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***Condemned to Loneliness – Elderly
People in Penitentiary Isolation
and the Determinants of their Social
Re-adaptation***

SUMMARY

The purpose of the article is to describe one of the determinants of social re-adaptation of a special category of prisoners, namely elderly people. Since very few studies devoted to the determinants of their social re-adaptation have been published, one of the most neglected areas of research is a sense of loneliness perceived as a barrier obstructing positive re-adaptation. Elderly people experience double stigma: of age and related psychological, social and health constraints and of an ex-deviant – a person leaving a place of isolation. A sense of loneliness and of solitude to a great extent hampers re-adaptation and reintegration in an open environment. Unfortunately, the analyses constituting a part of scientific research as well as theories of social rehabilitation focus mainly on youth. Modern times, along with their characteristic individualism and anonymity are not favourable to old people. The issue of loneliness and its consequences for the lives of people in this age group (whose population in all societies within our cultural and civilization area continuously grows) seems to be a vital research problem requiring multi-dimensional analyses.

→ **KEYWORDS** – LONELINESS, A SENSE OF LONELINESS, SOCIAL RE-ADAPTATION, SOCIAL REHABILITATION, CONVICTED OFFENDERS

STRESZCZENIE

Skazani na samotność – izolacja starszych osób po opuszczeniu zakładu karnego i wyznaczniki ich społecznej readaptacji

Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu opisanie jednego z wyznaczników społecznej readaptacji więźniów w podeszłym wieku. Istnieje niewiele badań poświęconych wyznacznikom społecznej readaptacji tej grupy wiekowej, a jednym z najbardziej zaniedbanych obszarów jest poczucie osamotnienia postrzegane jako bariera utrudniająca pozytywną readaptację. Starsi ludzie doświadczają podwójnej stygmatyzacji: związanej

z wielkim i ze wszystkimi tego psychologicznymi, społecznymi i zdrowotnymi konsekwencjami oraz z faktem, że są byłymi więźniami. Poczucie samotności i osamotnienia skutecznie utrudnia readaptację i reintegrację na wolności. Niestety, opracowania naukowe i teorie dotyczące społecznej resocjalizacji koncentrują się głównie na młodych ludziach. Czasy współczesne, charakteryzujące się indywidualizmem i anonimowością, nie sprzyjają starszym osobom. Zjawisko samotności i jej konsekwencje dla ludzi w tej grupie wiekowej (której liczebność stale wzrasta w społecznościach naszego kręgu kulturowego i cywilizacyjnego) wydają się być istotnym problemem badawczym wymagającym wielopłaszczyznowej analizy.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** – SAMOTNOŚĆ, POCZUCIE SAMOTNOŚCI, SPOŁECZNA READAPTACJA, SPOŁECZNA RESOCJALIZACJA, SKAZAŃCY

Loneliness as a universal, psycho-social human experience has many faces; it may have various degrees, and may be experienced with various degrees of intensity.¹ It is generally perceived as an objective negative situation leading to an alarming state of mind that human beings try to free themselves from.² The issue of loneliness is analysed in the literature on the subject from various perspectives: physiological, sociological, anthropological or pedagogical – the last of which will prevail in the present study.

According to the generally available results of the research on loneliness, it is a widespread phenomenon, as it is experienced by approximately ten per cent of children at school age, approximately twenty per cent of students in their first years, and by over half of people of advanced age. Loneliness may have a destructive influence on human life due to its links with addictions, mental diseases, aggressive and auto-aggressive

¹ Cf. J. Rembowski, *Samotność [Loneliness]*, Gdańsk 1992, p. 33, quote from: K. Śliwińska, *Niedostosowanie społeczne i sytuacja szkolna uczniów wywodzących się z rodzin emigrantów zarobkowych [Social Maladaptation of Pupils from Families of Economic Emigrants and their Position in School Environment]*, Kraków 2012, unpublished.

² Z. Dołęga, *Samotność jako stan psychiczny – samotność jako cecha psychologiczna [Loneliness as a State of Mind – Loneliness as a Psychological Feature]*, in: *Zrozumieć samotność [Understanding Loneliness]*, ed. P. Domeracki, Toruń 2006, p. 253; Cf. K. Śliwińska, *Niedostosowanie społeczne i sytuacja szkolna uczniów...*, op. cit.

behaviours. Additionally, loneliness adversely affects the physical and mental condition of society and is perceived as a sign of the deteriorating health of the society.³

According to Jan Rembowski, one of numerous ways to describe the phenomenon of loneliness, apart from those that are psychodynamic, phenomenological and interactionist, is the existentialist perspective focusing on loneliness as a condition of being separated, the essence of our existence. Those who accept this fact concentrate on the way to live with their loneliness and to make positive use of it. Loneliness is therefore a painful yet creative experience. From the interactionist perspective mentioned above, emotional loneliness (experienced by persons who have no intimate relationships) is differentiated from social loneliness (which is characteristic of people who do not have any ties with others, with a sense of not belonging to any group whatsoever).⁴

Also found in the literature on the subject is the concept of Róża Pawłowska and Elżbieta Jundziłł,⁵ who described three types of loneliness: social, mental and moral. According to Jan Szczepański, “solitude is the absence of contacts with other people and with oneself, while loneliness is just being only with oneself, focusing on one’s internal world”. Hence, Szczepański perceives loneliness as a positive phenomenon related to self-cognition. Solitude, on the other hand, is for him a negative condition consequent upon the absence of interpersonal relations and contact with oneself.⁶ In the Polish literature on the subject, solitude is treated as a specific type of loneliness – mental loneliness. This definition is, for instance, adopted by Janusz Gajda, for

³ Cf. K. Śliwińska, *Niedostosowanie społeczne i sytuacja szkolna uczniów...*, op. cit.

⁴ The concept of R. Weiss is described in the literature on the subject, *inter alia* by Z. Dołęga, *Samotność młodzieży – analiza teoretyczna i studia empiryczne [Loneliness of the Young – Theoretical Analysis and Empirical Study]*, Katowice 2003, p. 44

⁵ Cf. M. Bukowska, *Zagadnienie samotności we współczesnej literaturze naukowej [Loneliness in the Contemporary Scientific Publications]*, Kraków 2008, pp. 14-15

⁶ Cf. J. Szczepański, *Sprawy ludzkie [Human Affairs]*, Warszawa 1984, p. 21, quoted after: A. Siuda, *Poczucie samotności wśród polskich emigrantów w Szkocji [Sense of Loneliness among Polish Immigrants in Scotland]*, Kraków 2009, unpublished.

whom solitude is a subjective, individual experience of a person, related to a lack of any mental ties with another human being.⁷

Social loneliness, also referred to as physical loneliness, is perceived as weak or absent interpersonal relations, living in a very loose relationship with society or even outside society. Such solitude may be experienced by a person who has not started a family, or from a family where familial ties have loosened or disappeared, or a person seeking isolation or who is isolated from the society. Social isolation is further divided into partial – where there are no natural ties, but in which lasting personal contacts with other people are observable, and complete – where a person experiences neither type of ties (e.g. a hermit, prisoner).

The notion of solitude associated with an individual, emotional aspect of loneliness as such is equivalent to the concept of alienation, broadly discussed in the literature on the subject by Krystyna Kmieciak-Baran, propagating the concept of A. Seeman and analysing the differences between a sense of alienation and solitude. According to her, a sense of solitude is equivalent to one of the aspects of alienation, namely a sense of isolation.⁸

It is broadly agreed that loneliness is experienced by persons in penitentiary isolation⁹ or undergoing re-adaptation process after being released from a place of isolation, which is described in the literature on the subject as socially excluded or disadvantaged groups, although the experience is not identical for all persons.

There are few research reports concerning this issue that refer to a young population,¹⁰ yet, some of them also account for older respondents. The surveys conducted by Piotr Czekanowski are

⁷ Cf. J. Gajda, *Wartości w życiu człowieka. Prawda – miłość – samotność* [Values in Human Life. Truth – Love – Loneliness], Lublin 1987, p. 87, quoted after A. Siuda, *Poczucie samotności wśród polskich emigrantów w Szkocji*, op. cit.

⁸ Cf. K. Kmieciak-Baran, *Poczucie osamotnienia – charakterystyka zjawiska* [Sense of Solitude – Overview of the Phenomenon], "Przegląd Psychologiczny" ["Psychological Review"] No. 4/1988, pp. 1079-1097, quoted after A. Siuda, *Poczucie samotności wśród polskich emigrantów w Szkocji*, op. cit.

⁹ Cf. M. Ciosek, *Człowiek w obliczu izolacji więziennej* [Human Being faced with Isolation in Prison], Gdańsk 1996, p. 163 et seq.

¹⁰ Cf. E. Czerwińska, *Perspektywy życiowe a poczucie alienacji u młodocianych przestępców* [Life Perspectives vs. Sense of Alienation of Juvenile Delinquents], in: *Prawne i socjokulturowe uwarunkowania profilaktyki społecznej i resocjalizacji* [Legal and Socio-cultural Determinants of Social Prophylaxis and Social Rehabilitation], ed. F. Kozaczuk, Rzeszów 2009, p. 408 et seq.

particularly worth mentioning here are t.¹¹ The empirical research conducted by him shows that out of a group of 236 people surveyed by him, 37% of the respondents experienced solitude to varying degrees: sometimes, often, nearly always, always. The main reasons for solitude, according to the respondents, include: the lack of a close person (33.3%), being alone (23.7%), lack of contacts with other people (18.8%); that is, factors closely related to the loss of interpersonal relations. Fewer respondents also mentioned circumstantial factors, such as illness (9.1%), family problems (6.7%), or changing the place of living (1.8%). What is more, Czekanowski's survey clearly shows that three socio-demographic factors, namely age, sex and marital status, to a considerable extent (from the perspective of statistics) affect the degree of solitude experienced. Solitude is felt most strongly by older people, women and singles.

Publications dealing with pedagogy quite extensively discuss the negative consequences of loneliness, and scientific research confirms the conclusions pointing to the adverse effects of loneliness on a human life at various stages of life. The negative consequences of loneliness observed in the elderly have been described, based on her own research, by Elżbieta Dubas (2000), who has pointed to the fact that loneliness may lead to lower self-esteem, demotivation, withdrawal from social life and negative emotions, including depression.¹² According to Janusz Gajda, loneliness damages personality, which, in turn, leads to a psychopathic attitude, social maladaptation, aggression, or the inability to establish emotional bonds. As a result, such behaviours may have an impact on the broader social context and can be a source of social pathology – drug addiction, alcoholism, and crime.¹³

With regard to prophylaxis and social rehabilitation, it is hard to make any reference to any results of published scientific

¹¹ The surveys mentioned by E. Dubas in *Edukacja dorosłych w sytuacji samotności i osamotnienia [Education of Adults Experiencing Loneliness and Solitude]*, Łódź 2000, quoted after A. Siuda, *Poczucie samotności wśród polskich emigrantów w Szkocji*, op. cit.

¹² Cf. ibidem.

¹³ Cf. footnote 7, p. 35.

research on the experience of loneliness and its consequences by old people being in isolation or after long-term isolation.¹⁴

The generally available data of the Central Management of the Prison Service in Poland do not have a separate statistical category of prisoners in old age. Statistical reports only contain a breakdown by age, and this can serve as a basis for estimating the size of this group in the total population of prisoners in Poland. Lack of detailed data as such suggests that this particular category of prisoners is not separately accounted for in studies on prison population or social rehabilitation programmes, which means that it is not a target group for those activities that aim for social rehabilitation or re-adaptation. Apparently, the causes and factors responsible for this situation are numerous; however, one should notice that the problem of old people in penitentiary isolation is multi-dimensional and as such requires analyses both from the perspective of the theory of social rehabilitation as well as penitentiary practice.¹⁵ The situation looks quite different in other EU countries and in the United States, where the issue has been broadly discussed for several years in the media and literature on the subject. A general conclusion that can be drawn from a cursory reading of publications available on the Internet is that the most commonly discussed issue is the condition of the health of older prisoners and the resultant barriers to social re-adaptation of this category of people.

Old age, according to gerontologists, is the most diversified phase of life, not following any standard patterns as it is shaped

¹⁴ The latest published research results concerning social readaptation determinants are described by A. Kieszowska in *Katalektyczno-inkluzyjny model readaptacji społecznej skazanych. Konteksty resocjalizacyjne* [Catalectic-Inclusive Model of Social Re-adaptation of Convicted Offenders. Social Rehabilitation Contexts], Kraków 2012. The variables analysed by her included, *inter alia*, a sense of a meaning in life, a sense of effectiveness, intensity and quality of relations with others; yet she did not directly refer to a sense of solitude or loneliness. A. Szymanowska's research, which is widely commented and quoted in the literature, published *inter alia*, in "Więzienie i co dalej" [Prison and what then?] Warszawa 2003, does not mention this phenomenon as one of the factors conditioning the social re-adaptation of convicted offenders.

¹⁵ Polish academic circles have noticed the problem of convicted defenders [offenders?] at an older age in the penitentiary system, which is confirmed in the subjects to be discussed at conferences planned for 2013: "Oddziaływania resocjalizacyjne wobec wybranych kategorii więźniów" [Social Rehabilitation Activities Addressed to Selected Categories of Prisoners] and „Człowiek stary w obliczu izolacji więziennej” [Old Person Faced with Penitentiary Isolation].

by earlier phases – childhood, youth and adulthood – which are individual and unique for everyone. It is difficult to define the point in time when old age begins;¹⁶ according to the WHO classification, there are three sub-phases; young-old: 65-74 years of age; old-old: 75-90, and long-life – above 90 years of age. Since the average human life span is increasing, it can be expected that the current border values may change in future.¹⁷

The research results published in 2005 by Elaine Crowley and Richard Sparks show that approximately 5% of the population of prisoners in England and Wales are prisoners aged above 50. This is twice as many as in the decade preceding the study. These numbers are increasing more rapidly for the population of prisoners above 60 years of age: in 2005 there were approximately 1200 males aged 60 or more imprisoned in England and Wales. This number has tripled since 1994. A factor conditioning this significant growth in the number of prisoners at an older age may be higher levels of detection and conviction rate as regards sexual offences. In 2000, one third of all prisoners aged above 60 were convicted for sexual offences (given that 3% of sexual offenders in the total population of prisoners). Approximately half of the older male prisoners were convicted for sexual offences. In English and Welsh courts, age is a factor which may cause mitigation of a sentence; however, it is not as important as an adequate proportion between the sentence and the punishment or the risk. The vast majority of elderly convicted offenders were convicted for serious crimes and they serve long or life-time sentences. Only a few of them will live until very old age in prison; the majority will die before they serve their sentences (many prisoner-respondents of the survey are already dead).

The research was carried out in four prisons in England and Wales, with a large population of elderly prisoners (defined as aged above 65); two of the prisons have separate wards for elderly prisoners. The research methods included: observation,

¹⁶ Cf. O. Czerniawska, *Starość wczoraj, dziś i jutro* [*Old Age Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*], <<http://kutw.kk.jgora.pl/witryna3/starosc.htm>> (access date: 12.11.2010), quoted after J. Sztuka, *Formacja do starości* [*Towards Old Age*], "Ateneum Kapłańskie. Pełnia życia w starości?" [*Living life to the fullest at old age?*] 157 (2011), z. 1(614), pp. 42-52.

¹⁷ Cf. *World Population Prospects, The 2002 Revision*, Vol. I: *Comprehensive Tables*, United Nations, New York 2003, quoted after J. Sztuka, *Formacja do starości*, op. cit.

interviews with prisoners aged between 65 and 84 (80 comprehensive interviews) and with the personnel (11 interviews, mainly with prison service officers and informal conversations with nurses).

The conclusions are not optimistic and are indicative of the urgent need to solve the problems of elderly prisoners. The study results show that prisons are not suitable for elderly prisoners due to architectonic barriers and the organisation of daily activities (stairs, distances between rooms, queues, shared showers, noise). Prison is perceived by older prisoners in a different way – they are afraid of dying in prison or of being released and living in isolation (they often have no families waiting for them outside); they also feel lonely because they have been cut off from their past.¹⁸ Older prisoners feel maladjusted (to the prison requirements), unable to protest or refuse anything, invisible (their feelings and needs are ignored). The study describes instances of intentional and wilful abuse of older prisoners; yet, on the other hand, acts of kindness and generosity towards them were also observed.

As in Poland, personnel treat all prisoners in the same way; the same rules apply to all, regardless of age. Rarely are elderly prisoners (unlike women or prisoners with mental problems) perceived as a special or separate group of prisoners (also from the perspective of legal acts). In each of the four prisons where the research was conducted, internal rules and daily agenda are identical for younger and older prisoners. This results in practical problems, such as older prisoners coming late to assemblies due to difficulties with walking). Older prisoners need more fresh air and physical exercising. The research shows that these needs are ignored by the personnel. Some elderly prisoners had to give up daily walks because of problems with their motor system or urinary tract. Physical exercise organised by prisons required working out for the whole hour, which was impossible for many prisoners of older age. Aside from the issues mentioned above, the situation is made even worse by the fact that the majority of older prisoners are sexual offenders – this is a source of discrepancy between the needs of an older prisoner and the way he is

¹⁸ Cf. E. Crawley, R. Sparks, *Hidden Injuries? Researching the Experiences of Older Men in English Prisons*, "The Howard Journal" Vol. 44, 2005, p. 4, translated by A. Siuda.

perceived by the prison staff. The prison staff are not willing to assume additional duties related to looking after elderly prisoners as they perceive such duties as affronts to the dignity of their profession – they are considered dishonourable and unmanly. Prisoners of older age often complain about being humiliated, reminded of their low position in the prison hierarchy, of the easiness with which they could be deprived of any prison privileges.

More general conclusions based on the research refer to institutional solutions and point out that it is the “senselessness of the institution” that makes older prisoners invisible from the perspective of legal acts. Identification of the needs of elderly prisoners should be the task of prison personnel.

Despite the growing number of older prisoners, in Great Britain there is no national strategy addressed to this group of convicted offenders.¹⁹ At a local level, thanks to some prison directors and personnel, there are prisons where certain improvements which constitute “best practices” have been introduced, like in HMP Wymot prison where there is a special ward for older prisoners. The personnel there tried their best to adapt the prison environment to the needs of elderly prisoners. Despite the absence of any national regulations in this respect, some innovative solutions have been implemented. This was possible only thanks to the good will of the prison staff, the support of the government and volunteers, although such actions should be initiated and carried out by state authorities.²⁰

American research published in 2012 was carried out in Maryland prisons.²¹ Older prisoners constitute the fastest growing group of prisoners, who require special attention and care. Statistical data show that in the last 20 years the number of older prisoners grew in this state by 750%. The average cost of their stay in prison is sometimes three times higher than in the case of younger ones. 45% of the prison population in the United States is above 51 years of age. This is due to tougher criminal law provisions which have resulted in mass imprisonment.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibidem*.

²⁰ Cf. *ibidem*.

²¹ Cf. *Ageing Inmates: Correctional Issues and Initiatives*, “Corrections Today”, Aug/Sep2012, Vol. 74 Issue 4, s. 84, <<http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/80132016/aging-inmates-correctional-issues-initiatives>>: (access date 25.03.2013), translated by. A. Siuda.

As already mentioned above, a sense of loneliness is a barrier hampering the process of social re-adaptation and reintegration of socially excluded persons. As regards former prisoners of old age, the burden of prison stigma is accompanied by social exclusion caused by age, thus creating a category of those who are “doubly excluded”. According to the National Social Integration Strategy – the basic document adopted by EU member states with regard to counteracting social exclusion, exclusion is defined as a situation where an affected individual or community is prevented from fully and lawfully performing social roles, using public goods and social infrastructure, gathering private goods and earning income in the way that respects human dignity.²²

As for older people, an important issue seems to be the subjective aspect of exclusion: to what extent this was an independent decision and to what extent it was caused by prior social determinants or even social prejudices functioning within a given community (...). This may be the case with people after long isolation in a penitentiary or psychiatric institution, or people changing their place of living at an older age, however having their limited and closed social area.²³ According to Tadeusz Pilch, such subjective factors may include: the loosening of interpersonal relations, growing anonymity in everyday life and cultivation of individualism, the gradual disappearance of neighbourly relations, disappearance of the significance of social control as well as a sense of rejection, mutual hostility, “psychopathization” of social life, which even encourages isolation from the social environment in which a human being is perceived only as a giver.²⁴ This need to separate themselves from the environment and a sense of rejection are the symptoms of a sense of loneliness which prevents such individuals from engaging in any pro-social activity.

²² Cf. A. Fidelus, *Działania insercyjne wobec osób wykluczonych i marginalizowanych społecznie [Insertion Activities Concerning Socially Excluded People or People Living on the Margins of Society]*, in: *Oblicza wykluczenia i marginalizacji społecznej [Faces of Social Exclusion and Marginalisation]*, ed. A. Fidelus, Warszawa 2011, p. 81 and literature quoted there.

²³ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 85.

²⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 86.

The literature on social pedagogy or geragogy contains extensive descriptions of various areas of activity of elderly people,²⁵ most often focusing on cultural and educational activities or those related to the tourism of mutual help. However, doubly excluded persons cannot find a place among older people functioning in local communities, engaging in various forms of activity. Most often they have no family, and even if they do, they do not keep in touch with them.

Elderly prisoners are often reoffenders who have spent most of their lives in total institutions, whose degree of prizonisation practically makes them unable to function outside prison as free people. When analysing stages of imprisonment²⁶ and prison adaptation mechanisms widely described in the literature, it can be said that elderly prisoners are within the phase of withdrawal or settling in, experiencing a sense of resignation, mental stagnation or mental silence.

If elderly prisoners prepare for their time after release from prison, they most often focus on their physical health as a precondition; healthcare in prison gives them a sense of security, it is provided free of charge and – most importantly – immediately when needed. When the basic needs of the prisoners are the priority, naturally higher needs must give way to the need to feel secure and healthy, or to physiological or living needs. Hence, one can hardly speak of any creativity in the lives of such people, although if creativity is understood as a feature of particularly gifted or talented individuals,²⁷ who, too, can find themselves in such isolation, waiting to be released and fulfilment of this expectation can trigger creative work.

Another context of social re-adaptation and reintegration is also worth mentioning: to what degree is society prepared to accept a former offender back into the local community? Wiesław Ambrozik in his numerous publications points to civil society which is a society that is self-organised, that voluntarily engages in social activities aimed at creating social structures independent

²⁵ Cf. J. Sztuka, *Formacja do starości*, op. cit.

²⁶ See footnote 9, pp. 163-164.

²⁷ Cf. B. Majerek, *Między rezygnacją a kreatywnością* [*Between Resignation and Creativity*], in: *Pedagogika społeczna*, No. 1/2001, pp. 126-127.

of the state.²⁸ This activity is understood as the functioning of public institutions, civic support movements, mutual help groups organised by former convicted offenders, local government structures, the media encouraging the idea of social inclusion.

As already mentioned above, in the case of elderly people the consequences of stigmatization experienced by former prisoners are enhanced by the stigma of old age, as well as by the accompanying physical, mental, health-related or cultural constraints. Social reintegration can be understood – as proposed by Anna Kieszowska – as a chance for responsible partnership on both sides: former prisoners and the local community guarantees their full participation in social life.²⁹ A barrier preventing free and voluntary engagement in the partnership is the age of former convicted prisoners and related health and cognitive constraints linked with the level of social maladaptation of this group. Bronisław Urban, one of most prominent theoreticians of the social de-stigmatization phenomenon in the Polish literature has emphasised on numerous occasions that “former deviation does not disappear during the process of de-stigmatization, but a new identity develops in parallel with it and gains advantage over the former one”. Another possible stage of the de-stigmatization process, giving a deviant an opportunity to break free from the vicious circle of helplessness, is the stage that is almost impossible to reach for all individuals. It can be reached only by those who themselves are capable of exceptional conscious effort. Therefore, de-stigmatization is sometimes compared to sanctity.³⁰ This effort must be active and conscious; the individual must have the will to face a social audience, because only their acceptance can lead to de-stigmatization. In the case

²⁸ Cf. W. Ambrozik, *Reorganizacja społeczności lokalnej a reintegracja społeczna byłych przestępców [Reorganisation of Local Community versus Social Reintegration of Former Offenders]*, in: *Tożsamość osobowa dewiantów a ich reintegracja społeczna [Personal Identity of Deviants and their Social Reintegration]*, ed. A. Kieszowska, Kraków 2011, p. 66.

²⁹ Cf. A. Kieszowska, *Katalektyczno-inkluzyjny model readaptacji społecznej skazanych. Konteksty resocjalizacyjne*, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁰ Cf. B. Urban, *Kognitywno-interakcyjne podstawy współczesnej resocjalizacji [Cognitive and Interactive foundations of Modern Social Rehabilitation]*, in: *Resocjalizacja. Ciągłość i zmiana [Social Rehabilitation. Continuity and Change]*, ed. M. Konopczyński, B.M. Nowak, Warszawa 2008, p. 28 et seq.

of elderly people, to find the strength and actively to engage in the process seems almost impossible.

It would be unfair not to note that sometimes elderly people in a state of loneliness during isolation or after being released from the institution make creative use of their condition, engaging in creative work in the area of broadly understood as culture and art. Many authors describe loneliness as a positive experience. According to Tadeusz Gadacz, loneliness may be a positive experience, particularly when it lasts for a short period and is the result of the free choice of an individual. This is not apparently the situation experienced by the typical old person after being released from prison. However, a period of loneliness may provide an opportunity to get some rest from the outside world and look into oneself.³¹

Similar advantages of loneliness have been observed by Elżbieta Dziba: “rarely do authors mention the joy of being alone, the affirmation of one’s loneliness, the joyful search for isolation, a sense of inner peace found in loneliness, deep inner satisfaction that stems from experiencing accepted and awaited loneliness”.³² Loneliness may be also an opportunity to get some rest, to calm down, to better understand oneself and to start building a new ex-deviant identity. Such exceptional situations give hope that loneliness does not have to be perceived only as an obstacle to social re-adaptation and reintegration, but – although for a limited group – also as a chance for a respectful life after prison.

³¹ Cf. T. Gadacz, *Wypisy z ksiąg filozoficznych. O samotności. O spotkaniu* [Excerpts from Books on Philosophy. On Loneliness. On Meeting.] Kraków 1995, quoted after: A. Siuda, *Poczucie samotności wśród polskich emigrantów w Szkocji*, op. cit.

³² E. Dubas, *Edukacja dorosłych w sytuacji samotności i osamotnienia*, op. cit., p. 112, quoted after A. Siuda, *Poczucie samotności wśród polskich emigrantów w Szkocji*, op. cit.

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