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The survival game: Impression management and strategies of survival under extreme conditions in a Soviet Gulag prison camp

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Abstract
How do people survive under extreme conditions? Will selfish, non-cooperating free-rider types – the *solo* players – have the best chances of surviving? Or would cooperating, hard-working types – the *team* players – have higher chances? All morale put aside, it is interesting to know whether non-cooperation or cooperation pays off in a game characterized by scarcity and hard competition for survival. A study of people in such a Hobbesian state of nature can also teach us important lessons about social dynamics in contemporary, prosperous societies. An interesting case of 'The survival game' can be found in Solzhenitsyn's (1963 [1962]) self-biographical book, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, depicting life in a Soviet Gulag prison camp in Siberia January 1951. We use Solzhenitsyn's work as evidence of the interplay between five player types among prisoners: Cooperative *blind-riders* (BRs), *hard-riders* (HRs) and *tough-riders* (TRs), i.e. the so-called 'toilers'; non-cooperative *easy-riders* (ERs), looked upon by the toilers as 'bastards', 'screws' and 'errand boys'; and finally *Low-riders* (LRs), comprising 'goners' and 'jackals'. The main research question addresses the successfulness of the survival strategies of the five player types. Apart from a Multiple Player Approach (MPA) that may be seen as a further development of second-generation theory of collective action (Ostrom & Ahn, 2009), we apply Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory on our case. Hence, we argue that *impression management* at two different 'stages' – the Brigade stage and the Camp stage – is crucial for survival for hard-riding as well as for easy-riding players, in particular *strategic masking*. Seeking to unite Goffman and game-theoretic MPA, our overall purpose is to make a theoretical contribution to "game-related sociology" (Swedberg, 2001).

Keywords Game-related sociology · Impression management · Microsociology · Third-generation theory of collective action · Soviet labor camp · Survival strategies under extreme conditions

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"It's the law of the jungle here, fellows. But even here you can live. The first to go is the guy who licks out bowls, puts his faith in the infirmary, or squeals to the screws." Aleksandr Isajevich Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1963 [1962]: 2)."[In] camp, too (and everywhere in life), there is no corruption without ascent. They exist alongside one another." Aleksandr Isajevich Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (1974b[1973]: 627)."Anyone who has proclaimed violence his method inexorably must choose lying as his principle." Aleksandr Isajevich Solzhenitsyn, from his Nobel prize address in 1970.How do people survive under extreme conditions? Will egoistic, non-cooperating free-rider types – the *solo* players – have the best chances of surviving? Or would cooperating, non-selfish hard-working types – the *team* players – have higher chances?

Within social science, we find three main explanations of how social order is created, or *not* created, in a state of nature. First, there is the classical Hobbesian, political science solution of an autocratic third-party, or 'Leviathan', to protect people against each other. If not top-down created social order, then anarchy prevails, meaning "continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 1985 [1651]: 186). Second, we have the social Darwinist "the survival of the fittest" explanations, that is, the natural selection principle induced to human beings, as in the work of Spencer (1864). Here, it is hypothesized that – in a sort of man against man competition – the number of the most fit for physical survival will increase. Third, we have the cooperative hypothesis: People will *not* end up in anarchy and lawlessness, neither try to outcompete each other, but seek to cooperate in order to secure collective survival. For example, we find support for this claim in the work of British anthropologist Robin Dunbar, who has argued that pre-modern hunter-gatherer communities lived in small groups, seldom exceeding 150 persons, that is, the approximate number a tribe member is able to know personally, given the capacity of the human brain.[1] Hence, social sanctioning would be effective and all tribe members would have an incentive not to free-ride but rather contribute to provide the collective good of the survival of the whole tribe. The first two explanations represent undersocialized conceptions of man, while the third may be oversocialized and, hence, not realistic either (Granovetter, 1985; Wrong, 1961).

If we can find a good example of people living under dire life conditions, we may approach a more realistic and multi-faceted explanation of how humans try to survive severe life-threatening events. First, we may find out whether both cooperative and non-cooperative actors develop, and which survival strategies they use. Second, if this *both-and* scenario is the case, we may get to know whether the former or latter player type would have the highest survival chances.

[1] Using ethnographic fieldwork sources from the 20th c., Dunbar estimated the group size in hunter/gatherer societies on average to have been 40 in small nomadic "overnight camp bands", 150 in settled "village bands" and 1150 in "tribes" (Dunbar, 1993:684). Moreover, by comparing the evolutionary size of the brain, group size and communication among apes he has made probable that the cognitive capacity of a modern human being only suffices to personal knowledge of about 150 people (Dunbar's number, also termed *Monkeysphere*), such as family members, friends and colleagues/tribe members (Dunbar, 1993 690). This indicates that, in ancient times, small groups were most apt at securing collective survival, as in-depth knowledge allows for effective, social control and, hence, cooperation and no free-riding.

Such a 'social experiment' can be found in Solzhenitsyn's (1963 [1962]) fascinating and largely self-biographical book, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which has had an enormous importance for Russian political dissidents – and generally political dissidents in autocratic societies all over the world – ever since its publication.[2] In this short novel, Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) describes into the slightest detail[3] one day in a Soviet Gulag prison camp for political prisoners in Siberia on a January day in 1951, 27.5 degrees below zero.[4]

We intend to use Solzhenitsyn's book as a case study to highlight the interplay between five ideal-typical players among prisoners: Cooperative *blind-riders* (BRs), *hard-riders* (HRs) and *tough-riders* (TRs), i.e. the so-called 'toilers' or grey *zeks*, who are the most hard-working prisoners struggling for collective survival; non-cooperative *easy-riders* (ERs), called 'errand boys', 'screws', 'bastards', 'squealers' and the like by the toilers, many of whom trying to survive at the cost of their co-prisoners; and finally *Low-riders* (LRs) called 'goners' and 'jackals', who due to physical and/or mental deficiencies only survive in the camp for a very short time. We supplement *One Day* with Solzhenitsyn's scientific 'literary investigation' three-volume work, *The Gulag Archipelago* (Solzhenitsyn, 1974a, b, c). Thus, we use a single-case study (*One Day*), which however is a condensation of the author's own experiences in several camps and, in that sense, relatively representative.[5]

On this background, our main question becomes: *Which are the survival strategies of five player types in a Gulag prison camp, and how successful are these strategies?*

Our main purpose is to offer a theoretical contribution to "game-related sociology" (Swedberg, 2001; Talanker, 2019). Apart from the game-theoretical Multiple Player Approach (MPA) inspired by micro-economics (Ostrom, 2000; Svendsen et al., 2021; Brandt et al., 2022), we apply Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory on our case – a framework that is micro-sociological of course, but clearly game-theoretic

[2] Solzhenitsyn already started on writing *One Day* in 1957, after having been released from internal exile. For political reasons, he had great difficulties in getting his book manuscript through the zealous Soviet censorship. However, in 1962 he exploited Nikita Krushchev's showdown over the atrocities of the Stalin period, and the manuscript – based on own experiences but also to a certain extent 'camouflaged' – was finally published in the journal *Novyj Mir*. "Solzhenitsyn's description was drawn largely from his own memory of life in the camps, although it contained a nod to Soviet class considerations. He transposed a certain period of his own life onto the life of a peasant, which he knew, for political reasons, would be a much more acceptable narrator than an intellectual would be," his biographer Michael Scammell writes. "That coincided with the ideology that the state was a workers' state run by workers and for workers" (Scammell, 1984, quoted in Brown 2017).

[3] Solzhenitsyn had an extraordinary memory. For example, during his stays in various prison camps he would memorize long poems.

[4] Solzhenitsyn wrote the following about the idea to *One Day*: "On one long winter workday in camp, as I was lugging a handbarrow together with another man, I asked myself how one might portray the totality of our camp existence. In essence it should suffice to give a thorough description of a single day, providing minute details and focusing on the most ordinary kind of worker; that would reflect the entirety of our experience. It wouldn't even be necessary to give examples of any particular horrors. It shouldn't be an extraordinary day at all, but rather a completely unremarkable one, the kind of day that will add up to years. That was my conception, and it lay dormant in my mind for nine years" (The Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn Center, 2020).

[5] The authencity and high representativeness of the book is also mirrored in the flood of thank you letters to Solzhenitsyn from former camp prisoners after the publication of *One Day* in 1962.

in scope.[6] Goffman appears highly relevant, as the *impression management* undertaken by prisoners at two different scenes, or stages, stands out as crucial for survival for both hard-riding team players and easy-riding one-team players. The first one is *The Brigade Stage*, closely related to the 'brigade-family' and the undertaking of so-called 'hard jobs', or 'general work' (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:198–199) outside camp. The second one is *The Camp Stage*, related to prisoners acting as staff-helpers, who perform 'soft jobs' (at 'soft spots') within camp.[7]

Thus, this contribution to game-related sociology contains two elements. First, we try to develop a new rider terminology that – as a correction to one-sided focus on free-riders – is able to include *both* 'egoistic' *and* 'altruistic' players and thus attempts to avoid under- as well as oversocialized explanations, economism and culturalism. Second, we combine this with Goffman's conceptualization of impression management, which allows us to specify the *concrete strategies* that are being used by team players and one-team players to secure survival. In doing so, we aim to include the micro-sociological richness of daily life among people struggling to survive in extreme conditions in the Gulag labor camp8. The mechanisms we find here are similar to those we find in other horrifying 'survival games', such as life in Nazi concentration camps (e.g. Nansen 1949; Kogon, 2006 [1950]; Lederer, 1953; Reitlinger 1953), torture situations (e.g. Varouhakis, 2010), natural disasters (e.g. Drabek 2018), hunger crises (e.g. Devereux et al., 2008); terror attacks (e.g. Kleinman 1989), war situations (e.g. Fujii 2010), slavery (e.g. Yetman 2012), as well as survival strategies

[6] Although Swedberg (2001:311) finds Clifford Geertz' remark of Goffman's work as resting "almost entirely on the game analogy" a bit exaggerated, Swedberg points at Goffman's own explicit intention of using "games as a general metaphor", most prominently in his usage of *expression games* (in which people either reveal or conceal information) (Goffman, [1961] 1972). Goffman did however warn that "a game-theoretical approach [involves] important limitations for the study of face-to-face interaction" (ibid. 32, also quoted in Swedberg 2001:312). In particular, the usage of sociological (non-technical) game theory can be seen in "Fun in games" in *Encounters* (Goffman, 1961) and *Strategic interaction* (Goffman, [1961] 1972); as well as in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959), influenced by the works of two of the founding fathers of game theory, namely mathematician John von Neumann and economist Oskar Morgenstern (including the concept of "team") (ibid. 330). He also became influenced by economist Thomas Schelling during the 1950 and 1960s (Jaworski, 2019). See also Maynard (1991) and Jacobsen & Kristiansen (2015).

[7] "And the life of the natives consists of work, work, work; of starvation, cold, and cunning. This work, for those who are unable to push others out of the way and set themselves up in a soft spot, is that selfsame *general work* which raises socialism up out of the earth, and drives us down into the earth. One cannot enumerate nor cover all the different aspects of this work, nor wrap your tongue about them. To push a wheelbarrow. ("Oh, the machine of the OSO, two handles and one wheel, so!") To carry hand barrows. To unload bricks barehanded (the skin quickly wears off the fingers). To haul bricks on one's own body by "goat" (in a shoulder barrow). To break up stone and coal in quarry and mine, to dig clay and sand. To hack out eight cubic yards of gold-bearing ore with a pick and haul them to the screening apparatus. Yes, and just to dig in the earth, just to "chew" up earth (flinty soil and in winter). To cut coal underground. And there are ores there too – lead and copper. Yes, and one can also … pulverize copper ore (a sweet taste in the mouth, and one waters at the nose). One can impregnate ties with creosote (and one's whole body at the same time too). One can carve out tunnels for railroads. And build roadbeds. One can dig peat in the bog, up to one's waist in the mud. One can smelt ores. One can cast metal. One can cut hay on hummocks in swampy meadows (sinking up to one's ankles in water). One can be a sman or a drayman (yes, and steal oats from the horse's bag for one's own pot, but the horse is government-issue, the old grass-bag, and she'll last it out, most likely, but you can drop dead). Yes, and generally at the "*selkhozy*" – the Agricultural Camps – you can do every kind of peasant work (and there is no work better than that: you'll grab something from the ground for yourself)" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:198–199, see also p. 19).

in other secluded 'total institutions' (than prisons) aiming to control people, such as psychiatric hospitals (Goffman, 1961).[8] In this way, we try to get new insights in how social order is created, and survival secured, under extreme conditions caused by natural or human disasters and leading to emergency situations.[9]

Next section explains the theoretical framework, followed by a presentation of *One Day* and Gulag. Then we analyse survival strategies among types of prisoners staging on two scenes – The Brigade Stage and The Camp Stage.

Theory: Rider types and impression management

Some preliminary reflections on the usage of ideal types

Our rider types are of course ideal types. Therefore, in line with Max Weber's original idea, they should be considered heuristic tools for the researcher, designed to attain analytical strength. According to Weber, an ideal type is "obtained by means of a one-sided *accentuation* of *one* or a number of viewpoints and through the synthesis of a great many diffuse and discrete *individual* phenomena (…) which are in conformity with those one-sided, accentuated viewpoints, into an internally consistent *mental* image. In its conceptual purity, this mental image cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia* (Weber, 2012d [1904]: 125).

Hence, the universality of (utopian) *holistic ideal types* such as the rider types should be understood in this constricted sense, namely as methodological devices aimed at reducing complexity to achieve simplicity and 'purity' – or 'pure forms' – in an empirical world that is far from pure and unequivocal. Accordingly, rider types should not be confused with reality itself, that is, they should never be considered *real* types. Rather, like all ideal types, they are constructed to aid "the researcher's grasp upon and comprehension of – for Weber – an amorphous and ceaselessly flowing reality [and] assist the clear conceptualization of the particular case and development under investigation" (Kalberg, 2012:122; see also Rosenberg 2016, and Aspalter 2020).

[8] In his preface to *Asylums*, Goffman defines a *total institution* "as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. Prisons serve as a clear example, providing we appreciate that what is prison-like about prisons is found in institutions whose members have broken no laws. This volume deals with total institutions in general and one example, mental hospitals, in particular" (Goffman, 1968 [1961]:11). The word *"total"* Goffman understands thusly: "First, [that] all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member's daily activity is carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same things together. Third, all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled with one activity leading at a pre-arranged time into the next, the whole sequence of events being imposed from above by a system of explicit, formal rulings and a body of officials. Finally the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution" (Goffman, 1968 [1961] 17).

[9] Regarding the example of Nazi concentration camps: In fact, in *The Gulag Archipelago* Solzhenitsyn compares Gulag with the German KZ camps (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:17–18, 537).

Multiple players: from first to second and third-generation theory of collective action

When looking at the literature within game theory in microeconomics, the egoistic *free-rider* type stands out. The framing is, overall, that if human beings are not disciplined through punishment and reward, they become tempted to defect at the cost of all other players. Hence, people are in their 'default setting' always selfish, easy to tempt and, in many ways, 'evil' in the state of nature – in line with Thomas Hobbes' original assumption. Free-riders have broadly been defined as "a group who obtains benefits from group membership but does not bear a proportional share of the costs of providing the benefits" (Albanese & Van Fleet, 1985:244). Free-riders arise from collective action problems where single members in a group will not take the initiative to contribute and provide collective goods (Svendsen, 2020a, b).

The *free-rider problem* was originally formulated by American economist and political scientist Mancur Olson in his classical book from 1965, *The Logic of Collective Action*. In the book, Olson proposed that, in obtaining a collective good for a group, the free-rider problem occurs: "Though all of the members of the group therefore have a common interest in obtaining this collective benefit, they have no common interest in paying the cost of providing that collective good. Each would prefer that the others pay the entire cost, and ordinarily would get any benefit provided whether he had borne part of the cost or not" (Olson, 1965: 21).

This research strand was later on labelled first-generation theories of collective action, in which the economists' rational actor theory was adapted to public choice inspired political science (Ostrom & Ahn, 2009; Ahn & Ostrom, 2014; Svendsen 2020a). However, during the 1990s, second-generation theories of collective action were gradually developed, partly as a critique of the narrow economistic Olsonian approach and led by political scientist and 2009 nobel prize winner in economics, Elinor Ostrom (see e.g. Ostrom 1990; Ostrom, 2000; Ostrom & Ahn, 2009; Volacu & Golopenţa, 2014). According to Ostrom, second-generation theories of collective action should attempt to offer more realistic models that use *sociological* explanatory variables, such as a broader typology of collective goods, group characteristics, and people's own rules. Moreover, they should include both "rational egoists" as well as other "conditional players" (Ostrom, 2000:5). Hence, more realistic models of human interaction should simply include "multiple types of players":

> [It] is necessary to adopt a broader theory of human behavior that posits multiple types of individuals – including rational egoists as well as conditional cooperators – and examines how the contexts of collective action affect the mix of individuals involved (ibid. 3).

Ostrom did however not develop a consistent theoretical framework of multiple player types, covering all outcomes at a continuum going from pure calculating egoists to players solely driven by altruism.

The multiple player framework

On this background, we introduce and apply what may be termed a third-generation theory of collective action by translating Ostrom's idea of "multiple types of players" into the framework of a Multiple Player Approach (MPA) (Brandt et al., 2022). The purpose of MPA is to include, and balance, both economic and sociological variables, in an attempt to avoid under- and oversocialized conceptions of man (Granovetter, 1985; Wrong, 1961). To do this, MPA seeks to cover *all* types of players by expanding the rider theoretical framework to include five ideal typical players, namely average contributing *blind-riders* (BRs) and above-average contributing *hard-riders* (HRs) and *tough-riders* (TRs) on the one hand; and sub-average contributing *easy-riders* (ERs) and *low-riders* (LRs) on the other.[10] The framework is generic and can potentially be applied to all cases of human cooperation in all space-time contexts. This includes the case of people in dire conditions struggling for survival – the survival game – but potentially also more symbolic games outside total institutions in which justice is 'negotiated' at micro, meso or macro levels, such as power struggles over division of labor and accreditation/distribution of honor at work places, within redistribution politicies, civic movements and sports.

Notice, that we argue that free-riders are near *non-existent*. Most loafers will seek to minimize as much as possible their contributions to collective goods (as e.g. taxpaying, working hard to secure the survival of one's firm, doing voluntary work for the local community). However, in the absence of perverse incentives[11] people only very seldom make zero contributions due to fear of punishment. This is to say that easy-riders may free-ride *occasionally*, but only if they feel there is low chance of getting detected and punished. Hence, we have exchanged the 'anthropological monster' of a 100% free-rider with a more realistic player type, namely *the easy-rider* (at times also called 'soft-rider'). Table 1 below shows our MPA framework.

As can be seen, we look at BRs as average and HRs and TRs as above average contributors to the building of collective goods in a group and/or in a society, e.g., taxpaying or increasing the turnover of a company or, in this case, securing collective survival.

Blind-riders (BRs) are average contributors in the sense that they always imitate the majority, hence, they contribute with what is *acceptable* according to given norms within a group or population (but nothing more beyond that). Moreover, BRs – who

[10] Admittedly, these 'utopian' ideal types appear rigid, and there is definitely a risk of reductionalism if they are used without critical reflection. Just to mention af few caveats: As we all know by experience, people may during their lives *change type*. Imagine for example an easy-riding teenager who develops into a hard-rider at his or her future workplace, and/or in the local community. Besides, *the social arena* can determine whether a person easy-ride or hard-ride. For example, a lazy husband might be a hardworking teamplayer at his workplace. This shifting between types may happen due to differences in motivations (different 'drivers') within single individuals in various social contexts.

[11] In our Gulag case, we find many of such perverse incentives, leading the majority of the population to contribute as little as possible to collective goods, and most often only paying taxes, or delivering agricultural products to the state by use of force and threats of arbitrary violence. Morover, the Soviet state – despite its social/socialist ideology – simply fostered *collective evils* destroying common goods, in the form of un-social, selfish behaviour, distrust, easy-riding, over-control, corrupt behaviour, cheating, stool pigeoning, betrayal, arbitrary violence, breaches of law institutionalized crime.

Table 1 Five player types within a Multiple Player Approach

TYPE	BR *(Blind-rider)*	HR *(Hard-rider)*	TR *(Tough-rider)*	ER *(Easy-rider)*	LR *(Low-rider)*
Contribution	Average	Above	Above	Below	Below
Honest/ Dishonest	Honest	Honest	Conditionally honest	Dishonest	Honest
Cooperative	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Driver	Obedient	Work ethic	Fairness	Self-interest	Survival
Reflective/ Strategic	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Masking	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

according to Ostrom (2000:7) make up about 50% of a population – tend to be obedient, rule-abiding, always seeking to imitate the average behaviour within a group. In short, they always seek to conform. They are honest team-players, who do not use *masking*, understood as a performer's engagement in a "profitable form of activity that is concealed from his audience and that is incompatible with the view of his activity which he hopes they will obtain" – another place as "an idealized impression [that] is offered by accentuating certain facts and concealing others".[12] Hence, we observe purposive action, why Goffman (1959:105,142) also uses terms like "strategic concealment" and "strategic secrets" used in various expression games. In sum, BRs are essentially non-reflective/not self-reflective, hence they are not calculating and strategic in the sense of being able to predict, plan and 'control' the future.

Hard-riders (HRs) are above average contributors. They are altruistically driven, cooperative, honest, non-reflective team-players, always in danger of getting the sucker's payoff due to their high work ethic and dedication to a noble cause. Therefore, they are also termed *Boxer players*, named after the good-hearted but naïve workhorse Boxer in George Orwell's (1951 [1945]) *Animal Farm*.[13] The Boxer players do not use masking, hence they play with open cards and do not accentuate certain facts and conceal others in order to give their audiences the 'right' impression.

[12] "If an individual is to give expression to ideal standards during his performance, then he will have to forgo or conceal action which is inconsistent with these standards" (Goffman, 1959:50). "I have suggested that a performer tends to conceal or underplay those activities, facts, and motives which are incompatible with an idealized version of himself and his products" (ibid. 56). In a later work, concealment is described as rationalizations to conceal facts from audiences and even from oneself: "By a sort of prearrangement, then, social situations seem to be perfectly designed to provide us with evidence of a participant's various attributes – if only to vividly re-present what we already know. Further, in social situations, as in other circumstances, deciders, if pressed, can employ an open-ended list of rationalizations to conceal from the subject (and even from themselves) the mix of considerations that figure in their decision and, especially, the relative weight given to these several determinants" (Goffman, 1983:8).

[13] The friendly, hard-working but extremely naïve cart-horse, Boxer, is a good illustration of a pure hard-rider who contribute to what we have termed *the hardrider problem* (Brandt et al., 2022). Unwillingly, he helps the corrupt pigs to become near free-riders, believing blindly in all their lies without critical reflection whatsoever ("Napoleon is always right"). The pigs – like the Soviet Communist Party – ask the other animals to sacrifice themselves even more for the cause of Animalism, Boxer's solution to every problem is simply: "I will work harder". Consequently, Boxer works harder and harder until he 'over-rides' and finally collapses. The lazy pigs 'thank' the horse for his efforts by selling the injured Boxer to Alfred Simmonds, Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler (Orwell, 1951 [1945]:17). Squealer glorifies the deceased horse in front of the other animals, while Napoleon buys himself whiskey for the money.

Tough-riders (TRs) are also above average contributors. They are similar to HRs in all respects, except for being reflective, fair-minded with consequence (tough), and strategic. The latter means that they seek to control the future – just like the ERs. Hence, they are cooperative team-players who want to see justice done, why they only contribute above-average if the game is fair, and there are rational reasons to do so. Put otherwise, they celebrate the old Latin saying *Vide, sed cui, vide*[14] and do not trust blindly. And they by all means want to avoid getting the sucker's pay-off. Tough-riders are conditionally honest, in that they are honest with all people except their 'competitors', the easy-riders, i.e. the only other type that also consist of reflective-strategic players who use *strategic masking* in "expression games" in order to control the future (Goffman, 1972 [1961]). Moreover, as our case also reveals, TRs are inclined to invest time and energy in punishing ERs and rewarding HRs and, hence, the most important *facilitators* of collective good provision by continuously encouraging win-win games in everyday situations, both formally (as e.g. leaders) and informally (as helpers, advisers and the like).

In contrast to BRs, HRs and TRs, ERs are *minimizers* who contribute less than average. In that sense they are *time thieves*, as they make all others work harder and longer and, by this, steal their leisure time. At times they also steal other things, for example money, property, the truth, other people's moods, trust and lives, why they should more broadly be termed *the thieves*. The thieves are selfish, non-cooperative one-team players, as often acting in bad faith, that is, consciously cheating others. They use strategic masking extensively, accentuating certain things while disguising others – sometimes also overtly lying and/or manipulating – in order to obtain private gains, most often at the cost of all other players.

Finally, we have the players who are sub-contributing but however not in bad faith, namely the *low-riders* (LRs). In this cruel setting, they are one-team players like the ERs, however they are LRs out of necessity and *not* narrow self-interest. They are simply net negative contributors due to their physical and/or mental deficiencies (Svendsen et al., 2021; Brandt et al., 2022). In a modern society, they would be receivers of permanent public transfer incomes, such as disability pension.

Impression management: creating and maintaining desired self-presentations

As mentioned, the Gulag prison camps were isolated 'islands' in the most peripheral parts of USSR. Hence, each camp should be seen as a total institution with groups of prisoners and staff performers staging in front of varying audiences and trying to control both their front- and backstages and, overall, their futures. Gulag is a 'serious' theatre in the sense that every zek struggles for survival under extreme conditions. Thus, the zek typically uses impression management strategies – at a minimum simulates docility – in what at first glance looks like zero-sum games. These strategies include simulating to work (make-work), doubletalk and facework, as well as – what regards half of the prisoners and, perhaps even, the majority – using 'dirty tricks' (stool pigeoning, cheating, bribing, lying, threatening, using physical violence etc.)

[14] "Trust, but see in whom you are trusting."

at the cost of co-prisoners' welfare and lives. The latter is what we term easy-riding, or simply, thief behavior.

> In the cruel island conditions (so close to the conditions of life in the animal kingdom that we can without fear of a contradiction apply here the Darwinian "struggle for life") life itself often depends on success or failure in a struggle for a place – and in driving a path for oneself at the cost of others, the natives [the zeks] acknowledge no restraining ethical principles. They themselves say straight out: "Conscience? It got left in my file." In taking vital decisions they are guided by the well-known rule of the Archipelago: It is better to be a son-of-a-bitch than to suffer (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:516).

Gulag is an absurd theatre in the double sense that legal justice is constantly violated in camp and, besides, that the large majority of prisoners are totally innocent. Often, they have been betrayed by friends or colleagues and other personal acquaintances.[15] The regime has emprisoned them *not* because they were guilty, but with the double purpose of, at the macro level, to spread general fear within the population and making the zeks serve as a slave population in the Communist economy. However, rules of law have been substituted by informal rules between prisoners and staff, as well as among the prisoners themselves, securing some sort of fragile, social order. Apart from the physical endurance of every single prisoner, *acting* is the key to survival, summarized in the zek term "secretiveness":

> The most important condition of success in the life struggle of the Gulag islanders is their secretiveness. Their character and their intentions are so profoundly hidden that to the inexperienced novice employer it seems at the outset as if the zeks bend like a blade of grass – between the wind and the boot (…) Secretiveness is almost the most characteristic trait of the zek tribe. The zek has to hide his intentions and acts, both from the employers and from the jailers and from the brigadiers and from the so-called "stoolies" [stool pigeons]. He has to conceal his successes so that they will not be outdone. He has to conceal his plans, his calculations, and his hopes, whether he be preparing for a big "escape" or has figured out where to collect shavings for a mattress. In the zek life it is always the case that to disclose means to lose…. (ibid. 517–518).

[15] Like Solzhenitsyn himself, who was betrayed by a friend to whom he wrote a letter in which he made a joke about Stalin – something that released 8 years in camp prison followed by 3 years in internal exile. In *The Gulag Archipelago*, he writes the following about distrust and betrayal culture in Stalin's Soviet Union: "In a situation of fear and betrayal over many years people survive unharmed only in a superficial, bodily sense. And inside … they become corrupt. So many millions of people agreed to become stool pigeons. And, after all, if some forty to fifty million people served long sentences in the Archipelago during the course of the thirty-five years up to 1953, including those who died – and this is a modest estimate, being only three or four times the population of Gulag at any one time, and, after all, during the war the death rate there was running *1% per day* – then we can assume that at least every third or at least every fifth case was the consequence of somebody's denunciation and that somebody was willing to provide evidence as a witness! All of them, all those murderers with ink, are still among us today" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:642–643).

Hence, it seems reasonable to link the five player types (BRs, HRs, TRs, ERs, LRs) with Goffman's team- and one-team players, thus including the sociological-dramaturgical aspect of impression management as a tool for individuals and groups to shape reality in a way that is favourable for themselves.

Like MPA, Goffman's dramaturgical theory should be seen as a general theory seeking to cover all outcomes of human behaviour.[16] According to Goffman, we are all performers, understood as actors at various theatre scenes, and who all the time seek to "create and maintain a desired image" of ourselves and our group (team) (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011:2). Hence, we strive to preserve our positive images of self in front of audiences by use of "artistic imagery" (Goffman, 1959:60) and, by applying such symbolic camouflage, hide the (calculating) "man behind the mask" (ibid. 206).[17] Such masking strategies (underpinned by sign equipment such as roles, lines, 'props', decorums, words and body language) is done as a part of impression management, or the presentation of self, understood as a way to shape and control reality. Hence, according to Goffman (1959, preface) impression management at the individual level is "the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them". At the group level, social context, team work and not betraying one's team by 'speaking out of character', 'going out of play' etc., is crucial. Thus, "[within] the walls of a social establishment we find a team of performers who co-operate to present to an audience a given definition of the situation [in accordance with a] working consensus" (ibid. 231). In this way, any embarrassing, or overtly harmful, disruptions are prevented.

In the prison camp, we meet both team-players and one-team players (solo-players), the latter being non-cooperative ERs selling their souls in order to survive at all costs. There is no suggestion of the share of each group, however in *The Gulag Archipelago* Soltzhenitsyn seems to indicate that the number of the socalled toilers or 'human beings' (BRs/HRs/TRs) and the 'cannibal-thieves' (ERs) is approximately the same.[18]

[16] "I have argued that any social establishment can be studied profitably from the point of view of impression management (…) This framework is formal and abstract in the sense that it can be applied to any social establishment; it is not, however, merely a static classification. The framework bears upon dynamic issues created by the motivation to sustain a definition of the situation, which has been projected before others" (Goffman, 1959:231,232). Hence, within the field of game theory we see the same ambition as in Pierre Bourdieu's neocapital theory, that is, a new, sociologized economics (Bourdieuconomics) outlining a "general science of the economy of practices, capable of reappropriating the totality of the practices which, although objectively economic, are not and cannot be socially recognised as economic (…) must endeavour to grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws whereby the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another" (Bourdieu, 1986:243). On Bourdieuconomics, see Svendsen & Svendsen 2003).

[17] "Artistic imagery would be [a more accurate term], for it prepares us for the fact that a single note off key can disrupt the tone of an entire performance" (Goffman, 1959:60).

[18] Solzhenitsyn (1974b[1973]:609) here sharply distinguishes between *'surviving'* and *'surviving at any price'*: "And though for this industry and for these rockets it was necessary to sacrifice the way of life, and the integrity of the family, and the spiritual health of the people, and the very soul of our fields and forests and rivers – to hell with them! The result is what counts!!! But that is a lie! Here we have been breaking our backs for years at All-Union hard labor. Here in slow annual spirals we have been climbing up to an

> Let us admit the truth: At that great fork in the camp road, at that great divider of souls, it was not the majority of the prisoners that turned to the right. Alas, not the majority. But fortunately neither was it just a few. There are many of them – human beings – who made this choice. But they did not shout about themselves. You had to look closely to see them (Soltzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:603).[19]

These 'human beings' are the grey *zeks*[20], or 'toilers' – i.e., in our terminology BRs, HRs and TRs who undertake exhausting 'general work'. They appear to perform prevailingly on one stage, namely The Brigade Stage. This is a backstage, where front performance scripts are fabricated in secrecy.[21] Thus, at this backstage in the total institution of Gulag a vibrant *underlife* goes on, by Goffman (1968 [1961]:180) understood as 'invisible' practices outside the control of the institution and the assigned roles that belong to it. This underlife is "to a social establishment what an underworld is to a city", that is, "secondary adaptation any habitual arrangement by which a member of an organisation employs unauthorised means, or obtains unauthorised ends, or both, thus getting around the organisation's assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be" (ibid. 171).

In Gulag, such an underlife most often takes place in the barrack of the brigade. Here, the 'brigade-family' members discuss and plan the 'hard jobs' they must carry out outside camp every day, how they can bribe the staff to avoid the hardest jobs and to increase food rations, making transactions in an informal economy comprising grey zeks across brigades, and the like.[22] There are however also examples of unsuc-

understanding of life – and from this height it can all be seen so clearly: It is not the result that counts! It is not the result – but *the spirit!* Not *what* – but *how*. Not what has been attained – but at what price. And so it is with us the prisoners – if it is the result which counts, then it is also true that one must survive at any price. And what that means is: One must become a stool pigeon, betray one's comrades. And thereby get oneself set up comfortably. And perhaps even get time off sentence. In the light of the Infallible Teaching [of Communism] there is, evidently, nothing reprehensible in this. After all, if one does that, then the result will be in our favor, and the result is what counts. No one is going to argue. It is pleasant to win. But not at the price of losing one's human countenance. If it is the result which counts – you must strain every nerve and sinew to avoid *general work*. You must bend down, be servile, act meanly – yet hang on to your position as a trusty. And by this means… survive."

[19] A famous quote on the moral responsibility of every single human being to behave decently, despite living under conditions of (institutionalized) injustice and lawlessness: "The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either - - but right through every human heart - - and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts there remains… an unuprooted small corner of evil" (Solzhenitsyn 1974b[1973]:615).

[20] *Zek* is an abbreviation of the Russian word *zaključónnyj*, which means emprisoned, prisoner.

[21] "A back region or backstage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course. There are, of course, many characteristic functions of such places. It is here that the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed" (Goffman, 1959:114).

[22] On soft and hard jobs, see Solzhenitsyn (1963 [1962]:52, 172). In *The Gulag Archipelago*, we read the following about the the brigade and the work norm, as the most important elements in a 'self-guardening' labor camp industry where slave exploited slave, using as main incentive the threat of starvation, physical punishment and death: "Also, the *brigade* was invented (…) Slave-driving the prisoners with club and ration, the brigadier has to cope with the brigade in the absence of the higher-ups, the supervisors, and the

cessful ERs who did not succeed in getting 'soft jobs' inside camp and, hence, must do 'hard jobs' together with their brigade. Like Fetyukov in Shukhov's brigade, they are despised, and many of them are regarded as 'goners' (already gone, i.e. dead). The most successful ERs, who do soft jobs inside camp, perform on another stage – The Camp Stage (see Table 2). This is a frontstage, meaning a stage bereft of privacy.[23] Here the prisoners who did not 'turn to the right' try to maintain their favourable positions. Many of these socalled trustees strive for making careers within the staff helper social hierarchy. This entails significant differences in impression management strategies among prisoners.

The brigade stage: team-players

Prisoners are grouped in brigades of about 20–30 members, who live closely together in separate barracks within the well-guarded prison camp. In order to secure the collective good of survival of brigade members, they are forced to cooperate on defining and controlling everyday life situations by not only working hard and efficiently, but also by making a good, impressive show. This includes masking strategies, that is, to "conceal from the audience all evidence of 'dirty work'" (Goffman, 1959:53). In this context, this would mean bribing and cheating behind the scene, i.e. backstage, in order to get good work norms and extra food rations and thus increase the probability of the survival of the brigade. Hence, brigade members must not only *work* as a team to fulfill their work norms by undertaking 'hard jobs' outside the camp from early morning to late evening; they must also *play-act* as a team, that is, obtain a working consensus and, being loyal to their brigade, follow specific scripts that are ultimately decided upon by the brigade boss, who works as the 'show director' (ibid. 102). In this way, they can make a 'good show' in front of the staff at what we term The Camp Stage, always seeking to optimize collective outcomes in expression games.[24]

In *One Day*, the main character Shukhov (Soltzhenitsyn's alter ego) ponders about how, in the prison camp, "[it] was every man for himself" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962] :83). However, careful reading shows that this is not completely so. The toilers do actually work closely together, both frontstage and backstage. Moreover, internal dis-

convoy. Shalamov cites examples in which the whole membership of the brigade died several times over in the course of one gold-washing season on the Kolyma but the brigadier remained the same" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:156, 157).

[23] "Throughout our society there tends to be one informal or backstage language of behaviour, and another language of behaviour for occasions when a performance is being presented. The backstage language consists of reciprocal first-naming, co-operative decision-making, profanity, open sexual remarks, elaborate griping, smoking, rough informal dress, *'sloppy'* sitting and standing posture, use of dialect or substandard speech, mumbling and shouting, playful aggressivity and 'kidding', inconsiderateness for the other in minor but potentially symbolic acts, minor physical self-involvements such a s humming, whistling, chewing, nibbling, belching, and flatulence. The frontstage behaviour language can be taken as the absence (and in some sense the opposite) of this. In general, then, backstage conduct is one which allows minor acts which might easily be taken as symbolic of intimacy and disrespect for others present and for the region, while front region conduct is one which disallows such potentially offensive behaviour" (Goffman, 1959:129).

[24] Of course, also staff members use The Camp Stage as a frontstage. Moreover, groups of staff member as e.g. the ordinary wards form their own networks, hence have backstages as well. We do however not include the prison staff aspect in this article.

cipline is secured by the most responsible and reflective types[25], by us termed tough-riders, who reward hard-riders and punish easy-riders in the brigade (for example by excluding them from the intimacy of the Brigade-family, scolding and threatening them, making jokes at them, or even smack them). Against all odds, these prisoners continue to exhibit what Solzhenitsyn (1974b[1973]:524) calls a "secret thirst for justice" – hence they simply appear to be disposed for being (and remaining) .[26] These *conditionally* honest players include Shukhov himself, the boss of Brigade 104, Tyurin, as well as his helper Pavlo. At The Camp Stage, they use impression management as extensively as the solo-playing they 'compete' with. Hence, in front of staff they use strategic masking, while within the brigade 'behind the scene' they are completely honest players – frank, even blunt, in their communication.

Masking and, more generally, impression management rest on the prisoners' skills in using "proper sign equipment" (Goffman, 1959:45), here primarily the skills of the brigade boss and a few other (who help him work out 'scripts'). This implies that every single brigade member must exhibit dramaturgical discipline and act out specific team *lines*, that is, "[patterns of] verbal and non-verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation" (Goffman, 1967:5). In order to do this, impression management techniques like make-work (simulating to work hard), giving face to other people's shows, avoiding scenes, and – not least – expressive body language including face-work and voice management (e.g. appearing humble, miserable, powerless, obedient and dumb) are widely used in front of staff personnel (see also Table 2).

The camp stage: solo-players

Some prisoners are however one-team players (solo-players), that is, they pursue self-interested strategies in a "calculating manner" (Goffman, 1959:17).[27] They are summarized as "the thieves", alternatively "the cannibal-thieves", who follow "the law of thieves" (in contrast to the grey zeks who might be thieves, but not cannibal-like and (still) 'human beings') (Soltzhenitsyn, 1974b [1973]:520).[28] effectively shield

[25] Reflective like Solzhenitsyn himself: "And that is only one year. And there are ten. There are twenty-five…. And then, too, when you are lying in the hospital with dystrophy – that, too, is a good time – *to think*. Think! Draw some conclusions from misfortune" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:597).

[26] "[The toilers/grey zeks] also suffer from a certain national weakness, which in some incomprehensible fashion they retain despite the whole structure of their life. This is their **secret thirst for justice**. Chekhov [the famous Russian writer], too, observed this strange feeling on an island which, in fact, did not belong to Achipelago at all: "The hard-labor prisoner, no matter how profoundly depraved and unjust he himself was, loved justice above all, and if it was not to be found among the people placed over him, then year after year he fell into a state of anger, into extreme mistrust" (…) Chekhov's observations (…) astonish us with their accuracy" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:524).

[27] "Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain" (Goffman, 1959:17).

[28] The ordinary non-cannibal thieves (the grey zeks, or toilers) were not angels but all "hard and cruel sons of Gulag": "[The zek's soul was] in a word, "Let me live as I wish, and you live as you wish (…) "Even if you are croaking right next to me, it's none of my affair"". However, the law of thieves implies 'cannibalism': "This is a cruel law [the law of the son of Gulag], yet it is much more humane than the law of the law of the thieves – the island cannibals: "You today, me tomorrow". The cannibal-thief is not in the least

themselves within "symbolic armour" (Goffman, 1959:38), many of them being unscrupulous impostors. A good example is the much feared canteen guard Hromoj ('Clubfoot'), a monstrous being who simulates being a cripple. Combined with his physical strength and brutal manners, this qualifies him to this 'soft job' within the camp. Such immoral types who have sort of 'prostituted' themselves to the 'enemy', are called derogatory names like errand boys, screws, bastards and squealers by the toilers. Rooted in a system of self-guarding[29], these renegate prisoners threaten the grey zeks, as they – although co-prisoners – far exceed the hired personnel in cruelty and violations of law.

> Self-guarding constitutes a special area in the history of the camp guard. [In] the first postrevolutionary years it was proclaimed that self-watch was a duty of Soviet prisoners. We will not affirm that this was a special, diabolical plan for the moral disintegration of the people. As always in the half-century of our most recent modern history, a lofty, bright theory and creeping moral vileness somehow got naturally interwoven, and were easily transformed into one another. But from the stories of the old zeks it has become known that the prisoner trusty guards were cruel to their own brothers, strove to curry favor and to hold on to their dogs' duties, and sometimes settled old accounts with a bullet on the spot (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:562).

Apart from the socalled 'goners' (the 'already dead') – that is, sick and worn-out prisoners (*low-riders* in our terminology) who either are utilized to the maximum extent by the staff in the few weeks or months they live, or perish quickly in the brigades working outside of camp – this considerable number of solo-riding prisoners however have a more long-term value to staff members, especially the most brutal and strongest of them. This is simply because these prisoners – in accordance with the abovementioned principle of *self-guarding* – alleviate their work, hence allow *them*, the staff members, to easy-ride if not simply free-ride (as in the case of the cook).

Except from a group of 'rich' prisoner ERs who regularly receive packages with food, clothes etc. from home and who perform tasks within camp (as e.g. Caesar in Shukhov's brigade 104), all liked and appreciated by the toilers (also for their value in the bribing business), these zeks are always solo-acting frontstage. Hence, unlike the toilers who apart from a Camp frontstage have a Brigade backstage, they are *deprived* of a backstage where they can be honest and confidential with brigade co-members, i.e. enjoy 'relaxation from front' (Table 2). Thus, their position is what Goffman (1959:38) terms "precarious", as they must never "go out of play" (ibid. 73). The potential cost for stepping out of character would be losing their 'soft job'

indifferent to his neighbor; he will speed up the latter's death so as to put off his own or sometimes just for the hell of it or even for the amusement of watching it" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:520).

[29] "After all, it was not just a matter of "self-guarding" either. There were also "self-supervision," and "self-oppression"—right up to the situation in the thirties when all of them, all the way up to the camp chief, were zeks. Including the transport chief. The production chief. Yes, and even *security chiefs* were zeks too. One could not have carried "self-supervision" any further than that: The zeks were conducting interrogations of hemselves. They were recruiting stool pigeons to denounce themselves" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:622–623).

Table 2 Characteristics of the two stages in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

Stages	Type of stage	Impression management	Rider types
The Brigade Stage	*Backstage* within the brigade with no audience	Informal communication (familiarity) incl. confidentiality markers, script-editing, control of backstage	Mostly BRs, HRs and TRs
The Camp Stage	*Frontstage* with camp staff and co-prisoners as audiences	TRs: Masking, control of frontstage, team performance, collective good provision ERs: Masking, control of frontstage, one-team performance, private good provision	ERs and TRs

and hence, most probably, their lives. In *The Gulag Archipelago*, the psychological mechanism is described thusly: "If it is the result which counts [surviving at any price] – you must strain every nerve and sinew to avoid *general work*. You must bend down, be servile, act meanly – yet hang on to your position as a trusty. And by this means… survive" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974 [1973]:609).

Internally, among these solo-players, we see a rich variety. Hence, there are honest (or quasi-honest) players who do not seek to survive by getting a 'career' within the staff-helper hierarchy, such as the already mentioned goners and, besides, the socalled errand boys (see Table 3 for an overview of ER types). And then we have types like the abovementioned Clubfoot, who, in perfect disguise, survives by harassing his co-prisoners, hence, what we term a pure ER solo-acting out from pure selfish motives. Table 2 below shows the two stages.

Survival strategies and impression management in the soviet prison camp

On this background, how can Goffman's dramaturgical theory generally, and his concept of impression management specifically, help us to understand the survival strategies of various types of riders?

Let us now move from this formal setting to a real-world life setting, in order to observe how the rider types interact in practice. As mentioned, we will use our Multiple Player Approach to analyze the behavior of five rider types in an extremely rough scenario: A Siberian Gulag prison camp in January 1951. Here, physical survival among prisoners who, like nomads, regularly are moved from camp to camp[30], supersedes all other needs in life. This is clearly reflected in the prisoners' obsession with getting enough food, avoid life-threatening work tasks as the construction of "The New Socialist Community Development" on "bare fields covered with snowdrifts" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962] :4), not end up in solitary confinement and, not least, having good boots and mittens. In the following, we will first introduce *One*

[30] "It is a rare zek who has not known from three to five transit prisons and camps; many remember a dozen or so, and *the sons of Gulag* can count up to fifty of them without the slightest difficulty. However, in memory they get all mixed up together because they are so similar" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974a[1973]:533).

Day and the Gulag phenomenon more thoroughly, before we proceed with explaining survival strategies at the two stages.

One day: the absurd theatre of Gulag

The novel is based on Solzhenitsyn's own experiences in various camps during 8 years of imprisonment (from May 1945 to March 1953), not least experiences from the camp in the city of Ekibastuz in Kazakhstan, where he was a coal miner, bricklayer and iron foundry worker.[31] The macro-historical context of One Day is thoroughly given in his part-scientific, part-autobiographical book *The Gulag Archipelago*, first published in 1973.[32]

The truthfulness of One Day is beyond doubt. It is indeed based on the author's own painful, to the tiniest detail memorized experiences.[33] When published in 1962, it created a storm in The Soviet Union (as well in the Western World when an English translation was issued in 1963). It was a bomb, or a 'literary miracle' (as one commentator named it). "It is a pitiless and relentlessly told tale of forced labor camps under Stalin" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]:xix).[34]

[31] After the camps, Solzhenitsyn was sentenced to internal exile until at last released and exonerated by Krushchev in 1956.

[32] It is a three-volume non-fiction work written between 1958 and 1968, based on many sources "including reports, interviews, statements, diaries, legal documents" and supplemented with Solzhenitsyn's own experiences (Wikipedia, The Gulag Archipelago, date of access: 2021-20-11).

[33] In the foreword of the editor in chief of the literary magazine *Novyj Mir*, in which the novel first was published in November 1962, it is written: "The author of this novel does not go out of his way to emphasize the arbitrary brutality which was a consequence of the breakdown of Soviet legality. He has taken a very ordinary day – from reveille to lights out – in the life of a prisoner (…) The effect of this novel, which is so unusual for its honesty and harrowing truth, is to unburden our minds of things thus far unspoken, but which had to be said. It thereby strengthens and ennobles us" (Solzhenitsyn 1963 [1962]:xix).

[34] Readers were shocked by its vivid depiction of the prison camp as a "microcosm of the society as a whole", as it was formulated by the American translators (Solzhenitsyn 1963 [1962] :vii). And further, the translators stated that *One Day* "is beyond doubt the most startling work ever to have been published in the Soviet Union. Apart from being a literary masterpiece, it is a revolutionary document that will affect the climate of life inside the Soviet Union" (ibid. v). Hanne (1996) has described the wide-ranging impacts of this little book, which should show to be a disaster for the Communist regime. Nikita Krushchev's decision to release the book should indeed later show to be fatal, as the book did – paradoxically, not least thanks to its calm understating, concise and matter-of-fact style – ignite ongoing political dissidence, especially among the intelligentsia. This contributed to erode the Soviet power up to its sudden collapse shortly before 1992 (see also Reddaway2020 for a recent review). "In approving the publication of *One Day*, Krushchev had released a creature to which he would subsequently attribute some of the blame for his downfall" (Hanne, 1996:166). Hanne explains further: "Within a fairly short time, it became evident that the reception of *One Day* had slipped right out of the hand of Krushchev's control. In the first place, its publication generated the production and circulation of a great number of other accounts of camp life, including both factual memories and fictional accounts, many of which depicted the treatment of prisoners, and the camps as a whole, in a much less favorable light than *One Day*. Not surprisingly, it was the hundred of thousands of former prisoners of such camps for whom the book meant most. The effect on them of seeing something of their experiences recounted publicly for the first time was extraordinary. Many wrote to Solzhenitsyn to testify to the accuracy of his depiction of camp life. As one, P. R. Martynyuk, said, "I worked on the White Sea and Volga-Moscow canals, and by a miracle stayed alive. What is described in the story is a tiny part of what I personally saw and lived through" (Hanne, 1996164).

Table 3 The eight types of prisoners in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, grouped after rider type and survival chances (Low, Medium, High)

Type	Characteristics	Examples	Impression management	Survival strategy	Estimated success of strategy
BLIND-RIDERS					
"Toilers" (*Rabotjági*)	Average contributors Obedient and submissive Performing their duties and nothing more Honest players Non-reflective	Klevshin Aljoshka	Team workers Stay in character Avoid disruptive events	Hunkering down strategy	Medium
HARD-RIDERS					
"Toilers" (*Rabotjági*)	Above-average contributors Altruistically motivated Honest players Non-reflective	Buynovskij	Team workers Play out of character	Hard work strategy	Low
TOUGH-RIDERS					
"Toilers" (*Rabotjági*)	Above-average contributors Helping HRs Punishing ERs Thirst for justice Facilitators of collective goods Conditionally honest players Reflective	Shukhov Tyurin	Team workers Team directors Conditional concealment Calculative	Fairness strategy	Medium
EASY-RIDERS					
"Errand boys" (*Sjestérki*)	Below-average contributors The warders' 'slave souls' Regarded as weaklings by the toilers Dishonest players Reflective	Errand boys for the cook	One-man teams Stay in character Avoid disruptive events	Slave strategy	Low
"Jerks" (*Pridúrki*)	Much below-average contributors Ordinary trustees, who are looked down upon by the toilers Serving as hands for the camp warders Dishonest players Reflective	The trustee in charge of the package delivery, or trusties for the cook	One-man teams Stay in character Avoid disruptive events	Slave strategy	Medium

Table 3 continued

"Screws" (*Vertúhai*, lit. those who 'turn around')	Much below-average contributors Powerful, superior camp trustees, at times also termed "scoundrels" (*svolótji*) by toilers Carry the official name of "orderlies" (*dnevál'nyje*) Feared and hated by all the other prisoners Dishonest players Reflective	Hromoj, the cantine guard The barrack trustee Camp barbers, bookkeepers, staff from Culture and Education Department	One-man teams Stay in character Concealment Calculative	Brutality strategy	High
"Squealers" (*Stukátji*)	Much below-average contributors (near free-riders) Stool pigeons, also named "whores" (*súki*) At times liquidated by brigade co-members Dishonest players Reflective	Panteleyev	One-man teams Stay in character Concealment Calculative	Traitor strategy	High/ Low*
"Rich" (*Bogátyje*)	Much below-average contributors Rich prisoners who regularly get packages from their family Enabled to bribe and get 'soft jobs' inside the camp Not looked down upon by the toilers Honest players Reflective	Caesar Markovich	Team-workers Play out of character	Bribing strategy	High
LOW-RIDERS					
"Jackals" (*Sjakályje*)	Below-average contributors 'Bowl lickers', loafers, "lazy slobs" (*gádskaja krývj*) Disdained, disgusted and punished by the toilers Honest players Non-reflective	Fetyukov	One-man teams Play out of character Concealment	Scavenger strategy	Low
"Goners" (*Dokhódjagi*, lit. those who are already gone)	Below-average contributors Exhausted and/or sick prisoners with only little more time left to live Not easy-riders by choice Honest players Non-reflective	Hands for the cook	One-man teams Avoid disruptive events	No strategy	Low

* "High/Low" for squealers indicates a high-risk ('Russian roulette') strategy. In some cases, the prisoner remains protected by the camp staff, in other cases the squealing prisoner is at high risk of getting liquidated by co-prisoners

In the Soviet Gulag system, there were more than 30,000 labor camps, the largest camps (many in the Kolyma region in North-East of Siberia) holding 25,000 prisoners and the smallest less than 5,000. About 18million people were sent to the Gulag camps in the period 1929–1953. The large majority were men and one third of them political prisoners like Solzhenitsyn.[35] Solzhenitsyn himself saw the zeks as a slave population, however with much worse life conditions than the tzarist slaves, the serfs, and acting as tools for sustaining a failed economy:

> The labor of the zeks was needed for degrading and particularly heavy work, which no one, under socialism, would wish to perform. For work in remote and primitive localities where it would not be possible to construct housing, schools, hospitals, and stores for many years to come. For work with pick and spade—in the flowering of the twentieth century. For the erection of the great construction projects of socialism, when the economic means for them did not yet exist (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:578–579).

As we mentioned, the book depicts a single, ordinary day in Ivan Denisovich's life in the prison camp – and even a *good* one. The main character, Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, bricklayer by trade and pictured as a clever, energetic little 'squirrel', is clearly Solzhenitsyn's alter ego. And surely, after reading the book, you understand why Aleksandr Isayevich survived in the camps for 8 years. Having served 8 out of 10 years in the prison camps, Shukhov understands 'how to live' (read: survive)[36]. "Some fellows always thought the grass was greener on the other side of the fence. Let them envy other people if they wanted to, but Shukhov knew what life was about. And he was not the kind who thought anybody owed him a living" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]:180).

[35] Even though dissidents were insignificant in number, they were nonetheless perceived as dangerous to the regime. The dissidents consisted of high-educated intellectuals, including many Russian Jews – scientists, journalists, writers and the like – who were well-known in the West and had the courage to report on the numerous violations of human rights in the USSR. Therefore, they were brutally persecuted and ended up in prison camps, psychiatric hospitals or were sent into exile either within Soviet borders or abroad. Besides Solzhenitsyn were well-known dissidents like nuclear physicist and Nobel laureate, Andrei Sakharov, and his wife Yelena Bonner. Other known dissident authors were Osip Mandelstam, Boris Pasternak, Vasilij Aksyonov, Alexander Zinoviev, Mikhail Bulgakov, Joseph Brodsky and Vladimir Bukovsky. The latter, for example, spent 12 years in psychiatric hospitals, prison camps and prisons until 1976, when he was finally exiled and settled in England. Bukovskij died only recently (October 27, 2019). He left several books, in which he documented the atrocities of the Soviet regime, see e.g. Bukovskij (1979 [1978], 1989, 2019). Like Solzhenitsyn, he did not let himself be intimidated to silence by the Soviet state ("I will never renounce my convictions and I will express them") and was throughout his life amazed about how ideology can turn ordinary people into monsters: "This dream of absolute, universal equality is amazing, terrifying, and inhuman. And the moment it captures people's minds, the result is mountains of corpses and rivers of blood" (Bukovskij, 1979).

[36] For example, Shukhov reports the following about the captain's encounter with the Commander Volkovoj (*Volk* means wolf in Russian): "The Captain kicked up a fuss, just like he used to on his ship – he'd only been here three months. "You've no right to strip people in the cold! You don't know Article Nine of the Criminal Code!" They had the right and they knew the article. You've still got a lot to learn, brother. "You're not Soviet people," the Captain kept on at them. "You're not Communists!" Volkovoj could take the stuff about the Criminal Code, but this made him mad. He looked black as a thundercloud and snapped at him: "Ten days' solitary!"" (Solzhenitsyn 1963 [1962] :38).

As can be seen, Shukhov indulges in no self-pity and never laments the inhuman, unjust way he has been treated in this absurd theatre of Gulag, a microcosmos reflecting Stalin's Soviet Union wrapped up in lies and arbitrary violence.[37] He accepts his role, even embraces it at times, which means, in the wordings of Goffman (1961:106), "to be fully seen in terms of the [self] image, and to confirm expressively one's acceptance of it". He however realizes, and perfectly understands, the atrocities of the regime, something that is clearly revealed in his inner dialogue. Shukhov is a man with extraordinary analytical power. Most importantly, Shukhov is stubborn, adapts to prison life and never gives up:

> Shukhov didn't have a grudge in the world now – about how long his sentence was, about how long their day was, about that Sunday they wouldn't get [a day off]. All he thought now was: "We'll get through! We'll get through it all! And God grant it'll all come to an end" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]:170).

On the whole, Shukhov is so busy with surviving 'one more day' that he completely forgets about how a miserable and hopeless life he has. Only once, he cannot hold back a desperate outburst: "The moon was really shining bright. It wasn't purple any more and it was way up by now. They'd lost their evening! (…) What a rotten lousy life!" (ibid. 138). Besides from that, this one day is, as mentioned, a very good day:

> Shukhov (…) jumped up on his own bunk like a squirrel. He could finish off that bread now or smoke another cigarette or go to sleep if he wanted. But Shukhov'd had such a good day – he didn't even feel like sleeping, he felt so great (Solzhenitsyn 1963 194).

A struggle for survival: the role of the brigade

The book provides a deep insight in the prison camp daily life, including the self-regulating and, to a great extent, self-policing brigade-communities of prisoners, or zeks, each day struggling for survival in an unjust world (unjust judgments, corruption, abuse of power, physical violence, scolding etc.).[38] And the years go by while trying to survive day by day…[39]

[37] Accordingly, a famous quote of Solzhenitsyn is: "In our country the lie has become not just a moral category, but a pillar of the state." In a similar vein, the painter Elena Gorokhova (1933–2014) remarked in her memoires, *A Mountain of Crumbs*, the following about dealing with the authorities in Soviet Russia: "The rules are simple: They lie to us, we know they're lying, they know we know they're lying, but they keep lying anyway, and we keep pretending to believe them" (Gorokhova, 2010:181).

[38] For example, it is mentioned in relation to the much feared flexibility clause, article 58, in the Soviet Criminal Code that covered anti-Soviet offenses, such as espionage, sabotage and propaganda against the regime: "They twisted the law any way they wanted. You finished a ten-year stretch and they gave you another one. Or if not, they still wouldn't let you go home" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]:75).

[39] "And the years go by…. Not in swift staccato, as they joke in camp—"winter-summer, wintersummer"—but a long-drawn-out autumn, an endless winter, an unwilling spring, and only a summer that is short. Even one mere year, whew, how long it lasts! Even in one year how much time is left for you to think! For 365 days you stomp out to line-up in a drizzling, slushy rain, and in a piercing blizzard, and in

> One's own order to oneself, "Survive!," is the natural splash of a living person. Who does not wish to survive? Who does not have the right to survive? Straining all the strength of our body! An order to all our cells: Survive! (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:603)

The brigade (*brigáda*) is the prisoner's family. During the long working days, all family members interact in what can be seen as an energetic, vibrant underlife outside the control of the prison staff. Ivan Denisovich Shukhov belongs to Brigade 104, Barrack 9, including 24 members. Although it is fundamentally "every man for himself" (ibid. 83), each brigade struggles for collective survival, which can be seen as the most important collective good that must be provided:

> You might well ask why a prisoner worked so hard for ten years in a camp. (…) In the camps they had these gangs [brigades] to make the prisoners keep each other on their toes. So the fellows at the top didn't have to worry. It was like this – either you all got something extra or you all starved. ("You're not pulling your weight, you swine, and I've got to go hungry because of you. So work, you bastard!"). So when a really tough job came along (…) you couldn't sit on your hands. Like it or not, you had to get a move on (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]:66–67).

Using camp terminology in a peculiar concise, staccato and cue word like style, Shukhov/Solzhenitsyn dispassionately reports on the interplay between various zek types and camp personnel types. What regards the prisoners, we see a rich variety of types within a well-defined social hierarchy: "To look at them, the gang was all the same – the same black overcoats and numbers – but underneath they were all different. You couldn't ask the captain to guard your bowl, and there were jobs even Shukhov wouldn't do – jobs that were beneath him" (ibid. 16).

The calm Shukhov only becomes agitated when he, in an aggressive and derogatory tone, talks about the easy- and (near) free-riders, performing at what we call The Camp Stage. Hence, the "biggest bastards" (*pjérvyje svolótji*) are those co-prisoners who have made the best 'careers' within the separate social hierarchy belonging to the camp personnel (as hands, trustees and orderlies), often doing the dirty work, at the cost (at the 'blood') of co-prisoners. As mentioned, the rich ER prisoners, with whom every prisoner for obvious reasons try to stay in good relations, are however not looked down upon.

a biting and still subzero cold. For 365 days you work away at hateful, alien work with your mind unoccupied. For 365 evenings you squinch up, wet, chilled, in the end-of-work line-up, waiting for the convoy to assemble from the distant watchtowers. And then there is the march out. And the march back. And bending down over 730 bowls of gruel, over 730 portions of grits. Yes, and waking up and going to sleep on your multiple bunk. And neither radio nor books to distract you. There are none, and thank God. And that is only one year. And there are ten. There are twenty-five…." (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:597).

The brigade stage: backstage relaxation, protection, script-making and informal economy

Actually, when reading the book thoroughly, one realizes that there are, in essence, only two main groups: Those who struggle to preserve their human dignity (the toilers/grey zeks, or 'human beings') and those who 'prostitute' themselves to the staff (all other prisoners). In this sense, the prison camp is as already mentioned this great divider of souls in the wordings of Solzhenitsyn.[40] Shukhov himself is a good example of someone who resists degrading himself in order to get 'an easier life', for example by loafing, begging, stealing, lying, squealing on co-prisoners, pretending to be ill or invalid, scavenging, or licking bowls. "[After] eight years of hard labor he was still no scavenger and the more time went on, the more he stuck to his guns" (ibid. 178).[41]

As mentioned, the main predictor for survival is the brigade-family, dominated by the team-playing top-contributors, the grey zeks:

> The gang was quiet. The guys with tobacco were smoking on the sly. They were huddling in the darkness and looking at the fire. Like one big family. It wasa family, your gang. They were listening to the boss tell a story to a couple of the guys near the stove. He never wasted his breath on talk, and if he got going with a story it meant he was in a good mood (ibid. 96–97).

In the 'family', the BRs prevail. The BR *rabotjági* are obedient and always try to do what is expected from them – both backstage, within the brigade, as well as frontstage, when interacting with camp staff. They always await orders, don't think too much, don't bother about what is fair or unfair and never use strategic masking (other than acting/being extremely docile). Examples are the almost deaf Senka Klevshin and Aljoshka, the Ukrainian Baptist, a firm believer. Klevshin has adapted to camp life by being submissive, not provoking anyone and just doing what he's told:

> Senka Klevshin was a quiet fellow and he'd had a very hard life. One of his eardrums had burst back in forty-one. Then he'd been taken prisoner, but he

[40] "Yes, camp corruption was a mass phenomenon. But not only because the camps were awful, but because in addition we Soviet people stepped upon the soil of the Archipelago spiritually disarmed – long since prepared to be corrupted, already tinged by it out in freedom, and we strained our ears to hear from the old camp veterans "how to live in camp." But we ought to have known how to live (and how to die) without any camp. Yes, the camps were calculated and intended to corrupt. But this didn't mean that they succeeded in crushing *everyone*. Just as in nature the process of oxidation never occurs without an accompanying reduction (one substance oxidizes while at the same time another reduces), so in camp, too (and everywhere in life), there is no corruption without ascent. They exist alongside one another" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:627).

[41] An even better example of an "ascent" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:597) is Y-81, who, when one ten-year stretch was over, "they slapped on another" (Solzhenitsyn 1963 [1962]:171). With great awe, Shukhov describes this extraordinary man who had lived most of his life in the camps: "His face was all worn-out but not like a "goner's" – it was dark and looked like it had been hewed out of stone. And you could tell from his big rough hands with the dirt worked in them he hadn't spent many of his long years doing any of the soft jobs. You could see his mind was set on one thing – never to give in" (ibid. 172).

> got away. They caught him and stuck him in Buchenwald. In Buchenwald he'd stayed alive by a miracle, and now he was here quietly doing his sentence. He said if you kicked up a fuss you were finished (ibid. 56–57).

The same goes for Alyosha, the good-hearted Ukrainian peasant youngster who does not appear a threat to anyone and always does his duty, hence is not harassed by anyone; on the other hand, his unselfishness and (religious) remoteness bring him in the risk of starving to death:

> Alyoshka was a quiet fellow and he took orders from anybody who felt like giving them. "Full steam ahead, sailor," the Captain shouted at him (...) Alyoshka gave him that meek smile of his. "If we have to go faster, then let's go. Whatever you say" (ibid. 112).

As mentioned above, the relatively few HRs of the 'family' consist of naïve, ideological Boxer types who, without the slightest hesitation, will work themselves to death for the sake of their fellows (or an ideology, or both). A good example is former Soviet naval captain, Buynovskij. The newly arrived Buynovskij has for a minor misdemeanor been 'slapped on' 25 years. 'The captain' is a stubborn and righteous man who absolutely must sacrify himself – a type, who would most certainly fall as the first at the front. But the captain is no longer young (about 40) and, ash-gray in the face, is working himself to death.

> The Captain was clearly going downhill. His cheeks were caved in, but he kept his spirits up (…) The Captain trudged up with another hod. He was as willing as an old carthorse. "Two more to come!" he shouted. He could barely stand on his feet any more, the Captain, but he kept on going. Shukhov had an old horse like that at home once. He took good care of that old horse, but he worked himself to death. And then they skinned the hide off him (ibid. 41,121–122).

Furthermore, the captain has difficulties in submitting to the camp's absurd rules and definitely does not know 'how to live'.[42] Hence, Shukhov, Tyurin and Pavlo have to 'socialize' the vulnerable captain into being a Gulag survivor, as "a stable, indifferent state of mind is the zek's indispensable defense so he can survive long years of grim island life".[43] Eating the extra portion of soup his three comrades have procured to him, the captain starts his transformation to a humble, insignificant prisoner:

[42] For example, Shukhov reports the following about the captain's encounter with the Commander Volkovoj (*Volk* means wolf in Russian): "The Captain kicked up a fuss, just like he used to on his ship – he'd only been here three months. "You've no right to strip people in the cold! You don't know Article Nine of the Criminal Code!" They had the right and they knew the article. You've still got a lot to learn, brother. "You're not Soviet people," the Captain kept on at them. "You're not Communists!" Volkovoj could take the stuff about the Criminal Code, but this made him mad. He looked black as a thundercloud and snapped at him: "Ten days' solitary!"" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]:38).

[43] "If he does not attain this smoldering, lusterless state of mind in his first year in the Archipelago, ordinarily he dies. Once he has attained it, he continues to live (…) All the zek's feelings are dulled, and his nerves coarsened. Having become indifferent to his own grief, and to the punishments which he guardians

> It was moments like this (though he didn't know it) that were very important for him. This was the sort of thing that was changing him from a bossy, loudmouth naval officer into a slow-moving and cagey prisoner. He'd have to be like this if he wanted to get through his twenty-five years in camp (ibid. 90).

As can be seen, the TRs among the grey zeks are shielding their co-members in the brigade-family and, besides, socializing them into being more resilient prisoners. Like a 'Boxer' HR as Buynovskij they work hard – but not so hard that they wear themselves out, or do not have any time to analyze or plan things. As hard-working toilers, they exhibit high morale but, in contrast to the HRs, understand the game in depth and therefore are inclined to punish cheaters on the one hand, and support fellow toilers on the other. Moreover, in *The Gulag Archipelago* Solzhenitsyn enumerates quite a few of these intelligent, reflective zeks who underwent a spiritual transformation, literally a catharsis of the soul.[44]

As mentioned, important examples of TRs are Shukhov himself, the brigade boss Tyurin and his helper Pavlo. Tyurin is a fair, hard-working man, always concerned with providing his brigade 'good norms'. He has spent almost his whole life in the camps, his only crime being that his father was judged a kulak in 1930. Tyurin is highly intelligent and can "fix the work rates" (ibid. 68) by bribing. In this bribing business, in which he acts as the 'script-director', he gets help from brigade members, including the rich prisoner in the brigade, Caesar. Tyurin simply takes the responsibility for the survival of his 'boys', and his orders are obeyed immediately.[45]

> He had powerful shoulders and a large face. He looked grim. He didn't stand for any fucking nonsense in the gang, but he kept them pretty well fed and was always worried about getting them a good ration. He was doing his second sentence and he had lived practically all his life in the camps. What he didn't know about the camps wasn't worth knowing.
> Tyurin got "better rates," which meant they'd have good bread rations for five days.
> The boss needed a lot of fatback to slip to the people in the PPS [Production Planning Section] and still have enough left for his own belly. He didn't get any

of the tribe have laid upon him, and even, by then, almost his whole life – he does not experience any spiritual sympathy for the grief of those around him either" (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:521).

[44] "And as soon as you have renounced that aim of "surviving at any price," and gone where the calm and simple people go – then imprisonment begins to transform your former character in an astonishing way. To transform it in a direction most unexpected to you. And it would seem that in this situation feelings of malice, the disturbance of being oppressed, aimless hate, irritability, and nervousness ought to multiply. But you yourself do not notice how, with the impalpable flow of time, slavery nurtures in you the shoots of contradictory feelings. Once upon a time you were sharply intolerant. You were constantly in a rush. And you were constantly short of time. And now you have time with interest. You are surfeited with it, with its months and its years, behind you and ahead of you – and a beneficial calming fluid pours through your blood vessels – patience. You are ascending…." (Solzhenitsyn, 1974b[1973]:610–611).

[45] "That's how it was in your gang. The higher-ups had a job to get a prisoner to work even in working hours, but your boss only had to say the word, even if it was the meal break, and you worked. Because it was the boss who fed you. And he wouldn't make you work if you didn't have to" (Solzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]: 103).

> packages from home, but he was never short of fatback. It was always handed over to him right away by anyone in the gang who got some. That was the only way you could live (ibid. 96,50,31).

Intelligent and (self-)reflective toilers like Shukhov divide their fellow prisoners into two groups: Those you can trust and those you can't trust. People you can't trust primarily consist of the most selfish and reckless , that is, the *pridúrki* (jerks) and the *vertúhai* (screws).

In order 'to live', you have to cooperate with people whom you can trust within an informal economy based on reciprocity; while you must avoid people you cannot trust due to risk of, for example, them telling on you.[46] Overall, the two groups – the top-contributors and the sub-contributors – do not trust each other, except from "rich fellow" such as Caesar Markovich who are not automatically distrusted by , due to his important contribution to the survival of the group (bribing and packages).

Hence we see strong bonds between the *rabotjági* in the brigade based on reciprocity and justice. One favor is worth the other. The camp simply contains a 'favor bank' that, although invisible to the eye, is in function all the time, however only including 'creditworthy' (trustworthy) prisoners: "Shukhov got his money by doing odd jobs – making slippers (for two rubles) out of the rags the customer gave you or patching up a jacket" (ibid. 174). For example, the exchange of tobacco is an important part of everyday transactions: "Shukhov pulled out his pouch. He took out as much tobacco as he'd borrowed earlier that day, reached it over to the Estonian in the top bunk across from him and said "Thanks"" (ibid. 183).

Another example is Shukhov's services for the abovementioned Caesar, a 'rich fellow' prisoner in his brigade who regularly receives large packages from his family. However, Caesar is an urban person (former Moscow film maker student) who does not "understand how to live", therefore he constantly needs Shukhov's help. Besides, Shukhov simply likes Caesar.

> [Shukhov] didn't go right away, because he was sorry for Caesar. It wasn't that he wanted to get something out of Caesar again but he was just sorry for him. He thought a lot of himself, Caesar did, and he didn't know a thing about life – he shouldn't have spent all that time fussing with his package and should've gotten it to storeroom before night check (ibid. 188–189).

The 'reciprocity law' however still works, and the honest Caesar will surely reciprocitate:

> Caesar reached up and gave him [Shukhov] two cookies, two lumps of sugar, and a slice of sausage. "Thank you, Caesar Markovich." Shukhov leaned over

[46] For example, having returned back to the camp late evening, there are three in Shukhov's barrack who accidentally witness him illegally making a small knife out of a ruined saw blade. Luckily, these are people he can trust: "Alyoshka the Baptist and the two Estonians could see him doing it from their bunks. But he didn't have to worry about them" (Soltzhenitsyn 1963 [1962]:181).

> his bunk. "Now you give me that bag and put it under my pillow here" (ibid. 200).

Hence, Shukhov is supporting people, he likes, such as Caesar Markovich, Alyoshka and, not least, the brigade boss Tyurin, for whom he would do anything:

> Shukhov wasn't a bit worried about himself – his boss wouldn't give him away – but he was scared for Tyurin. The boss was like a father to you, but to them he was nothing at all. Up here in the North they were always slapping on new sentences (ibid. 115).

The camp stage: masking, face- and make-working – and surviving at any price

As mentioned, The Camp Stage (i.e. the camp area apart from the 'private' brigade barracks) are dominated by ER solo-players ('the thieves') who do soft in-camp jobs during the daytime. The successful ERs consist of *sjestérki* (the errand boys), *pridúrki* (the jerks) and the *vertúhai* (the screws), the latter being the most cunning ERs who use the most advanced masking strategies (simulating being invalids, for example) combined with recklessness and brutality. The *stukátji* (the squealers) are near free-riders and may live, however in permanent danger of getting killed by co-prisoners. The unsuccessful ERs (or *low-riders* in our terminology), who have extremely short and brutish lives, consist of the *dokhódjagi* (the goners) and the *sjakályje* (the jackals/bowl-lickers). For various reasons, these prisoners cannot adapt to a life where ordinary zeks – starved, half sick and poorly dressed – have to do construction work outside the camp from early morning to late evening, in temperatures down to 40 minus degrees. Hence, they try to avoid work without being able to either hide or bribe (as they do not receive packages from home). The prisoners already 'gone', *dokhódjagi*, only survive a few months, while the loafing and scrounging *sjakályje* can live a bit longer (like the former 'big shot' Fetyukov). (See overview in Table 3).

Shukhov never forgets the following lesson he got from a former, experienced brigade boss, Kuzyomin:

> "It's the law of the jungle here, fellows. But even here you can live. The first to go is the guy who licks out bowls, puts his faith in the infirmary, or squeals to the screws". He was dead right about this – though it didn't always work out that way with the fellows who squealed to the screws. They knew how to look after themselves. They got away with it and it was the other guys who suffered (ibid. 2).

Shukhov himself and other TRs in fact use impression management in order to survive, just as diligently as the ERs, however *not* at the cost of others. A typical example is when Shukhov is ordered to wash the floor for the warders and seeks to minimize his efforts by using both make-work and face-work:

> Shukhov straitened up and held the dripping rag in his hand. He gave an innocent smile which showed that some of his teeth were missing (…) Shukhov quickly finished up the job. There's work and work. It's like the two ends of a stick. If you're working for human beings, then do a real job of it, but if you work for dopes, then you just go through the motions. Otherwise they'd all have kicked the bucket long ago. That was for sure (ibid. 13,14).

As mentioned, the reckless and cunning *pridúrki* (the jerks) and *vertúhai* (the screws) are protected by the easy- or near free-riding prison staff, hence they are near impossible to punish.[47] Besides, they use *masking* (lies, simulated invalidity etc.) combined with threats, scolding and physical violence, filling co-prisoners with both fear and disdain. The flunkies or errand boys, *sjestérki*, are slave souls for the camp personnel and looked upon by the *rabotjági* as weaklings, or prostitutes. The flunkies serve as hands for the prison staff. Not least, the cook uses a lot of them together with 'goners':

> [The cook] thought it was better to slip an extra portion of the stuff to a trusty at the expense of the prisoners' bellies rather than break his own back. Then there was water and firewood to carry and the stove to light. The cook didn't do that either. He had other prisoners and "goners" (ibid. 81).

A good example of an exceptionally successful *vertúhaj*, capable of surviving by masking himself as an invalid and, besides, being brutal, is the aforementioned canteen guard Hromoj:

> Hromoj, the lame one, clung to the position of canteen guard. He had made his limb into disability, but he was a strong man, the rogue. He had procured a birch stick, and with it he staggered up from the stairs to those who did not follow his command. But he didn't hit on anyone. He was quick in perception, Hromoj, in the dark he could know people from the back, he did not turn on those who give him even on the snout (...) He is called "guardian". It must be interpreted prince! He is a friend of the chefs (ibid. 123).

Another trusty, or *vertúhaj*, who oversees the barracks, is, if possible, an even worse monster:

> This guy was the biggest bastard of them all. He was shut up with them at night in the same barracks but acted like a higher-up and he wasn't scared of anybody. It was the other way around – everybody was scared of him. He could turn you in to the screws or let you have it in the puss. He counted as an invalid, because he'd lost a finger in a fight. You could tell from his mug he was a real

[47] That the entire staff are easy-riders is considered normal by everyone. Staff personnel like the warders feel that their stay in this hell on earth is punishment enough in itself. In the context of the work on a motor, Shukhov remarks: "It is as it should be: one works, the other watches" (Soltzhenitsyn, 1963 [1962]:90).

> hood. And that's just what he was. They pulled him in for a real crime, but they hung Article 58/14 on him too. That's why he was in this camp (ibid. 188).

However, unsuccessful and badly camouflaged ERs are severely punished, namely the jackals and the goners. The goners – *low-riders* in our terminology – quickly die from exhaustion. As mentioned, the jackals can live a bit longer as, for example, the jackal (*sjakályj*) in Shukhov's brigade, the former 'big shot', Fetyukov. Fetyukov is an isolated unhappy soul who try to survive by scavenging, begging and loafing, never doing anybody any favors. Therefore, he is not predicted a long life by Shukhov, although Shukhov acknowledges that Fetyukov definitely has his special skills: "You couldn't beat Fetyukov when it came to scrounging, though he didn't have the guts to pinch anything" (ibid. 90).

Hromoj is in some way pitiful like Fetyukov, but whereas Hromoj is cynical and clever enough to mask his cheating, Fetyukov is not. Fetyukov is spiteful and full of self-pity. He feels let down by everyone, including his wife (who has remarried) and his three children, none of whom wanting to know of him. He therefore receives no parcels and cannot bribe anyone. Fetyukov lives friendless, despised by everyone. He knows nothing, and he *is* nothing.

> Fetyukov came through the barracks, whining and sobbing. He appeared. His lips were smeared with blood. Then again, there was someone tamping him out there at the bowls. Without looking at anyone and without concealing his tears, he walked past the entire brigade, climbed onto his couch and buried himself in the mattress. When you think about it, you get hurt by it. He does not live out his punishment. He does not understand how to stay up (ibid. 138).

People like Tyurin and Shukhov also act as willing punishers, punishing ERs like Fetyukov for trying to get around the job. Also, the captain helps to punish lazy brigade members like Fetyukov. An example is his ruffle to Fetyukov at a time when the brigade is building up a wall. Fetyukov and the captain carry mortar on wheelbarrows, and both of them have a hard time keeping up with the bricklayers Shukhov and Kilgas.

> [The] Captain got better all the time and Fetyukov got slacker and slacker. He kept tilting the hod – the sonofabitch – and spilled some of the mortar to ease the load. Once Shukhov gave him a poke in the back. "You lazy slob. I bet you really took it out on the fellows in that factory you managed!" "Boss," the Captain shouted, "give me a man to work with. I can't go on with this shithead (ibid. 111–112).

Hence we see that both hard-riding and easy-riding strategies may pay off in a gruesome survival game like Gulag. However, non-reflective HR team-players like Buynovskij and failed, non-disguised solo ER players like Fetyukov, as well as LRs like the 'goners', have relatively very low survival chances (see overview in Table 3). In order to safely sub-contribute, you need effective masking combined with low psychological costs (bad consciousness, remorse etc.) for surviving at the cost of others,

like a Hromoj. Moreover, among cooperating toilers, TRs like Tyurin are extremely valuably, not only as team-players and above-average contributors, but also as facilitators of the provision of collective goods, the most important one being to safeguard collective survival.

Conclusion

Based on Aleksandr Soltzhenitsyn's (1963 [1962]) *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the aim was to identify the survival strategies of five player types living under extreme conditions in a secluded, restrictive world – a 'total institution' – namely Gulag prison camp in Siberia; as well as assess how successful these strategies were. Leaving out the camp personnel, who all attempted to easy-ride to a greater or lesser degree at the cost of the prisoners, we found among the prisoners eight main groups of zeks who could be categorized under the five main player ideal-types: Blind-riders (BRs), Hard-riders (HRs), Tough-riders (TRs), Easy-riders (ERs) and Low-riders (LRs). Such a social experiment approximated a Hobbesian state of nature, and the contribution was to combine Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory and our Multiple Player Approach (MPA) to make a theoretical contribution to "game-related sociology" (Swedberg, 2001). The purpose of MPA is to balance economic and sociological variables within the analysis, in an attempt to avoid under- and oversocialized conceptions of man, and thus advance what has been termed second-generation theory of collective action.

In the Gulag 'survival game', we found that many prisoners sought to cooperate in order to secure collective survival rather than defecting, or trying to outcompete each other in a Hobbesian state of nature. That is to say that first-generation theory of collective action is insufficient when asserting innate human selfishness and inclination to free-ride at the cost of others and, hence, the necessity of third-party intervention (a 'Leviathan') to solve collective action problems. According to Soltzhenitsyn, the truth is that this 'great divider of soul', the Gulag, led to both human corruption and egoism *as well as* human cooperation and, even, human ascent. Thus we see that the immense human ability to self-organize and create social order bottom-up – even under the most atrocious circumstances – shows the crucial importance of norms and practices of cooperation, as pointed out in second-generation theory of collective action. Thus we see that, against all odds, BRs, HRs and TRs in the brigade actually cooperated to provide the collective good of collective survival, performing effective impression management in specific expression games at The Camp Stage (towards the camp staff), as well as finding relaxation and social support and, besides, cooperating on 'script-writing' backstage, at The Brigade Stage. The most crucial players were clearly the TRs who took the main responsibility of raising the odds of group members' survival. In contrast, the ERs achieving 'soft jobs' at The Camp Stage chose selfish one-team strategies in their desperate attempt to survive at any price.

Hence, surprisingly maybe, the non-cooperating prisoners who did not respect the prevailing social norms, but cheated and achieved 'soft jobs' at the cost of their co-prisoners, did not seem to have significantly higher chances of surviving than the among the toilers. One exception, however, was the rich easy-riders who were able

to bribe their way to soft jobs and, at the same time, enjoy the relaxation backstage, in their brigade. Another exception was, as mentioned above, the most unscrupulous camp personnel helpers – the so-called *screws* – i.e. brutes who expertly applied masking strategies (backed up by physical violence) in order to shape the reality in accordance with their own selfish goals. Hence we see that the best cooperating players – that is, those hard-working team players who, unlike the 'Boxer hardriders', avoided to overwork themselves – *as well as* the most cynical, well-masked had the highest chances of survival in Gulag. In sum, effective trust-based cooperation and team performance as well as effective, cunningly masked defection performed by highly skilled solo-players appeared as the best survival strategies in this game.

On the one hand, future research may consider whether this result applies to other cases characterized by scarcity and hard competion for survival, such as war, prison, terror or natural disaster situations. On the other hand, it would be interesting to study how successfully the five player types perform in contemporary, affluent societies where opportunies for easy-riding and strategic masking ceteris paribus is much easier – and much more risk-free – than in the prison camp where people know each other and extreme social and formal control and punishment prevail.

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