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Psychological deformation of youths' sense sphere staying at the pretrial detention centre (PDC)

The loss of life meaning, the feeling of meaningless being is the fundamental psychological fact widely spread in our society. In criminal youth subculture – this is a well-known problem, however it is intensified in the conditions when people are deprived of freedom and they spend long hours waiting. This is confirmed by the researches of sense sphere deformation, which happens to youths staying at the pretrial detention centre and must be taken into consideration in the process of their resocialization.

Key words: situation of life crisis, sense sphere of personality, conscious ceasing, aggression and transformation of sense sphere of personality, sense barriers and dispositions, resocialization.

In the society which experience crisis, and our state has been in such a situation more than a decade, the quantity of the factors, which influence criminal situation, are increasing. This causes employment problems, curtailment of cultural, sport, health programs, in the country, the decrease of social guarantees and as a result difficulties that arise for youths in getting education and receiving profession. In the space of socio-economical changes and aggravation of social contradictions,

people loose vital necessary ideals, the values are changed in public and individual conscious. The criminalists admit the crucial influence of the conditions of the social life upon character, level and structure of criminality. This negative social impact «starts» the internal mechanism, which significantly influence safety and stability of the state in whole. Social disadaptation of adolescents and youths is growing in the form of delinquent and criminal behavior. The number of crimes committed by youths has recently increased objectively.

The recent reforms, that changed social structure of Russia, are accompanied by changes in legal and penitentiary policy of the state. Though there are positive shifts in the direction of humanization of personality defense during investigation, court hearing and punishment execution, there is problem of the opposition between the activity of employees of penitentiary institutions to resocialize convicted people and antisocial stability of criminal subculture. There is the opinion among youths according to which the existing system of law is not efficient, because «people do not obey laws», «the law is not equal for everyone», «there is the widespread opinion about legal system («they want only to convict»)», «we can't understand judges' logics when



they try a case», «they do not take into consideration all the circumstances». At the pretrial detention centre (sometimes people under trial have stayed there for a long time) a certain informal structure of communication and interaction between people under trial exists and functions; there is the introjection of criminal reduces stereotypes and antisocial values. In this connection, studies of the values and life priorities of youths at the pretrial detention centres, are necessary to grasp existing legal reality, and to improve state policy of criminality fight, to prepare specialists professionally oriented (psychologists, educators) to increase efficiency of correction at institutions of confinement.

At present the sense sphere of those who break law, is not enough studied; of course, it is a serious obstacle to reorganize their resocialisation. In the national penitentiary practice the personal features of the people who committed crimes were under consideration in the works of A.D. Glotkin, M.G. Debolskii, V.G. Deev, A.V. Dmitrov, A.G. Kovalev, A.V. Napris, O.U. Mikhailova, A.S. Mikhлина, V.F. Pirozhkova, V.M. Pozdnikova, V.P. Saphonov, V.A. Semenov, E.V. Chernisheva. In the frame of juridical psychology L.V. Alekseeva, I.A. Gorkova, U.L. Metelitsa, S.S. Shipshina analyze psychological characteristics of the subject of the arrested person and subjective side of his actions in different criminal affairs. However these studies are mainly concentrated on personal features of adult criminals and at the stage when they are already in prison. What is happening to youths while their stay at the pretrial detention centre and how this crisis period influences later their further life orientations (particularities of personal attitudes and orientations, self-esteem, auto-evaluation, values, life plans and etc) – it is not enough studied question in psychology. A.R. Patunov believes, that more than one third and maybe even half of juvenile offenders do not realize the sequences of their actions, they have too high self-esteem, they are inclined to fantasies and to low criticism of their actions and as a result, – they experience the lack of values and sense constructions, which characterize the stability of personality, providing her socially accepted personalization. The observed distortions of juvenile offenders' personal sphere lead to formation of «illegal, criminal reality as subjective world picture» (A.A. Baranov). We must carry out integrated studies (of core components of personality) of juvenile offenders in order to oppose this tendency and plan corrective work to prevent recidivations of illegal behavior (at the moment more than one third of people who were convicted served a sentence, commit unlawful acts again), at different stages of the investigation and punishment.

The evident deficit of the researches of transformation of youths' sense sphere in the conditions of isolation determined the aim of the present study. It was made in two groups of youths staying at the pretrial detention centres of Nalchik (67 people) and Rostov-on-Don (54 people), at the age of 16–18. According to national mixture, the sampling was multiethnic: more than 60% – Russian, 20% – the Kabardinians, 5% – the Tatars, the rest 5% are the Chechens, The Balkarians, the Armenians, the Kalmyks. The most of people were Kabardinian in Nalchik, and in Rostov-on-Don most of them were Russian. However in both pretrial detention centres there were youths



of different nationalities. 65% were charged of crimes against the property (theft, car stealing without plans of pilferage), 18% - crimes against public security (hooliganism, illegal turnover of weapon, racket), 17% - illegal turnover of drugs. In this research we did not involve people who were charged of crimes against personality (major crimes, health harm, sex crimes).

The research passed through the following stages:

Preliminary period (2004-2005) – analysis of the main approaches to the problem of sense deformation in different social contexts, researches of personal features made in the context of juridical and forensic psychology. Selection of problems and definition of logics of empirical part of the studies.

Diagnostic stage (2005-2006) – organization of diagnostics, tests, mathematical processing of the received data, carrying out of correlative and factor analysis, finding out symptom-complexes of deformations of sense sphere centering in the conditions of the pretrial detention centre.

Generalization stage (2006-2007) – elaboration of sense transformations as characteristics of “criminal orientation”. Results registration and description in the form of thesis. Recommendations writing for psychologists and educators working in the field of forensic psychology and with high-risk groups among youths.

At the preliminary stage of our diagnostic research, people on demand completed test revealing intellectual level of development (the purpose was to find out those who won't be able to do the test assignments connected to discovering verbal senses due to intellectual development limits).

As the result of diagnostics we have found that, in the sampling there were no youths with high IQ (more than 110 scores). 6 people (5% of sampling) had the coefficient below the norm, which is necessary to make these assignments, used in our study, and further they didn't take part in diagnostics oriented to clarify sense sphere particularities. About 65% had conventionally average IQ, 35% - low one, they couldn't understand the task of the tests.

General conclusions of the study of the deformation of youths' sense sphere in the conditions of the pretrial detention centre are:

1. In the conditions of the pretrial detention centre youths have several personal transformations and sense reductions due to regression, projection and repression of different forms of the accommodation to new conditions of the existence, the introjection of criminal reduced stereotypes and illegal values. They have very low orientation to the future, inclination to nostalgia, attempts to find psychological defense in his memories, regression and repression of undesirable memories deform sense sphere and cause her essential differences from characteristics, typical to this stage of personality development (young people at the period of youth).

2. **Appeared** in the conditions of the pretrial detention centre, interpersonal conflict actualizes the dissonance of subjective personal relations in regard to public relations, where the person is involved by force now (as the consequence of arrest and investigation). Diagnostic data testimony about correlative association **between the**



level of self-esteem and the level of intellectual development. For those who had low IQ, the typical features are low self-esteem, it means that they underestimate their significance for the environment and they do not understand the results of their activity, and a ratio distortion between real and desirable achievements. They try to realize their particularities and future perspectives. Their sense Ego centering differs by low regularity (fragmentary introspective observations), which is connected to little experience of the reality analysis not only in PDT, but during all their life before arrest. It was aggravated by high conflict rate in the self-esteem of youths with medium level of IQ (discrepancy between Self-real and Self-ideal), which is connected on one hand with high requirements towards themselves, and on second hand with the absence or underestimation of their own success.

The tendency of low self-esteem as a component of socio-psychological disadaptation witnesses about inadequate perception of the juvenile offenders of themselves in the surrounding world, about the absence of the group, they link their dreams and realization of his abilities with. This usually leads to self-deception, truth fear, psychological defense, which, in their turn, are sources of self-esteem rigidity.

Scales "Locus of control – Self" and «Locus of control – Life» give us information about the level of personal responsibility for one's own life, that the person takes, and about his awareness of his possibility to have an impact upon life, to be its active participant. Only 17% of people on remand treat themselves as active participants of life process, and think that the reasons of everything which happens to them, are due to their character and abilities. More than 60% of respondents have external locus of control. This can be explained by the fact that they want to guard self-esteem, soul poise and psycho-emotional stability in the conditions of negative sufferings, and it results in external locus of control, permitting person to avoid responsibility for the misfortunes.

3. The deficit and the detriment of the values and sense determination generate uncertainty of life choice, discord in life meaning dispositions. The results of the study of the general personality orientation of the youths at the pretrial detention centre showed the dominance of simplified, curtailed structure of sense regulation of life, contraction of sense perspectives. The senses are closed to themselves, to the satisfaction of situationally actualized needs. Actualized needs severely determine senses of concrete actions, losing their complicated polyconative character. Life of the youths on remand is a chain of unconnected episodes, drawn by the cycles of the actualization – satisfaction of needs. The main role of sense regulations is defensive, it helps to avoid dangerous situations (though there are some, who in reverse, do not find the possibility of the defense in building up the barrier, but in the enlargement of the space by provoking a conflict). The most typical meanings are: «not to be the worst among others», «not to think long», «not to take responsibility» and etc. As the role of the inner world, of «interior plan» of conscious in life regulation is reduced to the minimum, discomfort avoidance is provided by the defensive mechanism of negativism, that ensures some compliance with themselves. The informality and at-



omism of the structure of sense regulation of the life activity is determined by their initial poverty of the interior world, complicating orientation towards furcated and difficult sense links.

4. Using the factor analysis it is possible to discover types of sense sphere deformation as specifically formed «criminal orientation of youths» in the conditions of pretrial detention center. Under types of the «criminal orientation», we mean, stable tendencies to orientate towards certain life goals, available in new conditions of being and initiating the overcoming of the environment resistance by purposeful ways of behavior. They have the following sense forming characteristics:

- To the first type of life sense strategies we can relegate young people who in conditions of pretrial detention centre, are inclined to «ritual criminalization». They have low and less than medium level of the intellect, they differ by weekly formed emotional and will sphere and heightened suggestibility. Most of them are characterized by low and medium level of sense development, instability of conscious centering, high dependence of the norms, stereotypes and values of we-groups (especially those, who were their accomplices, or cellmates and etc.), where they are usually well socialized. They used to drink alcohol and take drugs, but «alcoholization» as a matter of fact has the traits of actions «for company's sake», opened the opportunity to deal with the equal partners of communication. They are highly group-oriented.

- The second group of youths is the group of «addictive criminalization». Addictive behavior is one of the forms of destructive behavior, which do harm to the person and society. It manifests itself in the desire to escape from the reality changing mental state. The leading deformation of conscious centering is the communicative complexity. Youths experience the feeling of the alienation, they try to quit unfavorable situation by autistic ways, we can observe a kind of self-isolation, depression, conflict with the society, low self-esteem, the feeling of the inferiority, the actuality of the problems of the past (most of them do not want to speak about the present or the future), the representation of evil reign in the society. They treat the situation as a disaster. Vital necessary concept of their own future is rather stable, at the certain stage supraliminal and generalized system of representations about their life, was extremely deformed in this group of young people – core events of the future had no cause-and-effect relations with the present. Life perspectives are pessimistic and insignificant.

- Youths of the third group that can be conventionally called the group of «addictive criminalization», could be characterized by aggressiveness and negativism. They are highly excitable and impulsive. Their life was concentrated on themselves (they do what they want without taking into consideration other people needs and interests – it is one of the component of their life disposition). The fears and troubles were connected, first of all, with the situation of the uncertainty, typical for all the people on remand deprived of communicative contacts. Around them there are only strangers, who are all in the situation of «outcasts», and the lack of possibility to keep in touch with the group. It increases the level of the interior tension and strengthens negative emotions by arising negative relation to the Others (bitterness) (including the



conscious level). This can be considered as a symptom of the reduction of regulating role of conscious towards reality assessment and practical activity. The mechanism of psychological defenses actualizes as the result of the inner tension growth. We have distinguished (as the result of this research) the main mechanism – the rationalization in the exaggeration form of some social stereotypes, extreme dependence and desire of social group approval, sharing these stereotypes. Very often these stereotypes can be comparable with following sententious utterances: «everyone has his own law», «the legal system is completely submitted to money», «these laws do not correspond to life realities of the new generation» and etc. This mechanism decreases the feeling of guilt and shame, it is a kind of “permission” for intolerant behavior.

5. Deformation of sense sphere of youths during the period of their staying at the pretrial detention centre must be taken into consideration by psychologists and educators of penitentiary institutions fulfilling the resocialisation work. Reintegration and integration of juvenile offenders into socio-cultural space are obligatory components of prevention of recidivated criminality. We should use variable and recipient-oriented model of the facilitation for juvenile offenders at all stages of the investigation and punishment. The main work must be concentrated upon the mini-ization and prevention of dissocializing influence from the new environment. The overcoming of negative consequences of youths’ dissocializing during the period of their stay at pretrial detention centre is possible through recipient oriented system of leveling the consequences of destructive form of criminal environment and teaching constructive nonaggressive behavior, the right choice of the skills in complicated life situations and taking responsibility of this choice.

The results of the research showed the necessity of search of new approaches and of making new diagnostic studies of those who are staying at pretrial detention centres and penitentiary institutions in order to create updated to public demand, system of resocialisation of people committed crimes. A.G. Asmolov, one of the ideologists of humanizing the contemporary national education, in his work «Aggression and aggressiveness» (2000) he wrote: «We didn’t note, how we found ourselves in the power of the absurd logic of public education of the difficult children, logics, which are based upon formula. Let’s respond to the growth of crimes committed by young people by the growing number of penitentiary institutions. The paradox of this situation consists in the fact that the point of the application of social, economical, pedagogical efforts of the society is correction and prophylaxis of cruelty, but it must be the peace-loving education». New approaches to resocialisation suggest that in criminal and penitentiary system punishment is not only a retribution for the committed crime, but it has the goal to correct in the humane way and reform the criminal.

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