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Relevance of Studying a Problematic Issue of Placing and Detaining Convicts in Cell-Type Premises

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Abstract

Introduction: the issue of placing and detaining convicts in cell-type premises has a long history, being relevant not only due to the conflict behavior of convicts in conditions of long-term social deprivation, but also due to the need to suppress (prevent) the ideology of extremism in prison-type correctional institutions. *Purpose:* to determine the relevance and significance of the issue of placing and detaining convicts in cell-type premises in penitentiary institutions. *Materials and methods:* a review-analytical method including a theoretical and methodological analysis of available scientific and literary sources, as well as an ascertaining empirical method regulating the analysis of organizational-methodological and normative-legal sources. *Results:* all available theoretical and methodological sources on the studied problematic issue are analyzed. The conclusion about the relevance and significance of the issue of cell placement and detention of convicts in penitentiary institutions is substantiated. The experience of psychological work (diagnostic and correctional) in penitentiary institutions of epμBryansk and Vladimir oblasts is described. *Conclusion:* to prevent possible problems of cell placement of convicts, it is necessary to take into account the intensity of past criminal activity of convicts and its type; serving a sentence in the past; personal characteristics; religion; socio-cultural development level; presence of mental anomalies; presence of categories of preventive registration; attitude to measures of influence, labor, and regime. The author gives recommendations on solving the problem of unstructured time of convicts through employment; diagnosing true intentions of groups of convicts; developing skills of tolerant and conflict-free behavior of convicts, etc.

Key words: convicts; placement in cell-type premises; ideology of extremism and terrorism; destructive behavior; conflicts; social deprivation; psychologists; prisons; penal system.

5.3.9. Legal psychology and accident psychology.

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Introduction

The issue of placement and detention of convicts in prison cells and locked rooms (punitive isolation ward, ward-type room, single ward-type room) has always been significant for the penal system. But today the relevance of this issue is of particular importance due to the strengthening of destructive personal characteristics of convicts in general and those who are kept in locked rooms and prisons in particular [1, p. 357; 2, p. 128; 3, p. 48]. There is an increase in the number and proportion of convicts with mental abnormalities due to drug and alcohol addiction before they have been placed in a pre-trial detention center and convicted [4, p. 54; 5, p. 23], as well as spreading the ideology of extremism and terrorism in penitentiary institutions [1, p. 358]. The destructive circumstances mentioned above contribute significantly to the urgency of the issue of cell placement and detention of convicts.

Empirical part

The issue of psychological compatibility in small social groups has been considered in sufficient detail by researchers. Thus, A.E. Krasovskaya presents the following components of compatibility: motivational-purposeful (consistency of motives and goals), perceptual (based on interpersonal perception), communicative (flexibility of communication patterns), behavioral (acceptance of another's style of behavior), and emotional (emotional preference) [6, p. 27].

S.V. Krutkin studying compatibility of military teams identifies the following criteria of psychological compatibility: emotional satisfaction with joint life activities with team members and emotional satisfaction of group members with joint life activities. Homogeneous combinations of factors of personal anxiety-adaptability and heterogeneous combinations of factors of leadership-subordination are of crucial importance for the mutual psychological compatibility of military personnel in a team [7, p. 118].

V.V. Kozlovskii defines compatibility as tolerance, which is an essential aspect of com-

munication and coherence in the relationships and actions of different individuals and groups, a measure of compatibility of participants in interaction [8, p. 188]. This view translates the concept of tolerance into the category of basic categories of interpersonal interaction. Analyzing tolerance as a phenomenon of communication, the author points to the conflict potential of a low degree of its manifestation, "many socio-cultural conflicts are caused precisely by a low degree of tolerance, that is, incompatibility, disruption of relationships, and, consequently, blocking of communication" [8, p. 189].

The problem of placing and detaining convicts in cell-type premises is traditionally considered by penitentiary psychological researchers as part of the methodological issue of the formation of temporary tolerant small groups of convicts in conditions of social deprivation [9, p. 31; 10, p. 24; 11]. Various aspects of social mechanisms and patterns of functioning of small groups of convicts have been studied by I.P. Bashkatov, A.G. Bronnikov, Yu.A. Vakutina, B.F. Vodolazskii, V.G. Deev, V.F. Klyukin, S.I. Kurganov, A.I. Mokretsov, V.F. Pirozhkov, A.N. Sukhov, G.F. Khokhryakov, I.G. Shmarov, and others.

Studying the relevance of the issue of placement and detention of convicts in prison cells and locked rooms, the author uses materials of works prepared by the Research Institute of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia and departmental institutions. The author analyzed research materials obtained over the past twelve years as a result of psychodiagnostic and experimental psychocorrective work with convicts serving sentences in locked rooms (cells).

The review-analytical method applied includes a theoretical and methodological analysis of available scientific and literary sources, while the ascertaining empirical method regulates the analysis of organizational, methodological and regulatory sources.

It is worth mentioning that a few years ago penitentiary psychologists considered formation of temporary tolerant groups of convicts

in isolation from society. It added additional meaning to the generally accepted definition of tolerance as patience for a different worldview, religion, nationality, lifestyle, behavior and customs [9, p. 33; 10, p. 28].

The scientific and methodological literature devoted to the formation of tolerant groups fixes group cohesion as its main goal [12, p. 17; 13, p. 14; 15, p. 41], which seems inappropriate in conditions of penitentiary institutions. It does not seem advisable to first artificially form a group that meets operational requirements of psychological compatibility, and then purposefully work to rally this community, which may subsequently create the ground for the combined implementation of illegal intentions.

The formation of tolerant, emotionally distanced, conflict-free behavior of individuals who, contrary to their interests, are forced to stay in one limited territory for a long time, with strict regulation of activities and in conditions of emotional saturation with a formal group, can be considered optimal.

Tolerance has (and should have) its limits. For example, if you build a pyramid of opinions on an issue, then up to a certain level the convict treats it calmly, but from a certain level it is already irreconcilable. Expanding the boundaries of personal components of tolerance in this pyramid is one of the goals of optimal cell placement of convicts. A tolerant group of convicts, therefore, is a social community, within which the behavior, customs, worldview, and religion of each individual are tolerated, thereby ensuring their rights and safety.

When creating a special informal environment for convicts, specific conditions for serving sentences in penitentiary institutions are formed [15]. It is recommended to take these features into account when forming various groups of convicts in correctional institutions, since the group includes convicts who initially have no reasons or motives for joining, which can be an additional factor in increasing the period of adaptation to the group, communication difficulties, and the occurrence of short and long-term conflict situations.

The analysis of available scientific and methodological sources shows that the subjects of research activities of the Federal Penitentiary

Service of Russia who conducted not only theoretical but also applied (experimental) study of the problematic issue considered in the article include the Research Institute of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia and several interregional departments of psychological work of the territorial bodies.

Thus, the study conducted by the interregional department of psychological work of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in Krasnoyarsk Krai shows that when forming groups of convicts of various types it is necessary to take into account:

- intensity of past criminal activity of convicts, its type;
- serving a sentence in the past;
- personal characteristics;
- religion;
- socio-cultural development level;
- presence of mental abnormalities;
- presence of preventive accounting categories;
- attitude towards measures of influence, labor, regime, etc. [16, p. 24].

The study of the differentiation of convicts into groups conducted by another interregional department of psychological work has identified a number of patterns, the knowledge of which helps to prevent undesirable phenomena [8, p. 17]. First, unity is achieved in a group when its members become attached to each other more than they realize it. The longer such a group functions in stable conditions, the more cohesive it becomes.

Second, when regulating intra-group relations in order to achieve necessary tolerant interaction, the following phenomena may occur:

- if a group has been functioning for a long time and its members know each other's abilities, then convicts are usually chosen who are well versed in the environment and can point out solutions to emerging problems related to the functioning of the group, but they often do not take into account the abilities, skills and desires of each member of the group when assigning responsibilities. Thus, ignoring the interests of certain convicts boosts unhealthy competitiveness and the likelihood of conflict, which ultimately leads to even greater polarization of relations, verbal and physical aggres-

sion, which can lead to operational problems of varying degrees of complexity;

- representatives of the group are much more loyal to their group, do not compromise for fear of “turning on their friends” and defend the generally accepted intra-group point of view. The mechanisms operating within the group have a huge impact on all areas of the convict’s socio-psychological functioning. Thus, intra-group dynamics as a natural phenomenon has a number of both positive and negative sides [8, p. 19].

Ignoring intra-group dynamics in cell-by-cell placement can lead to socio-psychological, operational and regime problems within both an individual cell and a correctional institution as a whole [17, p. 148].

Summarizing the research materials of both interregional departments of psychological work, we can propose the following measures to prevent problems connected with placement of convicts in cell-type premises:

- ensuring that employees are aware of the psychological mechanisms operating at different stages of the group’s development;
- ensuring that employees are aware of the specifics of a criminal subculture that affect the interaction of convicts;
- conducting psychological measures aimed at conflict prevention;
- constant and prompt cooperation of employees of all departments and services on problems arisen due to placement of convicts in cell-type premises;
- constant monitoring of the dynamics of the socio-psychological situation;
- systematic rotation of convicts;
- ensuring the priority of key vectors of work in this direction, i.e. the formation of tolerant attitudes and preventing the consolidation of small groups of a negative orientation.

In 2013, considering the problematic issue of detaining convicts in prison cells, the staff of the Federal Research Institute of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia developed a diagnostic and psychological corrective program “Formation of temporary tolerant groups in conditions of isolation from society”, consisting of two modules: diagnostic and psychological corrective. The applied part of the program was tested in the Bryansk Juvenile Correctional Fa-

cility of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Bryansk Oblast and the Prison No. 2 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Vladimir Oblast [10, p. 48].

The staff of the institute notes that the work on the formation of temporary tolerant groups presupposes a group form of work (this is what the program is designed for) [10, p. 37]. However, due to the regime requirements, it is not always possible for prison inmates to perform group exercises. However, the exercises in the program are selected in such a way that they are suitable for individual work, laying a certain foundation for the development of tolerant relations among convicts belonging to the same group in conditions of cell placement.

After implementing relaxation, art-therapeutic and socio-psychological blocks of the diagnostic and psychological corrective program, certain positive results were achieved in the emotional-volitional, behavioral and interpersonal spheres of convicts’ life [10, p. 41; 18, p. 56]. This is why we are now interested in the research experience of the staff of the Institute and the interregional departments of psychological work of the territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia, who conducted not only a theoretical study of the issue of temporary placement of convicts, but also implemented the experimental part of the research work.

In modern conditions of detaining convicts in cell-type premises, we can identify the following problems: conflict behavior, consequences of prolonged social deprivation, a rise in the destructive general characteristics of convicts (criminal law, penal enforcement, socio-demographic, etc.), increased manifestations of mental abnormalities due to drug and/or alcohol addiction of convicts before conviction [4, p. 37], and spread of the ideology of extremism and terrorism in penitentiary institutions [19, p. 180].

Conclusions

First, the theoretical and applied (experimental) studies conducted earlier on the problematic issue of detaining convicts in cell-type premises are still of some interest, as they achieved certain positive results and proposed a number of practical recommendations.

1. Certain mechanisms of group dynamics begin to work in any community of people who have been together for a long time. To prevent such phenomena, it is required to conduct regular rotation, otherwise there may emerge acute emotional protest reactions and even attempts to commit acts of disobedience. Rotation does not imply the transfer of one convict to another cell, but the renewal of a separate group by more than 60% [6, p. 39].

Another positive aspect of rotation is the significant emotional energy intensity of this process: convicts adapt to the microclimate of a new group, arrange their lives and build interaction with new cellmates, which temporarily reduces the overall non-constructive activity in the group.

2. A low percentage of convict employment in labor is an important aspect. On the one hand, it is an indicator of the stability of their criminal attitudes, on the other – the difficulty of combating a prison subculture. However, the key problem of unemployment is the presence of unstructured time, which creates the ground for conflicts caused by monotony and various kinds of violations of the regime of serving sentences.

3. Most groups of convicts in places of deprivation of liberty, regardless of the nature of their orientation, hide their true intentions. It is impossible to assert that a particular community of convicts has a positive orientation. Employees of a penitentiary institution should try to diagnose intentions of the group of convicts.

4. The problems of cell placement extend beyond the authority of the institution's psychologist, since the distribution of cells is primarily handled by the staff of the operations department. In some cases, recommendations of a psychologist are taken into account only within the framework of available operational information, the occurrence of problems in ex-

isting groups, which shifts the focus from psychological work to operational work.

5. Conducting trainings (other psychotechnics) aimed at cohesion and team building is impractical in conditions of cell placement of convicts, since it boosts their intra-group activity and cohesion. In this regard, it seems advisable to work individually to stabilize the emotional background of individual convicts, to develop skills of tolerant and conflict-free behavior in conditions of incarceration, which requires strengthening the role of the employee in intra-group processes – large-scale extensive work of correctional psychologists.

6. Conditions of cell placement imply separation, not cohesion of convicts. This model, focused on international standards rather than the Russian mentality, is unusual for both employees and convicts and can be passively rejected. Thus, when a particular group of convicts looks well-to-do and the authorities of a facility may reject rotation with this group. It will lead to the formation of an influential community, which will subsequently begin to dictate its terms [20, p. 48; 21, p. 115].

Second, the theoretical and applied research on the detention of convicts in cell-type premises was conducted in 2013–2018. This state of affairs automatically determines the relevance and significance of the problematic issue of detaining convicts in prison cells and locked rooms, taking into account current conditions of the functioning of the penal system.

In modern conditions of increased destructive general characteristics of convicts and manifestations of mental abnormalities due to drug and alcohol addiction before conviction, as well as the spread of the ideology of extremism and terrorism in penitentiary institutions, the need for theoretical and applied research with mandatory experimental study of the problematic issue of temporary placement and detention of convicts is also extremely urgent.

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