



*J. Widacki (ed.),
Badania poligraficzne w Polsce
[literally: 'Polygraph
examination in Poland']*

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Jan Widacki is one of the pioneer in the field of experimental research in polygraph examinations in Poland, and one of the pioneers in the field of performing such examinations for purposes of criminal proceedings. This time, the author and his team fill the gap in manuals of forensic sciences, which devote little space to the actual condition of polygraph examination in Poland. The book is composed of parts covering different aspects of polygraphy.

In Chapter I A. Domin-Kuźma, M. Huszcza and J. Widacki describe the contribution of Polish scientists to fields related to polygraph examination: experimental psychology, physiology, and psychophysiology. The authors remind

us of N. Cybulski's research on the human brain activity as well as his discover of adrenalin and E. Abramowski's – on the impact of emotions on breathing activity.

Chapter II (written by J. Widacki) is dedicated to history of polygraph examinations in Poland. The author presents results of his queries into the use of polygraph examination before the second world war. He also describes the application of polygraph examinations in the cases of two serial sexual killers (Zdzisław Marchwicki, Joachim Knychala), which were in the centre of attention in Poland about forty years ago. Next, he presents in detail the changes of legal framework concerning the use of polygraph examination in criminal cases. All that I believe to be missing is a short explanation of earliest use of polygraph examinations in Polish special forces, as the text includes only a remark about starting with such pre-employment and screening examinations in the early 1990s. Moreover, the services Widacki laid for the development of polygraph examinations in criminal cases need emphasising as the author belittles his achievements in the field.

The Chapter III concerns the legal sphere. First, A. Cempura, A. Kasolik, and J. Widacki take up the question of using examination results within a criminal proceeding to proceed to the legal framework for using the examinations in special forces. It is an interesting detail that a polygraph examination may be used as part of disciplinary proceeding against prosecutors. What I find disturbing about the polygraph is its application in private marital cases when there is a suspicion of marital infidelity. Some Polish experts find no ethical obstacles barring such examinations, and I share the authors' disapproval of such practices.

The same authors work on the verdicts of the Polish Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal on proofs from polygraph examination outcomes (Chapter IV). When applied to criminal cases, the authors' meticulousness is noteworthy.

In Chapter V, A. Ibek presents Polish research on polygraph examinations: experiments, case studies, result analyses, and general case analyses. Although the author makes no comments on the methodological aspects of the studies, they all are certain to hold the reader's attention.

In the following Chapter (VI), M. Gołaszewski and M. Widacki describe Polish practices of applying polygraph in criminal cases, working on a sample of approximately a hundred criminal cases in which polygraph examinations were performed in 2002–2012 (the sample includes over 10% of such cases, with opinions of different centres being well represented). The authors throw some light on the work of Polish polygraphers in the context of relevant world standards. I believe all Polish prosecutors and judges should become familiar if not versed with this material to

decide correctly about the significance of polygraph results. The authors comment on the time and place of examinations, polygrapher's professional qualifications, maintenance of equipment, assessment of quantification of physiological responses, and decisions about the configuration of obtained data. Examiners very often rely on an overall evaluation of polygraph charts (without using numerical scoring systems) even though such evaluations are beyond quality control because in the context of a particular polygraph examination, such a control is always based on comparing elements of the examination to established polygraph standards. For this reason, no decision-maker will be in a position to override polygrapher's opinion if she or he does not know standards of this kind of examination. The fact that many Polish lawyers never learn the accuracy of a polygrapher's decision and how it is used as evidence is a different case. They may not know the accuracy of others forensic methods either. That is why the data on the accuracy of polygraph examination tests (present in Chapter VI) are essential for lawyers. In the same chapter, the authors attract the reader's attention to negative practices in the Polish practice. Polygraph examinations are used to a minimal degree in Polish criminal cases. According to the authors such examinations 'are performed in just one in more than six thousand criminal cases, and moreover not all of them are performed correctly', while the lawyers' knowledge 'is often sufficiently low to prohibit the correct use of polygraph examinations'. It is alarming that there is no professional control of polygraph examination quality in Poland. An examination may be carried out incorrectly, and the expert needs not fear any consequences. The authors also recognise the matter of ethical standards, and only the issue of the quality of polygraph examination in Polish special forces requires augmenting.

In Chapter VII, A. Ibek and M. Wrońska carry out logical and methodological analyses of the content of polygraphers' opinions, focusing particularly on their conclusions. Justifiably, the authors underscore bizarreness and inconsistency in such statements.

The last Chapter (VIII, written by J. Widacki) concerns the presentation of polygraph examinations in handbooks of criminal and forensic studies. I agree with Widacki that they still represent the fundamental source of lawyers' knowledge of polygraph examination and their contents may influence putting expert witness opinions to proper use. Unfortunately, the author is right to report that Polish handbooks of forensic sciences misinform about polygraph examinations rather than inform about them. Let me add that no handbook informs lawyers about their accuracy.

I hope that the book reviewed will contribute to increasing the level of dispute on polygraph examinations in Poland. A lawyer should understand that a polygrapher's

opinion may be highly useful for crime prosecution (in faithful reconstruction of events) and for recruitment purposes. Yet proper application of polygraph examinations and evaluation of polygrapher opinions requires accumulated relevant knowledge. The book provides Polish readers with it, and therefore is precious both for polygraph decision-makers and practitioners alike.

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