

Post-modern society, social contract and determinants of violence

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

"Social contract" is one of the central notions of the treasury (or at least armoury) of contemporary sociological and also criminological thinking. This is not at all surprising. A contract - in particular a purchase and sale agreement - is the core of the capitalist economy and ideology and may even be a key generator of the ideological and objective illusion of capitalism as a system founded on the freedom of an individual, i.e. a worker (seller of labour), a capitalist (buyer and at the same time exploiter/oppressor of labour or more precisely of working man as an honorary slave or at least a prostitute), a consumer (a disciplined and controlled buyer of capitalist goods, products and services), a citizen, a bearer of a given sexual role (male or female) and a parent.

The mythical notion of a social contract (as the presumed foundation of a "disciplined society" managed by a national state) was (and for many still is) a fairly convincing rhetorical and propaganda instrument (e.g. for assuring constant "economic growth", that uncontested modern ideal, the goal of all goals), particularly in the optimistic conditions after the Second World War (i.e. at a time of a "relative stability" and "long-term mentality"), which were marked by a "principled" (would it be more appropriate to say "unprincipled" ?) coalition between three central "social partners": labour (organised in trade unions), capital and the social welfare state. This "marriage until death" (Zygmunt Bauman) has miserably fallen to pieces in a post-modern context, or at least has become increasingly fragile, "openly promiscuous", out of date or, even more, obviously obsolete. The world of capital namely produces more and more wealth with less and less labour, the negotiating situation of the proletariat has drastically worsened (e.g. due to structural unemployment, flexibility of employment, job insecurity and increased mobility of economic resources), while the national state is in a serious and complex crisis (which in particular affects its "economic sovereignty"). Such a situation also implies a variety of relatively new criminogenic and penal repercussions.

Keywords: social contract, capitalism, globalisation, crime, violence, post-modernism

UDC: 321.01:316.47 + 316.647.3