

In-between Frivolous Women and Prostitutes: Legal Framework and Reality of Prostitution in Soviet Latvia in the Context of Soviet Family Politics, 1950s–1980s¹

by Ineta Lipša

On 29 January 1956, Kaspars Aleksandrs Irbe, who at the time was working as a bailiff at the People's Court of Riga City Kirova (Central) District, reflected in his diary on what he had seen in the city centre. He saw a woman, whom he had noticed before, and commented that she “lived [i.e., cohabited; I. L.] with men”.

The bailiff describes the everyday aspect of prostitution on Dzirnavu Street, which in the 1950s was the most popular location in the city, in which to find prostitutes. Irbe writes:

“29.01.1956. Austra also lives with men. How else can you survive on a tiny salary? Prostitution and crime have spread enormously, mainly due to the small salaries and difficult living conditions. One day I walked down Dzirnavu Street and handed out notices to those who had failed to pay alimony. The street sweepers told me how the prostitutes behave [with their clients; I. L.] on the staircases and in the basements, and how the criminals undress and rob and even kill people. It is quite horrific to see in the court how crime has spread. The day before a prostitute was brought to court for hooliganism. In fact, official prostitution does not exist and the sick indecent women on Dzirnavu Street are not restricted by anyone.”²

By writing that prostitution does not exist officially and that there is therefore no regulation of prostitutes – i.e., no records in the militsiia filing system and medical control, which was functioning in pre-war Latvia, thus enabling prostitutes who suffered from STI (sexually transmitted infections) but received no treatment and continued to pursue prostitution, to spread the infections –, Irbe implicitly criticises the claim that the social causes of prostitution in the Soviet Union have been eliminated, and that prostitution therefore does not exist. By noting repeatedly in his diary scenes of unofficial prostitution that he observed in the centre of Riga, both in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1960s and 1970s, Irbe contradicts the claims made by the Communist ideologues.

The moralising language, so characteristic of Irbe (“the indecent women”), shows that he approved the fighting policy against prostitution implemented in independent Latvia before the Second World War.³ The official policy of fighting prostitution, which ignored the idea

1 The author's work on this article constitutes a part of the University of Latvia project No. ZD2015/AZ85.

2 Kaspars Aleksandrs Irbe. Dienasgrāmata [Diaries of Kaspars Irbe], 29.01.1956. Latviešu folkloras krātuves digitālais arhīvs, Autobiogrāfiju krājums, nr. 47 [Digital Archives of Latvian Folklore, Autobiography Collection, No. 47], <http://folklore.lv/en/collection/1197727/Diaries-of-Kaspars-Irbe> [accessed 01.09.2020].

3 Cf. Ineta Lipša: Seksualitāte un sociālā kontrole Latvijā, 1914–1939 [Sexuality and Social Control in Latvia, 1914–1939], Rīga 2014, pp. 441–455; idem: Prostitution in Riga City, in: Jean-Michel

of gender equality and punished only the sellers, not the buyers, of sex, corresponded to the pre-war dominant view of Latvian citizens, where female prostitutes were seen as a social group and prostitution as a phenomenon that threatened family values. In contrast, the official policy of the Soviet regime in the context of prostitution can be defined as one of gender equality, since it did not anticipate the repression of female prostitutes, thus seemingly establishing an equal attitude towards both, female and male genders.

The Soviet regime regarded work as the main duty – and thus, the main value – of each citizen. In order to impose it on every citizen, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a secret law on 23 July 1951 on fighting “antisocial, parasitic elements”, which was directed against beggars and vagabonds, giving the People’s Courts the right to penalise such persons who lived on nonlabour income with five years’ exile with compulsory labour at the place of settlement. Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick points out that, in practice, the law may have been extended to other marginal categories of population, such as prostitutes not working in official workplaces, but it is difficult to clarify the application of the law due to the secret status of the decree.⁴

Thus, female prostitutes were an ideological threat to the regime, as they manifested that under socialism, despite the claims of its ideologues, certain phenomena (for example, prostitution) had not been eradicated, thus contradicting the ideologues, who claimed that such phenomena were characteristic of capitalism and that their absence demonstrated the superiority of socialism over capitalism, along with the argument that these phenomena had been eradicated due to the change of regime and the provision of employment for everyone who was able to work. In the opinion of the general public, female prostitutes were still regarded as a threat in the context of other – private – family values.

The 1950s: Encounters between Soviet Female Citizens and Foreigners

Attention was drawn to the problem of prostitution on the agenda of Soviet officials by the opening of the Soviet Union to the rest of the world after Stalin’s death. More and more foreigners came to Soviet Latvia and could see with their own eyes whether the achievements postulated in the propaganda of the socialist system corresponded to the reality of life. The Soviet authorities wanted to make a good impression on foreigners. The secret correspondence between the Central Committee (hereinafter CC) of CPL and the Riga City Committee of CPL from November 1955 shows the aim of ensuring that the Riga City Committee would take care of providing public order in the places of accommodation for foreign sailors. In March 1956, the city’s militia authorities implemented a series of operational measures, resulting in the elimination of several brothels (*prytomy*). Some of the individuals detained in the brothels were held criminally liable. In order to secure public

Chaumont, Magaly Rodríguez García et al. (eds.): *Trafficking in Women. The Paul Kinsie Reports for the League of Nations*. Vol. II. United Nations Publications. Historical Series N. 2, Geneva 2017, pp. 191-196.

4 Cf. Sheila Fitzpatrick: *Social Parasites: How Tramps, Idle Youth, and Busy Entrepreneurs Impeded the Soviet March to Communism*, in: *Cahiers du monde russe* 47 (2006), no. 1-2, pp. 377-408, here p. 381.

order and to fight profiteering (*spekuliatsiia*), additional militia forces were allocated in the Riga Port district for the spring, summer and fall periods in 1956, when the ship traffic was intense.⁵

In the summer of 1956, when foreigners were visiting Riga, the Ministry of Justice did not allow the bailiffs of the Riga People's Courts to comply with the court verdicts regarding eviction of residents from apartments in the city centre.⁶ During that time sausages and sugar suddenly appeared in the shops, which some residents explained by the fact that foreigners' tours were taking place in Riga. The Party and the State Security Committee authorities regarded uncontrolled communication between foreign sailors and Soviet citizens as undesirable. In 1956–1957 the Head of the KGB administration, who was responsible for the territory of the Riga Port, in his reports to the First Secretary of the Riga City Committee Eduards Berklavs and the Minister of the Internal Affairs reported about the situation at the port from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., when foreign sailors were heading to the city.

“In the territory, which is adjacent to the Riga Port Export [street] District, including the Viesturs Park, every day a significant number of men and frivolous women hang out. When the foreigners leave the ships, the women impudently establish contact with them and immediately implement smuggling transactions there. In a number of cases these persons take the sailors to restaurants or apartments, where they implement smuggling transactions or other deals disreputable for Soviet citizens. There are cases, when certain sailors express their outrage over the behaviour of such individuals and ask to be protected from the harassment of the latter.”⁷

The wording “deals disreputable for Soviet citizens” in the context of “frivolous women” (*zhenshchiny legkogo povedeniia*) was interpreted by the Head of the KGB administration as profiteering, stealing, prostitution, which he described in the following way: they “look for the sailors in taxis and private cars, and, after establishing contact with them, effortlessly trying to get the goods, make them drunk in the respective apartments or restaurants, often steal from them and engage in prostitution, etc.” He also considered it was important to mention that part of the women involved had STI.

The Head of the KGB administration also reported on the reaction of the foreign sailors. For example, on 8 May 1957 a sailor from an Icelandic steamer said that as he walked from the Port of Riga to the tram stop on Export street, a young man aged 17-19 approached him from a crowd of teenagers and started to beg for things and “other speculative goods”. Literally at the same moment, a 17-to-18-year-old girl also came up and asked directly in English: “Do you need a girl?” In a conversation with the person, from whose report the wording of the sailor reached the Head of the KGB administration, the sailor started to explain the aforementioned facts as being typical of the “vices of the Soviet system”, etc. Other sailors

5 Cf. Letter of the Committee of Riga City of the CPL to the CC of the CPL, 12 March 1956, State Archive of Latvia at the National Archives of Latvia [Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs Latvijas Valsts arhīvs, LNA LVA], PA-102-14-13, 69. lp.

6 Cf. Irbe, Dienasgrāmata (see note 2), 16.08.1956.

7 Report of V. Allaberts, Head of the Latvian Railway and Latvian Sea Basin Administration of the KGB at the LSSR Council of Ministers, to E. Berklavs, the First Secretary of the Committee of Riga City of the CPL, 12 June 1957, LNA LVA, PA-102-15-9, 4.-6. lp.

tried to connect similar facts with the idea that “in comparison to the capitalist system, the Soviet societal system has been more affected by immoral actions and that the police are taking care of this and it works, but in our country they don’t see these things”, etc.⁸

The Head of the KGB administration argued that as a result of such communication the foreign sailors have “a wrong impression of the life of Soviet people, of our morals and of our system in general”. The First Secretary of the Riga City Committee asked to question the chiefs of the militsiia departments in order to find out, what was “preventing militsiia from fighting against this human refuse”. If there is no hope of eradicating this phenomenon, then the letter of the Head of the KGB administration must be supplemented with information regarding the causes of infringement and to inform the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow.

The Soviet authorities wanted to prevent sexual encounters between Soviet female citizens and foreigners in order to ensure that the foreigners had an ideologically correct image of the Soviet state. The militsiia tried to monitor the communication between Soviet citizens and sailors. On 4 August 1956, sailors from a Swedish warship stayed in Riga. Irbe observed them on Dzirnavu Street, which was a popular place of prostitution. At one of the tables in a basement bar, a prostitute, whom he had known before the Second World War, sat and started to talk to one of the sailors in fluent Swedish. Irbe writes that one of the bar’s clients immediately called the militsiia. “One of the spies who were there immediately called the militsiia, who took the woman away. They must be worried that such an expert of languages could tell undesirable things.”⁹ Yet the “spy” could easily have been an informant of the militsiia. Legal historian Louise Shelley finds that “the militia regularly arrested, punished and converted prostitutes into informants” and “closely monitored the activities of numerous prostitutes who operated in the streets and out of apartments and hotels”.¹⁰ However, the militsiia failed to prevent communication between foreigners and Soviet citizens, which included also sex.

Efforts to restrict contact between female Soviet citizens and foreign sailors were motivated by both ideological reasons and the economic role the women performed as black marketeers. The women called “frivolous” were among the social groups who engaged in illegal dealings with foreign goods and currency: criminal acts, according to Soviet law. Due to the official Soviet claim that prostitution did not exist in the USSR, prostitution was neither illegal or legal. There is a shortage of sources that could help to establish the motivation of women who engaged in intimate friendships with foreigners other than an alleged wish to earn money. Nevertheless, testimonies from the criminal cases of persons questioned in the course of the investigation of currency offences suggest that the motivation could have been a wish to spend time with males who were interesting precisely because they were foreigners, and might even have involved the dream of marrying a foreigner. That motivation can also be described by the words “she spoke foreign languages and wanted to use them”.¹¹

8 Ibidem.

9 Irbe, *Dienasgrāmata* (see note 2), 06.08.1956.

10 Louise Shelley: *Policing Soviet Society. The Evolution of State Control*, London et al. 1996, p. 145.

11 Ineta Lipša: *Vieglā uzvedība padomju Latvijā [Frivolous Behaviour in Soviet Latvia]*, in: *Rīgas Laiks* (January 2008), pp. 48-57, here p. 51.

In the USSR in the 1920s–1930s the political as well as civil police developed registration systems that kept information about individuals under suspicion or observation on file cards in card catalogs (*kartoteki*). In the 1950s there was a register (*uchet*) of prostitutes in the militsiia. The Head of the Latvian Railway and Latvian Sea Basin Administration of the KGB at the Council of Ministers of the LSSR, Vladimirs Allaberts, mentions this in an informative letter of 12 June 1957 to Eduards Berklavs, the First Secretary the Riga City Committee of the CPL. He explains that a considerable number of “the women of this category” were in the register of the militsiia authorities; some of them have been repeatedly detained or called to the militsiia for negotiations, “yet, there was no result in the operation of the militsiia authorities, and the situation did not improve”.¹² In order to prevent a similar communication between Soviet female citizens and foreign sailors, the Militsiia Department of the Central (Kirova) District of Riga City was delegated to find persons, who avoided socially useful work, and to initiate criminal prosecution against them.¹³

When describing prostitutes and citizens who engaged in profiteering (*spekuliatsiia*) as “human refuse”, Berklavs spoke the politicised language that officials used in crime reporting in the USSR from the late 1930s. At that time the so-called “professionalized approach to policing as a non-politicized fight against statutory violations of law” was changed to a politicised approach to policing as a politicised fight against a specific set of crimes that received special attention for ideological or strategic reasons of state security.¹⁴ Historian David R. Shearer finds that “one of the most serious crimes in the view of Soviet leaders and police officials was that of being socially harmful.”¹⁵ Although the category of “socially harmful element” had existed since at least the 1920s, there was no specific criminal statute that covered this category until 1935. Shearer states that “throughout much of the 1930s, leaders enacted laws and engaged in numerous policing campaigns against social harmfuls, as being among the most threatening to the regime and the construction of socialist order”.¹⁶ This meant that social marginals “could be marked and repressed more easily under one nonjudicial law covering ‘dangerous elements’” than under numerous statutes of the Criminal Code.¹⁷

The key words of the politicised language changed: from the early 1950s, the phrase “socially harmful elements” was replaced by “antisocial, parasitic elements”. The 1951 Secret Law of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (hereinafter the PSS) of the USSR on measures to fight antisocial, parasitic elements was such a nonjudicial law. As the number of foreigners visiting Riga increased, the political and civilian police were unable to control encounters between foreigners and Soviet citizens. The *organs* informed the supreme authorities that control was not possible with the existing means.

Thus, a Draft Law on strengthening the fight against antisocial, parasitic elements by the PSS of the LSSR was initiated. The 1957 Draft Law transferred the right to punish-

12 LNA LVA, PA-102-15-9, 4.-6. lp. (see note 7).

13 Cf. Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of Kirov district of Riga City of the CPL, 30 May 1957, LNA LVA, PA-106-26-9, 51.-71. lp., here 65-67. lp.

14 David R. Shearer: Policing Stalin’s Socialism. Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924–1953, New Haven, CT et al. 2009, p. 26.

15 Ibidem, p. 57.

16 Ibidem.

17 Ibidem, p. 58.

ment from the people's courts to several assemblies of citizens, such as commissions on promoting the public-order of apartment housing managements, streets' committees or the Councils of People's Deputies in the countryside. Meetings of citizens living in their territories could issue a warning if the offender repented and promised to reform, or could use the right to come up with initiatives to re-educate such individuals using so-called means of societal influence such as within the Republic for the duration of two to five years with obligatory labour at the place to which they were sent. In general, after Stalin's death in 1953, a new model of social control was gradually introduced, namely, the mobilisation of "societal opinion" (*obshchestvennoe mnenie*) through the action of collective organisations, such as comrades' courts, volunteer militia (*druzhinniki*), the party, the Komsomol maintaining mutual surveillance. Historian Edward D. Cohn, analysing how the party policed comrades' behaviour and punished married communists for marital infidelity and family troubles, finds that by the 1950s "party committees were encouraged to put education and persuasion ahead of exclusion and punishment in their formal misconduct proceedings".¹⁸ During the Khrushchev era the intention of high-level officials was to profoundly consolidate social control by "dramatically curtailing personal privacy via a complex system of mutual surveillance".¹⁹ The 1957 draft embodies the new model of social control.

From Anti-Social Elements to Anti-Social Way of Life: the 1957 and 1961 Laws

The Draft Law was discussed in the spring of 1957 by the Central Committee of the CPL.²⁰ On the basis of the necessity of the project, it was stated that in accordance with the Constitution of the USSR, work is the duty of every citizen, who is capable of working, and that Soviet citizens should work ("with enthusiasm") in various workplaces "or perform socially useful work in the family".²¹ The document postulated that a parasitic way of life was incompatible with the principles of socialism. A few weeks later, the CC of the CPL supported the publication of the Draft Law with the aim of passing it for "public discussion". The project fuelled family rhetoric – Soviet citizens were defined as a Soviet family, whose key characteristic trait is the love of work. The project highlighted a particular social group as being outside of this "Soviet family".

"Yet, there are other people in the work-loving Soviet family who lead an antisocial, parasitic way of life. Such people either pretend that they are working, but in fact live from out-of-work income and become rich at the expense of workers, or, being capable to work, they do not perform any useful work either in society or in the

18 Edward D. Cohn: Sex and the Married Communist: Family Troubles, Marital Infidelity, and Party Discipline in the Postwar USSR, 1945–64, in: *The Russian Review* 68 (2009), no. 3, pp. 429-450, here p. 432.

19 *Ibidem*, p. 449.

20 Cf. Minutes of the Meeting of the Bureau of the CC of the CPL, 26 March 1957, LNA LVA, PA-101-20-23, 95.-105. lp., here 101. lp.

21 *Ibidem*, 116-118. lp. Annex to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Bureau of the the CC of the CPL, 26 March 1957.

family, they engage in vagabondage, begging and speculation and often commit other types of crime.”²²

In the autumn of 1957, the CC of the CPL allowed the Draft Law to be placed on the agenda of the PSS regular session.²³ On 12 October 1957, the PSS of the LSSR issued the respective law.²⁴ An important conclusion in this context is that obtaining unofficial out-of-work income constituted a basis for punishing people who gained income from selling sex. This was the rare occasion when the law was adopted at the republican level before it was passed in Moscow. Due to lawyers' objections, the Law by the PSS of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (hereinafter RSFSR) was adopted only on 4 May 1961. For many lawyers, it was not acceptable that the Draft Law involved two completely different categories of defendants (beggars and vagabonds, on the one hand, and people living from out-of-work income, on the other). Caution was also excited by the use of internal exile as a form of punishment, perhaps because it was closely associated with Stalinism. Fitzpatrick has found that the period from 1957 to 1961 in the history of Soviet “anti-parasitic” laws is secret and it is not known why this Draft Law was issued.²⁵ The discussion and adoption of this law by the LSSR makes it possible to argue that the Draft Law could be initiated by the request of those republics, which could not cope with the problem of consorting with prostitutes, exacerbated at the time by the foreigners visiting the Soviet Union. The discussion of the national Draft Criminal Codes in the USSR in 1960 could facilitate the adoption of anti-parasite law in a different format in 1961 by the RSFSR and afterwards by the rest of the Soviet Republics.

In the LSSR lawyers twice tried to make prostitution into a statutory crime – in 1960 and 1977. When discussing the Draft National Criminal Code of the LSSR in 1960, the officials of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the LSSR wanted to include a legal norm that would imply a punishment for prostitution by adding prostitution in the article on vagabondage and begging, and by giving it a different name: “parasitic lifestyle”.²⁶ The Head of the Legal Commission Jānis Fridriksons explained that discussions on the issue of prostitution were being held in Moscow by the Legal Commission of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and that the issue would be resolved on the All-Union scale.²⁷ A second attempt, also unsuccessful, to introduce the concept of prostitution in criminal legislation took place in 1977, when the proposal to supplement the Criminal Code of the LSSR with liability for the involvement of minors in prostitution was rejected (such a legal norm existed in all republics of the Soviet Union until 1961, while the RSFSR Criminal

22 Minutes of the Meeting of the Bureau of the CC of the CPL, 9 April 1957, LNA LVA, PA-101-20-24, 96.-99. lp., here 85. lp.

23 Cf. Minutes of the Meeting of the Bureau of the CC of the CPL, 11 September 1957, *ibidem*, pp. 37-64. lp., here 51. lp.

24 Cf. Latvijas PSR likums Par sabiedrībai kaitīgu, parazītisku elementu pastiprinātu apkarošanu [The Law of the LSSR “On Strengthening the Fight against the Harmful, Parasitic Elements”], in: *Cīņa* 15.10.1957.

25 Fitzpatrick, *Social Parasites* (see note 4), pp. 383, 388.

26 Minutes of the Meeting on the Discussion of the Draft Criminal Code of the LSSR, 14 October 1960, LNA LVA, 938-6-64, 1.-72. lp., here 29.-30. lp.

27 Cf. *ibidem*, 70.-71. lp.

Code was in force²⁸). The Public Prosecutor's Office of the LSSR stated that there were only a few cases and that "we do not have individuals who are engaged in professional prostitution but we have individuals who lead a parasitic lifestyle for which liability under Article 211 of the Criminal Code of the LSSR has been established".²⁹

The law that was expected by the Head of the Legal Commission of the LSSR was the law of 4 May 1961 issued by the PSS of the RSFSR. Following this, on 18 August 1961 the PSS of the LSSR issued the law "On Strengthening the Fight with Persons Avoiding Socially-Useful Work and Leading an Antisocial, Parasitic Lifestyle".³⁰ From the early 1960s politicised language became more sophisticated replacing the phrase "antisocial, parasitic elements" with references to persons who lead an "antisocial, parasitical way of life".

Now the defendants could be punished both with verdicts of the People's Courts and a majority vote of the citizens' assemblies by expulsion within the Republic for a period of from two to five years. Thus the Latvian 1961 law significantly differed from the Russian 1961 law that adopted the rule that "the sentences were now to be imposed not by citizens' assemblies but by people's courts".³¹ (The duration of the sentence differed in the Soviet Republics; for example, in the Lithuanian SSR it was shorter: expulsion for a period of from one to three years.)³² The law enforcement authorities turned to five social groups, including the group that was defined in the covert statistics as "individuals who are engaged in prostitution".³³ For example, in the nine months between August 1961 and April 1962, sixteen prostitutes were exiled from Riga.

"14/11/1964. Yesterday night I saw at the [Riga railway; I. L.] station the low category prostitutes that I had seen at the court. The elderly Līziņa, who looked like a whore with black stockings, black scarf, and black mascara circles under her eyes, went down the street. As the 'Broadway' of the respective circles, girls used to dress themselves in an ultra-modern way. She was expelled from Riga, but she must have achieved a commutation of her sentence somehow. She was walking together with a very tall young woman and other prostitutes of higher status, whom I know from the respective court hearings."³⁴

Here Irbe has documented the method of "expulsion from Riga", which was applied by the militsiia as an administrative measure (nonjudicial expulsion) for offenders who did

28 Cf. Dalia Marcinkevičienė, Rima Praspaliauskienė: Prostitution in Post-war Lithuania, in: *Women's History Review* 12 (2003), no. 4, pp. 651-660, here p. 653.

29 Letter of V. Ščerbins, Acting Public Prosecutor of the LSSR, to Minister of Justice J. Dzenītis, September 1977, LNA LVA, 938-6-1572, 32. lp.

30 Latvijas PSR Augstākās Padomes Prezidija dekrēts "Par cīņas pastiprināšanu pret personām, kas izvairās no sabiedriski derīga darba un dzīvo sabiedrībai kaitīgu, parazitisku dzīvesveidu" ["On Strengthening the Fight with Persons Avoiding Socially Useful Work and Leading an Antisocial, Parasitic Lifestyle"], in: LPSR Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs (1961), no. 34, pp. 928 f.

31 Fitzpatrick, *Social Parasites* (see note 4), p. 388.

32 Cf. Marcinkevičienė, Praspaliauskienė, *Prostitution* (see note 28), p. 654.

33 Form for Statistical Data on Persons Convicted on the 18 August 1961 Decree of the PSS of LSSR "On Strengthening the Struggle with Persons Avoiding Socially Useful Work and Leading an Antisocial, Parasitical Way of Life", LNA LVA, 856-1a-36, 26. lp.

34 Irbe, *Dienasgrāmata* (see note 2), 14.11.1964.

not work, often drank and were not registered in Riga. Such people could be detained as violators of residency and passport laws and warned in writing that they had to leave Riga within 24 hours. Līziņa, mentioned by Irbe, had received such a punishment. By referring to his knowledge that he had obtained from the “respective court proceedings”, he refers to the criminal cases in which prostitutes had participated, for example, as witnesses in the prosecution of alleged brothel-keepers. As a bailiff working at the People’s Court, Irbe could observe the court proceedings. He used his privilege, by attending the court proceedings, where the charges were related to issues of sexuality.

In the mid-1960s the regulatory framework that was also used to fight prostitution was developed. In September 1965 the PSS of the USSR made amendments in the law on fighting the parasitic way of life. The formulation about living from out-of-work income was removed from the wording, the People’s Courts did not have the right to punish those “parasites” who were not found guilty of a criminal offence; internal exile as punishment was annulled (except exile from Moscow and Leningrad), but the right to decide in the workplace on the sanction of re-education was transferred to the Executive Committees of the Councils of People’s Deputies.³⁵ In April 1966 the lawyers of the Latvian SSR also discussed the rule of abolishing the exile of individuals, and to oblige them instead to undergo re-education measures at their place of work or residence.³⁶ The bailiff of the People’s Court, Irbe, noted in his diary in February 1966 how the rank and file employees of the Ministry of Justice learned about the upcoming changes. They were of the opinion that the abolition of exile was motivated by the Soviet Union’s resentment of the international reprimand that it still used such a penal measure. Actually, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which the USSR re-joined in 1954, strongly condemned the Soviet Union for the use of forced labour.³⁷ The heated debates over the drafting of the ILO’s Convention on Forced Labour in 1956–1957 were retracted in the Soviet press. Irbe’s own experience also showed that citizens used this legal measure for the purposes of mutual retaliation:

“Yesterday at the meeting of the militsiia, Kosarskene [his boss, the senior bailiff of the Kirov District People’s Court of Riga City; I.L.] was accused of writing to the militsiia administration [at the Executive Committee of the People’s Deputy Council of Riga City; I.L.] and complaining that the militsiia did not help us to fight against scum, criminals, parasites. The law that stipulates that one can be exiled for parasitic lifestyle was nearly never applied, and now it will be abolished forever, because it is not in accordance with democracy. Besides, the foreign press also writes that exiles still exist. It was introduced by Khrushchev and therefore it must be abolished. To some extent, this is true. Especially in the beginning, the housing management authorities arbitrarily exiled individuals without any reason. There are always extremes. Our client Jofe last year [experienced such a situation; I.L.] in the court. Šaligina ordered the convoys to arrest her and exile her by force. The

35 Cf. Fitzpatrick, *Social Parasites* (see note 4), p. 407.

36 Cf. Letter of the Head of the Legal Commission A. Pāže to the LSSR Council of Ministers, 7 April 1966, LNA LVA, 938-6-430, 14. lp.

37 Cf. Harold Karan Jacobson: *The USSR and ILO*, in: *International Organization* 14 (1960), no. 3, pp. 402-428, here 421 f.

verdict was taken in absentia. Other people from Jofe's [communal; I. L.] apartment hated her, physically assaulted her and threw her out of the apartment, etc. They all complained that Jofe is a parasite-prostitute. Jofe managed to escape from the place of exile. She took a plane and went to Moscow to complain. On the basis of the order issued by Moscow, the case was reconsidered and the verdict was annulled, because Jofe was working all the time and the law could not be applied to her."³⁸

Fitzpatrick has concluded that in the anti-parasite legislation of the early 1960s addressing the problem of beggars, the problem of vagabonds and prostitution was regarded as of secondary importance. However, from the early 1960s the rhetoric against immoral and parasitic way of life had already been seized upon and employed by health care officials in internal documents aimed at fighting STI.

In the 1960s, the rhetoric about frivolous women was also placed in the context of sexual morality. The unacceptable way of life was no longer described as anti-social, but as immoral. The requirement to educate violators of the anti-parasite law in their workplaces (thus mobilising societal opinion through education and persuasion) meant bringing them up in a metaphorical "Soviet family".

From Anti-social to Immoral: Issue of the Ministries of Health Care and Internal Affairs

From the mid-1960s, the fight on STI in the LSSR focused on particular social groups accused of practising an immoral and parasitic way of life. The aspect of immorality was introduced in the politics of fighting STI by health care officials. In the reports on the state of affairs for the years 1961 and 1962 prepared by the Ministry of Health Care, women who practised an "immoral way of life in terms of sex life and who are malevolent sources of infection" were identified as a dangerous social group.³⁹ In the 1960s the Ministry defined this group as "women who lead a negligent sex life". They were forcibly transferred by militia employees seconded to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs to undergo a medical inspection.⁴⁰

The officials involved in the elaboration of the policy used numerous variations of the words "frivolous women" as a euphemism for prostitution. This is reflected in the wording of the instruction for the procedure by which the Ministries of Health Care and Internal Affairs implemented the decisions of the Council of Ministers concerning the fighting of STI. In the 1964 instruction, the keyword was "persons", without indication of gender.⁴¹

38 Irbe, Dienasgrāmata (see note 2), 09.02.1966.

39 The 1961 Comprehensive Plan of the Ministry of Health Care of the LSSR for Fighting Skin, Venereal Infections and Leprosy, LNA LVA, 1022-7-337, 3.-17. lp., here 6. lp.

40 Cf. Conjunction Review of the Operation of Skin Venereological Institutions of the LSSR in 1962, 23 May 1963, LNA LVA, 1022-7-366, 1.-70. lp., here 49. lp.; Conjunction Review of the Operation of Skin Venereological Institutions of the LSSR in 1965, 18 June 1966, LNA LVA, 1022-7-427, 2-96. lp., here 62. lp.

41 Cf. Instruction "On the Procedure for the Application of Decree no. 304 of the LSSR Council

In the 1971 instruction, on the other hand, women were demonised: “persons who lead a negligent sex life” was reformulated as “frivolous women leading a negligent sex life”.⁴² Also, the notion of “prostitution” was clarified by being formulated as “persons who enter into sexual relations for the purpose of material benefit”. Thus the policy was aimed only at sellers of sex, not buyers.

Moreover, the fight to correct the behaviour of individuals from these groups was institutionalised. The decision of the Council of Ministers of the LSSR taken on 26 May 1964, “On the Measures in Fighting STI”, authorised the Ministry of the Internal Affairs to cooperate with the authorities of Health Care regarding the identification and transfer for medical examination of those persons about whom it was justified to assume that they suffered from a STI.⁴³ In 1965, implementing the law of 26 May 1964, a two-member operative group in close cooperation with the Republican Skin and Venereal Disease Dispensary Riga, was set up at the Criminal Investigation Department of the Administration of Internal Affairs of the Riga Executive Committee.⁴⁴ One of this task force’s target groups was so-called frivolous women, mainly sex workers. Similarly tasked operational staff were also appointed elsewhere in Latvia. The monitoring of prostitutes was based on the practice of fighting STI by using two databases that registered prostitutes. They were created and maintained by the health care and internal affairs offices as an instrument of social control.

In the 1969 filing system of the Riga militsiia there were 1639 “women [registered; I. L.], who were engaged in prostitution”.⁴⁵ In 1973 the number rose to 2,300-2,400 persons in the LSSR, including about 800 women in Riga.⁴⁶ In the 1950s–1980s the Ministry of the Internal Affairs used individual conversations, individual and collective patronage, and discussion of the problem in collective meetings and in the comrades’ courts to educate women who engaged in prostitution.⁴⁷ The 1964 decision instructed the employees of the Ministries of the Internal Affairs and Health Care to reinforce the education of young people and to organise regular lectures and discussions about sexual relations, as well as to implement activities intended to eradicate the possibility of “immoral behaviour” in dormitories and boarding schools.⁴⁸

of Ministers, May 26, 1964. ‘On Measures to Fight Venereal Infections’”, 6 August 1964, LNA LVA, 938-6-430, 64.-65. lp.

42 Instruction “On the Procedure for the Application of Decree no. 304 of the LSSR Council of Ministers, May 26, 1964 ‘On Measures to Fight Venereal Infections’ and Decree no. 301-12, 16 June 1971 ‘On the Measures to Strengthen the Fight of Venereal Infections’”, LNA LVA, 938-6-971, 5.-6. lp.

43 Decree no. 304 of the LSSR Council of Ministers, 26 May 1964. “On Measures to Fight Venereal Infections”, LNA LVA, 270-3-2009, 109.-110. lp., here 109.

44 LNA LVA, 1022-7-427, 2-96. lp., here 62. lp. (see note 40).

45 Report of N. Pahomovs, the Prosecutor of the Riga City Procuracy, to the Prosecutor of the LSSR V. Laiviņš, 31 December 1969, LNA LVA, 1854-1a-5, 1.-11. lp., here 2.-3. lp.; Inquiry to the Report of N. Pahomovs, the Prosecutor of the Riga City Procuracy, to the Prosecutor of the LSSR V. Laiviņš, 31 December 1969, *ibidem*, 12.-17. lp., here 12.-13. lp.

46 Cf. The Minutes of the meeting of the Council at the Ministry of Health Care of the LSSR, 19 October 1973, LNA LVA, 1022-4-235, 416.-435. lp., here 435. lp.

47 Cf. Proposals of the Ministry of Public Order to the Draft Decree “On Measures to Fight Venereal Infections”, March 1964, LNA LVA, 270-3-2009, 122.-123. lp.

48 Decree no. 304 of the LSSR Council of Ministers, May 26, 1964. “On Measures to Fight Venereal Infections”, *ibidem*, 109.-110. lp., here 109.

Political Language and Unofficial Family Values

The fight against women's use of sexuality outside the marriage was promoted also by post-war reproductive politics. Postwar Soviet family values were maintained by the Supreme Soviet edict of 8 July 1944 on the family. Aiming to stop the increase in the number of illegitimate births, the law created single motherhood as a new legitimate site for reproduction as well as a new legal category of single mother who, with state aid, was responsible for parenting and had no right to claim paternity for her children. Her sexual partner had no legal responsibility or obligations. Historian Mie Nakachi finds that in this way, new, gendered roles were imposed by the pro-natalist government. Women were expected to be mothers. Men were expected not only to marry and form stable families but were "asked to fulfill a second task as well, impregnating unmarried women. By sanctioning adultery, a systemic requirement, implied but never stated in even Khrushchev's frankest moments, the Soviet government undermined its simultaneous desire for stable families."⁴⁹ Historian Lauren Kaminsky finds that the 1944 Family Law favoured a restoration of the nuclear family more in line with popular family values.⁵⁰ Only the 1968 All-Union Family and marital code gave to single mothers the right to claim paternity of their children.

Pushing (out-of-wedlock) male paternal responsibility aside was consistent with family values based on marriage. However, pursuing its pro-natalist aim, the state did not moralise about the status of single mother, thus making family values unofficial. By supporting single mothers and illegitimate children, the state symbolically took on the role of father. Sociologists Anna Temkina and Elena Zdravomyslova have characterised Soviet family politics as containing both traditional and emancipated aspects.⁵¹ Women used different strategies of adaptation in the Soviet system. Widespread was "the individual manipulation of gender-marked rights and privileges". In the 1930s "women began appealing to the authorities on a mass scale concerning family conflicts. This strategy rested on the traditionalist views which had been incorporated into Soviet ideology."⁵²

49 Mie Nakachi: N.S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law: Politics, Reproduction, and Language, in: *East European Politics and Societies* 20 (2006), no. 1, pp. 40-68, here pp. 46 f.

50 Cf. Lauren Kaminsky: Utopian Visions of Family Life in the Stalin-Era Soviet Union, in: *Central European History* 44 (2011), no. 1, pp. 63-91, here p. 84.

51 Cf. Elena Zdravomyslova, Anna Temkina: Gendered Citizenship in Soviet and Post-Soviet Societies, in: Vera Tolz, Stephenie Booth (eds.): *Nation and Gender in Contemporary Europe*, Manchester 2005, pp. 96-115, here p. 104.

52 Ibidem, p. 105. See also: Ineta Lipša: Privātās dzīves uzraudzīšana un kontrole Latvijas PSR, izmantojot valsts represīvos mehānismus (1944–1953) [Surveillance and Control of Private Life in the LSSR using repressive mechanisms of the state (1944–1953)], in: Kristīne Jarinovska (ed.): *Totalitārisma sabiedrības kontrole un represijas. VDK zinātniskās izpētes komisijas raksti. 1. sējums* [Control and Repressions of the Totalitarian Society. Proceedings of the International conference "Control and repressions of the totalitarian society: research of the documents and its methodology". Symposium of the Government Commission for KGB Research. Volume 1.], Rīga 2015, pp. 443-474; Elena Zhidkova: Family, Divorce, and Comrades' Courts: Soviet Family and Public Organizations During the Thaw, in: Helene Carlbäck, Yulia Gradska et al. (eds.): *And They Lived Happily Ever After. Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Central Europe*, Budapest et al. 2012, pp. 47-64; Sof'ia Chuikina: "Byt neotdelim ot politiki": ofitsial'nye i neofitsial'nye normy "polovoi" morali v sovetskom obshchestve 1930–1980-kh godov

Fitzpatrick gives an example of the incorporated traditionalist views found in a brochure, “On the Moral Profile of Soviet Man”, compiled in 1948 for the use of party propagandists and agitators. It “reminded Party members that ‘relations between the sexes are not only a personal affair’, that ‘so-called private life demands an understanding of one’s duty to the family,’ and that ‘in our society, dissolute behaviour calls forth general indignation and contempt’”.⁵³

The incorporated traditionalist views are evident in the official discourse of Communist morality during both the Stalinist and Khrushchev periods, a discourse that demanded that “married people who found themselves attracted to acquaintances [...] subdue their illicit desires by force of will”.⁵⁴ Individuals who willingly internalised prescriptions of Communist morality about personal conduct were viewed as citizens who “ensure social stability by establishing secure families and leading orderly personal lives, and by making sure that their coworkers and neighbors did the same”.⁵⁵

Thus, the state simultaneously accepted unofficial family values in official Soviet discourse but challenged them in the reality. The attitude towards prostitution was the opposite: the state challenged the official Soviet discourse with the notion that there was no prostitution, but in reality accepted the existence of prostitution and persecuted women in accordance with unofficial family values that questioned women’s sexual activity outside marriage. The laws on the fight against anti-social, parasitical elements and ways of life, and against STI, were used as tools for the surveillance of women.

The oppressive attitude towards female sexual agency manifested itself in the discourse about “frivolous women”, which, according to unofficial family values, was used also as a synonym for prostitution. An oppressive patriarchy hid behind disingenuous words about “frivolous women” and revealed itself in the censoring of any mention of prostitution in the public media. Thus, the thesis that the Soviet authorities were concerned not with the morality of prostitution (a woman selling her body), but with prostitution as a source of income⁵⁶ or as a source of a STI, has to be broadened to reveal that moralisation over the female use of sexuality was its hidden agenda. Therefore, an analysis of the language used to articulate female sexual behaviour out of marriage must put the notion of prostitution in the context of family values.

In the 1950s, distinct forms of language were used in high-level documents and internal communication documents of officials. In law the language was more euphemism-based, while in the documents of internal communication it was more direct. Nakachi has demonstrated these distinct forms of political language, which “legitimate the policies in different

[“Way of life is inseparable from politics”: Official and unofficial norms of sexual morality in the Soviet society of the 1930s–1980s], in: Elena Zdravomyslova, Anna Temkina (eds.): *V poiskakh seksual’nosti. Sbornik statei* [In Search of Sexuality. Collected Articles], Sankt-Peterburg 2002, pp. 99-127.

53 Sheila Fitzpatrick: *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia*, Princeton, NJ et al. 2005, pp. 243 f.

54 Deborah A. Field: *Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era*, in: *The Russian Review* 57 (1998), no. 4, pp. 599-613, here p. 604.

55 *Ibidem*, pp. 601 f.

56 Marcinkeviciene, Praspaliauskiene, *Prostitution* (see note 28), p. 657.

ideological terms for different audiences”, by analysing the 1944 Soviet Family Law.⁵⁷ Similar language practices were implemented in Soviet Lithuania at two levels with regard to the documentation on prostitution.⁵⁸ When describing the situation in Soviet Latvia, which officials considered as prostitution, they used the wording of the regulatory enactments (“frivolous women”) and the nature of such behaviour was defined by the notion of prostitution.

In Soviet Latvia, the issue of prostitution was discussed mainly in internal correspondence, which was not intended for publication, by officials from the Ministries of the Health Care and Internal Affairs. Because prostitution did not officially exist, the officials in their vocabulary used the euphemism “frivolous women”, quite unlike the highly moralising, pre-war wording such as “indecent women” used by Irbe. The moralising vocabulary provides evidence of tension between official Soviet discourse and unofficial family values.

In the 1960s–1970s the concept of prostitution was occasionally used in the context of fighting STI in non-public documentation of the Ministries of the Internal Affairs and Health Care. In the press, the notion of prostitution in the Soviet context was not used, while several notions were implied in the phrase “frivolous women”: it was used both when talking about prostitution and when discussing casual sex relations without the purpose of profit. The publications of the officials only contributed to maintain the conviction of the population that both meanings were actually synonyms (and were thus consistent with unofficial family values). The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the LSSR, Anrijs Kavalieris, published an article in the magazine *Veselība* (Health) in 1974. The article warned readers about the situations in which it was possible to contract STI. Kavalieris first claimed that prostitution was only characteristic of countries in the capitalist world. He discussed the situation using such wording as “women, who gave themselves without any feelings to the first person whom they met, receiving material reward”, “the women of the mentioned category”, “sexual debauchery”, “casual sexual intercourse”, and “lewd immoral lifestyle”.

“In our Soviet land the class roots of prostitution have long been eradicated. In the ideological field, too, much is being done to ensure that our youth grow up with healthy, socially acceptable views on family and mutual relations between the sexes. Not only in theory, but also in practical terms, we have eliminated a situation in which a woman would be forced to sell her body, to have sexual intercourse for reward, in order to earn livelihood. And there are no such cases in practice. In theory, we might think that, as a result, the STI should also gradually disappear, first, syphilis and gonorrhoea. Yet, it is not so.”⁵⁹

Further on, Kavalieris reminded the reader that one is held criminally liable for infecting another person with STI. He provided several examples in which women were shown as the only sources of STI. The examples included women who,

57 Nakachi, Khrushchev (see note 49), pp. 40-68.

58 Cf. Marcinkeviciene, Praspaliauskiene, Prostitution (see note 28), p. 658.

59 Anrijs Kavalieris: Slidenais ceļš, in: *Veselība* (1974), no. 2, pp. 26 f.

“being materially secure, want to have ‘fun’, drink at the expense of the stranger, receive various gifts of a material nature, and not only have sex with anyone who is willing to provide such a ‘benefit’ to them, but look for the opportunity to meet strangers by themselves. Because most of them are ‘materially secure’, it cannot be ‘considered that sexual intercourse for reward is their only or even their main source of livelihood’. It is therefore a matter of easy additional ‘profit’, [they are] ‘gold diggers’, if we may say so. They do not deny it in conversations. They do not regard such behaviour as shameful. Having listened to foreign radio stations and read the porn magazines obtained from tourists or foreign sailors, these young women often argue that sexual debauchery is ‘modern’, ‘appropriate to current times’.”⁶⁰

Thus the behaviour of Soviet male citizens was not problematised by the Soviet power structures and authorities at all. There were no special formulations in use, which by analogy with the stigmatisation of women’s behaviour could have served to define “frivolous men”.

Having read the article by Kavalieris, Irbe writes in conclusion in his diary: “A young alcoholic has brought to his flat a ‘frivolous woman’, as prostitutes are now called.”⁶¹ Later, in the 1980s, the structures of militsiia used the terms “frivolous women”, “prostitutes” and “prostitution”.⁶²

Since official Soviet communication avoided the use of the concept of prostitution, casual sexual intercourse came to be equated by the general population with prostitution. This is also illustrated by the entry in Irbe’s diary of 22 March 1975:

“Having eaten [my meal], I was reading a newspaper in bed. There was a big article about the hardship of the service personnel when dealing with alcoholics and debauchees, even in posh places of entertainment. All kinds of insults, whims, and cockiness must be faced. As can be seen, tipsy, scandalous young girls lead a lewd lifestyle, because every time they come in, it is with another man. It must be assumed that they lead a lifestyle that was formerly led by the officially-existing prostitutes. It is not a secret that such women also operate nowadays, although a legal framework for prostitutes does not exist.”⁶³

In the 1970s, the Director of the Riga International Club of Sailors, founded in 1958 for the surveillance of communication between foreign sailors and Soviet citizens, reported to

60 Ibidem.

61 Irbe, Dienasgrāmata (see note 2), 14.03.1974.

62 Proposals for the Prevention and Strengthening the Fight against Prostitution in the LSSR to the Report on the Results of the Inspection on the Organisation of the Fight against Prostitution and Violation of the Rules on Currency in the LSSR, 30 December 1986, LNA LVA, PA 101-59-200, 19.-20. lp.; Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of Riga City of the CPL, 10 April 1987, LNA LVA, PA-102-54-3, 141.-151. lp., here 147. lp.; Comprehensive Plan of Measures for the Improvement of Educational Work, the Prevention of Offenses, and the Maintenance of Order and Organisation for 1986–1990 years, 10 April 1987, ibidem, 164.-166. lp., here 166. lp.; On Measures to Strengthen the Fight against Illegal Currency Operations, Prostitution and Related Illegal Activities, 10 April 1987, LNA LVA, PA-102-54-4, 151.-153. lp., here 152.-153. lp.

63 Irbe, Dienasgrāmata (see note 2), 22.03.1975.

the Party and KGB authorities on impressions about Riga; and he, too, used the wording “frivolous women”⁶⁴. When presenting the views of the sailors, he used both this wording⁶⁵ and its variations – “girls of questionable behaviour”⁶⁶ and “girls of the free professions”⁶⁷:

“The cleanliness of streets and parks, as well as the greenery catch the eye in your city; the appearance of people leaves a good impression. An unpleasant surprise was the girls of questionable behaviour near *Interklubs*, who made every effort to take the sailors with them.”⁶⁸ (Sailor from England, 26/07/1974.)

The notions of prostitutes⁶⁹ and prostitution⁷⁰ were also used in the report, but they were cited from the questionnaires of foreign sailors:

“I see a lot of girls of the free professions in the city. Does that mean that prostitution exists legally in the USSR?”⁷¹ (First Mate of Captain, Democratic Republic of Germany, 1979.)

“A foreigner cannot walk peacefully around the city. Everywhere – at the port, on the streets, even near the club – we are met by people who offer to change money or sell something. Besides, they are very obtrusive. The prostitutes also don’t leave us alone. One cannot sit peacefully in a café or a restaurant. They approach you everywhere – [the restaurants; I.L.] *Luna, Rostoka, Rīga, Astorija, Tūrists, Daugava*. They behave shamelessly, they sit at your table and it is hard to get rid of them. The most interesting thing is the fact that militsiia sees everything, but does not pay any attention. It seems that there is some agreement between them. It is very sad that the impression of your beautiful city is damaged by such elements, which according to the headlines of your newspapers, only exist in the West.”⁷² (Chief Mechanic, Federal Republic of Germany, 1979.)

Thus, in the context of Cold War ideology, the Director of the Riga International Sailors Club has interpreted morally the existence of prostitution as a phenomenon that damages the image of the Soviet regime in the eyes of people from Western countries. In Estonia, in contrast, the problem of encounters between female citizens and Finnish tourists was predominantly treated as a matter of black marketeers, interested in currency and Western consumer products. Historian Oliver Pagel has claimed that

64 Report on the Work of Riga International Sailors Club in 1979, LNA LVA, 1732-8-111, 3.-31. lp., here 6. lp.

65 Cf. *ibidem*, 24. lp.

66 Report on the Work of Riga International Sailors Club in 1974, LNA LVA, 1732-8-42, 23.-92. lp., here 36. lp.

67 LNA LVA, 1732-8-111, 23. lp. (see note 64).

68 LNA LVA, 1732 -8-42, 36. lp. (see note 66).

69 Cf. LNA LVA, 1732-8-111, 24. lp. (see note 64).

70 Cf. *ibidem*, 23. lp.

71 *Ibidem*.

72 *Ibidem*, 24. lp.

“only a few women interested in Finnish tourists were actual prostitutes sleeping with clients for money. Most prostitutes were thieves, using the ‘oldest profession’ as a cover to gain access to Finnish tourists at the hard currency bar in Tallinn’s Viru Hotel, get them drunk, and lure them back to their rooms (which were officially off-limits to Soviet citizens) to steal their money and personal belongings”.⁷³

Without going into the idea of prostitution as a cover for female thieves, it should be noted that in this case, too, the concept of prostitution was used by the officials of internal affairs as a moralising metaphor for the unacceptable use of female sexuality.

Perestroika: the Idea of Administrative Liability for Men Buying Sex

It is not clear why in May 1985 the Operational Group of the Internal Affairs Administration of the Riga Executive Committee to fight STI was shut down by order of the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR. In any case, the registration of prostitutes continued. In late 1986 there were approximately 3,500 women registered in the filing system of the militsiia of the LSSR, of whom 3,000 were registered in Riga and 500 in Ventspils.⁷⁴ In Riga, similarly to Moscow, a registration system for prostitutes had been maintained for years – at least since 1965, not just since 1987 as has been stated elsewhere.⁷⁵ In spring 1987 the fight against STI was once again institutionalised in the militsiia authorities. Now again, as in the period from 1965 to 1985, two employees with responsibility for fighting STI were included in the Operational Department of the Internal Affairs Administration of the Riga Executive Committee. The Department was in charge of ensuring the personal and property security of foreigners, as well as of fighting illegal currency operations (the Department was established in 1985). Similarly, as in 1956 before the law on fighting parasitic and immoral lifestyle was adopted, in 1986, too, the emphasis on preserving the image of the Soviet Union in the eyes of foreigners contributed to the adoption of a new legal instrument for fighting prostitution: the 1987 addition to the Code of Administrative Offenses of the LSSR. It was an article which stipulated a punishment for engaging in prostitution.

Gorbachev’s glasnost politics officially recognised the existence of prostitution in the USSR. Louise Shelley has stated that “perestroika contributed to the spread of prostitution in the USSR by lifting certain social controls, increasing the flow of foreign visitors to the country and creating a new class of affluent Soviet businessmen. For many high school and vocational students, prostitution unfortunately became a prestigious occupation.”⁷⁶

Prior to the formal recognition of prostitution, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union delegated a group of employees of the USSR Prosecutor’s Office and the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs to identify the work of the militsiia authorities

73 Oliver Pagel: Finnish Tourists in Soviet Estonia: Security Considerations, in: *Journal of Baltic Studies* 50 (2019), no. 3, pp. 375-391, here p. 384.

74 Cf. Report on the Results of the Inspection on the Organisation of the Fight against Prostitution and Violation of the Rules on Currency in the LSSR, 30 December 1986, LNA LVA, PA-101-59-200, 1.-14. lp., here 1. lp.

75 Cf. Shelley, *Policing Soviet Society* (see note 10), p. 145.

76 *Ibidem*, p. 146.

of the LSSR in the fight against prostitution and the violation of currency rules.⁷⁷ The group inspected the work of militsiia in the major port cities – Riga and Ventspils. Because prostitution in the Soviet Union did not exist officially, the authors of the report specifically stated that the wording “women, who earn with prostitution” was used in the report because such wording was used by the citizens of the LSSR. Foreigners were placed at the centre of the document. Its authors claimed that “the most common [sexual relations; I. L.], where the payment is in foreign currency and foreign goods are involved, are [instances of] sexual intercourse between frivolous women and foreign citizens”.⁷⁸ All groups of foreigners which annually visited the LSSR were mentioned: foreign ships in the Riga Sea Port (around 500 ships with 23-25 thousand crews’ members) and Ventspils Sea Port (around 800 ships); foreign students at educational establishments in the LSSR (around two thousand); an increasing number of foreign specialists who worked full-time at Riga enterprises in accordance with interstate contracts; ethnic tourists (around 6,000) and foreign tourists (50,000). The total number of foreigners who visited the LSSR in 1986 was around 81-83 thousand. The number of foreign tourists visiting Soviet Latvia had been steadily grown from the early 1960s (data do not include foreign sailors). In 1960, 2,649 foreign tourists visited Latvia (in comparison with 618 tourists who visited Tallinn in 1961⁷⁹). In the space of ten years, the number doubled to 13,210 by 1969. In the decade from 1970 to 1979, however, the number increased three-fold from 12,263 to 37,200 tourists. From 1979 to 1987 (in nine years), the number of foreign tourists increased 1.7 times from 37,200 to 64,300.⁸⁰

The 1986 Inspection report described the state of prostitution by dividing prostitutes in three categories. There were “higher category prostitutes or inter-teams”, who mostly operated in restaurants and hotels where foreigners stayed. There were also prostitutes who served *fartsovshchiks* and “other criminal elements” for Soviet money. Then there were “lower category” prostitutes who gathered in stations, markets and brothels, and who served alcoholics and vagabonds for reward. There were also “seasonal” (summer) prostitutes, who arrived in the port and resort towns from other regions of the country. The inspection group noted that women who engaged in prostitution with foreigners were fluent in foreign languages and rarely committed crimes. This was also attested by the fact that, out of 3,000 prostitutes registered in the operational filing system of the Internal Affairs Administration of the Riga Executive Committee, only 138 had sold sex to foreigners.⁸¹ However, the aim of the militsiia authorities was to punish the majority of prostitutes – those who sold sex to foreigners without violating the existing laws and regulations. The inspection group finished the description of the situation with proposals as to what should be done, and how to accomplish it.

77 Cf. LNA LVA, PA-101-59-200, 1.-14. lp., here 1. lp. (see note 74).

78 Ibidem, here 2. lp.

79 Cf. Pagel, Finnish Tourists (see note 73), p. 377.

80 Cf. Ineta Lipša: VDK ietekme un padomju Latvijas ārzemju tūrisma iestāžu vadošais personāls: Vissavienības akciju sabiedrības “Inturist” Rīgas nodaļa un tās operatīvā vadība (1957–1992) [KGB Interests at the Top Management Level of the Riga Office of GAO Intourist and Its Operative Management (1957–1992)], in: Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls 103 (2017), no. 2, pp. 80-128, here 87 f.

81 Cf. LNA LVA, PA-102-54-3, 141.-151. lp., here 147. lp. (see note 62).

The first recommendation was to supplement Article 208 of the Republican Criminal Code so as to include “sex for pay” among other activities to be punished (debauchery of thieves and users of alcohol, keeping of brothels, as well as setting up for debauchery). It was followed by a recommendation to abolish the 1985 order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, which had closed down the operational group for fighting STI in the Riga militsiia administration. It was recommended that specialised units for fighting prostitution in Riga, Ventspils and other major cities be established, and that prostitutes be held administratively liable. In case the administratively penalised persons continued to engage in prostitution, criminal liability should be stipulated. The harassment of foreign citizens by women in order to have sexual intercourse for remuneration should be qualified as petty hooliganism. However, the most radical recommendation was to stipulate administrative liability for men who paid to receive sexual services.⁸² The adoption of such a recommendation would be in line with the official Soviet discourse – one of the ideological corner stones of the Soviet Union – that claimed that the socialist system was based on gender equality. If the seller of sex was administratively sanctioned, the buyer of sex must also be punished. However, this recommendation was not adopted, which meant that, in the rivalry that always existed between official Soviet discourse and unofficial family values, the Soviet Union chose to include in its official discourse the values that did not correspond to its former official discourse.

In its evaluation of the proposals of the Moscow group in June 1987, the Ministry of Justice of the LSSR stated that in foreign socialist countries (Poland, Bulgaria, Democratic Republic of Germany, Rumania, but not the Mongolian Autonomous SSR) prostitution was not a crime.⁸³ The authors of the report recommended defining prostitution as a woman’s systematic engagement in debauchery for selfish purposes, for which administrative liability in the form of a fine of up to 100 roubles should be imposed. If there was a repeated case of prostitution (within a year after the application of social sanctions or administrative penalties), criminal liability should be imposed by punishing the respective person with imprisonment for up to two years; by penal labour for the same period of time; or by a pecuniary penalty of up to 200 roubles.

In order to fulfill these recommendations, Article 174 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the LSSR was supplemented with Article 174¹ on the engagement in prostitution. In 1988, 240 women were held administratively liable for engaging in prostitution. That was 3.6 times more than in 1987.⁸⁴ In 1987, prostitution was officially recognised in the USSR. In consequence, militsiia tactics changed and militiamen dealt with the problem more directly. The leadership of militsiia had agreements with the managements of hotels where foreign citizens were accommodated, which stipulated that “frivolous women” would not be given passes for access to hotels, nor would travel documents be issued for going to *Intourist* hotels in other cities of the Soviet Union.⁸⁵ The administration of militsiia submit-

82 Cf. LNA LVA, PA-101-59-200, 19.-20. lp. (see note 74).

83 Cf. Reference to the Decree of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of LSSR “On Amendments and Additions to the LSSR Code on Administrative Offences”, 12 June 1987, LNA LVA, 938-6-3000, 1.-3. lp., here 1. lp.

84 Cf. Report of Minister of Internal Affairs B. Šteinbriks, 28 January 1989, LNA LVA, PA-101-63-99, 26.-29. lp.

85 Cf. LNA LVA, PA-102-54-4, 151.-153. lp. (see note 62).

ted the lists of the “*farcovshchiks*, *valutchiks* and frivolous women” residing in Riga. The Riga City Committee asked the administration of the city militia to engage various Soviet “volunteer groups” (voluntary people’s *druzhina*, Komsomol operative *druzhina*, comrades’ courts and street committees) in the fight against prostitution.

Thus, the lawyers of the LSSR chose to apply administrative liability for prostitution only on the female gender. Consequently, the principle of gender equality was eliminated from official Soviet discourse, and the unofficial family values, which existed in the real lives of citizens of the Soviet Union, were reinforced.

Conclusion

The analysis of documents produced by the authorities, as well as the examination of autobiographical documents, provide evidence of the fact that the euphemisation of prostitution in Soviet Latvia maintained and reinforced a repressive, judgmental attitude towards women who were not prostitutes, but merely wanted to realise their sexuality without marriage ties. The behaviour of the buyers of prostitution – Soviet male citizens – was not problematised by the Soviet power structures and authorities at all. There were no special formulations in use which, by analogy with the stigmatisation of women’s behaviour, could have served to define the behaviour of “frivolous men”. As a result of the euphemisation of prostitution, the women who were suspected of using or who actually used sexuality without the aim of getting married, were stigmatised. Consequently, prostitution was gendered as merely a problem of Soviet female citizens, contributing to the idealisation of the family as an institution and to the emphasis on women’s moral responsibilities.

Zusammenfassung

Der Schwerpunkt dieses Artikels liegt auf der Untersuchung des rechtlichen Rahmens der Prostitution im sowjetischen Lettland (Lettische Sowjetische Sozialistische Republik oder LSSR). Im Fokus stehen Aufzeichnungen der Komitees der Kommunistischen Partei der LSSR (CPL) auf der Landes-, Stadt- und Bezirksebene sowie Dokumente staatlicher Behörden wie Polizei, Staatssicherheit, Justiz und allgemein des Gesundheitssystems. Die Analyse von Archivadokumenten wird durch Zeugnisse aus dem Tagebuch von Kaspars Aleksandrs Irbe (1906–1996) ergänzt, das aus 77 Bänden besteht und über 55 Jahre von 1940 bis 1996 durchgehend geschrieben wurde. Darüber hinaus werden die Untersuchungen, die die offizielle Gewerkschaftseinrichtung⁸⁶ – die Riga Internationale Seeleutevereinigung (der sogenannte Interclub) – durchgeführt hat, herangezogen. Dabei werden drei Phasen im Umgang mit der Prostitution herausgearbeitet; auch die Auswirkungen, die das Aufeinandertreffen von Sowjetbürgern und Ausländern auf die Ausformung der Anti-Prostitutions-Politik hatte, sind Bestandteil der Untersuchung.

In den 1950er Jahren änderte sich die Gesetzgebung zur Bekämpfung der Prostitution, indem sie nicht mehr auf „antisoziale, parasitäre Elemente“ abzielte, sondern Prostitution

86 Inoffiziell mit dem Staatssicherheitskomitee verbunden.

als eine Lebensweise betrachtete. Von den 1960er Jahren bis 1986 richtete sich die Politik überwiegend gegen sexuell übertragbare Infektionen (sexually transmitted infections, STI); Personen „mit unmoralischer Lebensweise“ standen hier im Visier der Behörden. Die dritte Phase begann 1987 mit der offiziellen Einstufung der Prostitution als Ordnungswidrigkeit, wobei ausschließlich Sexarbeiterinnen erfasst wurden und damit die Ungleichheit der Geschlechter in den offiziellen sowjetischen Diskurs eingeführt wurde. Während der zweiten Phase, beginnend mit den frühen 1960er Jahren, setzte die Vorstellung ein, dass „Frauen mit einem unmoralischen Lebenswandel“ als gefährliche soziale Gruppierung anzusehen seien. 1965 wurde die Überwachung von Prostituierten durch die Aufstellung einer sofort einsatzbereiten Einheit in der Verwaltung der Stadtpolizei Riga und den Aufbau eines Registratursystems über Prostituierte (*kartoteka*) eingeführt. Dieser Politik folgte eine auf Moral basierende Diskussion über das weibliche Geschlecht. Durch die Schuldzuweisung an das weibliche Geschlecht tat sich eine Kluft auf zwischen dem offiziellen sowjetischen Diskurs über Geschlechtergleichheit und den inoffiziellen Familienwerten, die dem Konservatismus der sowjetischen Nachkriegsgesellschaft in Geschlechterfragen entsprachen.