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The History of Polygraph Use in Bulgaria

The polygraph and polygraph methodology came relatively late to Bulgaria. It has a history of about 40 years, since the first polygraph instrument – a six-channel Stoelting – arrived in 1968. This instrument was for the needs of Bulgarian intelligence to develop a system for training in deceiving the polygraph. It was necessary for intelligence operations for the infiltration of agents in the NATO bloc and the former Yugoslavia (at this time considered, although not an enemy, not a friend either). Later, in 1972, another Stoelting Ultrascibe was received. After the creation of a laboratory (and later institute) of psychology at the Ministry of the Interior, all polygraph experiments were conducted there. Initially, different information was collected by written sources (books, articles, documents) and by stories of people who were tested by polygraph behind the Iron Curtain. This leads to the conclusion that the main focus of experiments for deceiving the polygraph had to be use of pharmacological substances. All experiments in the early 1970s were carried out in an attempt to search for the best combination of drugs that might be easy to access and used

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to decrease physiological reactions in polygraph examination. Based on later information from participants in this training, the results had variable success. The key person in this period was Dr. G. Boyanov, a medical doctor and the head of the group which developed the programme.

In this period, the polygraph was used in just a few criminal cases. This use was generally as an experiment, and not for verification of truth or finding new information for investigation. In these experiments, Dr. Boyanov and colleagues tried to develop a test format that might be used in criminal investigations. Having access to theoretical sources for different testing formats, they developed a local version of the Relevant-Irrelevant test format. This format was used in examinations with multiple issues. In addition, another format used is POT. Without any obvious reason, zone techniques were considered solely for the needs of intelligence and were practically not used in criminal investigations.

During this period, a VSA was also imported from the USA. Many experiments were conducted with the same purpose – modifying behaviour by pharmacological substances. The experiments were cancelled in the early 1980s, for various reasons.

Up to 1989 the mainstream of development of the polygraph was creation of techniques for countermeasures. Training in the use of polygraph examinations was based on books and local experiments, and a small number of people was able to work with the polygraph. This was critical for the first years of the 1990s, because these people retired, leaving no successors to continue their work. In practice, the polygraph was used in this period in a few criminal cases and for selection of officers for a new service for fighting organized crime. Old instruments ceased to work (they can now be seen in the Museum of the Ministry of the Interior) and the Director of the Institute of Psychology (at the time Dr. Boyko Ganchevski) decided to buy new ones.

In May 2007, Paul Redden, then senior polygraph examiner at the San Diego police department and representative of Lafayette Instruments, arrived at the institute. Mr. Redden taught a short course in the Backster zone technique and became the first person to give “first-hand” information on the contemporary use of the polygraph in investigations in the USA. After this visit, the author of this article had the opportunity to complete a full course for polygraph examiners at the Backster School of Lie Detection in San Diego. This was the first formal training of a Bulgarian polygraph examiner at an APA-accredited

school. After that, two other polygraph examiners attended the same school. All this catalyzed the process of finding an appropriate place for polygraph examinations. After 1997, use of the polygraph increased considerably. In the following years polygraph examination became decisive in the resolution of many criminal cases – murder, serial assaults, robbery and burglary. From 1999, the first results from polygraph examinations were presented before court. They were presented as “psychological expertise for the investigation of truthfulness”. This is the only legal way to introduce polygraph examination in the court system. This expertise might be accepted or rejected by the court. The key issue is coherence with other evidence as described in the Bulgarian criminal code. In order to be presented to court, examinations must be made by a criminal investigator, prosecutor or the court itself.

In 1998 the Bulgarian Polygraph Association (BPA) was established. It was declared to be a professional body of people who work in the field of polygraph examinations. In order to be admitted to the association a candidate must have training and practice and accept the code. We decided to accept the ethical code and rules from the APA in order to guarantee good practice. The BPA now has 14 members working for government and in private practice (about 50–50 represented in the association). The Association has an Executive Board and Supervisory Board. The key task of the latter is to consult and resolve difficult cases in evaluation and administration of polygraph examination if an examiner or a customer needs. In 2004, the BPA organized its first international conference. This conference, which had a major influence on public opinion, took place under the patronage of Boyko Borisov (then General Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, now Prime Minister of Bulgaria) and hosted guests from the USA, Russia and Israel. The conference generated fruitful discussion on the regulation of polygraph use in the court system leading to greater acceptance of polygraph examination results. The Association maintains very good contacts with polygraph examiners from different points of the world. On a regular basis, we organize seminars with Tuvia Shurany, a private examiner from Israel.

As mentioned above, polygraph examinations are now conducted for the government (at the Institute of Psychology in the Ministry of the Interior) and in private companies (most of which were established by former officers from the Institute).

Since 1996, in the Institute of Psychology, polygraph examinations have been situated in the department for “Psychological expertise and support of crimi-

nal investigation". Along with polygraph examinations, this department also works in criminal profiling, prevention of suicides and hostage negotiations. The key assignment of the department is investigation of murder, robbery and burglary cases. Polygraph examinations from 1997 until today have played a role in resolving a number of murder cases, which has led to great popularity and acceptance of the results of the polygraph. From 1998 to 2008 the head of this department was Dr. Nedelcho Stoychev. Today, Dr. Stoychev is Director of the Institute of Psychology at the Ministry of the Interior.

In 2008, following a restructuring programme of all activity in fighting corruption and organized crime, all group members of special units had to pass a polygraph examination. Members of these units are prosecutors, investigators and police officers.

Private polygraph examiners work mainly in cases of burglary and periodic loyalty testing. Both the government and the private sector conduct more than 1000 examinations per year.

In both sectors the main methodology used is the zone technique of Cleve Backster – You phase, Exploratory, SKY. In addition, different formats of POT are used. Some modifications have been made in comparison questions in order to make them easy to understand for the examinee and to fit the cultural and national specifics of Bulgaria. In addition, the Matte quadri-track ZST format is exploited, along with some modifications of RI in screening procedures.

Meanwhile, books have been published aimed at popularizing the use of the polygraph: by Svetoslav Zanev – *Polygraph or "Truth Machine"*; Boyko Ganchevski – *Use of the Polygraph in Criminal Investigation*; Radostin Belenski – *Lie Detector*.

Polygraph examiners use different instruments, but all are computerized versions of Lafayette Instrument and Stoelting products and polygraphs made in Russia.