THE ANALYSIS OF DRIVERS’ ESCAPES FROM AN ACCIDENT PLACE
AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT TRAFFIC SAFETY

Rotter
Tadeusz
Docent of Work Psychology Dept.
Institute of Psychology
Jagiellonian University
Department of Work Psychology
31-110 Kraków, Poland
ul. Manifestu Lipcowego 13 I p

The problem of drivers’ escapes from an accident place we can analyse from four points of view. The law aspect and moral aspect concern a road users. The formal and situational aspects belong to traffic organization and to traffic safety. This article touches all kinds of aspects.

1. Law problems of escapes from an accident’s place.
The road accidents are non-typical criminal acts. Theoretically, each of road users could meet such a situation. The accidental impedence grows parallel to enlargement of vehicles and acceleration of their speed. The consequences of road accidents are nasty.
From the law point of view, the traffic accidents are always connected with material damages and very often with people’s injuries and human death. There are two main law problems:
1) The punishment for breaking law, which was a reason of the accident.
2) The victims of accidents satisfaction for their injuries and their material damages.
In the punishment aspect we ought to remember that the traffic accident is the mainly unintentional transgression, very often for no reason whatever. Therefore, the restriction for traffic accidents are rather mild. However, that mild punishment may be used only under specific conditions. The causer ought to care of victims and to organize the first aid for them. If that activity is not realized, the court could raise the punishment.
The problem of the financial satisfaction is basically soluted by obligatory insurance for all owners of vehicles. It allows to pay the compensation for all victims regardless to wealth of causer of the accident.
However in the law and financial aspects of an accidental situation, we could find several main principles, which ought to be respected.
The first condition says that the causer must be sober.
The second condition touches the necessity of adequate driving licences of all drivers, who took part in an accident.
The third condition is related to a good technical state of vehicles of all drivers, before the accident time.
The fourth condition is the complete control the postaccidental situation by police investigation inspectors. Below, we present several facts about law aspects of drivers' escapes from places of accidents. There are results of the analysis of 86 cases of drivers' escapes from accident places in the Cracow province during the last six month. The tables show only factors which were be of frequent occurrence (max) and in exceptional cases (min). The character of each of presented situation was defined in two categories: randomized factor (RF) and unrandomized factor (URF).

Table No 1
The Alcohol using in the accidents with a driver's escapes (URF)
N = 86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pos</th>
<th>the kind of road users</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max 1</td>
<td>Drinking drivers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min 2</td>
<td>Drinking pedestrians</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol using unidentified</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No 2
The main reasons of the accidents with a driver's escapes (RF)
N = 86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pos</th>
<th>the kind of accident's reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max 1</td>
<td>The pedestrians' inroading</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max 2</td>
<td>Unlimited speed of vehicles</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min 3</td>
<td>The skid of vehicles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min 4</td>
<td>The lack of good protection of children, disables and older people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2: Formal aspects of drivers' escapes.
The basic duty of everyone who participate in accident is to stay right at the place and wait for ambulance and police is coming. That duty is not compulsory only for causer who organize first aid for victims and for causers who could be lynched by furious crowd.
The staying at the place of an accident is very important for qualification of character of an accident, the policemen must make identification of participants of an accidental situation, reasons of the accident and point the accident's causer. The process of liquidation of an accident contains several duties, as: investigations about injuries and data of people, who were transported to the hospital, the primary expertise of damage vehicles, and then the decision what to do with them. The attendance of participants of accidental situation allows for inspection their personal documents and for control of their sobriety.
Therefore each escape or even short time going away of participants of an accidental situation (especially the causer) makes the process of liquidation of an accident difficult or impossible. In such a situation, the road traffic organization has to have possibility to make the escape impossible or to hold the causer if he has begun to escape. We ought to remember that the escaping driver is very often desperate and his driver's behaviour is very dangerous for other road users. Therefore, police in all countries have a special training and special strategy for stopping and holding the drivers, who escape from the accident place.

From the result of our analysis, we present several data about the formal aspects of drivers' escapes.

### Table No. 3
The causes of the traffic accidents connected with a drivers' escapes (URF)  
\(N = 86\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pos.</th>
<th>the kind of road users</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>1 Car drivers</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>2 Pedestrians</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>3 Bus drivers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>4 Tractor drivers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table No. 4
The participants of the traffic accidents connected with a drivers' escapes (URF)  
\(N = 86\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pos.</th>
<th>the kind of road users</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>1 Pedestrians</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>2 Car drivers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>3 Motor cyclist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Moral aspects of the drivers' escapes.

The road is the meeting place of people from various social groups, of different characters and different human worth. Travel by car is permanent coming and outgoing off social contacts with other road users. The contacts between the drivers of driving past cars are not too long (just several seconds) and afterwards they immediately disappear. The accident stops this band of superficial contacts just as stopping the frame of film. Two or more unknown each other road users could be tied by strong relation suddenly. That relation influences very intensely upon their lives. The road accident is the special form of interpersonal relation between road users on the material base. Very often the accidents connected with damages and injuries. One can be a causer and one can be a victim of an accident. Somebody made an error and the others could be disabled for
all their one's life by this error. Very important problem: touches the blame of accident's participants. Many times the real causer of an accident is a driver or other road user, even they didn't find fault with him. The classical example shows the colleagues who were drinking alcohol with the driver, before he caused the accident.

The problem of guilty is not only the law, but also the moral category, very often. The accident could influence stronger the moral attitude of causer, than the hard punishment. Therefore the temptation to devolve the responsibility for accident is very strong. In the causer's opinion it is possible only by the escape from the accident's place. He disregards the duty of aid to victims because he thinks: the escape guarantees him anonymity and impunity and protects against other unpleasant consequences of accident. The "attractiveness" of the escape must be considered by the causer. It determines the further behaviour of the causer.

From the psychological point of view, the most important moment is the time of decision making of escape. The psychological investigations of drivers' escapes ought to concentrate at that point.

The second important factor is a causer's position in relation to victims of accidents. It is clear, especially in "the drivers - the pedestrians" or "the drivers - the cyclists" accidents. The driver has bigger, quicker and stronger vehicle. It gives him better position in that situation. He runs away from the accident's place and he is sure, that he won't be chased.

The third factor, which makes motivation to escape, is causer's unsobriety. That problem was already discussed together with legal and formal aspects of the escapes.

It is necessary to point the moral causers of the accidents, who run away from the place without any consequences, for ex. pedestrians who has jumped on the road and provoked the drivers to sudden stopping their vehicles and breaking them, the drivers who has uncorrectly used their vehicles' lamps by night and dazzled other road users, who has made an accidents because of that etc. It is very difficult to chase those people because the accident's participants could not remember any details about them (reg. number of car etc.). The next results of our analysis characterize of the moral aspects of drivers escapes from an accidents place.

Table No. 5
The victims of a traffic accidents (URF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pos.</th>
<th>the kind of road users</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>1. Pedestrians</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>2. Motorcyclists</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table No. 6
The drivers not guilty for an accident,
who escaped from the place of event (URF)
N = 86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pos.</th>
<th>the kind of drivers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max.</td>
<td>1 Car drivers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>2 Bus drivers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>3 Tractor drivers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Situational aspects of drivers' escapes.
   In each decision on escape making, we could find some elements
   of realistic evaluation of situation. The refugee ought to make,
   even superficially, evaluation of his escape possibility, to co-
   ver up tracks, at last, the possibility of recognition of him by
   victims or witness. It is sure, that he would inspect mainly the
   factor, which make the escape easy. Some categories of accidents
   could be connected with the escapes of causers.
   The first cluster of facts, which is conductive to escapes are
   the time conditions; The night time and the darkness make caus-
   er's identification more difficult and do not show the way of
   his escape. Sometimes the night hours mask the accidental situ-
   ation, especially, when the broken vehicles or victims are moved
   to the side space of the road. During the night the number
   of road users is rather small, so there are very few people who
   could observe the accident and raise alarm.
   The weather conditions play similar role. Rain, fog, snow very
   effectively, cover up tracks and making difficult identification
   of accident's causers. Bad weather stops the pursuit or makes it
   difficult;
   the third group of facts are topographic conditions; The charac-
   ter of area could be conductive to causers' escape from the
   traffic organisation point of view we distinguish build area
   (cities and villages) and non build over area (other areas).
   In the empty area the refugee has a better chance, because the
   lack of people and their homes allows him to run out unnoticed.
   Other area factors: big woods, hills, many secondary roads are
   very good for refugees.
   The next group of factors, which are conductive to escapes,
   are traffic control and traffic organization. The small number of
   regular police stations makes possibility of alarm difficult,
   when the road accident has happened. The staff of those stations
   could observe the road users and note for example, damaged vehicles,
   drinkers etc.
   the second problem is a small number and weak activity of moving
   police traffic patrols, which could observe the roads of big traf-
   fic or with a great number of accidents. It allows to get quick
   information about undesirable events in traffic. The helicopters
   or plane patrols are very useful for the roads with big intensi-
   vity of the traffic.
   It is clear, that police information system ought to cooperate
   with a good system of analysis of traffic accidents. It allows
to show a dangerous places of the roads, to define major reasons of the accidents and to analyse all facts of drivers escapes. The next factor is the well working system of the road communication, which allows informing about accidents quick.

Very important too for escape's prevention is a quick system of information about road users which reports immediately about the basic data of refugee (his address, type and colour of vehicle etc.) The special police system of way stopping, which orders to limit possibility of escape.

At last, the judgement system ought to treat the escaping drivers very seriously by the serious punishment and confiscation of their driving licenses.

Finally, we present the last table with the data of analysis of drivers escapes:

Table No. 7
The places of the accidents with a drivers escapes (RF)
N = 86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pos.</th>
<th>The kind of accident's places</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max. 1</td>
<td>the quarters of the Great Cracow</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. 2</td>
<td>the non build off area</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. 3</td>
<td>Cracow center area</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. 4</td>
<td>Cracow near-center area</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>