to his intentions in the Caucasus"<sup>32</sup>. Examining these two fragments by Procopius about the loss of Lazica, A.D. Lee doesn't pay attention to the one in the "Wars", also about *κατάσκοποι*, and with extra information about double agent. It seems that if we analyse these three evidences together that could give us a "missing link" – the explanation of Justinian's actions. It would be a strange political decision simply to reduce the number of spies and not to create anything instead. H. Mihăescu<sup>33</sup> provides an important commentary to this situation, noting that secret services could not have been eliminated, but could have been reduced to a certain extent. From his point of view, Justinian probably relied on the treaties of nonaggression, concluded with the Persians, or his financial resources

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, 572. This hypothesis is also supported by D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity. A history of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 BC – AD 562*, Oxford, 1994, 295.

<sup>33</sup> H. Mihăescu, *Procopius din Caesarea. Istoria secretă* (Ediție, critică, traducere și introducere de H. Mihăescu), București, 1972, 229, note 12: "Serviciul de informații, atât de necesar pentru apărarea unui imperiu întins, nu putea fi desființat, ci numai redus într-o oarecare măsură. Probabil Justinian s-a bizuit pe diferitele tratate de neagresiune încheiate cu perșii sau n-avea la îndemână destule mijloace financiare".

were not sufficient. It seems doubtful that the existence of the treaties would automatically mean reduction of intelligence importance - quite on the contrary<sup>34</sup>, perhaps Justinian used this time to change something in the intelligence system, possibly to make it not only more effective, but less expensive as well. Maybe the misfortune with Lazica occurred in the period of installation of a new, more up-to-date and inevitable, but not yet perfect intelligence technique of using double agents, which was the reason for curtailing the quantity of spies.

The analysis of several passages by Procopius of Caesaria makes it possible to suppose that Justinian carried out a kind of a reform, starting to spend the money mostly for recruiting foreign agents instead of supporting his native intelligence service. Such policy seems to be natural and unavoidable on a certain level of development of the intelligence system. Conversion of the method of data collecting explains the fact of reducing the number of spies, about which Procopius is so annoyed. This technique was of particular importance for exploring situation in Sasanian Iran since Persian system of information defence was perfect enough. So the circle of those to be bribed was narrow and surely this required considerable sums, as perhaps those spent on the Persian envoy Isdigousnas, who is likely to have been involved in some sort of a complicated intrigue both of Roman and Persian intelligence services.

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<sup>34</sup> See B.Rubin's commentary on the augmentation of the role of intelligence after the conclusion of "Eternal peace" of 532 or, with the reference to Agath. *Hist.* 4.23, after the treaty of 561, when the Romans and the Persians were collecting information about the plans of the adversary: B.Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Iustianians...*, 502.