

INNOVATION, WORK, SOCIETY

THE ARMY BEHIND BARBED WIRE.
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF BEHAVIOR IN CAPTIVITY

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Summary

The article examines the psychological features of humans entering and the subsequent stay in a hostile environment and its consequences. We made the analysis of psychological factors influencing the behavior of a soldier in captivity. The genesis of captivity was analyzed, and the mechanisms of destructive psychological influence of captors on persons who were captured were investigated. The results of the research allow forming a holistic view of the psychological factors that affect military personnel from the moment of capture to the moment of their release. Activities of international humanitarian organizations and missions, does not fully protect prisoners of war from violence. The state of constant mental stress reduces the inner life of the individual to a primitive level. It was found that the events of the captivity were extreme. They go beyond the usual human experiences and cause intense fear for their lives, as well as create feelings of helplessness. Preparations for possible capture are mandatory for all servicemen. Post-captive reintegration will help to restore mental health and return the person to a full life and performance of duties. We identified the factors that help to endure conditions of the forced isolation with minimal loss to the physical and mental health.

Keywords: prisoners; captives; forced isolation; behavior regulation; rationalization; psychological treatment; collaboration.

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“The attempt to survive in captivity is a struggle against the enemy,
which equates to the fighting at the front or even stands above”

Edwin E. Dwinger

1. Introduction

There are no laws in captivity. Here is a completely different life with humiliation, fear, and uncertainty, with wounds and burn marks on the body, with the pain of broken bones and often broken will and consciousness. The main task is to survive when you do not want to live anymore, and almost nothing depends on you. You should keep common sense when you are close to madness, remain human in inhuman conditions where faith, forgiveness, hatred, and

even the look between an executioner and a victim takes on a new meaning. A person feels most acutely his or her fragility, helplessness, and weakness exactly in captivity. That is why psychological training to possible capture is a guarantee for the survival of servicemen. It allows significantly reducing the risk of losing personnel during captivity.

Psychological features of the captured soldiers were studied by a number of psychologists, such as V. Karpov, V. Savintsev, H. Filipova, O. Khmiliar, Yu. Shyrobokov. The research materials are largely supplemented by historical and autobiographical data on the stay of civilians in forced isolation laid out by S. Asieiev V. Hlukhovskiy, Edwin E. Dwinger, N. Zaretska, Philip Zimbardo, D. Pavlychenko, A. Pobidash, and Viktor Frankl. Given the relevance and lack of elaboration of the problem, the aim of the article is a theoretical analysis of psychological characteristics of the behavior of a soldier in captivity as well as to determine the factors that contribute to survival.

Theoretical **research methods** were used in the process: analysis, synthesis, comparison, and generalization.

2. Body text

After being captured, a person enters a new, alien, and incomprehensible world (*Dwinger 2004*). As I. Kant notes, “Human depends on many natural things, but much more cruel and unnatural than the burden of external necessity is submission to the will of another person. Nothing can plunge a human into grief more than the thought that in the future his or her position will depend not on his or her will but on the whim of another ...” (*Kant, 1964: 3*). Circumstances of captivity destroy the identity of the individual. A human no longer understands who he or she is, where he or she is, and how to behave (*Asieiev, 2020*). Captivity for an individual is a severe psychological and moral crisis. For a captured military servant, the conflict between the call of duty on the one hand and the desire to save his or her life on the other hand is extremely acute. During captivity, a person undergoes a test of his or her mental and physical strength. Captivity takes away a person’s will and makes him or her as an object of destruction because the world of captivity despises the value of human life and his or her dignity. The military’s fear of being taken a prisoner is perhaps the strongest in the triad of mutilation, captivity, and death. It is based on the testimonies of the released persons about the cruelty and torture they suffered in captivity. The fear is heightened by understanding that throughout the history of wars prisoners were usually considered as a burden to a military unit because they needed to be protected and supported. During the war, they save on prisoners. Prisoner of war is less valuable than cattle (*Dwinger, 2004*).

The bitter and ruthless fate of captives also befell female soldiers. Sexuality and reproductive function made female as a target for violence and priority destruction (*Hrinchenko, 2015*). We should mention that, for a serviceman, the stigma of “captive” implicitly contains the indication of his or her inferiority and even the guilt for being taken prisoner. N. Zaretska believes that the stigmatization and heroization of captivity and captives are public manifestations of bias because the vast majority of freed people do not consider themselves as heroes. They know that each of them had circumstances they are still thinking about, and rightly or wrongly they did (*Zaretska, 2019*).

All captured people have one common thing: they are survival experts. They survived in extremely difficult conditions and gained extraordinary experience that others did not have. According to A. Filipova, the first thing that comes to mind for those, who were taken as a prisoner, is escape. At the same time, some captives try to use connections or even their charisma to improve the situation. Research on this topic requires studying the experience of not

only military but also civilians. The works of S. Asieiev, V. Hlukhovsky, Edwin E. Dwinger, N. Zaretska, Philip Zimbardo, D. Pavlychenko, A. Pobidash, Viktor Frankl, and Robert Cialdini are devoted to this topic. The analysis of works of domestic and foreign scientists such as V. Karpov, A. Pobidash, V. Savintsev, I. Sribniak, A. Filipova, Viktor Frankl, O. Khmiliar, Yu. Shyrobokov, Hakan Henriksson, and Robert Cialdini gives the ability to investigate the influence of various factors that affect the human psyche during captivity. The sources of information are also specific clusters of Internet resources, statistics and official data of the authorities, reports of international missions and organizations as well as personal archives.

During the study, we observe the change in the attitude (in modern Ukraine) to the native captives by the official state authorities. The almost indifferent attitude towards the native captives during the Great Northern War of 1700-1721 changed to the more humane attitude during the First World War. At the same time, during the Second World War, the attitude to their captives was repressive. They were seen as traitors, and punitive measures were taken against their families. Significant psychological support is the awareness that the Motherland considers the captive's actions as heroic and takes care of his or her family. A serviceman should remember that his or her release may not happen immediately but it will happen (*Khmiliar, 2017*). Prolonged captivity will repeatedly respond in the mind of a prisoner with the question of whether he or she is forgotten here (*Dwinger, 2004; Shyrobokov, 2020*). The urgent task of the state is not only to return a person from captivity but also not to leave him or her alone with its consequences and to help him return to a full life (*Zaretska, 2019*). During the 19th and 20th centuries, as a result of the accession of the most leading countries to international humanitarian agreements, captives were transformed into objects of international law. In the VI century B.C., the ancient Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu in his treatise "The Art of War" noted that the greatness of the commander is manifested in the relation to prisoners. Usually, the purpose of capture is the cessation of resistance, the need to obtain information, intimidation of enemy, demonstration of strength and skill, exchange for native captives, reluctance to kill, and receiving a ransom. Most captives are found in concentration camps or prisoner-of-war camps after being taken as a prisoner. Recently, captured servicemen can be concentrated in informal places of detention (such as basements and boxes of abandoned enterprises) where international humanitarian organizations have no access.

Studies of the captives' behavior make it possible to distinguish special mental reactions which are divided into three phases: the shock of being captured, the changes in character due to prolonged captivity, and the phase of release (*Frankl, 2018; Shyrobokov, 2020*). In turn, captivity is also divided into three components: acceptance, adaptation, and apathy. The works of such researchers as

V. Savintsev, Viktor Frankl, O. Khmiliar, and Yu. Shyrobokov confirms that the above phases are the same for both military and civilian prisoners. Having studied the psychological aspects of the captured soldiers, O. Khmiliar states that awareness of this fact by a serviceman is delayed. At first, a soldier cannot believe what happened (*Khmiliar, 2017*). Many experts agree with O. Khmiliar and note that in anticipation of an unknown and terrible future captives always feed the so-called "illusion of salvation" that everything will go well. However, later a person develops an uncontrolled reaction of protest. In some cases, just captured behave irrationally. They escape and try to seize a weapon of the enemy. As a rule, such a hostage is killed even if the purpose of his or her captivity was to get a ransom or exchange.

During the mortal danger, a person may experience mental reactions which are called by Viktor Frankl as "sinister sense of humor" and "cold curiosity." They arise as a reaction of a human psyche to the disproportionate horror which he or she has never felt before (*Frankl, 2018*).

That is why it is important not to lose the self-control during detention. In captivity, a person is subjected to torture and ill-treatment for no reason. Psychological pressure is exerted on a person through humiliation of personal virtues and qualities, brutal abuse, and constant ridicule. Hunger and cold accompany a person throughout captivity. Prisoners' mutual assistance is the key to surviving (*Dwinger, 2004*). Many experts, according to Viktor Frankl, argue that it is almost impossible to survive alone in captivity. The need to communicate to express one's feelings, thoughts, and fears forces one to look for a colleague (*Hlukhovsky, 2008; Dwinger, 2004; Zaretska, 2019; Philip Zimbardo, 2019; Pavlychenko, 2014; Robert Cialdini, 2017*). L. Hrymak notes that the structure of the focused needs of the individual includes the need for emotional contact and the need for the meaning of life among others. Captors periodically change the place of the captive's detention to prevent the formation of friendly relations, and thus inflict even greater mental trauma. Being in captivity brings mental confusion to the inner world of a person because captivity takes away a person's will and makes it as the object of destruction. The value of life and human dignity are neglected. Captivity forces people to reconsider the life values and some of them are even given in to doubt. The moral norms of behavior are not longer applied here (*Dwinger, 2004; Khmiliar, 2017*).

There is almost no difference between an officer and a soldier in captivity. A lot of issues among the prisoners are resolved by the "right of the strongest." A prison administration generally welcomes the production (sometimes artificial) of hostility between prisoners (*Asieiev, 2020; Dwinger, 2004; Khmiliar, 2017*). In numerous testimonies, prisoners note that longing for home and family as well as the lack of opportunity to inform relatives about their destiny creates great emotional tension (*Asieiev, 2020; Hlukhovskiy, 2008; Dwinger, 2004; Khmiliar, 2017*). Prohibition of correspondence and parcels from relatives is an additional lever of psychological aggression against the individual. Such tension combined with the abnormal living conditions of a captive introduces psychological distortions into the perception of the environment and his or her inner world. Many prisoners testify to the peculiarities in the perception of the time flow which is manifested in its distortion. They say that the day lasts indefinitely but the week flies by like a moment (*Asieiev, 2020; Dwinger, 2004; Viktor Frankl, 2018*). According to the prisoners, the sharp difference (contrast) between the conditions of everyday life and the conditions of captivity creates a psychological imagination of falling into another dimension. The prisoner looks at life beside the barbed wire as from another world (*Asieiev, 2020; Dwinger, 2004; Pavlichenko 2014; Viktor Frankl, 2018*). Even a short stay of a person in conditions of forced isolation is a psycho traumatic event. A. Pobidash notes that two-thirds of civilian sailors who were captured by pirates received serious physical and mental injuries. Circumstances of fear, depression, and tension created by pirates were a psychological factor that influenced all sailors and forced them to a certain pattern of behavior according to the interests of captors (*Pobidash, 2012*).

Viktor Frankl and V. Savintsev note that despite the inhuman abuse in concentration camps, the suicide rate was not high. However, many experts suggest that the idea of suicide appeared in the minds of every captive or prisoner (*Hlukhovskiy, 2008; Dwinger, 2004; Zimbardo, 2019; Pavlychenko, 2014; Cialdini, 2017*).

Sense of life

Many captives or prisoners see suicide as a way to avoid daily abuse. The founder of Logotherapy, W. Frankl, concluded that a strong focus on the meaning of life plays a crucial role in suicide prevention. Suicide is a person who has enough livelihoods but has no meaning

in life. V. Frankl spent three terrible years of his life in concentration camps and proved that a person only needs the meaning to survive on the verge of human existence (Frankl, 2018). D. Leontiev notes that life has no ready meaning and guaranteed happiness, but everyone has the opportunity to find them through their own choices and efforts (Leontiev, 1992). A captive soldier always suffers from torture and painful emotions which he or she tries to suppress. Former prisoners testify that during corporal punishment, not physical pain hurts the most but the mental agony caused by the injustice of punishment (Asieiev, 2020; Dwinger, 2004; Pavlychenko 2014; Frankl, 2018).

The most painful component of beating is the embedded resentment. Wounded prisoners of war are being bullied even while they are weak. In this context, the question arises: why people do evil to weak prisoners, those who are completely in their power and unable to fight back to protect themselves? Why are the guards on the Primordial Evil side? The thinkers of the middle ages called this phenomenon “cupiditas” (Latin greed). It means, at the same time, a thirst for wealth or power as well as a desire to appropriate, use or absorb everything other than “I” (Zimbardo, 2019). As O. Khmilyar points out in his research, establishing a certain relationship with the guards can make it easier to survive the captivity, if this interaction takes place rationally and the prisoner can control it (for example, try to awaken compassion and willingness in the guards to make concessions). According to some experts, for most prisoners, the attempt to save their lives leads to a total loss of interest in everything that does not comply with this goal. This explains the complete lack of sentiment among concentration camp captives and prisoners. Under the burden of captivity, prisoners often lose their will to live.

Psychologist and former prisoner V. Frankl came to the conclusion using the observation that the will to live, which is lost by the prisoner, returns rarely (Frankl, 2018). The development of military affairs proved the expediency of psychological treatment (indoctrination, political re-education) of captives in order to change the hostile attitude to the enemy country and persuade prisoners to collaborate. The reorganization and reorientation of the prisoners’ consciousness was highly effective in encouraging American and British troops to collaborate during their stay in Japanese captivity. When returning from captivity, these soldiers were so ideologically reorganized that they became a problem for their own society which further weakened the rear of the warring country. A huge mental burden for a captive, unlike prison inmates, is the lack of reliable information on the date of release and return home (Savintsev, 2012; Zaretska, 2019; Khmiliar, 2017; Shyrobokov, 2020).

Uncertainty of their destiny as well as daily humiliation and bullying generalize the depressed moral and mental health of prisoners. Suffering fully embraces the soul of such a person and his or her consciousness. D. Leontiev notes that at the level of awareness the most difficult for a person is to accept and get used to the uncertainty of life causing his or her anxiety. Observations have shown that the inner world of prisoners, who are accustomed to a rich intellectual life, does not suffer so much. These people are able to escape the surrounding horror in the rich inner world and their spiritual freedom. Activation of the inner life helps the prisoner to find a hiding place from the emptiness, devastation, and spiritual poverty of his or her existence, allows escaping mentally into the past or future. Strong convictions, optimism, faith, and the search for meaning of life help to endure captivity. The prisoners who cannot maintain their inner freedom, self-esteem, and sense of individuality undergo a process of personality depersonalization. They become a part of the “grey mass” whose meaning of existence is reduced to the animal level (Hlukhovskiy, 2008; Frankl, 2018). The spiritual destruction of a person in captivity is much more dangerous than the physical weakness (Dwinger, 2004). As a prisoner always witnesses scenes of violence, it ceases to provoke resistance. Hunger, physical

suffering in combination with mental stress causes apathy. Many experts agree that apathy plays a protective role in the psyche. It prevents prisoners getting even more suffering. It looks like an emotional death. A captive can no longer feel such emotions as disgust, horror, and pity.

However, most experts note that a person is able to save freedom and independent thinking in conditions of mental and physical stress. After all, the only thing that cannot be taken away from a prisoner is his or her inner freedom and dignity (*Hlukhovskiy, 2008; Pavlychenko, 2014; Frankl, 2018; Shyrobokov, 2020*). The cohabitation of prisoners under constant supervision makes them want to have privacy, to be alone with their thoughts. In this way, they resort to escape to another world. It is common for a prisoner to have an internal dialogue with him or her. In this dialogue, there is a struggle between the ambivalent thoughts: to resist until “the last breath” or to submit... (*Hlukhovskiy, 2008; Dwinger, 2004; Pavlychenko, 2014; Frankl, 2018; Shyrobokov, 2020*).

Deprivation of sanitary supervision is a widespread practice used by captors to inflict suffering on prisoners. In conditions of excessive concentration, these actions lead to the spread of disease and the death of thousands of prisoners (*Shyrobokov, 2020*). It is characteristic to prisons (both official and non-official) that the medical staff has no influence on the status and condition of patients. Unsanitary leads to the habitual search for lice by prisoners every night because neglecting this procedure will not allow them to sleep at night (*Hlukhovskiy, 2008; Pavlychenko, 2014; Savintsev, 2012; Frankl, 2018; Shyrobokov, 2020*).

Sexual attraction is inherent in prisoners only in places with satisfactory nutrition because the human body “turns off” this attraction in situations where there is only enough energy to survive. So V. Frankl notes that their exhausted and jaded bodies could move only slowly, so they did not feel sexual desire at all. Edwin Dwinger stated that prisoners had an active sexual (homosexual) life. There were even separate cases of bribery guards for quelling the sexual desire with the services of local prostitutes. Stanislav Asieiev noted the existence of sexual services provided by female prisoners to the administration of the «Izolyatsiya» in Donetsk to prevent their torture. The author sees it as a rationalization of the behavior of female prisoners to improve their situation. In this context, it is worth recalling the term “cupiditas”, which we already know, because rape (regardless of gender) is a form of “cupiditas” because in the context of captors a person is a thing, a way to please their desires (*Asieiev, 2020; Dwinger, 2004; Pavlychenko, 2014; Frankl, 2018; Shyrobokov, 2020*).

Training

For servicemen, captivity is not the end of life. Captivity is a continuation of military service when all types of security are preserved, and the time spent in captivity is counted as years of service. In these conditions, it is necessary to avoid feelings of despair and shame because a person cannot have a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. We agree with Yu. Shyrobokov that the targeted psychological training of personnel for action in case of the possible capture or hostage will help save the lives of servicemen and reduce the risk of collaboration (*Shyrobokov, 2020*). The targeted psychological training should include preparation for interrogation, formation of skills to evade answers, and manipulation of information, including by means of symbolic mimicry.

The need for special psychological training of the military in case of captivity and stay in it is approved and actively implemented in most of the leading armies of NATO bloc countries. It is justified by the fact that a certain model of adaptive behavior of a prisoner can help him or her survive in captivity. One of the main goals of psychological preparation for the situation of

captivity is to train self-control under strong psychological pressure. It is achieved by the controlled approximation of the training conditions to the conditions of a real captivity. Therefore, psychological training for possible capture is a kind of investment in the mental health of the servicemen. It should be noted that domestic military psychology develops recommendations for regulating the servicemen behavior in the combat stress which is an integral part of the servicemen preparing for survival in captivity (*Khmliar, 2017; Shyrobokov, 2020*). We agree with N. Zaretska who notes that reintegration measures for all persons released from captivity should be mandatory (*Zaretska, 2019*).

3. Conclusion

We can state that each new level of historical development of mankind becomes less tragic for captives. We associate this with the level of civilization of humanization in society. However, we must state that the activities of international humanitarian organizations and missions do not fully protect prisoners of war from violence. A state of constant mental stress reduces the inner life of the individual to a primitive level. Conversations usually revolve around food and thoughts about life after release. The only escape from this reality is a dream when the hopes of the captives come to life. The numerous testimonies of prisoners show that waking up is the most horrible moment of the day because it brings them back to the reality of captivity (*Hlukhovskiy, 2008; Dwinger, 2004; Zimbardo, 2019*).

Captivity is a deep psychological crisis of any person. Psychological consequences such as doubts, guilt, anger at oneself and others, feelings of injustice, one's own helplessness in some situations, etc. can accompany a person for the rest of his or her life. For a prisoner, the analysis showed the need to communicate with security and friendly relations with some other prisoners (*Dwinger, 2020*). The events of captivity are extreme in nature, go beyond the usual human experiences, and cause intense fear (horror) in his or her life, generating feelings of helplessness.

In view of the above, it can be argued that the measures to prepare for a possible capture are mandatory for all the servicemen. The post-captive reintegration will help to restore the mental health and return the person to a full life and his or her duties. Being in captivity is not meaningless because the "army behind barbed wire" continues to wage its own war. This war is in the struggle for himself or herself, his or her life, and consciousness. This struggle is superior to the struggle at the front, although it is fought in the backyard of the war (*Dwinger, 2020*). This struggle leads to maturity which is unattainable in everyday life.

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