

The motivation for escaping from prisons

Emil Madzharov

Academy of the Ministry of Interior, Sofia, Bulgaria
email: e.madzharov@abv.bg

Abstract: *The leading motives for perpetrators' escapes are self-affirmation, self-preservation, identification, increase of self-esteem, achievement of retribution and justice. The precise psychological analysis of the motives for the escapes favours their forecasting, timely crossing and termination. The sustainable motives for the realization of escapes are connected with serious conspiratorial activity. Situational motives for escape are inherent in impulsive and primary personalities.*

KEY WORDS: ESCAPES, OFFENDERS, CONVICTED, MOTIVE, SUSTAINABLE MOTIVES, SITUATIONAL MOTIVES

1. Introduction

Escapes from places of imprisonment in modern conditions are not decreasing and are becoming more daring, technically facilitated, resourcefully realized. Their implementation endangers the penitentiary institution security, the health and life of both the offenders themselves and the prison staff, the police and the citizens. This requires them to be seriously studied in psychological terms in order to improve the system of measures for their forecasting and timely anticipation of neutralization at the stage of their preparation or after their successful implementation. In this context, a precise psychological analysis of the motives of the fugitives is essential.

At the heart of different types of human behaviour and activities are certain motives which represent the personal meaning of the actions taken by the subject. Motives embody needs, which transform, change and enrich along with them [12].

The leading motives and needs among escape perpetrators are those of self-preservation, self-affirmation, identification, increasing self-esteem, achieving retribution and justice.

The motive is a kind of motivation, functioning on a conscious level. The motive content may be an object, value, activity, inclination. Motives perform the functions to stimulate and direct the activity of the individual and to set the meaning of his actions [4].

Escapes from places of imprisonment are a special type of offenses directed against justice in the implementation of which the motives present the basic needs of the individual for self-preservation, self-realization, self-affirmation, autonomy, identification, recognition. They are realized to a certain extent, but their full reflection can take place later, when the captured offender is released from the tension, excitement and stress that inevitably accompany the realization of the main stages of a particular escape. The high dissatisfaction of the failed fugitive with the negative development of the events becomes an additional stimulus for their fuller and more thorough comprehension, in the hours of isolation, when they have a significant reserve of free time.

The motive is a subjective phenomenon related to the individual characteristics and attitudes of the person and his socio-psychological traits [12]. The individual psychological characteristics of escape perpetrators are their extraversion, level of neuroticism, impulsiveness, persistence, rigidity, narcissism. The socio-psychological characteristics of fugitives reveal their tolerance for risk and adventurous attitudes and the expressiveness of their autonomy.

W. Schutz connects the motives of human social behaviour with the needs for identification (accession), control and openness [7]. The perpetrator of escapes from the places of imprisonment purposefully seeks to identify with their role and with the prison subculture, but when this is blocked they strengthen their control over the situation, begin to prepare their offense, reduce their contacts or selectively communicate only with persons having a certain relation to the realization of their own intentions.

2. Prerequisites and ways to solve the problem.

In the presence of a conflict of different motives, the decision to escape from a penitentiary institution is influenced by all personal factors, character, temperamental and intellectual characteristics of the convict, the mental states they experience and the specific situation.

The struggle of motives is also a process of mental analysis and evaluation of all pros and cons [9] for the realization of an escape from a particular prison, prison dormitory or pre-trial detention. In the context of the described process, a significant part of the motivational components are consciously reflected, but due to the active emotional background and the intense action of mental defences, this may not be complete and cause some deviations and errors. Despite the comment made, the motive, including that for prison escape, is a sufficiently conscious motive. It plays an important role in the regulation of individual criminal activity. In this regard, B. Minchev points out that the individual who carries out law-abiding or criminal activity always has the choice to include one or another motive in the next act of experience [4].

In a particular situation and the intense motivation and stressful mental states caused thereby, even in the absence of appropriate personality traits such as impulsivity, low stress resistance, weak self-control and increased aggression, escape can be realized. This is confirmed by numerous examples from our own psychodiagnostic, counselling and management practice in places of detention [2].

Mental states, and frustration in particular, also play a motivating role in escapes, but they are still caused by a complicated, conflict or crisis situation, in which other prisoners and penitentiary staff usually take an active part. The important fact that the interaction of the fugitive offender with the situation and their mental states largely depends on their value orientations, self-esteem and character should not be ignored. These basic, integral and sustainable personal characteristics collaborate with each other and with the specific situations in which the individual escapes carried out in the different categories of penitentiary institutions develop.

The motives for escape are related to acute personal problems of prisoners, but they arise, intensify and modify as a result of the specific situation. It may further be dramatized due to the personal structure of the fugitive, which is, for example, of the hysterical type [2]. Representatives of this character are overly sensitive to emerging difficulties, tend to view them as too dangerous and insurmountable and act very aggressively without objectively existing threats.

The leading motive in some of the escapes is the desire of the detainees to escape persecution. It acquires special significance in the loss of funds as a result of the participation of convicts in gambling, in borrowing, theft and illegal use of other people's property. In all these cases, direct accountability is sought, and verbal threats and blackmail quickly escalate into direct aggression, public humiliation or complete dependence [10,8,1]. Convicts who find themselves in such a situation feel threatened, anxious, insecure and frustrated. They are ready to take final action,

regardless of the possible negative consequences, and try to use all, albeit minimal, advantages of any situation that has arisen in the penitentiary institution where they are located, in order to escape.

In certain cases, the escape is motivated by the threat of rape or other sexual perversions. This motive is especially relevant among some juveniles and young convicts, among those imprisoned for the first time and among outsider offenders who are unable to effectively protect themselves from sexual assault [11,1]

The modern criminal contingent's violence, the search for alternatives for self-affirmation, domination, entertainment, strengthening one's own status in the prison community intensify the manifestations of sexual violence among prisoners. This trend is evolving against the background of prisoners' population reduction, overcrowding reduction in prisons and prison dormitories, and a persistence of a deficit of meaningful activities to engage the excessive leisure time of convicts.

A serious motive for escape commitment is the longing for freedom, relatives and loved ones, which can increase significantly at certain times of the sentence serving. Practice shows that in case of illness of relatives, fear for their safety, jealousy experiences and intense conflicts, sustainable escape intentions can arise, which can be consistently, purposefully and persistently realized. When the described experiences are accumulated and intensified, they can become an immediate motive for action and without prior preparation to proceed to spontaneous and impulsive escape. These affectively motivated actions can also be too extreme, when they are blocked during the development of a specific situation, and the internal anxiety and frustration of the fugitive increases. Under the influence of affective motives, the prisoner, during his escape, shows great endurance, overcomes serious obstacles and long distances, which in a calm and balanced state he would not be able to cope with [1]. Such an orientation of over-mobilization and motivation creates not only imaginative Olympic records and achievements, but also acts of violence, cruelty and sadism towards innocent citizens, who due to accidental circumstances become an obstacle for the fugitive, threatening the realization of his intentions and security.

3. Solution to the researched problem

The motives for escape can be reliably identified and interpreted based on the needs for self-affirmation, self-realization and achieving solidarity with other prisoners. In practice, they are realized in specific situations, roles, relationships and conflicts, allowing prisoners to structure their motives, which regulate both their daily activities and their interactions with other accused and convicted persons and with the penitentiary staff.

Escape can be motivated by the desire of prisoners to demonstrate their courage, resourcefulness and thus strengthen their authority [10] among other criminals.

The motive for demonstrative self-affirmation, in combination with narcissism, high risk readiness and expressed risky-adventurous attitudes causes criminals who have taken a bold escape an illusory sense of personal possibilities, security and chance. The real situation can completely disprove it. Such is the tragic case of the escape in 1995 from the prison in the town of Pleven, when one of the fugitives demonstratively advertised his fearlessness by insolently provoking the armed guards and trying to overcome the wall with a ladder, relying on their astonishment and restraint from using firearm.

Due to the wrong assessment made by the fugitive prisoner, he incorrectly perceives the situation, does not assess the determination and higher risk readiness of a young warden who previously served in the border troops. The fugitive's misjudgement is due to increased narcissism, demonstrativeness, disregard for danger. As he crossed the prison wall, he was shot after ignoring all warnings to stop his escape. [1]

The whole described scenario takes place at a time when there are many prisoners in the open-air place in the prison in the town of Pleven. It was their presence and empathy for the situation that further stimulated the deceased prisoner to take ruthlessly provocative and reckless actions [1].

One of the reasons for escape is related to showing solidarity with other prisoners and imitating their behaviour [11]. A severe escape attempt was made in the Bulgarian penitentiary system in 1974, when two inmates, in a homosexual relationship, tried to escape in solidarity, taking an officer hostage to help them overcome the guards [1].

The outraged officer did not agree to cooperate, as a result of which he was inflicted with numerous slit wounds all over his body with specially sharpened and split parts of sewing scissors. He later died of his injuries. The study of the escape in question showed that its perpetrators had a long-term homosexual relationship and were strongly attached to each other. For this reason, their actions were very supportive, synchronized and biased.

On the day of the escape, the two homosexual prisoners were very tense and preferred to use narcotics, which made them very agitated, irritable and overly aggressive. Their actions as a group increase their aggressive readiness and propensity for extreme reactions [1].

Influenced by certain events, the detainees may have a motive for revenge over the administration, which, in their opinion, should be punished for its unprincipled and unjust actions [11].

The desire to somehow achieve freedom in certain cases and situations becomes the leading motive for escape. It is most common in life-sentenced people who have served part of their sentence. The lack of perspective and hope makes them fierce, and they gradually mature the persistent motive to escape at any cost, regardless of the possible consequences, because they are convinced that they have nothing to lose.

Among the motives for escape in detainees is the desire of individual convicts to check what they are capable of [11]. This motive is more common, as our own empirical observations show, among juvenile convicts and infantile young offenders who tend to compensate for their inferiority by engaging in risky adventurous initiatives such as escape. Through it, they are able to rise up on the hierarchical ladder of the criminal world, as they gain greater popularity, authority and a halo of heroes among other prisoners [1].

The motive related to proving one's own competencies, abilities and skills presupposes the purposeful search and selection of complex and crisis situations, the mastery of which in the penitentiary institution and during the escape requires great determination, accurate assessment of current circumstances and expeditious and largely intuitive finding the correct action algorithm.

A long time has passed, but Bulgarian penitentiaries are still commenting on the attempt of a prisoner in the town of Belene to cross the Danube River with the help of a car tire at very low water temperatures.

Similar is the case of a juvenile convicted from the already closed Correctional Home in the town of Boychinovtsi is similar, who jumped a distance of almost seven meters, flying over the fence and falling into a pile of soil, where he broke his leg. The prisoner then managed to run 15 kilometres before being detained. These are clear examples of over-mobilization and concentration on the target, which suppresses fear, pain and even the instinct for self-preservation, as the fugitive copes with all obstacles in his path [1]. The case in question can be interpreted as an illustrative example of self-actualization in the context of Maslow's approach [5]. It activates serious mental mechanisms and resources for compensation, ensuring the achievement of the expected result, but also revealing potentials and abilities unsuspected by the fugitive himself, which can be utilized in a constructive and lawful manner.

4. Results and discussion.

The detailed analysis of different types of escapes from the penitentiary institutions shows that the content characteristics of fugitives' motives definitely correspond to their differentiation into sustainable and situational ones.

Sustainable motives are personal and meaningful. They present values, inclinations, intentions and activities that are important for the specific person [3]. Such, with an escape perpetrator may be the categorical rejection of the penitentiary isolation and the ensuing series of restrictions, the emphasized desire for freedom and the continuation of his own intensive criminal activity.

Persistent motives for escape determine the mental activity of prisoners for a significant period of time. They direct and regulate all his activities. The stable motives are related to the realization of a conspiratorial activity, presupposing the realization of the respective escape preparation. It can be realized very purposefully, consistently, originally and ingeniously.

For example, during the construction of the building of the Moscow State University "M. V. Lomonosov" in the early fifties a prisoner, former military pilot, working on the upper floors as a plasterer. On a windy day, he pulls a large sheet of plywood to the window opening and lies on it on his chest, placing his hands and feet in specially made ax holes. Then he flew off the building. Thanks to the upward air currents, the fugitive flew 30 kilometres away from Moscow. Subsequently, the plywood sheet was found, but the perpetrator himself was not [8].

Sustainable motives for escape are inherent in those sentenced to life imprisonment, to persons accustomed to a nomadic and parasitic lifestyle who do not recognize any restrictions, as well as to antisocial natures, especially those who value the free and adventurous criminal life. These categories of offenders find it difficult to accept the penitentiary restrictions and the constant external control imposed on them, as well as the monotony and stereotypes of the conditions and the scheduled activities typical of prisons.

Sustainable motives for escape give rise to a new time perspective and expectations for the convict, stimulate his strong-willed efforts, as well as his readiness to resist and overcome various difficulties. They determine the content of his goals and intentions, subordinating them entirely to the pursuit of the planned escape.

Sustainable motives help to reduce anxiety, control agitation and carry out a series of cold-blooded actions in complex and crisis situations in the preparation, execution of the escape and hiding after its implementation.

Sustainable motives of fugitives are positively correlated with their volitional self-control, with their manifestations of self-control, with their coping strategies, facilitating the rapid relaxation of the accumulated tension and the timely restoration of emotional balance.

Situational motives are motives that arise and act in the current situation [3]. For a prison fugitive, this role can be played by the desire to have contact with a woman or to quickly enjoy a dose of drugs or alcohol delivered and consumed in good company.

Escapes from open type prison dormitories, as well as the numerous deviations of prisoners from work facilities for the period 2010-2013 demonstrate that the situational type of motivation, which K. Levin himself defines as inexhaustible [6], is very widespread in the penitentiary reality.

Situational motives predominate with the more impulsive, spontaneous and primary personalities, characterized by first-signal behaviour in a wide range of situations. We must take into account that they demonstrate fast orientation and are able to use as many different circumstances and conditions as possible to their advantage in order to make their escape unexpected and very

inventive. Usually, the actions of the category of detainees in question surprise the officers of the supervisory security staff of the places of imprisonment. They are poorly aware of the dangerous potential of the situational type of motivation and disregard the first signs of imprisonment, underestimating their behaviour and the risks involved in escaping.

Threatened, ill-treated and anxious prisoners try to get rid of the uncomfortable situation at all costs. Therefore, they tend to recognize any sudden situation as providing them with an opportunity for the desired escape from the oppressive penitentiary institution.

5. Conclusion.

The different types of criminal behaviour of offenders are caused by the respective motives, expressing their basic needs and are in a constant process of change, transformation and differentiation.

The analysis of escapes perpetrators' leading motives demonstrated that they are directly related to the needs of self-preservation, self-realization, self-affirmation, identification, increase of self-esteem, achievement of retribution and justice. In the course of their practical realization they are partially realized. Their fuller and more detailed reflection is possible after the escape, when the captured offender has freed himself from the excitement and stress.

In the process of deciding to escape, there is a struggle between different motives. They are seriously influenced by the convict's character and intellectual features, the mental states he experiences and the current situation.

The motives for escape are determined by acute personal problems, but their modification is seriously affected by the specific situation in the respective penitentiary institution.

Sustainable motives for escape direct the mental activity of prisoners for a long period of time. They determine the longer and more precise conspiratorial preparation of the escape. This type of motive is most common among life-sentenced, prone to vagrant offenders, as well as among criminally active convicts who seek to consistently develop their criminal careers and ignore the risks and negative consequences.

Situational motives are determined by the criminal situation. They are directly related to the sensory-hedonistic needs and are primarily inherent in the impulsive, infantile and primary personalities of the criminal contingent.

The analysis of the motivation for escapes from the places of imprisonment shows that it has different content aspects and manifestations, it is characterized by specific stability and is influenced by the current situation of the particular offender.

Despite the dynamics and diversity of motives of perpetrators of escapes from prisons, prison dormitories, correctional facilities and arrests, they can easily be psychologically identified, systematized and typologized. Such a step will seriously facilitate the implementation of psychological diagnostics and forecasting of escapes, which will significantly contribute to the more effective implementation of the regimen-preventive and operative-search measures in relation thereto.

The precise structuring of qualitative typologies of the most characteristic and common motives of accused and convicts escaping from prisons is a serious step towards building a more complete personal portrait of this category of offenders. This will further stimulate the more active implementation of applied psychological research, which will even more extensively, conceptually and methodologically approach the systematic study of the personal and psychological specifics of prisoners inclined to escape from penitentiary institutions.

6. Literature

1. Madzharov, E. Penitentiary psychology, first part, S. Albatross, 2016, pp.138-139; pp.191-192.
2. Madzharov, E. The psychological model for the study of escapes from places of imprisonment. In: VII International scientific conference Engineering. Technologies. Education. Security. Proceedings. Volume III Security, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria 29.05 – 01.06.2019, p. 226.
3. Minchev, B. General psychology. S. CIELA, 2008, p. 133.
4. Minchev, B. Psychology. Evolutionary phenomenological approach. S. Ciela Norma AD, 2013, pp. 178 – 180.
5. Maslow, E. Religions, values and excellence. Plovdiv "Hermes", 2018, p. 17
6. Andreeva, G. Social psychology. M. MSU, 1980, p. 121
7. Bityanova, M. Social psychology. M. EXMO-Press, 2001, p. 182.
8. Dmitriev, Yu. Penitentiary psychology. Rostov on Don, "Phoenix", 2007, p. 221; p. 281 (Dmitriev, Yu., Kazak, B).
9. Efremova, G. Motivation of lawful behaviour. In: p/r Stolyarenko, A. Encyclopaedia of legal psychology. M. "UNITY-DANA", 2003, p. 54 (Efremova, G., Ratinov, A.).
10. Pirozhkov, V. Laws of the criminal world of youth (criminal subculture) Tver. Prize, 1998, pp. 123-130.
11. Pirozhkov, V. Escapes from places of imprisonment.- In: p/r Stolyarenko, A. Encyclopaedia of legal psychology. M., UNITY-DANA, 2003, p. 262.
12. Shevchenko, A. Legal psychology M. "RIOR: INFRA - M", 2017, p. 119. (Shevchenko, A., Samygin, S).