

Vorovskoi mir: Kislevite gangs in the Old World

Across the Old World spirited individuals work to strengthen their enterprise by forming fraternities. While distant from its western cousins, Kislev and its brutally harsh justice has long fostered such criminal organisations. Consequently, *Vorovskoi Mir* (thieves' world) are long-standing establishments dominated by a traditional, practically feudal structure:



Members of a *Vorovskoi Mir* follow the *blatnye* (code of honour) and are called *Vor v Zakone* (thief in law). In large cities (Altdorf) and ports (Erengrad), the *Vorovskoi Mir* can reach several hundred in number:

- 1 *Pakhan* or *Krestnii Olets*: Godfather (Crime Lord):
 - Has made himself master of his domain by offering “protection” to those who cannot escape the grinding poverty in return for obedience and tribute
- A few *Sovietnik*: Councillors who seat with the *Pakhan* once a month alongside the *brigadir*. In difficult times this can reach once a week and in emergencies this can even become a daily council:
 - *Advokat*: Lawyer (Lawyer)
 - *Kaznachey*: Treasurer (Scribe)
- Half a dozen *Brigadir*: Lieutenants (Mercenary Captain) in charge of *avtoriet* (discipline), knowledge (intelligence) & marshalling the *brodyagi* (vagabonds)
- 2-dozen *Boets*: Warriors (Outlaw) in charge of paying his *brigadir*, recruitment & running the *shpana*
- Scores of *Shpana*: these lads are a disparate group of angry young men, desperate to fight their way up the ladder, whatever the cost. On average a single *boets* might boast:
 - A *Krysha*: enforcers for harassing & collecting dues (Racketeer)
 - A *Portnoy*: killer (Assassin)
 - A *Shaner*: receiver who offers 10-30% of original price if “hot” and 20-60% if “cold” (Fence)
 - A couple *Tat*: pick-pockets or cut-purses (Thief)
 - A couple *Byki*: thugs that protect (Bodyguard)
 - A few *Baklany*: robbers that mug (Footpad)
 - Half dozen *Shestyorka*: lookouts (Artisan’s Apprentice)

Purpose & ethics

Traditionally the *Vorovskoi Mir* steals from authorities and shares the profits among the people. The reality however can be very different; in most parts of the Old World, this lofty ideal has long been replaced by the *Dan*. Since the significance of the “rob the rich to give the poor” belief varies considerably from one *Vorovskoi Mir* to another, this is left to the GM’s discretion and perhaps even the player’s contribution...

Places of interest

Logovo (dens): taverns where *vor* meet, drink, do business & relax as *bratva* (brotherhood)

Arsenal (lock-up): when you need a sidearm bigger than a knuckleduster, knife or cudgel

Kontora (offices): where the *pakhan* holds audience with the *skhodka* & issue orders to the *brigadir*

Ubezshishche (hide): a quiet place to lie low when the tsarists and/or *streltsy* get too excited

Pogreb (cellar): a muted place to administer *avtoriet*, interrogations & executions

Svalka (tip): a place to dump bodies of the injured, dying or dead, e.g. canal or marsh

Resources

- *Dan*: tribute collected for “protection”, usually from local artisans and stall holders
- *Shluka*: whores
- *Samogon*: contraband spirits
- *Blat*: contacts
- *Zapodlo*: illicit curios
 - *Anasha*: weirdroot
 - *Bespredel*: spell ingredients
 - *Shalit*: proscribed books
- *Gastralyor*: guest thief (from another town or city)

Enemies

- *Frayer*: outsider (non-*vor*)
- *Kit*: big target (whale)
- *Kozyol*: homosexual (goat)
- *Muzhik*: outcast (peasant), demoted *vor*
- *Opuschiny*: rival (victim of rape)
- *Strelets*: watchman (archer), pl. *streltsy*
- *Suka*: traitor (bitch), exiled *vor*



Duties

- *Zametit*: lookout
- *Soobshchit*: inform
- *Kkuryer*: courier
- *Ulazhivat*: negotiate
- *Avtoriet*: discipline
- *Vzimat*: collect
- *Otstaivat*: defend
- *Osvobozhdat*: liberate
- *Napadeniye*: strike

Code of Honour (*blatnye*)

- Forsake your family (father, mother, brothers and sisters) for the *bratva*.
- Pay your dues, i.e. gift a tithe (10%) from your income to your superiors (*boets*, *brigadir* or *pakhan*).
- Don't fight with your *bratva*. If a conflict arises between yourself and another *vor* or between 2 *vor*, demand an inquiry and judgment by a *skhodka* (council of thieves) to settle the dispute.
- Punish any offending *vor* as decided by the judgment of the *skhodka*.
- Help other *vor*, both morally and financially.
- Teach the *blatnye* (*vor*'s code of honour) to youth showing potential.
- Never serve in the army nor accept weapons from the Tsar or *strelets*.
- Make good on promises given to other *vor*.
- Never reveal the secrets of the *Vorovskoi Mir* to outsiders, least of all the authorities.
- Never snitch on another *vor*.
- Never deny your roots (Better die standing, than live kneeling!). So if asked “Are you a Vor?” or “Who are you for life?” a *vor* should always answer “Yes/I am a *vor*.” even if asked by *strelets*.

Sources

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thief_in_law

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_mafia

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/hockey/etc/glossary.html>