



REVIEW

Szpiegostwo. Studium kryminologiczne, Piotr Chlebowicz¹

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A review of the literature on espionage indicates that this threat has been the subject of empirical research relatively rarely. Domestic and foreign academic literature is dominated by theoretical works referring to the historical, political science and legal aspects of this phenomenon. The monograph written by Piotr Chlebowicz entitled *Szpiegostwo. Studium kryminologiczne* (Espionage. Criminology study) is a pioneering work in this respect, and its publication is of exceptional importance for the development of criminological research on crimes against state security. The author – as the first researcher in Poland – undertook a comprehensive, systematic and empirically based criminological analysis of espionage in the years 1990–2022. He thus filled an important research gap.

¹ P. Chlebowicz, *Szpiegostwo. Studium kryminologiczne* (Eng. Espionage. Criminology study), series: Monografie Prawnicze Warszawa 2025, C.H. Beck, 227 p. The book is available only in Polish.

The issue raised by Chlebowicz is of key importance for national security. The Russian Federation's expansionist policy, aimed at reconstructing the spheres of influence from the Soviet period, is a threat to Poland's *raison d'état*. In this context, the espionage activities carried out by Russian and Belarusian special services can be seen as an instrument of hybrid warfare and part of potential preparations for armed conflict. Along with the intensification of espionage activities of Russian origin, a qualitative evolution can be observed. It involves expanding the repertoire of methods used and recruiting random individuals, including criminals operating under *espionage as a service* principle. Espionage precedes and supports influence operations bearing the hallmarks of diversion and sabotage. These operations involving both disinformation activities and influencing public opinion, decision-making processes and political structures in Western countries are becoming increasingly important. At the same time, cyber espionage capabilities are being developed with the aim of penetrating ICT systems, obtaining sensitive data and disrupting the functioning of national critical infrastructure. The scale and nature of the activities carried out by the Russian and Belarusian special services require in-depth research and analysis, as well as an adequate response from Polish institutions responsible for security.

The reviewed publication is a summary of the author's more than ten years of research on espionage, based on file and archival research, informal interviews and literature on the subject. The author gained access to operational and court files in espionage cases held in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance as well as common and military courts. He carefully analysed these documents and reconstructed cases of espionage against Poland, which constitutes an important contribution to the development of research on espionage infiltration and the functioning of the special services. Triangulation of sources – extremely difficult in research involving largely classified content – gives the work a high level of scientific reliability and allows for a multifaceted reconstruction of the operating mechanisms of foreign intelligence services and the identification of patterns of espionage tactics.

The methodological assumptions adopted by the author integrate three perspectives: criminological, forensic and security sciences, which allows espionage to be approached as a multidimensional phenomenon. At the same time, the text remains well-organised and clear. This deserves to be emphasised, as with such a complex subject matter, it is easy to fall into informational chaos.

The monograph's case studies of Belarusian, Russian and German espionage, the phenomenon of walk-in agents, i.e. persons who independently declare their willingness to cooperate with foreign intelligence services, and the process of shaping an agent of influence contribute to the development of existing theoretical

concepts. The author explores both the recruitment process and operational activities, methods of communication, the structure of agency sourcehunting and the security measures used. Works of a similar level of detail are rare even in Anglo-Saxon literature. Chlebowicz also analyses the *modus operandi* of espionage perpetrators, the dark figure of this phenomenon, and areas of interest to foreign intelligence services. He accurately identifies qualitative changes in the activities of the RF and Belarus services after 2014. He discusses legal instruments in the field of combating espionage, taking into account the threats that have emerged following the annexation of Crimea by the RF.

The structure of the monograph follows the logic of a classical scientific argument. The author guides the reader from theoretical foundations to empirical analysis and practical conclusions. The book begins with a chapter in which espionage is treated as a criminological category. Chlebowicz points to definitional problems and the multi-layered nature of this phenomenon, especially its links to political crime. He draws attention to the functions of intelligence that go beyond classical data collection and include influencing political processes or destabilising states. This approach allows further considerations to be placed in a broader political context and shows why traditional criminological approaches are insufficient in the analysis of espionage.

The second chapter discusses the methodology of criminological research on espionage, as well as the state of research in Poland.

The most comprehensive chapter is the third chapter, devoted to the complex causes of espionage, containing a multidimensional analysis of the factors conducive to such activity. Chlebowicz operates both from a macrostructural perspective, referring to geopolitics and changes after 2014, and from a microstructural perspective, analysing the motivations of perpetrators, their psychological conditions and individual life paths. Particularly valuable is the use of the results of 'Slammer' project, concerning the psychology of betrayal, and the study of offerors. This approach goes beyond the classic patterns of espionage research, as it takes into account the rarely described interior dynamics and behaviour patterns of perpetrators.

In the next chapter, the author moves on to the phenomenology of espionage, focusing on specific manifestations of the discussed phenomenon. The issue of the dark figure and the statistical difficulties associated with describing crime have been presented with methodological precision, which is of significant scientific value. The analysis of the most common areas of interest to foreign services, the motivations of perpetrators, and the techniques they use reveal the practical dimension of the theoretical findings described in previous chapters. Also noteworthy is the inclusion of the issue of the borderline between lobbying and

intelligence activities, illustrated by the example of the Mateusz Piskorski case. This shows the difficulties encountered by state authorities in distinguishing between legal political activities and intelligence activities.

The fifth chapter includes case studies – detailed analyses of the cases of Olga Sołomenik, Marek Zieliński, Ryszard Tomaszek and Piotr Hoffmann. The author reconstructs the *modus operandi* of the perpetrators, the circumstances of recruitment, and the activities of counterintelligence, and also indicates the relationships between the individual stages of their activity. The case file material was presented in an orderly manner, with a clear separation between facts and interpretations. This chapter is the most important empirical contribution, as it reveals mechanisms of actions of perpetrators and service in a way that is not possible in theoretical studies.

The sixth chapter concerns instruments for combating espionage and covers legal, operational and political aspects in a comprehensive manner. Chlebowicz describes the properties of individual state institutions, criminal law regulations, obligation to report and the role of the administrative law. It is particularly important to discuss operational and reconnaissance activities, including the institution of the so-called crown spy and analytical procedures. An interesting theme is the presentation of political perspective, especially spy exchanges and the expulsion of diplomats as tools of international policy, as well as cooperation between special services after 1990, with an emphasis on the eastern direction. The whole thing concludes with a reflection on the effectiveness of the Polish anti-espionage system.

Thanks to this structure, the monograph presents the phenomenon of espionage in a multifaceted manner: from definitional analyses, through soundly justified methodology, to the evaluation of the state's activities. The author creates a coherent, empirically grounded theoretical and methodological model that allows for the description and systematisation of the phenomenon of espionage, as well as an explanation of its mechanisms, functions and evolution in the context of contemporary external threats to national security.

The reflections on the theory of espionage deserve special mention. The author synthesises existing approaches and develops his own interpretative proposals, placing espionage in the category of cross-border political crime, the dynamics of which are linked to geopolitics and changes in the security environment. He convincingly argues that espionage is not only a crime in the strict sense of the word, but above all a threat to national security closely linked to geopolitics, the state's security strategy and interests.

The conclusions concerning counter-espionage have great scientific and practical value. Chlebowicz comprehensively discusses the role of criminal law, administrative as well as operational and reconnaissance instruments used to

combat espionage, including an assessment of their usefulness in the context of new espionage threats. Of particular importance are the analysis of the interpretation of Article 130 of the Criminal Code and the discussion of the obligation to report, as well as the presentation of the practical dimension of counterintelligence operational work.

The reviewed monograph meets the criteria for an outstanding work – it is original, empirically grounded, theoretically refined and coherent. It serves as a model for how interdisciplinary research on difficult, sensitive and hitherto marginalised phenomena should be conducted in scientific discourse. It therefore has the potential to become a reference publication in research on espionage and political crime in Poland as well as a point of reference for future studies. For many reasons, it would be worthwhile to translate it into English.

In an era of intensification of hybrid threats, the book by Piotr Chlebowicz should become required reading for criminologists, criminal lawyers, analysts, as well as politicians and others responsible for national security.

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