

Some of the particular features of victimisation in contemporary societies

Zoran Kanduč, LL.D., Research Assistant, Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law, Poljanski nasip 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

The real (but also apparent) needs and wishes of actual and potential victims of criminal victimisation become increasingly important factor in the formulation and implementation of criminal policy, at least in contemporary developed societies. It even seems that the political demand for the better protection of the public (i.e. the conformist members of the "moral" majority) against risks of conventional crime is one of the key arguments for the implementation of a more severe penal policy, widening the powers of repressive agencies and the adoption of new criminal law provisions. We are confronted with a rise of a special "cult of victim". This unusual phenomenon can be explained in the light of the social, cultural, economic and political changes which have marked the world in the past two decades, i.e. since the victory of economic neo-liberalism and political neo-conservatism. They have both supported the operation of "blind market forces" and thus enormously increased the freedom of "capital" and its power over increasingly automated and powerless sellers of labour; they have also intensified social control over problematic and dangerous social groups. Various risks, dangers and harmful phenomena are characteristic of post-modern societies. An individual feels ever more insecure, mainly due to the processes going on in the economic sphere; his economic security becomes increasingly precarious, and the same also applies to the members of his family. Feelings of being threatened escalate in individuals also due to an increasing "ontological insecurity", which is a result of the pluralisation of values and cultural pressure towards the individualisation of a life course.

The contradictory and conflictual logic of the transition from modernity to "post-modernity" gives rise to different fears, apprehensions and anxieties, which are all canalised either politically or by the media into the unified formula of "fear of crime". In this regard, victims of crime have in fact been ideologically abused (or subjected to a "secondary victimisation«), that is, used in order to divert public attention from much more serious forms of economic, media and political violence. It is even possible to argue the thesis that the very label of "victim" is semantically misleading. In connection with criminal offences it would be more correct to use the word »injured parties«, while the term "victims" would be more suitable for all those miserable people who are compelled - and to a great extent with their own consent - to sacrifice their life (or rather time and energy) for the heteronomous and in fact irrational objectives of the self-sufficient "economic machine", based on the anachronistic logic of the endless accumulation of capital.

Keywords: critical victimology, criminal victimisation, victims, post-modern society, criminal policy

UDC: 343.988