

Chapter 16

Philosophy of the Russian Criminal Subculture

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ABSTRACT

Mediation is a process where the impartial third-party assists negotiating parties to resolve their conflict using specific communication and negotiations techniques. It appears that mediation could be used not only in civil sphere and everyday life between conflicting persons, but also between conflicting inmates. The prison is a place full of conflicts, tension, pain, and discontent. The situation is aggravated by the closed space and hard subordination, where inmates with different backgrounds and level of patience are constantly side by side not being able to disperse. As a result, there is high possibility of crimes conviction especially a recidivism. In this chapter, the authors analyze the criminal subculture in Russian prisons, its philosophy, and its impact to criminals themselves and society. In the modern context of moral and economic crisis and the forfeiting of communistic deals, the criminal world with a mighty heave tries to instill the criminal philosophy into collective consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

Criminal Subculture as a Conflictogenic Factor in Correctional Facilities

The criminal subculture is a subtype of the culture characterized by the standards that are opposed to the socially approved ones and associated with the breach of criminal and legal prohibitions.

In a crisis people's needs and views are distorted, and ideals are lost. The criminal community uses this situation, creates its own system of values, philosophy, which is actively instilled in society and public consciousness. The roots of the criminal subculture have the prison origin.

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The main philosophical idea is a rejection of social norms, relations and official institutions, it justifies and encourages a criminal way of life.

This philosophy helps criminals assert themselves in their innocence and represent themselves to people as full-fledged or even heroic people, and psychological barriers make criminals insusceptible to positive views and ideas.

Criminal philosophical ideas function in everyday life through communication and regulation subculture elements (nicknames, tattoos, jargon, behavioral standards, traditions and conventions, stratification of criminals).

The influence of criminal philosophy reduces trust of society in law enforcement agencies, approves of lynch-law and vigilantism, disseminates ethnic and religious extremism.

There are two directions of counteracting criminal philosophy. The propagation of criminal traditions and beliefs concerning necessity and feasibility of conducting a criminal lifestyle can be limited legally. On the other hand, society and the state should make an additional effort to reduce the potential punitive detention.

The term “subculture” was first used abroad in the 1930s when F. Thrasher published his research (Thrasher, 1927) devoted to studying 1313 gangs in Chicago. His analysis of gangs, their origin, life, composition and structure, conventions and rules of their members is a masterpiece of criminological research.

Morality of “thieves by code” that emerged in the 1930s as a set of rules governing the relationships of pickpockets with each other and with the state dominated in the underworld for many years. In general, the criminal ethics was a distorted moral of law-abiding citizen. According to this ethics, a crime is a valor, and a life of a thief is the only worthy way of life. The basic rule is simple: you can steal, but do not get caught, and if you are caught, you must not confess.

M. Foucault (Foucault, 1979) also notes that the origin of the criminal subculture has a long history.

He said, “In the classical period, there opened up in the confines or interstices of society the confused, tolerant and dangerous domain of the ‘outlaw’ or at least of that which eluded the direct hold of power: an uncertain space that was for criminality a training ground and a region of refuge; there poverty, unemployment, pursued innocence, cunning, the struggle against the powerful, the refusal of obligations and laws, and organized crime all came together as chance and fortune would dictate.”

At the present stage of development of the Russian society the criminal subculture does not only spiritually feeds the criminal community, but also reproduces criminals and crimes. It has a very significant impact on offenders and their anti-social orientation.

B. Fox (Fox, 1985) points out that society obtains its strength from the effective functioning of certain groups such as family, school, church, industrial enterprise, corporation, club, professional groups and governmental institutions. In order to understand and change human behavior, it is necessary to examine a group and group behavior. Like any other kind of subculture, the criminal subculture is characterized by its group character.

Subculture is a part of general culture, but it differentiates itself from general culture on the basis of a culture-bearer, adherent, follower of this type of culture. Moreover, there is another criterion for this differentiation – a conflict of its philosophical ideas with the ideas considered a norm in society.

All major social institutions – state, law, family, education – are rejected and are non-existent in the scale of values. However, no subculture can create its independent material basis. Subculture cannot

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