"SERVING TIME"

16 mm colour, 6 minutes 50 seconds

Narration Script

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<td>KREMS PRISON</td>
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<td>GATE OPENS</td>
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Krems prison, Austria. A maximum security prison. Huge, forbidding, soulless. Oscar Wilde, once a prisoner himself, wrote about a prison like Krems. "The vilest deeds like poison weeds, bloom well in prison air; it is only what is good in man that wastes and withers there. Pale anguish keeps the heavy gate and the warder is Despair."

It is into places like this that too many societies still lock away their misfits. Their losers.
A man stands accused of a crime ... of breaking the rules ... and is brought to stand before the majesty of the courts. Either he pleads guilty or not guilty. The verdict ...

Guilty: "18 months in jail".

Since man first formed societies, he has punished those who broke the rules. And since human societies were dedicated mainly to their own survival, the punishment did have to be effective.

Hanging ......

Burning ......

Crucifixion ..

Torture ......

The galleys ..

Public humiliation ...

Banishment ...

For the last 200 years society has locked its more troublesome members behind stone walls.
In the sixties, in many parts of the world, there were prison riots. Inmates protested living conditions, harsh systems, excessive punishment, guard brutality. Then came Attica and other similar rebellions in different parts of the world.

Early in this century, a sociologist suggested abolishing prison entirely. He wrote: "Almost anything would be an improvement. It cannot be worse. It cannot be more brutal and useless." There are many who still hold to that view today.

Imprisonment has four purposes: punish the offender, lock him up for the protection of society, deter him from further crime and, ideally, reform him. But prisons do not deter and prisons do not reform.

This man is 24. Originally imprisoned for a felony, he escaped, seriously wounding a guard. He was recaptured. That was two years ago. Since then he has been in solitary confinement. He has learned needlepoint.
Has he repented of his crime, has he become a new man? And if he has not ... what are we to do with him ... and men like him? Are we to lock them away forever ... and forget them? Or is there some way we can save them?

Fifty miles from Krems is a newer jail. At Hirtenberg. This prison is for first-offenders and conditions here are far different from Krems. Hirtenberg is the pattern for future Austrian prisons.

Once a month, relatives are allowed to visit prisoners. The visit is for 15 minutes only. Officially, no bodily contact is allowed. In practice, guards will sometimes look the other way. The international increase of crime is often blamed on the collapse of the family structure, prosperity and rising expectations.
Other European countries have reformed their prison systems and Denmark is probably more liberal than most. This is an open prison camp in Jutland. Only hardened offenders are sent to walled prisons in Scandinavia.

Rehabilitation is the guiding principle here. Inmates live in rooms, not cells. They are not made to lose their self-respect.

Danish prison guards do not wear uniforms. This is a very significant aspect of the prison systems. The guard gives a new prisoner a key to his room ... and puts his name outside the door. The prisoners are not just numbers here. They remain people. People who have made mistakes, who have broken the rules and now must be removed from society for a while. But they are people.

Danish prisoners can even vote in elections.

A small thing in itself, but important, is that they wear their own clothes, except at work. This helps them retain a sense of identity. Here, the penal system does not degrade.
SOCIAL WORKER ON TELEPHONE

When a man has completed his sentence, he's paid his debt, his slate is clean. The Social Service helps him line up a decent job. He will be able to make a new start without the handicap of being labelled ex-convict.

Crime, unfortunately, is a matter of international concern. Every five years, the United Nations sponsors a Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, such as the session in Sydney, Australia, in August 1980. Topics of discussion span the entire range of problems in crime prevention and criminal justice.