

European intelligence, spotlights always on Brussels



**AGENFOR
INTERNATIONAL
FOUNDATION**

agenformedia.com

Overhauling your look

James B. - Security staff of the EU Commission who wants to maintain anonymity

Last week, the French newspaper Le Monde reported that Belgian intelligence sources believe that the headquarters of the Permanent Representation of Malta in Brussels may have been the subject of Chinese espionage.

In particular - according to the French newspaper - Belgian intelligence had already raised suspicions about the Chinese activity targeting the Maltese headquarters in 2010.

An activity that could, according to Belgian intelligence, still be ongoing.

According to Le Monde, the alarm was also reiterated by British intelligence, who claimed that the Chinese intelligence was already involved in the renovation of the Maltese building prior to its opening in 2007.

The Maltese Government, for its part, hastens to point out that the renovations carried out in 2007 are part of the national activity of the Government of Malta and that only the interior furnishings have been donated by Beijing.

The headquarters of the Permanent Representation of Malta at the European Union (DAR Malta) is located directly opposite the headquarters of the European Commission - the so-called "Berlaymont" - and therefore offers a privileged observation point on the main European decision-making centre. Furthermore, the Maltese headquarters is also a short distance (in visual range even) from Palazzo Europa, seat of the European Council.

Whether there have actually been ties between Malta and China to protect Chinese interests in Europe is to be ascertained, however – according to open sources - in 2014, Malta became the first European country to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese Government on mutual involvement in the "belt and road" initiative, which provides investments in infrastructure in Asia, Europe and Africa.

In 2014, the Chinese state-owned company Shanghai Electric Power also invested 320 million euros by purchasing a 33% stake in the Maltese energy company Enemalta.

The facts reported by the newspaper Le Monde provoke consideration of the vulnerabilities of the city of Brussels, seat of the main European institutions in the field of espionage and other important activities.

The European intelligence services is always on alert, the spotlight always on Brussels, which is considered to be one of the most exposed locations for the main espionage activities. A real information hot-spot.

In terms of concrete numbers, we are talking about a city that hosts the main European institutions, NATO, about 300 diplomatic offices, international and multinational organisations, lobbies.

Practically speaking, a (real-life) strategy game involving politics and economy based on a billionaire business.

We are faced with quantifying something that is probably not quantifiable, a place with the highest density of information, which is decisive in the construction of Europe's political decisions.

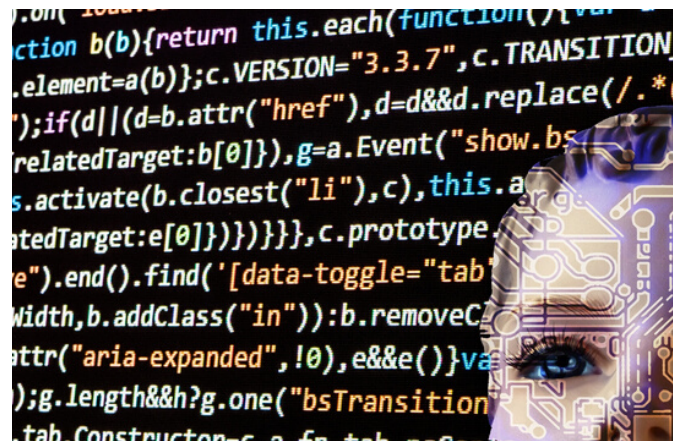
A key strategic laboratory for intelligence services where people and the so-called Human Intelligence are the main resource. Currently, Chinese and Russians are contending with Brussels in terms of information acquisition and knowledge of logics and decision-making processes.

The profiling of some bodies active in Brussels makes it fairly evident that the intelligence services are adapted to a reality that necessarily requires the re-defining of their mission, which must include the widening of the areas of interest and a heightened awareness among decision-making powers on phenomena that may have significant impacts.

I would like to conclude with a remark which has probably been overlooked by the headlines of the European institutions - or perhaps not.

A few years ago the new headquarters of the training school of the European institutions was built in Rue Philippe Le Bon (so-called European Quarter), which hosts several different professional courses and which is visited by hundreds, or perhaps more, officials of the European Union every day.

As a strange coincidence, after some time, on the other side of the road, a few meters away, a Chinese cultural center was established...



**The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Agenfor, however they are important insights for the public debate.*