

Stanisław Szelhaus, *Młodociani recydywiści. Społeczne czynniki procesu wykolejania* [Juvenile Recidivists. Social Factors in the Process of Social Derailment], Warszawa 1969, PWN, 314 pages.

The book under review analyses 100 cases of juvenile recidivists, that is criminals who after having completed 17 years of age were put into prison at least two times for committed offences. The study is made on recidivists who stayed in penitentiary institutions between 1956 and 1958 and whose fate was followed until 1967.

The author does not confine his work to a mere account of the studies he has made. He attempts to give a broader background for crimes committed by young offenders and with this aim in view devotes chapter one to describing circumstances of juvenile delinquency against the background of crimes committed by grown-ups in Poland in the years 1959 -1965. He shows in particular how recidivism was developing in that period.

The investigations which the author describes in successive chapters (from two to six) cover selected juvenile recidivists (from big towns) sentenced every year by Polish courts (about 4,000 annually). They are social misfits who showed signs of maladjustment already in their early childhood and of demoralization in the early school age. Representatives of this cat-

egory of criminals were carefully selected for the study and the investigated process of their demoralization shows the criminal road of persons among whom future grown-up regular recidivists are to be sought. In this part of the work the author presents the results of toilsome research and conclusions concerning the process of social derailment of the investigated persons, beginning with their early juvenile period. He points to the role of the education process in the family, at school in a penitentiary. He makes an appraisal of the family home and milieu of the persons under investigation and explains the factors which formed definite postures of the investigated persons towards life, community and norms of social coexistence. The results of the studies confirm the arguments known from other publications dealing with factors which helped to push juveniles and young offenders to the road of crime.¹

The author thoroughly analyses different factors which could play any part in the process of social degeneration of juvenile and then young delinquents and, next, discusses at length the role of educational and preventive measures and that of imprisonment in the process of re-education. The author shows the influence of the sentence and of the served term upon individual prisoners, by quoting comprehensive pronouncements made by the investigated persons. All in all, the results of the studies were presented in a very clear and comprehensible manner and the system of arranging individual chapters points to a certain logical continuity of the consequences which deepen social derailment of the investigated persons.

One of the main objections which can be raised to the work is its lack of a broader analysis of the personality of the investigated people, although the author himself announces at the outset, and then mentions several times, medical psychological examinations carried out by a research team: results of these examinations should have been published because the reader may get a wrong opinion that the investigated people have gone wreck only because of the environmental conditions. He may also fail to notice interrelation between subjective factors (personality disorders, psychopathy, characteropathy, etc.) and the influence of the environment on the process of social derailment, alienation, and in consequence, a progressing process of degeneration.

Contrary to expectations, the last (seven) chapter, entitled Conclusions, does not sum up what has been said earlier or give some suggestions that may stem from the whole work. It makes, instead, a comparison of the results of the investigations presented in preceding chapters with other investigations.

¹ See S. Batawia, *Młodociani i młodzi recydywiści w świetle badań kryminologicznych* [Juvenile and Young Recidivists in the Light of Criminological Studies], "Archiwum Kryminologii", vol. III, 1965, pp. 9-96; Z. Ostrowska, *Prognoza recydywy u nieletnich przestępców oraz wyniki badań prognostycznych 180 recydywistów w wieku 15-16 lat* [Prognosis of Recidivism among Juvenile Delinquents and Results of Prognostic Studies of 180 Recidivists Aged Between 15 and 16], "Archiwum Kryminologii", vol. III, 1965, pp. 121-271; A. Pawełczyńska, *Przestępczość grup nieletnich* [Crimes Among Juvenile Groups], Warszawa 1964; M. Rudnik, *Prognoza penitencjarna młodocianych recydywistów w świetle badań ich drogi przestępczej* [Penitentiary Prognosis of Juvenile Recidivists in the Light of Investigation of Their Criminal Road], "Państwo i Prawo", 1965, No 11, pp. 729ff; P. Zakrzewski, *Współdziałanie w przestępstwie młodocianych i dorosłych z nieletnimi* [Cooperation of Young and Grown-up Criminals with Juveniles], Kraków 1960; and other publications.

Although the author has not made in his work any definite suggestions or drawn obvious conclusions, he allows the reader to arrive by himself to many critical remarks about the way and methods of bringing up the youth, the role of school in educating the so-called difficult youth, the scope of alcoholism and the wrong method used to fight it.

In an annex to his book (pp. 213 - 295) the author gives a comprehensive and well arranged casuistry which provides the reader with a valuable illustration to the description of the results of the research.

It must be said in conclusion that the book is an important contribution to the Polish studies in crime. Apart from its theoretical values and rich materials that can be used in future studies and general conclusions, the book gives also to practitioners — educators, judges, and penitentiary officers — a vast store of knowledge in how attitudes are formed and how the process of moral degeneration wrecks demoralized individuals.

For science, it provides a starting point from which further studies in demoralization of juveniles and progressing social derailment of young delinquents may proceed.

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