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“Good” and “bad” adaptation to prison isolation of Polish long-term prisoners in the light of Erving Goffman’s typology of adaptation

„Dobra” i „zła” adaptacja do izolacji więziennej polskich skazanych długoterminowych w świetle typologii adaptacji Ervinga Goffmana

The methods of adaptation to prison isolation of prisoners sentenced to short and long-term sentences differ significantly. The latter, after the stage of initial rebellion, often develop constructive coping strategies, while the former are able to persist in rebellion throughout their sentence, realizing its short duration. Based on his own field research regarding adaptation to prison isolation of Polish long-term prisoners, the author reflects upon which methods of adaptation (on the basis of Ervin Goffman’s typology) may be referred to as “good” and which as “bad” ones.

Key words: prison adaptation, long-term prisoner, Erving Goffman.

Sposoby adaptacji do izolacji więziennej skazanych na kary krótko- i długoterminowe znacząco się różnią. Ci drudzy, po etapie początkowego buntu, rozwijają nierzadko konstruktywne strategie radzenia sobie, podczas gdy pierwsi potrafią trwać w buncie przez cały swój wyrok, zdając sobie sprawę z jego krótkotrwałości. Na podstawie wyników własnych badań terenowych nad adaptacją do izolacji więziennej polskich więźniów długoterminowych autor zastanawia się, które sposoby adaptacji (na podstawie typologii Ervinga Goffmana) można by określić jako „dobre”, a które jako „złe”.

Słowa kluczowe: adaptacja, więzień długoterminowy, Erving Goffman.

Introduction

Approaches to the issue of adaptation to prison isolation abound in criminological literature. Over the years, multiple, varying concepts and typologies attempting to systematize the issue were developed (these were described in detail elsewhere¹). In this article, I would like to reflect on whether one can speak of “better” and “worse” methods of adaptation. I became dedicated to the issue upon an analysis of the findings of my own research into adaptation of Polish long-term prisoners². However, before we move on to discuss which methods of adaptation may be regarded as better than others and for what reasons, let us take a closer look at how prisoners adapt to prison isolation as illustrated in literature.

Adaptation to prison isolation of long-term and short-term prisoners

Different problems which long-term prisoners have to face when serving their sentences mean that their adaptation process is also different from the adaptation of prisoners with shorter sentences. Thomas A. Coughlin III describes two main areas that seem to be more relevant for long-term prisoners than for short-term ones. First of all, at the beginning of their detention, they have to come to terms with the fact that they are serving a long sentence. Secondly, they have to engage in activities or develop interests which will allow them to cope with such long imprisonment. The New York State Department of Correctional Services claims that long-term prisoners are generally able to ‘make themselves at home’ very quickly without causing too many problems and they expand the perception of the prison as a ‘home’³.

The basic repetitive pattern of behavior starts with a denial of their situation. Then, prisoners take a more realistic view of their state of affairs and try to cope with the problems posed by long-term imprisonment.

¹ See: K. Miszewski, *Adapting to isolation in prison*, “Resocjalizacja Polska” 2020, nr 20, p. 156-177.

² K. Miszewski, *Zabójcy w więzieniu. Adaptacja więźniów długoterminowych do warunków izolacji*, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2016.

³ T. Coughlin, *Problems and challenges posed by long-term offenders in the New York State Prison System*, [in:] *Long-Term Imprisonment. Policy, Science, and Correctional Practice*, Timothy J. Flanagan (ed.), Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA 1995, p. 165.

Once they acclimatize with the judgment and find their place in the prison, they are much easier to cooperate with than short-term prisoners⁴.

The difference between long and short-term prisoners can also be seen in the nomenclature they use – Canadian long-term prisoners tend to call their cell ‘home’ while short-term prisoners use the term ‘barrel’. According to William Palmer, these expressions sharply contrast with each other and allow long-term prisoners to identify who is who⁵.

The ‘here and now’ perspective is, according to Timothy Flanagan, the basic element of the attitude adopted by long-term prisoners when they undertake any action in prison. Such attitude is strengthened through interactions with other long-term prisoners and imitation of their behavior. The key elements of the said attitude are maturity, predictability and ‘prison instinct’, which develops with the years spent in prison. The attitude also contains components of behavior which can prove very useful when dealing with everyday problems in prison, such as active avoidance of trouble and making efforts to spend time in productive way rather than simply ‘serve time’. Long-term prisoners avoid problems by following set principles such as ‘mind your own business’, ‘obey the authorities’, ‘select wisely groups to which you belong’ and ‘stay alert to signals emanating from your surroundings’⁶. Many long-term prisoners are willing to use their time behind bars to gain specific skills useful both in prison and, more importantly, after leaving it. They do it also to increase their chances for parole. Some prisoners find themselves ‘a niche’ – an environment featuring less social ‘density’, which allows them to get away from the noise of the entire prison population, an environment which does not require a confronting attitude towards staff members, and which offers identification with a group of similarly behaving prisoners. In many cases, educational, vocational and sport programs are highly valued ‘sanctuaries’ providing a breather from the rest of the prisoners, even if it is just for a short while⁷.

When long-term prisoners have a choice to get out of the cell or to stay in, they choose the latter. The more time they have spent in prison, the more likely they are to remain in the cell rather than go out. The most

⁴ Ibidem, p. 166.

⁵ W. Palmer, *Programming for long-term inmates*, [in:] *Long-Term Imprisonment...*, p. 224.

⁶ T. Flanagan, *Correctional policy and the long-term prisoner*, [in:] *Long-Term Imprisonment...*, p. 115.

⁷ H. Toch, *The long-term inmate as a long-term problem*, [in:] *Long-Term imprisonment. An international seminar*, Samir Rizkalla, Rene Levy, Renee Zauberman (ed.), University of Montreal, Montreal 1977, p. 287.

common explanation of this tendency is the fact that they take up activities such as studying, or hobbies such as crafts, or simply watch TV, all of which can be performed equally well, if not better, in the cell. According to Edward Zamble this tendency derives from the fact that long-term prisoners are aware of the dangers in prison (the consequences of participating in fights, joining a gang, etc.) and consciously wish to avoid them⁸.

A similar trend can be also observed in reference to the number of breaches of prison discipline. According to Hans Toch:

1. Young long-term prisoners are, at the early stage of serving their sentence, the biggest troublemakers committing the highest number of disciplinary breaches;
2. Older long-term prisoners are, at the final stage of serving their sentence, the best behaved prisoners;
3. Oftentimes, these are the same people in two different time periods⁹.

In penitentiary system generally the relation between behavior and its consequences has little implication for most prisoners. Short-term prisoners, even if punished for a breach of prison discipline, will anyway leave the prison shortly. They can serve the entire sentence just behaving badly to kill the time. However in the case of long-term prisoners bad behavior results in a definite and tangible reduction in the quality of life in prison. In contrast to prisoners serving short sentences, long-time prisoners, especially ones doing life, are facing an indefinite stay, during which even insensitive bureaucracy has a chance to take into account their good and bad behavior¹⁰.

When analyzing the above American research findings, one may get a feeling that there is a certain paradox. Here they are, perpetrators of some of the worst crimes, sentenced to the longest prison terms, who become – over time – the best adopted prisoners (in the meaning: the most constructively), or at least – better adapted than their mates serving shorter sentences for offences much smaller in scale.

⁸ E. Zamble, *Behavior and adaptation in long-term prison inmates*, [in:] *Long-Term Imprisonment...*, p. 144-145.

⁹ H. Toch, *The good old days in the joint*, [in:] *Long-Term Imprisonment...*, p. 165; achieving maturity by long-term prisoners is discussed in detail in his more recent article, see: H. Toch, *'I Am Not Now Who I Used to Be Then': Risk Assessment and the Maturation of Long-Term Prison Inmates*, "The Prison Journal" 2010, no. 90, p. 4-11.

¹⁰ E. Zamble, *op. cit.*, p. 145-146.

Methods and techniques of research

In my research on Polish long-term prisoners, I decided to avail of the typology of adaptation by Erving Goffman, which will be presented further on in the article. I was interested in what type of adaptation is most often selected by long-term prisoners and whether it is a single type which remained unchanged for the entire sentence period, or types that change over such long prison terms. If the type changes – what are the most frequent change sequences in prisoners?

Since I was eager to find out about the reality, otherwise little explored, I thought the best solution would be to use qualitative research methods. I opted for two research techniques: an analysis of prisoner files and an interview with prisoners.

With the help of the two techniques, I compiled highly detailed and extensive case studies of fifteen long-term prisoners. Only then did I assign specific types of adaptation according to Goffman’s typology to individual prisoners.

Whom did I intend to examine?

Given the fact that in the USA there is no definition of a long-term prisoner (in Europe, in turn, under the decision of the Council of Europe, a long-term prisoner is one serving a prison sentence or sentences totaling 5 years or more¹¹) and related discretion presented in various studies¹² and an upward tendency, since the 70s, to shift the upper limit of the prison sentence past which one could be classified as a long-term prisoner¹³, I decided to choose for the purpose of my research study only those prisoners who have spent minimum 20 uninterrupted years in prison isolation. On the one hand, this was supposed to stop speculations about whether prisoners selected for the study were definitely long-term ones. On the other hand, it allowed me to take a better look

¹¹ Recommendation Rec(2003)23 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the management by prison administrations of life sentence and other long-term prisoners.

¹² E. Cowles, M. Sabath, *Changes in the nature and perception of the long-term inmate population. Some implications for prison management and research*, „Criminal Justice Review” 1996, t. 21, no. 1, p. 44.

¹³ T. Flanagan, *Long-term incarceration. Issues of science, policy and correctional practice*, [in:] *Long-Term Imprisonment...* 1995a, p. 4.

at their adaptation over a very long time period, rather than focus on the adaptation at the time of the analysis.

Out of 92 who met the above criteria, I drew fifteen prisoners, from fifteen different prison facilities, one prisoner from each facility. Every prisoner who was drawn gave verbal consent to participate in the study, which I personally asked for.

What did I intend to do?

In order to reflect on what adaptation types and at what stage of sentence serving the selected prisoners represented, I first needed to get to know them and their world. Since I did not know what could be crucial for adapting one over another adaptation type, I just had to find out as much as I could about them. I divided the issue list as follows:

1. Activities and leisure time.

Work, education, leisure time activities (and: was he ever denied access to these activities just because he was a long-term prisoner?).

2. Type and atmosphere of the penitentiary unit.

Atmosphere in the current and previous detention facilities ('what's the hitch like': obstruction/facilitation of stay on the part of the prison administration, friendliness/hostility on the part of other prisoners), number of prisons the convict stayed in, reasons for transferring the prisoner to another penitentiary facility – at his request (closer to school, closer to family, etc.), due to external factors (hospital treatment, alcohol or drug addiction treatment, etc.) or for security reasons? Atmosphere in the cell, number of inmates, was the cell changed (if so, how many times, what was the cause – prisoner's request or request of the administration)? Cell preferences (large or small), inmate preferences (calm, high-spirited, older, juvenile, etc.), preferred company (long-term, short-term prisoners or irrelevant).

3. Adaptation from the prisoner's perspective.

What is the hardest aspect of his imprisonment (boredom, separation, no access to TV, communication problems with his correctional officer, lack of sexual contacts, homesickness)? What helps to overcome these problems, was it harder at the beginning of his detention or is it harder now, how long it took him to adapt?

4. Status among other prisoners/relations with other prisoners.
Does the prisoner belong to any prison subculture or to any group¹⁴? Does he hang about with a certain group of people, what is his role (leading, neutral), had he been a member of any group and then resigned, if yes, why and if it had any impact on his situation (improved, deteriorated, unchanged)? Do other inmates show respect just because he is serving such a long sentence, do prisoners treat him better/worse than others?
5. The closest friend / the biggest conflict.
Does he/did he have a friend in prison, if yes, is he/was he an inmate or a prison officer? How long have they been friends/how long did the friendship last? Is he/was he entangled in any conflict in prison, if so, what was the most serious one? Who is/was involved (another inmate, prison officer)?
6. Contacts with the outside world.
Is he in regular touch with anyone, if so, who is it how often they contact each other and in what way (letters, telephone conversations, visits, furlough)? Does he initiate new contacts, are these contacts of primary or secondary importance to him? Is he in touch with individuals or organisations which support prisoners (church representatives, support groups, organizations which support prisoners during and after detention, etc.), what does he expect from them (visits, parcels, mental support, assistance in getting a furlough), who initiates these contacts (prisoner or the organizations)?
7. Furloughs, parole, pardon, temporary release, transfer to a low-security prison
The sentence and its justification. Was it appealed, did the prisoner file for a pardon, if so, how many times, how did he function after the pardon was rejected, how was the rejection justified? Did he apply for parole, temporary release, furloughs, if so, how many times? Did prison administration make such an application, if not, did they at least support it? Did he apply to be transferred to a low-security prison, if so, to what effect? If the application was rejected, how was it justified? Did the prisoner refuse to be transferred to a low-security facility?

¹⁴ More about the subcultures in Polish prisons in: P. Moczydłowski, *The hidden life of polish prisons*, Indiana University Press 1992 and M. Kaminski, *Games prisoners play*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2004.

8. Relations with penitentiary personnel.

What are the relations between the prisoner and prison administration (prison warden, prison director, correctional officer, psychologist)? In his opinion, are long-term prisoners imposed more discipline (in particular these sentenced to 25 years or life imprisonment), if so, how is it executed? In his opinion, are long-term and short-term prisoners treated differently by penitentiary personnel? If so, how is it manifested?

9. Mental and physical condition.

Was there any self-mutilation, if yes, at what stage of the penalty, what was it caused by, what was the reaction on the prison personnel? Did he see a psychologist or/and a psychiatrist, if so, why – did he really need help or did he hope to gain something? Did he undergo any psychological/psychiatric treatment? Did he suffer from any disease/chronic illness during his detention? If so, was it necessary to refer him for treatment outside the prison facility? Is he suffering from any illness now? If so, did he develop the illness before his detention? (Persons with disabilities were not excluded from the study). What is his attitude to faith and religious practices? Does he practice any religion?

It is of primary or secondary importance to him or perhaps he treats it instrumentally (an opportunity to meet friends at a mass, participation in a mass noted in the prisoner's file, etc.)?

10. Prisoner's attitude to committed crime.

Has he come to terms with the length of the sentence? If so, how long did it take him? If not, what punishment, in his opinion, would fit the crime? Does he regret the crime he committed? If so, when did he start regretting it? Did he regret it and then stopped?

11. Plans after leaving prison.

Does he think about what the future will look like after leaving prison? If so, does it help or hinder the ability to cope with everyday life behind bars? Does he have a place to stay? Where and with whom will he stay?

The presentation of research findings exceeds the capacities of this article and is included in a separate book¹⁵. However, on the basis of the findings, prisoners were classified in relevant types according

¹⁵ K. Miszewski, *Zabójcy...*, op. cit.

to Goffman's typology. Before we move on, however, allow me to present an overview of the typology.

Types of adaptation to prison isolation according to Irving Goffman

Goffman distinguished five strategies of adaptation to the conditions of prison isolation: *situational withdrawal*, *intransigent line*, *colonization*, *conversion* and *playing it cool*.

A prisoner who uses the tactics of *withdrawal* does not pay attention to anything apart from the events referring to him directly. Situational withdrawal is an adaptation strategy characterized mainly by lack of interests. Such prisoners pay attention solely to what surrounds them, they distance themselves from everything else. These people are unwilling to cooperate with anyone and pay no attention to the presence of others¹⁶.

In the *intransigent line* an inmate flatly refuses to cooperate with the staff and exhibits sustained hostility towards the institution. He is continuously obstinate, sometimes has a high personal morale. Continuous nonacceptance of a total institution requires constant and good orientation of its formal organization, and so, ironically, something similar to a deep commitment. His negative attitude, in turn, triggers an increased interest of prison officers, more frequent controls and other impediments. According to Goffman, this attitude is usually transient and limited to the initial stage of stay in the institution. With time, it usually transforms into *withdrawal* or other type of adaptation¹⁷.

Prisoners who adapt by *colonization* try to create a relatively stable life in prison. Generally, for many convicts, there is a clear contradiction between the outside world and the life behind prison walls, but for those who adopt the colonization strategy such contradiction does not exist. In their opinion, one can feel equally satisfied inside and outside the institution, and you can adapt to the conditions here and there equally well. Such prisoners very often say that behind bars they feel 'at home' and that they 'have never felt better'. Prison officers are often skeptical and

¹⁶ E. Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1961, p. 61.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

wary of such prisoners because imprisonment is meant to be a penalty. A very severe penalty in fact. In this case, however, the convict feels 'too well' in the institution and it often translates directly into larger issues after returning to society. It may even happen that such prisoners, when they are just about to be released, consciously decide to do some harm or commit another offense simply to return to prison. We can assume that the more 'friendly' and more modern the prison is, and the more bearable conditions it offers, the more likely the prisoners will follow the colonization strategy of adaptation¹⁸.

A prisoner adopting the strategy of *conversion* behaves like a perfect subordinate. He takes over the philosophy of prison officers and also their behavior, body language and jargon. He wants to be liked by the personnel and is always at their disposal. Unlike the *colonized* type who, by using all available resources, tries to secure maximum possible liberty for himself, a *convert* adopts a more disciplined, moralistic attitude. He tries to gain reputation of a man who, with his statutory enthusiasm, is always at the disposal of the prison staff¹⁹.

Playing it cool is a combination of different elements of adaptation strategy – it comprises behavior characteristic for conversion, colonization and loyalty to fellow inmates. The attitude is chosen according to circumstances. Such tactics offers the best chance of leaving prison without mental and physical damage. What is typical for these prisoners is that they pretend to be loyal to their cellmates but this loyalty disappears when they have face-to-face encounters with the prison staff. In contacts with other inmates, they may as well adopt the attitude of 'avoiding trouble'. Sometimes they go as far as breaking contacts with the outside world, but they never become completely colonized²⁰.

According to Goffman, not each and every prisoner can be assigned to a single adaptation type. It may happen that during detention one will implement almost all strategies. It is also possible that adaptation strategies distinctive for the behavior and attitude of a particular prisoner will traverse²¹.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 62-63.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 63.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 64-65.

²¹ Ibidem.

Research findings

A brief description of the participants

All research subjects were male, aged between 41 and 61 at the time of research, randomly chosen from the list of long-term prisoners I obtained from the Central Board of Prison Service. They all had already served between 20 and 30 years (23.5 years on average) and all had been convicted of murder (theoretically, prisoners convicted of other crimes could have been picked as well, but with the criterion of years already served set so high it was extremely unlikely for anyone except for a murderer to be sampled for this research). All prisoners that participated in the research were sentenced to 25 years in prison for the first committed crime, although not always was it the initial sentence they received. In two cases long-term imprisonment was the result of a death sentence commuted to 25 years of detention (the last execution in Poland was performed in 1988); in three cases the initial sentence of 15 years was increased to 25 years of imprisonment by court of appeals. In six cases the murder was committed during an armed robbery; in four cases the subjects murdered their victims after they had raped them (in three cases the victim was a child). Three murders were committed while binge drinking; in one case the perpetrator committed a triple murder – he killed his child, the mother of the child and the grandmother.

In one case the murder was supposed to be a revenge for an alleged homosexual rape. In some cases further crimes were committed during the detention. Two prisoners committed murder – one was sentenced to another 25 years in prison for killing an inmate, and the other one got life sentence for a double murder committed on furlough. One inmate was convicted of armed robbery (also committed on furlough), and one of beating up a prison officer. Another one beat up prisoners (three times) and tried to escape. There was also one prisoner who did not return to prison when his temporary release finished, and during the release broke into a vehicle and used a forged passport. And finally one prisoner was convicted of evading child support payments. At the time of research twelve prisoners were serving their long-term sentence in the aggravating circumstance of recidivism and three subjects were in prison as first-time offenders.

It must be noted that nine of the twelve recidivists started serving their long-term sentence as reoffenders, and the remaining three started their long-term imprisonment as first-time offenders and became reoffenders when they committed further crimes during their detention. In view of the above, it is clear that not always long-term detention means a single long-term sentence. Given that, the age at which the convicts began their continuous stay in prison was different and ranged from 19 to 39.

Assigning adaptation types

Using the theoretical typology of adaptation to prison conditions created by Erving Goffman, I assigned adequate type of adaptation to each prisoner.

Below you will find the results showing the adaptation strategy which each prisoner demonstrated at the time of research and the types they adopted during the whole period of their long-term detention. Having analyzed the types of adaptation which the prisoners demonstrated at the time of the research, I concluded that according to Goffman's typology five of them were colonized, including one case when colonization was combined with situational withdrawal. Another two inmates fit the description of situational withdrawal, and one should be defined as a convert. The remaining seven prisoners adopted playing it cool strategy but in six cases it was combined with another predominant type – Intransigent line, situational withdrawal, colonization, conversion mixed with intransigent line, and twice with conversion. No one demonstrated a clear intransigent line.

The types of adaptation which the prisoners adopted at the beginning of their detention were as follows: in four cases they adopted intransigent line, in five situational withdrawal, three of them chose colonization and the remaining three adopted playing it cool strategy, however in each case playing it cool was combined with another predominant type: conversion, situational withdrawal, and in one case with conversion and intransigent line (alternately). There was not a single case of pure conversion.

In nine cases adaptation strategy did not change throughout the whole period of detention – adopted at the very beginning of the imprisonment it remained the same up till the time of the research. The distribution of these consistent strategies was as follows: in three cases it was

colonization, another three prisoners stuck to situational withdrawal (one of them combined it with colonization), and the last three demonstrated play it cool approach (each time combined with another predominant adaptation strategy: conversion in one case, conversion and intransigent line in another, and one prisoner evolved from the initial withdrawal into another predominant type – colonization). In the remaining six cases there was a change in the type of adaptation in the course of detention.

All four prisoners who at the beginning of their detention demonstrated intransigent line finally evolved into play it cool attitude. One of them retained intransigent line as a prevailing type, two combined this new attitude with other predominant strategies: in one case situational withdrawal and conversion in the other. In one case, before finally adopting play it cool attitude, the prisoner went through colonization (it was the only time when in the sequence of changes more than two adaptation types appeared). The remaining two prisoners who changed the adaptation strategy during their stay in prison started from situational withdrawal, which in one case turned into conversion and in the other into colonization.

We may now return to the question about “good” and “bad” prison adaptation. I will base my statements on my own research findings.

“Good” and “bad” adaptation to prison isolation

When analyzing adaptation strategies which prisoners adopt during their detention, an obvious question comes to mind □ which ones are ‘good’ and which are ‘bad’, which ones are most favored, by whom and why? By ‘good’ and ‘bad’ adaptation, I understand adaptation which is the most and the least advantageous from the perspective of social interest, that is from the point of view of the aim of long-term imprisonment, which is rehabilitation, and not from the perspective of prison administration or the prisoner himself. As these perspectives may not match, some adaptation types will be more desired by prison administration and some other by prisoners. To start with, let us take a look at them from the said perspectives.

Prison administration is certainly not happy when the prisoner adopts intransigent line. Such a prisoner is a source of constant trouble, he objects to everything, questions many decisions, etc. In a word: he is a ton

of work. But what if the prisoner is right? What if he rebels not because he feels like it, but actually has plausible reasons to do so, for example, violence used by prison officers, humiliating treatment, or malicious hindrance (there are numerous examples of such behavior in the history of the penitentiary system)? In such circumstances, demonstrating the tactic of intransigent line seems to be a necessary choice, even if the prisoner does not really want to adopt such an approach knowing how much it can cost him. Without a doubt, there is also a lot of prisoners who rebel just for the sake of rebellion, for whom causing problems to prison administration is the prize in itself. They demonstrate intransigent line without looking at the costs they will have to incur because they know that thanks to such tactic, they will be promoted in the informal prison stratification. They reckon that adoption of the strategy simply pays off. I have an impression, however, that the administration does not distinguish between the different sources of rebellion and both types of rebels are treated the same: they are considered unwelcome.

From my observations, I can conclude that the most favored type of adaptation from the perspective of prison administration is colonization. Such a prisoner requires very little work on the part of the administration. He is calm and quiet, does not make trouble, is typically a good worker, and wants close to nothing from the administration. If the administration looks at him only through the prism of their own convenience, they will not take any action that could change this peaceful status. Some prison officers appreciate peace and quiet in their ward so they like such prisoners for such attitude. Other officers find their smooth detention a bit annoying so they will try to make it slightly rough, but without any intention of breaking them out of their lethargy in a constructive way (so they could start doing something productive), but simply out of pure malice. Such prisoners will wait patiently till the end of their sentence or parole and will be released in the same easy way. Problems will start only after they are released. If, however, the administration takes their good functioning in prison as a good omen, or if they try to act in the interest of society, which is to teach the prisoner greater responsibility for his life (which will prove very useful outside the prison), these 'ideal prisoners' may start to cause trouble. It was clearly visible in my research, when each colonized prisoner abused the trust that was placed in him. They lost the trust, and they lost the furloughs. However, the real issue is the fact that prison administration expects that the furlough itself will teach

such a prisoner responsibility. So apart from granting them a furlough and nervously observing their behavior, the administration usually does nothing more.

This is just a narrow fragment of a bigger issue – on what basis in general the administration makes decisions concerning prisoners and what is expected of them. Surely one thing is usually expected – the prisoner shall be perfectly behaved and cause no problems. If that is what the prisoner does, no one bothers to ask how he managed to do it. Seldom do they take the trouble to find out what the prisoner is really like. Nobody says to him at the start of the detention: you need to work on this and that, you have to think your life through and make a change and I will help you with that. Nobody tells him how to do it, no one places any demands or any objectives (I mean something more than illusory actions in the form of forcing prisoners to read books and write reviews). If he is calm, it is more than enough. Prison administration has two options in the case of a colonized prisoner who has behaved well for years: either they decide he deserves to be trusted and he is granted furloughs, or they decide that good behavior alone is not enough, and furloughs are not granted. In both variants, the decisions are made with very limited knowledge about the prisoner.

For prison officers looking through the prism of their own convenience, a colonized prisoner is ‘a treasure’, thus colonization is the most desired type of prison adaptation. However, for administration willing to truly reintegrate such a prisoner into society colonization means a lot of work. From the perspective of a colonized prisoner this strategy seems the only possible option – life outside prison means too much concern and uncertainty, and other total institutions which are socially acceptable (such as the army or a monastery) are usually beyond the reach of ex-prisoners.

Situational withdrawal, just like colonization, may be favored by officers who are not willing to work with a prisoner. This type, however, requires a little more attention – a colonized prisoner will take care of his well-being himself but a prisoner who is withdrawn must be looked after by prison administration, who need to make an effort (select proper cellmates, for example) if they do not want the prisoner to start causing trouble.

Officers who want to work with a withdrawn prisoner must realize that there are two types of situational withdrawal. There are inmates who fear

everything that happens in prison and try to hide, so correctional officers must first break into their world, and there are prisoners who adapt this attitude because they want to isolate themselves from prison reality, in which case prison officers do not have much to do – what such prisoners really want is a quiet, isolated cell and limited contact with other prisoners who, in their opinion, do not contribute to their well-being in any way. This variant may be actually favored by some prisoners, whose main objective is to create their own isolated world in which they will exist during the detention.

Also, prisoners who demonstrate conversion are attractive to officers who do not want to work with a prisoner. Such prisoners are always ready to obey their commands, they are attentive, complaisant, helpful, ready to relieve them of some tasks. Officers who are willing to work with prisoners will, however, be annoyed with their servitude and will treat it as an obstacle rather than an advantage. There was not a single case of pure conversion among the prisoners who took part in my research, it appeared only as predominant strategy in play it cool approach. In my opinion, from the prisoner's perspective this is the least preferred type of adaptation as converts often face aversion and sometimes are even intensely hated by other prisoners.

Play it cool is the most unwelcome strategy from the perspective of all prison officers. For officers who want to work with prisoners, the problem lies in the attitude of such inmates – they always adjust to the circumstances, their behavior is superficial and instable and, therefore, it is difficult to achieve any improvement. On the other hand, officers who are not willing to work with prisoners are simply afraid of inmates who demonstrate play it cool attitude in prison. They are afraid of their manipulations which can be used against the administration, and they obviously are not fond of the fact that such prisoners cannot be 'calibrated' to behave in a quiet, peaceful, and predictable way, which is the most desired scenario. Looking at it from a prisoner's perspective, play it cool is the most favored tactic as it allows one to gain considerable benefits, in my opinion greater than in any other tactic.

When we look at adaptation strategies from the point of view of social interest, I would say prisoners who rebel and adopt intransigent line are best, provided they have a plausible cause for their rebellion. Correctional officers can work with such prisoners and teach them to use their potential in a constructive way when they are finally released. The ability

to fight for their rights will help them protect their interests outside the prison walls. Another adaptation type I would also consider desirable when it comes to social interest is situational withdrawal, but only if the prisoner adopts such a strategy to separate himself from the prison community, not when he withdraws because he is afraid. Living in his own world may in some ways impregnate him against adverse influences of the surrounding prison community and focus his actions on leaving the prison as soon as possible. Outside prison walls, he will not necessarily need to function following the tactic of withdrawal.

I reckon other strategies disadvantageous from the point of view of social interest. A prisoner who rebels just for the sake of a rebellion will do the same outside prison. A colonized prisoner, on the other hand, has the lowest chances to adapt to new conditions after he is released. And a prisoner who is withdrawn because he is afraid of prison community will probably demonstrate a similar withdrawal outside prison walls. A released convert will look for another group that he could join up and their interests rather than social norms will be of primary importance to him. Similarly, a person who played it cool in prison will adhere to social norms only when it suits one.

Conclusions

As stated by Nigel Walker, some prisoner adaptation strategies are more desirable than others in terms of prison management and mental health maintenance. Nonetheless, there is one thing we must bear in mind. No matter how desirable by prison staff a given strategy might be, no matter how much in the interest of prisoners themselves it would be, one must realize that some strategies are just beyond the capabilities and skills of individual inmates. All attempts to force adoption of a particular mode of adaptation, even a genuinely “useful” one, may go up in flames²².

According to Rūta Vaičiūnienė and Artūras Tereškinas²³, the early sociological research into imprisonment focused mainly on the analysis

²² N. Walker, *The unintended effects of long-term imprisonment*, [in:] *Long-Term Imprisonment...*, p. 101.

²³ R. Vaičiūnienė, A. Tereškinas, *Transformations in Prison Subculture and Adjustment to Imprisonment in Post-Soviet Lithuanian Penitentiary Institutions*, “East European Politics and Societies and Cultures” 2017, vol. 31, no. 3, p. 664.

of adaptation roles that were to absorb the pain of being imprisoned²⁴. Contemporary sociological studies, in turn, did not try to divide the adaptation types into good and bad or desirable and undesirable, but they did return to the analysis of the difficulties prisoners encountered and various adaptation strategies, which they chose to beat the odds. Therefore, Ben Crewe splits prisoners into those who passively submit to the environment, and those who actively shape it²⁵. Adaptation to prison environment may be analyzed in three respects: first, it is possible to make equal adaptation and improvement and good behavior in prison; second, it may be related to life quality, satisfaction with meeting one's needs and everyday existence; and third, adaptation may raise the issue of how criminal and antisocial attitudes affect inmate behavior in prison facilities²⁶. As further described by Vaičiūnienė and Tereškinas, many studies treat good behavior as an example of successful adaptation to the institution of prison and identifies positive adjustment as prisoner compliance with institutional principles or participation in resocialization programs. However, such studies do not examine in detail whether individuals who are considered to be model prisoners actually feel safe and comfortable amongst other inmates. When analyzing adaptation types, it is crucial to explore the specific context of one's imprisonment, which frequently differs among individual penitentiary systems or even individual correctional facilities²⁷.

With respect to adaptation of the studied long-term prisoners, in addition to the presented "good" and "bad" types based on the typology by Goffman, I should mention one thing which, at a first glance, may take one by surprise. One may not expect from a prisoner who is to spend at least twenty years of his life behind bars that he will not soak it up because it is "a bad place" and he should not follow any models found there or that he will live in prison only as if he was there for a while. We may look to short-term prisoners for such behaviors. In the event of long-term sentences, however, to adopt such attitude would simply be harmful. It would be appropriate for long-term prisoners to get to know

²⁴ E. Goffman, op. cit.; G. Sykes, *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*, Norwood, NJ: Princeton University Press 1958.

²⁵ B. Crewe, *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation, and Social Life in an English Prison*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009.

²⁶ D. Van Tongeren, K. Klebe, *Reconceptualizing Prison Adjustment: A Multidimensional Approach Exploring Female Offenders' Adjustment to Prison Life*, "The Prison Journal" 2010, 90, no. 1, p. 56.

²⁷ R. Vaičiūnienė, A. Tereškinas, op. cit., p. 676.

the rules (both formal and informal) governing the life in prison and adapt to isolation in a constructive way, which would offer them stability and safety, which are the foundations of corrective actions. Since prison becomes home for extended periods for long-term prisoners, the feeling of transience and trying to live by the rules binding on the outside are inexpedient. Hence, paradoxically, in the case of a long-term prisoner, “good” adaptation could mean “light prisonization”, even though in the subject literature prisonization is univocally referred to as a “bad” method of adaptation.

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