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The effects of intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts in the creation of an informal prison system⁷

Abstract

The paper analyzes the social-psychological triggers for the formation of the association of convicts. The association of convicts is a psychological inevitability that in the penal environment has two extremes: on the one hand, the association of convicts creates a suitable ground for criminal and anti-social acculturation, which ensures the already generally accepted stigmatization of convicts, and on the other hand, it enables a greater number of convicts to overcome the fear and stress of the effects of imprisonment and separation from the social environment.

Key words: prison, informal prison system, conflicts, group structure.

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1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the first institutions for prisoners, there has been an association of them in order to organize life in such conditions according to the same rules as outside them and thus reduce the misery of prison life. Social organization in such institutions is based on fear of the other, and everyone has internal conflicts in choosing the most functional strategy for survival and preservation of personality. When, as a strategy, the creation of a group that will reduce the chance of being endangered is chosen, the preservation of the group itself becomes a priority for all members. This preservation is carried out by conflicting with other groups in the environment.

1.1 Structure of the formal system

In the Republic of Serbia, there are currently 29 institutes for the execution of criminal sanctions. Their functioning is regulated, first of all, by the Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions and the Rulebook on House Rules. Thus, in Article 28 of the mentioned law (hereinafter: ZIKS) it is stated that the institution is managed by a manager, who reports to the director of the Administration for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions. In Article 19 of the ZIKS, the services in institutions are listed, namely: treatment service, security service, training and employment service, health care service and general affairs service. Services are managed by chiefs. The purpose of the existence of the aforementioned services is to implement a program of treatment of convicted persons for the most successful resocialization and integration into the social environment. Latent mechanisms of “resocialization” are repression, coercion, formalism, bureaucratic solutions, hierarchical chain of decision-making, conformity, primacy of procedures for organizing the entire convict life in the institution, inflexibility, reliance on architectural solutions of the institution, etc. The representatives and users of the mentioned mechanisms are employees of the institute, i.e. formal system in the institution.

Contrary to the formal system, in every prison there is an informal association of convicted persons, i.e. informal prison system. Also, the “formal” system itself has its own informal association of employees in order to more easily fulfil their own needs or to solve certain situational problems more quickly. Employees “associate” according to the service in which they work, positive or negative attitudes towards the manager or their bosses, trade union organization, the same interests outside the institution, place of birth and/or residence, which creates a specific climate for a certain period of time, which certainly affects the organization of prisoners.

Since the existence of the service dealing with psychosocial work (formerly the re-education service, now the treatment service), there has been a discrepancy between the officers focused on treatment and those focused on “guarding”, i.e. by the security service, which is transferred to newly employed persons, but the aforementioned discrepancy is of a dynamic nature and is often not noticed. Misunderstanding between the mentioned services derives its strength from the purpose of punishment and the way of serving the sentence, whereby the security service often sees the purpose in coercion, in the sense of maintaining order and peace, while the treatment service sees the purpose in corrective assistance to the convicted person. The aforementioned certainly makes it difficult to work in the institution, as well as life for convicted persons while serving their sentence.

The Rulebook on the treatment and classification and subsequent classification of convicted persons explains in more detail the classification of convicted persons into treatment, departments (open, semi-open and closed), educational groups, workplaces and accommodation. Coercive measures, as well as ways of solving disciplinary offenses, are also defined.

The psychological problem of the formal system is the incorporation of a superior attitude in

relation to the subordinate attitude adopted by convicted persons, which certainly maintains stability in the institution, but additionally affects the speed of acceptance of the rules of the convict system.

2. Influences on prisoner self-organization

The emergence of the informal prison system was and is influenced by a set of psychosocial factors. First of all, society with its control mechanisms affects its members throughout their lives. On a micro level, the process of socialization is the first instance where the cultural-symbolic repertoire of a certain society is learned, as well as behavioral guidelines, desirable/undesirable and insight into the outcome. Social sanctions in interactions are also mechanisms of control.⁸ We learn social rituals both in the process of socialization and during the rest of our lives through the use of institutions and assuming certain roles during our stay in them. Thus, we learn rituals during schooling, at the workplace, in the church community, in micro-institutions for hobbies, sports and leisure, and even while serving a prison sentence, in order to ensure “membership”, i.e. acceptance from other “members” and defined their role and stratification place in relation to them.

On the macro level of social control there are a number of social organizations aimed at control or providing a social safety valve.

One form of social organization to control deviance is often called a total institution, in which people are locked up until they stop behaving in deviant ways. Typical examples of such organizations are: prisons, mental institutions, homes for juvenile delinquents, detention, isolated prisons for suspected terrorists, and other complex organizations that separate rioters and others who are considered dangerous from the rest of society (Turner, 2009: 192).

Understanding the emergence of the informal association of convicts should be viewed through Goffman's (Erving Goffman) total institution as a place of residence and work for a large number of people who are in a similar situation, who are physically separated from the wider society for a long period of time and whose life is strictly defined and controlled by employees (Stohr & Walsh, 2012: 115).

During the arrest and detention, the person for the first time encounters the loss of freedom and authenticity as an expression of the previous personal identity. Respecting the rules of the house, as well as the officials, is a priority. Difficult or forbidden communication with the outside world additionally collapses a person's personality, whereupon the first intrapersonal conflicts arise. The minimum allowed for food, accommodation and hygiene represents the third collapse of the possibility of choice, which increases the feeling of hopelessness and aggressiveness. During the passage of time, a person creates a new identity - that of a prisoner, but also receives a new stigma from the employees, who, as a rule, place him in a subordinate position.

An individual whose ways of satisfying basic needs (according to Maslow) have been reduced to a minimum, along with a period of getting used to the newly created situation, also develops interaction with people from the immediate environment, i.e. with other detained persons. Depending on the crime committed, the newly detained person receives the first behavioral instructions from those “on the other side of the law”. If the person is known to the prosecuting authorities and if the crime is more acceptable in the criminal milieu (known robberies with large loot, liquidation of rivals...), in that case he gets a high status and certain available privileges. If the situation is the other way around - the first time he is arrested, a legally lesser crime - the person is subjected, first of all, to testing his personality through verbal or physical pressure by the “master in the room” or, in jargon, “the

roommate”, or someone designated by him. Then he is educated for the first time on how he should behave towards others in the room and towards the employees, especially the security officers. Depending on the skill of social adjustment, a new identity is consolidated in order to reduce the period of stress and tension to a minimum and to establish personal control in the new environment.

In the described period, the division into “us” and “them” groups is strengthened, i.e. on those who break the law and those who prevent them from doing so. The aforementioned division has its positive function in the manifestation of feelings of hostility (Kozier, 2007: 55), because it strengthens the “we” group and relieves pressure by directing aggression towards a substitute object, which in this case is the guard. By admonishing or using coercive measures by security officers against a certain person, the opposition between groups is strengthened; The “we” group gets new justifications and a motive for continuing aggressiveness, and the person against whom the coercive measure was used gains status and name. The same process continues during the investigative procedure and serving the prison sentence.

Also, during the stay in detention, people who have already been in prison get to know each other, and with them, depending on the favourable situation, a kind of social capital is created that can later ensure a “good reception” in a prison institution. Through connections and acquaintances, a network of criminally oriented persons is created, which is supplemented by later engagements in penal institutions.

After the sentencing and arrival in the prison unit, the already convicted person goes through the imprisonment phase again, i.e. adaptations to the penal environment. Depending on the length of the investigative procedure, the convicted person has already been educated to accept informal rules, i.e. rules of the convict group. The reasons for this are psychological in nature and are found in the feeling of rejection (from society) due to the committed criminal act. Considering that the perpetrators defend themselves with justifications for why they committed the crime, instead of accepting personal responsibility, they direct that responsibility to others, often to those who arrested or convicted them, and as a result, those who rejected them are rejected, all in order to protect the person.

2.1 Deprivations

Deprivation means hindering the satisfaction of motives (Rot, 1974: 120). In the prison environment, apart from the aforementioned feeling of rejection, there are deprivations of freedom, material goods, heterosexual relationships, independence and security.

Deprivation of freedom - Displacement of a person from his environment, with all obligations, contacts, adopted rules and acceptance by others, during deprivation of liberty and arrival in prison, has an almost destructive force on the personality, which pushes a person towards the reconstruction of everything learned. “[I]solation from family and society, feelings of loneliness and weakness, feelings of powerlessness to help those closest to you, feelings of anxiety due to living in a closed space, up to the difficulty of enduring limited movement in the prison itself” (Radovanović, 1992: 169) are among the basic components of deprivation of freedom. Reducing the impact of deprivation of liberty is realized by granting extra-institutional benefits to a convicted person who is treatment-oriented, after a certain period of time, when he can visit his family within a predefined time limit.

Deprivation of material goods - The Law on the Execution of Criminal Sanctions and the Rulebook on House Rules strictly define what a convict can own, what clothes he can wear, what type of food he can get via parcels, etc. Frustration due to the impossibility of personal choice creates tensions during the stay and motivates certain persons to acquire prohibited goods (mobile phone, alcohol, narcotics...) in order to reduce pressure. Institutions often, during a certain period of time, and with the aim of reducing tensions, approve certain items that convicts can make in workshops, which do not

disturb security, such as picture frames, ashtrays, chiviluks and the like. Also, if intergroup security-threatening situations occur, the same items are confiscated, to be approved again after the conflict subsides. In this way, the institution's management has a safety valve mechanism at its disposal.

Deprivation of heterosexual relationships - Given the difficult possibility of making contacts with the outside world and the fact of the same-sex population in prisons, the primary need for heterosexual relationships often remains unfulfilled, which leads to a change in motives and the appearance of homosexuality. A relaxing mechanism for the above is the approval of visits to married or non-marital partners in specially designated premises. Regular and extraordinary use of this facility is among the most desirable in prisons with a male population.

Deprivation of independence - The arrangement of prisoner's life determines where the prisoner sleeps, eats, works, spends his free time, when he gets up and lies down, when he meets his hygiene needs, how he should look, in what way he addresses an official, when he has a visit and how long it lasts, as well as other rules and obligations, which certainly reduces the space for personal autonomy. It is most often manifested through the acceptance of the convict code and advocacy for its further implementation.

Deprivation of security - From the moment of imprisonment, the feeling of general fear and insecurity from other convicts is present, to a greater or lesser extent, throughout the entire sentence. Despite the existence of security rules and security services, the informal prison system has its own mechanisms of testing group loyalty and punishment. Deprivations of freedom, material goods, security, independence and heterosexual relationships further facilitate the adoption of the prisoner's value system. "Convicts accept the social system that is created within the walls of penal institutions as a response to the problems they experience during their sentence and as a means to, if not eliminate, at least mitigate those problems" (Radovanović, op. cit., p. 28).

In addition to the aforementioned deprivations, Radovanović (1992) cites elements of the theories of anomie, subculture and labelling as additional factors of integration into the convict value system. The connection with the theory of differential associations is clear in the thesis about "learning" new rules during the first closure and the creation of social capital based on that. The weight of resisting the norms of convicts is more visible in the combination of crime - length of sentence - cognitive dissonance, which refers to the fact that there is "a need for people to have their knowledge and opinions about themselves, their environment and phenomena in it mutually harmonized, as well as for their opinions and their actions to be harmonized" (Radovanović, op. cit., p. 69).

Cognitive dissonance is followed by the gregarious motive, which "manifests itself in the aspiration to be in company with others, in the aspiration of the individual to be accepted as a member of the community and to cooperate with others in common tasks, in avoiding loneliness that is felt as an inconvenience and as a difficulty" (Rot, 1974: 95).

Due to the aforementioned factors, as well as depending on whether the prison institution is aimed at treatment or at custody, a person who comes to serve a sentence is in a particularly unfavorable and conflicting situation, in which the method of serving the sentence must be chosen at the very beginning, even if it is latent. The essence of that selection is reflected in the individual's ability to adapt to new and stressful situations, which most severely affect minors and younger adults, because, due to insufficient life experience, they have not adopted enough social strategies and skills to overcome unfavourable circumstances.

In practice, people with personality disorders also have a difficult time adapting to penal conditions. In addition to criminal infection and convict norms, the organization of the institution itself, the way it is managed, as well as the officers, who also go through the process of imprisonment, appear as a disturbing factor. An institution focused on the successful realization of treatment should

have mechanisms for alleviating stress, both for convicts and officials, as well as for their professional development and training, with a humane imperative in work, no matter how idealistic or moral it sounds. In this way, it is possible to reduce the degree of abuse of official position (primarily through respect for the personality of the convicted person, regardless of the crime committed), which, if it occurs, has a regressive effect on the convicted persons themselves.

In addition to the formal organization, the architectural solutions of the prison also have a psychological, purposefully repressive effect on its users, especially in cases where every step of the convict (as well as the employee) is planned and monitored, without the possibility of real solitude, in which the process of self-examination most often takes place. The humanization of prison conditions is regulated by law, and it is additionally carried out by mitigating deprivation factors through the allocation of funds for aesthetic solutions, the goal of which is to bring external conditions as close as possible to prison conditions.

3. The structure of the informal prison system

The informal prison system can be defined as a system among convicts with common values and interests, which functions on unwritten strict rules (convict code), hierarchically assigned and acquired roles based on expressive power, influence on others and the availability of prohibited goods in order to satisfy deprived needs. At least two informal groups can be formed in the prison system. Each convict group (according to the names created in the prisons) consists of a “leader”, “underleader” or “underleaders” (also called collectives), “gang” and “bums”. Also, in prisons there is a group of marginals who do not belong or have been expelled from one of the available groups. According to the nature of the ties between convicts, relatively permanent (according to the length of stay), loose (according to mutual distrust) and highly interdependent (when it comes to the acquisition, exchange and purchase of rare goods) ties can be formed. Informal convict groups can be formed on various grounds, and often according to place of residence, religion, criminal act, political option, fan groups, expressed loyalty...⁹ There can also be a mixing of all the mentioned bases when there are systemic changes, often by violent means.

3.1 Norms

Each penal institution has its own penal code that varies from institution to institution with its similarities and differences. The convict code is an integral part of the convict culture, which prescribes “a system of habits, behavioural patterns, prison customs and routines, attitudes towards the formal system, officials and social institutions outside the institution (courts, police, politicians...)” (Caldwell, 1956: 655). Also, convicts tend to develop their way of speaking through jargon adapted to the prison and previous lifestyle, and it is possible to speak the prison language (jargon).¹⁰

The penal code is passed down from generation to generation and is prone to change due to the pressures of the formal system. The recruitment of new members begins with their arrival at the

9 As important factors in the formation of informal groups, Roth (op.cit., p.: 68) cites: maturity, social adaptability, rigid attitudes, authoritativeness, willingness to cooperate, cooperativeness, extroversion...

10 Prison language belongs to the group of subcultural jargons without functional and elaborate syntax. It is based on the combination of the jargon of the tent, drug, drug addict and thief adapted to the prison environment and convict norms. Some of the most common words are “zipa” (in jargon: “zipa” (watch out), and it is used in two ways, for a convict who keeps watch during prohibited actions and on occasions when the attention of others is drawn to the arrival of an official), then the coin “to throw threes” (it has the meaning of revealing secrets to officials or snitching), “tossing a pancake” (listening in on a conversation by leaning one’s ear against the door), “trkelj” (notifying the convicts that the room is about to be searched to get rid of forbidden things), “ziben” (in German the number seven which in speech can correspond to an action), “samuraja” (solitary), etc.

institution and is based on coercion and fear. Due to the need for security, membership is accepted without objection. Loyalty to the leader and the group is regularly tested in the first months.

But by accepting this system, the convict achieves something more than “simple” protection of his self-image. Having lost his previous affiliation through conviction and imprisonment, he, by integrating into the prison society, regains that affiliation and at the same time acquires a group identity, protection from attacks by aggressive convicts, exploitation and fraud. Then he acquires “social” support to manage his hostile feelings, caused by rejection and punishment, towards the external enemy and not towards himself; he gains the support of the group to simply transfer the responsibility for what he has done and the feeling of guilt to the society and the environment that surrounds him, which once again reinforces the image of himself as a victim of various circumstances and especially “the authorities” (Radovanović, 1992: 29).

The main convict norms are: stand in solidarity with other convicts, do not cooperate with officials unless you are acquiring goods or information, snitching is strictly prohibited, show resistance to the staff and treatment, respect peace among convicts, respect family visits of other convicts, “do not make waves” (in the sense of the prohibition of using power and violence without reason), protect yourself and trust no one... The first and universal peculiarity of the convict code is: “no cooperate” and which is the first in terms of the degree of disrespect due to an individual’s attempt to participate in the program of action.¹¹ Also, disclosing the means of acquiring rare goods is the most severe form of non-compliance with the penal code, which is followed by the most severe sanctions. Other “rules” of behaviour, in some penal institutions, are informally called “complexes” and refer to the regulation of the way of serving the sentence through various attitudes and opinions. Typical situations that change more slowly and are followed with the comment: “it’s a complex!”, are cooperation with the treatment officer¹², taking any phallus-shaped food, performing any physical exercise that is associated with sexual intercourse, any conversation about homosexuality unless it is judgmental (convicts pay attention to how they talk to each other, for example, you don’t say “I smoke cigarettes, but light cigarettes”), accepting a workplace where anything is served to officers (food or drinks), especially security officers, refusing to work upon arrival at the institution, actively advocating in the program of action... Depending on the structure of the convict population as well as their organization, informal rules weaken or strengthen. In essence, “[the] prison code is always present and the success of resocialization will largely depend on the way the normative system is implemented and preserved. By strengthening the informal system, the formal system is weakened and for this very reason it is necessary to take all the necessary measures to avoid entropy. The influence of the prison code is present and it is impossible to eliminate it, and as such it should be accepted and controlled during re-educational work with convicted persons” (Macanović, 2009: 138).

All convicts in prison, regardless of whether they are collectives or marginals, adhere to unwritten rules of conduct, i.e. the convict code. A convict who is in prison for robbery gives basic instructions for overcoming prison life - “Be careful what you do and don’t trust anyone/In prison there are no friends/Never trust anyone, because it is often misused/Don’t trust those who comfort you too much/Many are with you out of profit, or fear or simply boredom/In prison everyone gets to know each other by force/Stay the same until the end, don’t be afraid of the “circle”, because they are people/Basic “complex” is excessive association

11 compare: Macanović, 2009:125-140

12 for a more detailed description of the treatment officer, see: Krstić, 2002: 223-240

with the teacher - you need to find a balance between the slaves and the teacher/Listen to what the seniors say, and what they do from what they say/There is a spectrum of different behaviour and the most suitable one is chosen over time/Don't be the best or the worst in anything, the golden mean is the best/Share with those who share with you/If you get used to people giving to them, once you don't give to them, they will immediately blaspheme and scold you/Don't try to hear and see everything. Tomorrow someone will "fall" for something and may call you to have something to do with it. Be interested but not overly interested/They will tell you what you need to know, what they don't - they won't. So, from what they tell you, ask what is not clear/Do some exercises and maintain yourself/ Create a sequence of events for each day of the week/Balance is the most important thing. The same convict describes the colourful prison population: "The gallery of characters is incredible that can be seen. There are pedophiles, public fags, snitches, "pussy" to the mentally disturbed. A really good environment for a person to go outside. Everything revolves around screwing and prison intrigues. All in all, rubbish. I was well accepted into the fourteen-member collective, which is the strongest in the home." (Krstić, 2003: 227)

3.2 Roles and status

Status in an informal group means a position along the social scale in the system. The role represents a pattern or type of behaviour that the convict builds in relation to the expectations of other convicts in the group. Prison status (like any social status) can be ascribed and acquired. In the convict population, it is attributed to age, intelligence, religion, family history, and personality. Acquired status in prison refers to the special abilities and knowledge that the convict possesses and acquired during his sentence, the way of influencing others, special achievements in criminal activities, behaviour according to the convict code, employment in a certain workplace, which position he occupies in the hierarchy of the convict group, the types of political connections he possesses...

The division of roles in the convict system, according to the prison jargon, was identified by Syks and Messinger (Syks and Messinger, 1960):

- The right guy – a convict who fully supports and accepts the convict system;
- The rat or squealer – a convict who violates the first norm of the convict code. As a result, they are often attacked by other convicts;
- The center man – a convict who respects formal rules and procedures either for secondary gain or because he believes in the correctness of his behaviour;
- The tough – an aggressive convict, full of anger and ready to fight;
- The hipster – a convict who adopts similar patterns of behaviour as a thug but who is essentially a manipulator. He chooses his victims carefully, especially those he is sure he can overpower;
- The gorilla – a convict who is also aggressive like a bully, but unlike him, he directs his aggression towards the weaker in order to steal the desired goods;
- The merchant or peddler – a convict who procures prohibited goods through informal channels. The main characteristics are manipulation of needs, high price and interest. Often associated with gamblers;
- The weakling – a convict who is weak to exploitation by others with the inability to defend himself. As a rule, the victim of a "gorilla";
- The fish – a newly arrived convict who still hasn't gotten used to prison conditions;
- The wolf – a convict who sexually exploits other convicts in an aggressive manner. He believes

himself to be playing a “male” role. There is no emotional connection and it often boils down to rape;

- The fag – a convict who assumes a passive, often unwilling role in sexual relations with other convicts;

- The ball buster – a convict who continuously fights against the system and employees despite the futility;

- The innocent – the convicted does not admit to the committed crime and constantly talks about his innocence, for which he was convicted;

- “Outsider” (The square john) – a convict who resisted imprisonment, identifies with the free world and the employees, stands aside from everything that happens in the prison.

All the listed roles are ideally typical in relation to the current situation in the execution system, and depending on the length of the sentence, some roles change over time and adapt to other situations.

3.3 Stratification in informal convict groups

Stratification in the convict population can be defined as a hierarchical system of roles, status and positions in the interdependent and relatively permanent relationship of convicts with the goals of: - maintaining the unequal distribution of valuable and prohibited resources, power and reputation during their stay in a penal institution; - preservation of personal autonomy. In the mentioned system, there is both a vertical and a horizontal plane. On the vertical plane, there are the above-mentioned, hierarchical positions: leader, sub-leader/s (collectives), gang, bums and marginals. The horizontal plane was previously explained by the roles and statuses that convicts occupy in a specific prison environment.

3.4 Vertical plane

- Leader: according to Roth (1983), the leader is defined as a person who has a dominant position in the group, primarily in terms of power and influence, a position that allows him to influence the behaviour of other group members. The conditions that must be met in order to appoint a certain convicted person to the position of leader are: a specific crime committed (in the first place, murders and serious murders committed for criminal interests, then, placing psychoactive substances on the market, serious robberies and blackmail), criminal status before coming to serve the sentence and committing the crime, membership in fan groups, positive attitude towards lower-ranking convicted persons, physical appearance (expressed bodybuilding is extremely desirable and accepted) and present collaborative interest relationship with the institution’s management. The task of the leader is to organize the collective in order to acquire rare goods and protect all members. In situations where the rights of convicts are threatened, he advocates for the establishment of a balance. According to the division of roles mentioned above, the combination of “True Man”, “Bully” and “Man of Management” is ideally typical and such a leader usually stays in that position for the longest time.

- Sub-leaders or collective members: convicts who occupy a lower position than the leader, first of all, have the primary goal of protecting the leader from all real and unrealistic conflicts in the collective or between collectives. The secondary goal is to enable the leader to use rare goods unhindered, and if a search occurs and a prohibited item is found, it is the duty of the collective (especially the one being checked or the one who is clearly passive in the treatment) to take responsibility so that the leader can go unpunished. The tertiary goal is to entertain and reduce the leader’s prison sentence as well as to carry out his orders. The benefits of collectives are protection, reduction of fear and tension and use of rare goods and services according to merit. The latent motive of most

collectives is to take over the leadership when the necessary conditions are created and often the formation of a new collective. The leader chooses his subordinates, usually according to acquaintance, criminal offense and current reputation and status in the convict population.

- Gang: Convicts who are the next lower rank than the leader. They are responsible for carrying out the orders of the leader and sub-leader, namely: procuring rare goods, causing conflicts, racketeering, beating up marked convicts, participating in a fight instead of a leader. The leader of the collective appoints the leader of the gang. The gang is also the most numerous subgroup and in case of dissatisfaction with the leader, they are often able to provoke a conflict aimed at his overthrow. The gang is most often made up of manipulators, gamblers, thugs, rapists, but also convicts who stay away and try to participate equally in the formal and informal system.

- Tramps: convicts who have the status of not accepted in the convict population. Most often from national minorities, with minor crimes and mentally unstable (not aggressive). The task of the “bum” is primarily of a courier nature and maintaining the hygiene of the rooms used by the leader and sub-leaders. If their numbers increase, the leader appoints a bum leader or adds that duty to the gang leader. In such situations, imitation of the leader of the collective through bullying of “subordinates” often occurs.

- Marginals: convicts who do not belong to any collective, either left them independently, or were kicked out. In both cases, they represent a danger to collectives because of the information they possess and as a result their security is often threatened. As a rule, they seek protection from the formal system and, under pressure, collapse and weaken the informal system by revealing secrets to the institution’s officials.

There is vertical and structural mobility in the informal organization of convicts. Both mobilities arise as a result of conflicts caused by the change of leadership or by filling positions due to the transfer of the leader and collectives to other penal institutions for reasons of threatened security or due to an exceptional threat to order and peace in the institution.

3.5 Dynamics of informal groups through interpersonal conflicts

The dynamics of informal convict groups can be defined as a process of changes and activities on the horizontal and vertical stratification level in a certain period. Studying such dynamics is crucial for prisons in order to prevent and thwart intra-group and small-group conflicts, inter-group conflicts, employee-directed conflicts, and possible larger riots and riots.

The dynamics of informal convict groups can be influenced by several factors:

- *respect for the convict code* - A positive attitude towards norms is the main cohesive element in the group. Ideally, the most desirable convict is one who does not question the penal code and accepts it in its entirety. He is loyal and executes orders without question and in this way creates fear in the opposing group as well as those lower than himself. The speed of adoption of convict norms depends on psychological combinatory and the choice that is chosen. The collapse of group cohesion is influenced by those convicts who are pro-social and non-criminally oriented and who accept the norms for protection and for a certain period until they progress to a more favourable treatment. Also, there are convicts who are a passive part of an informal group and who pay for protection in goods (packages, shoes, clothes, cigarettes...). Such convicts do not participate directly in any changes, unless pressure is put on them to achieve a “general” goal.

- *changes at the level of the leadership of the collective* - Changes may be due to the expiration of the sentence, the transfer of the convicted to another penal institution, a physical attack due to an undesirable way of leadership or conflicting interests, a planned attack and the assumption of leadership

by the collective, the transfer of the convicted (leader) to another pavilion or department (e.g. semi-open). According to examples from practice, a convict who respects all convicts with a lower rank and who is able to obtain some collective benefits from the administration (e.g. new equipment for the gym, organization of a joint New Year's celebration...) stays in the position of leader for the longest time. If the change of leader is effected by the formal system, there is a danger of rebellions and protests by the convicts. Calming tensions is solved by choosing the most suitable leader whose first task is to calm the other convicts. If the leader is changed due to conflict between opposing groups, the group that has protection from the formal system "wins" because the majority of that collective will not be punished but will be characterized as self-defense.

- *conflicts within the group* - Considering the durability and nature of bonds based on fear in the convict collective, conflicts can arise due to non-compliance with norms, disclosure of secret information, failure to carry out orders, provocations, attempts to take over leadership, advancement in the hierarchy. A popular safety valve for removing tension and measuring strength and power are fights, in prison slang, "on the fence" and which are approved by the leaders of the collective and, in Kozer's terms, belong to unrealistic conflicts. Conflicts within the group have the function of strengthening the group by filtering out undesirables and restructuring roles and positions.

- *conflicts between two or more groups* - In every institution there are at least two informal and opposing prisoner groups and one formal (official) group. The formal official group has a solid structure and divisions within them with clear and expressed attitudes towards the convicts and the functioning of the institution. Informal convict groups that make up a specific social system are primarily defined in relation to and opposition to the formal system. The common goal of the informal groups is resistance to the staff and free design of prison life according to permitted and prohibited possibilities. Any movement of the boundaries of the informal activates the protective processes and procedures of the formal system to restore the management of the institution to its previous state. The goals of each of the informal groups is to constantly strengthen the group, demonstrate power and influence, take over prison premises and space, which further demonstrates the said power.

- *coalitions within the group and between groups* - Coalitions can be formed due to shared accommodation, the same workshop where they work, similar interests and views of the world, belonging to the same fan groups. In such groups, "intimacy generates an accumulation of hostile feelings, because it creates frequent opportunities for conflict, which is usually suppressed due to feelings of attachment" (Kozer, 2007: 83). Also, "institutional ways of expressing ambivalence" is the "joking relationship" (Kozer, op.cit., p.: 85) between coalition members which has the function of lowering tension and strengthening cohesiveness through rude swearing and giving vulgar labels. Depending on the number of informal groups and the way they are led, convicts of opposing groups may be prohibited from all communication except "business" and in periods when communication is free, the coalition is filled with convicts from all informal groups. - transitions from the primary to the opposing group - "If they happen to be abandoned by someone with whom they shared care and responsibility for the life of the group, they will react to such "disloyalty" in a more violent way than less involved members would." (Kozer, op.cit., p.: 93) Motives for moving from one convict group to another can be various, but in most cases it is due to conflicts within the primary group and threatened security from convicts from that group. The conflict itself can arise due to the privileges offered in another group or the arrival of more convicts with whom there is an acquaintance from outside. If the group to which they are transferred is strong, the convicted will not have direct problems, but there will always be a danger of retaliation that can be transferred even after the sentence has expired. Increased commitment to the formal system in terms of revealing the secrets of the collective is also understood as a transition to another group. In this case, ie. when he receives the label of a snitch, the convict's safety is threatened by all the convicts in the institution, which is one of

the cohesive factors of two (or more) convict groups towards a common “enemy”. Another similar factor is the negative orientation towards the formal system.

- *changes in cooperation with the formal system* - In order to reduce informal influences, the formal system is constantly searching for ways to collapse pro-criminal associations. Influences can be formal and informal. In some prison institutions, especially those focused on guarding, the cooperation with the informal system is extremely close, in such a way that the leaders are given greater privileges (important information, better accommodation, workplace...) in order to influence the convict population so that major systemic upheavals (e.g. rebellion) do not occur. Thus, the formal system often appoints a convict leader who is responsible for cooperation with the administration. Also, it is not a rare case that abuses of official position occur in such a system, which the media welcomes by creating a general label of corruption of prison officials. A slightly more positive practice is to activate the existing leader to “fight” for more favourable treatment through legitimate and positive channels (the motive for freedom is the strongest, especially in such institutions), and in this way will influence the other convicts to jointly participate in maintaining stability in the prison and activate the majority of the convicts to individually try their hand at “fighting” for treatment. When the “treatment contagion” spreads through collectives, the negative pressures decrease until the moment of the collapse of the hierarchy with the departure of the leader to a semi-open ward or parole. In addition to the mentioned strategies aimed at the leader’s personality, there are other ways of reducing tensions. First of all, there are sports competitions in collective and individual sports, where convicts are given the opportunity to choose the sport and team members as well as their names. Just by giving a team a name, convicts define their group and reveal their connections to the formal system. The winners are awarded institutional benefits such as an extended visit or an extraordinary package. Then, organizing music concerts in the institution, at least for a while, removes each individual from the prison climate and allows him to enjoy popular music. During these events, the convicts sit in such a way that they directly show the hierarchical sequence in the collective, starting from the leader down to the lowest ranked. An additional advantage of organizing such events is that the most visible change in position in the collective can be observed.

- *increase in the number of lower-ranking convicted persons* - It was mentioned earlier that the middle layer in the convict collective consists of members of the “gang” who are responsible for various beatings and the procurement of illegal items. During the passage of time and the arrival of new convicts, there may be an imbalance in some collective, i.e. that the number, and thus the strength, of the gang exceeds the strength of the top of the collective. In situations where there is a “gang leader” with the motives of taking over the collective or forming his own, the entire convict population suffers internal pressure from the outbreak of possible riots, which automatically activates the formal system to suppress bigger problems through its channels. The most painless way is to transfer a certain number of convicts to other penal institutions in order to create a new structure.

- *divulging important information* - convicts who choose a strategy of behaviour that includes divulging secrets of convicts that are important to the formal system, directly put their safety in question. Those convicts who persist for a long period of time with such selection are in cooperation with both opposing sides. Sometimes they use false information, sometimes bad information in order to secure themselves. Through their channels, they find out about disagreements and quarrels among officials and are active in finding out who is the “weak link” in the formal system. They “sell” such and similar information to the leaders of the collective. For the formal system, they find out who procures illegal things, who owns them, changes in the hierarchy, who participated in the fight... Also, the formal system often uses them to spread incorrect news among the convicts and thus introduce instability among the convicts. As a rule, such a convict does not last long with such a choice, and if he wants to ensure his safety, a better strategy is to belong to one of the collectives that is able

to provide him with safety. In situations where the disclosure of secrets is of a situational nature and if the identity of that convicted person becomes known, security is directly threatened and a formal system must ensure security in the shortest possible time.

- *riots* - Prison riots are directly related to the degree of organization of the prison population. If the informal prison system is firmly organized without fear of internal collapse due to unrealistic conflicts, the formal system, and wider society, are at risk of rebellion. For a rebellion to occur, a rigid organization is a necessary but not the most important condition. In their study of prison riots, the authors cite Vernon Fox's conclusion that prison riots occur in prisons where inmates have medium to high morale and where certain conflicts arise within the institution's staff, most often between the philosophy of treatment and the concept of custody. (Marić, Radoman, 2001: 123) The previous rebellions in Serbia were caused by both internal and external factors. Complaining about prison conditions is the most primary reason (internal), while socio-political changes (external) are the second reason. As a trigger for the rebellion, there is also the subjective desire of a few convicts to ensure the conditions for escaping from prison or to settle "old scores" from the field.

"It all started on November 7 in the KPD Sremska Mitrovica, when 1,300 prisoners started a rebellion before midnight, demanding a general amnesty (also for Albanian separatists) and better living conditions. There were also unusual demands, such as that in the future only three commanders could, as the only ones eligible, enter the circle. The ten-day drama was announced by the prisoners from the first pavilion, when they blocked the doors with crowbars and To avoid being lynched, the guards ran away from the prison premises: "Freedom for all!" The prisoners of the second and third pavilions joined them and started burning the buildings in the prison grounds. The following day, on Monday, negotiations began between the representatives of the prisoners and the then minister of justice Seada Spahović and the prison administration, s others. A few days later, the guards also started the protest, who left the circle and went out in front of the Administration building. They demanded higher wages, better conditions and a change in management. In this lawlessness, the prisoners themselves maintained order within the circle, refusing to enter the cells. "I'd rather dig a field than worry that some prisoner will injure me, make me disabled or even kill me. Thank you! But for 80 marks, let them look for others", was heard at a meeting of about 500 employees in the Sremskomitrovec prison. A little later, when the situation began to slip out of their control, the prisoners called the guards from the watchtower to come back and take over their jobs. Part of the rebel prison atmosphere was the parties in the pavilions, and enjoying the good food that came to them as humanitarian aid. It was also reported that younger prisoners experience rape on a daily basis. that the leaders changed their gray uniforms with numbers to workmen's uniforms, that they collected all the medicines from the prison pharmacy. Before the food began to arrive, they occupied a warehouse with two tons of dried meat products, which, as they ordered, was used for appetizers. It was also rumoured that many planned to escape, first through the prison gate, then by tearing down one of the walls and digging underground tunnels."

Conclusion

As stated in the Law on the Execution of Criminal Sanctions, the execution of a prison sentence is defined in Article 43: The purpose of the execution of a prison sentence is that during the execution of the sentence, the convicted person, through the application of appropriate treatment programs, adopts socially acceptable values with the aim of easier inclusion in the conditions of life after the execution of the sentence so that he does not commit criminal acts in the future. If the above article were to be defined according to the above analysis, it would read: The purpose of the prison is for the convict, during the execution of the sentence, through the application of repressive measures, the formal and informal system, to adopt the convict's values in order to more easily integrate into the conditions of prison life so that he does not fear for his safety in the future. With the deprivation of freedom and arrival in a repressive environment, intrapersonal conflict is inevitable due to the discomfort of the life situation. By forming groups on various cohesive bases, a unity is created that protects individuals by activating them individually to defend the boundaries of their group. Therefore, in prison institutions, conflict, either intrapersonal or interpersonal, is inevitable as well as informal prisoner organization. Reducing repression and enabling the most humane possible access to a convicted person is the only way to alleviate fear and, therefore, conflicts in and among convicts. in prison institutions, conflict, either intrapersonal or interpersonal, is inevitable as well as informal prisoner organization. Reducing repression and enabling the most humane possible access to a convicted person is the only way to alleviate fear and, therefore, conflicts in and among convicts. in prison institutions, conflict, either intrapersonal or interpersonal, is inevitable as well as informal prisoner organization. Reducing repression and enabling the most humane possible access to a convicted person is the only way to alleviate fear and, therefore, conflicts in and among convicts.

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