



European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cerh20>

Selling sex under socialism: prostitution in the post-war USSR

Siobhán Hearne

To cite this article: Siobhán Hearne (2022) Selling sex under socialism: prostitution in the post-war USSR, European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire, 29:2, 290-310, DOI: [10.1080/13507486.2021.1937952](https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2021.1937952)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2021.1937952>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 31 Mar 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 839



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



OPEN ACCESS



Selling sex under socialism: prostitution in the post-war USSR

Siobhán Hearne 

School of Modern Languages & Cultures, Durham University, Durham, UK

ABSTRACT

The existence of prostitution was embarrassing for the Soviet government. This was especially true after the end of the Second World War and the death of Josef Stalin, when the Cold War and global processes of decolonization were in full swing and the USSR competed for the supremacy of its version of state socialism on the world stage. Soviet officials claimed that social ills that plagued capitalist countries, like prostitution, did not exist in the USSR. Despite these confident declarations, Party officials at the central and regional level, law enforcement and medical workers, as well as ordinary Soviet citizens, were well aware that these statements were false, as prostitution was a permanent feature in Soviet cities in the long post-war period. This article examines Soviet state policies towards women engaged in sex work from the mid-1950s until the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The article also explores how policing actually functioned in practice in major cities, paying particular attention to the Baltic capitals of Riga and Tallinn. This 'top down' and 'bottom up' approach reveals how prostitution was entangled with the spatial politics of the long post-war era, and examines how Soviet citizens aided and resisted policing, motivated by ideological commitment, indifference or concern for their own financial gain.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 June 2020

Accepted 31 May 2021

KEYWORDS

Soviet Union; police; prostitution; sex work; Baltic

Introduction

Officially we say that prostitution does not exist, but there are still many rendezvous held in exchange for a certain service or a fee. It is necessary for us to agree that something needs to be done.¹

Vladimirs Laiviņš, State Prosecutor of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR)

The above quotation comes from a meeting of the Bureau of the Communist Party of the Latvian SSR held on 4 March 1973 to discuss rising rates of venereal infection within the republic. Laiviņš' remark illustrates the tension at the core of state approaches to female prostitution in the USSR. The Soviet government claimed that prostitution had been eradicated because state socialism had eliminated the need for women to earn money through selling sex, but, in reality, state policy and the conditions of Soviet socialism actually made prostitution economically advantageous and

CONTACT Siobhán Hearne  siobhan.c.hearne@durham.ac.uk  School of Modern Languages & Cultures, Durham University, Durham, UK

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

even necessary for many women. This article interrogates this paradox, which was central to Soviet approaches to prostitution in the long post-war era. In doing so, it will explore the different ways in which female prostitution was indirectly regulated and directly repressed by the Soviet state, as well as the strategies that sex-working women employed to circumvent state policies.

The continued existence of prostitution was especially troubling for the Soviet government in the decades after Josef Stalin's death in 1953, when the Cold War and global processes of decolonization were in full swing and the USSR competed for the supremacy of its version of state socialism on the world stage. Soviet officialdom circulated carefully constructed images of social, gender and racial equality; military, scientific and sporting prowess; and the happiness and material comfort of Soviet citizens, both within and beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.² On the international stage, state officials boasted that prostitution had disappeared under Soviet socialism as there was no economic need for women to sell sex. When the USSR acceded to the 1949 UN Convention on the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, their delegation confidently declared that the social conditions which gave rise to prostitution, namely poverty and unemployment, had been eliminated in the Soviet Union.³ In the 1975 edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, the entry on prostitution stated that the phenomena did not exist in the USSR.⁴ Despite such confident declarations, Party officials at the central and regional level, law enforcement and medical workers, as well as ordinary Soviet citizens and foreign tourists, were well aware that these statements were false. Prostitution was a permanent feature in Soviet cities throughout the 1950s–80s.

In the USSR, the exchange of money (or other material remuneration) for sexual services was not subject to any legal sanctions until 1987, but sex workers were heavily stigmatized throughout Soviet history. Before the establishment of the Soviet Union, prostitution had been legally tolerated across the Russian Empire under a system known as regulation, under which women who engaged in prostitution were obliged to attend regular gynaecological examinations and required to abide by a whole host of rules and restrictions.⁵ Regulation was abolished in summer 1917 by the Provisional Government. After seizing power in October 1917, the early Soviet government attempted to eradicate prostitution and their approaches were (in theory) coloured by the Marxist classification of prostitution as an inevitable result of the social and economic conditions of capitalism.⁶ Brothel keeping and pimping were criminalized in the Soviet Union's first criminal code in 1922 and government initiatives focused on 'reforming' sex workers into productive Soviet citizens.⁷ Despite this, prominent early Soviet politicians invested in the idea that there were two types of women who sold sex: those who did so to escape poverty and 'hardened' or 'malicious' professionals, who could never integrate into Soviet society.⁸ The perceived prevalence of the latter group coloured the Soviet state's approach to dealing with prostitution. Officially, the police could not detain women merely for selling sex, but they could prosecute these women under the criminal articles outlawing parasitism, vagrancy, violation of passport restrictions, and the transmission of venereal diseases. On 29 May 1987, a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet made prostitution an administrative offence, punishable by an official warning or a fine of 100 roubles in the first instance, and then a 200-rouble fine if caught again within 12 months.⁹ The official motivations behind the change in the legal status of the act of selling

sex are difficult to decipher, although it was likely connected to the broader backlash against manifestations of sexuality that were perceived to be socially dangerous in the wake of the global AIDS epidemic.¹⁰

Prostitution in the Soviet Union is an emerging field in historiography. To date, scholarship has situated state efforts to eradicate commercial sex and 'reform' female sex workers into productive citizens within broader efforts to remake society and build socialism in the 1920s.¹¹ Scholars have also explored the links made between female prostitution, capitalist degeneracy and social disorder in official discourse and visual culture, while also examining how these connections were used to justify the repression of women who sold sex.¹² Others have investigated the impact of Stalinist-era aggressive spatial management on sites and practices of male and female prostitution in Moscow and Leningrad.¹³ Historians of Soviet Lithuania have found that discussions of prostitution became more euphemistic the higher one travelled up the Soviet government hierarchy, reflecting officialdom's discomfort with admitting that prostitution existed in the USSR.¹⁴ Studies have also examined the re-emergence of prostitution as a topic of public discussion during the relaxation of press censorship under the conditions of *perestroika* in the late 1980s.¹⁵

This article builds upon this literature by providing the first systematic examination of Soviet state policies towards women engaged in sex work from the mid-1950s until the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. This investigation contributes to an emerging historiography that explores prostitution in state socialist regimes, paying particular attention to the chasm between official proclamations about its absence on the one hand, and the regular interactions among state actors, medical authorities and sex-working women on the other.¹⁶ Throughout Soviet history, Party leadership consistently presented prostitution as something anti-Soviet and foreign, practised only by those who chose to 'drop out' of socialist society and engage in behaviour that actively violated the 'norms' of socialist morality.¹⁷ However, the Soviet state's inability to deliver on the 'social contract' by providing adequate housing, wages and welfare benefits made the additional income provided by paid sex especially attractive. Post-war material shortages and a deficit-based economy encouraged Soviet citizens to rely on the thriving second economy and other informal networks of exchange to make up for the deficiencies of state industry.¹⁸ A plethora of residency restrictions meant that residing in specific cities was only possible with official approval, or by circumventing the many bureaucratic procedures and trying to remain undetected by engaging in labour outside the state economy. Rather than a deliberately subversive activity, prostitution was just one of many strategies that women adopted to get the resources that they needed under late socialism.

This article begins by examining prostitution from the 'top down', focusing on key objectives and strategies of the police in their efforts to prevent women from selling sex. Thereafter, it will explore how policing actually functioned in practice in major cities, paying particular attention to the strategies employed by sex workers and urban residents to escape police detection. Police files and internal correspondence between different government agencies shed light on state perspectives on prostitution, but these sources are not without their limitations. The voices of women who engaged in prostitution rarely appear, and when they do, they are mediated through official channels. There is no way of knowing whether women who appeared in police files would have self-identified

as sex workers, whether they conceived of their activities differently, or whether they were actually involved in sex work at all. Much of the material drawn upon relates to the Latvian and Estonian Soviet Socialist Republics, although other major cities, such as Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv and Baku are also included in the analysis. From the mid-1950s onwards, the port cities of Riga and Tallinn were both popular tourist destinations for Soviet citizens and common points of entry for foreigners arriving in the Soviet Union on package tours. Riga and Tallinn's association with tourism and high concentration of foreign citizens meant that the existence of prostitution was more likely to inflict reputational damage on the image-conscious Soviet regime in these Baltic cities than elsewhere. This concern has generated a rich archival record, in which officials in Tallinn and Riga claimed that sex workers' flagrant flouting of moral codes sullied the reputation of their city, their republic and even the entire USSR.

The case studies of Riga and Tallinn offer insight into Soviet approaches to prostitution, but they are not representative of the situation across the USSR. Located at the USSR's western periphery, the Estonian and Latvian republics had stronger links with the capitalist west than elsewhere in the country and a reputation as centres of illicit, criminal and anti-Soviet activity.¹⁹ Estonia and Latvia were also relatively young Soviet republics, as both countries were invaded by the Red Army and forcibly incorporated into the USSR during the Second World War. In light of this, Riga and Tallinn were not included in Soviet discourse on prostitution in the 1920s and 1930s and had their own prostitution regimes in the interwar period. For example, a state-regulated prostitution system was in operation in interwar Latvia, as sex workers were required to abide by specific regulations outlined by the government, or face imprisonment or financial penalties.²⁰ After Soviet troops invaded Estonia and Latvia in June 1940, sex workers became targets of repression. By June 1941, the Soviet authorities exiled 760 women who had been registered as prostitutes with the police in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the Kazakh SSR for a period of at least five years.²¹ Therefore, the history of the Baltic republics and their unique place within Soviet official imagination may have influenced prostitution policy in the region.

Policing objectives

Women who sold sex made their living primarily outside the state-sponsored economy and often their material remuneration involved forging commercial contracts with foreigners, both factors that 'broke the boundaries of proper Soviet citizenship'.²² As in other state socialist contexts, women who engaged in paid sex were presented as violators of both socialist morality for their lack of engagement in 'honest' state-sanctioned labour and traditional morality for their failure to adhere to appropriate female gender roles.²³ After the Second World War, Soviet approaches to policing prostitution were oriented towards three key objectives: removing perceived threats to the social order from urban space; preventing reputational damage to the USSR; and ensuring that the treasury retained all of its assets. The first objective was to be enforced through the passport regime and criminal justice system. Introduced by decree in 1932, the Soviet passport system codified the category of 'socially harmful element' as a distinctly punishable social identity, defined as a person either with criminal convictions or ties to the criminal world, or with no definite place of work.²⁴ Such individuals were to be incarcerated or forcefully removed from urban centres. Sex-working women were subject to this aggressive spatial

management, and along with individuals identified as hooligans, vagrants or criminals, were accosted by the police, removed from their place of residence, and even sent to labour camps.²⁵ Soviet leaders continued to deport and incarcerate so-called 'antisocial elements' on a mass scale after the Second World War, in an attempt to discipline a society decimated by social dislocation, mass displacement, unemployment and even starvation to serve the goal of state economic reconstruction.²⁶

A series of measures implemented in the years immediately following Stalin's death expanded definitions of what it meant to be an offender and stoked official and popular anxieties about manifestations of criminal or immoral behaviour. From 1953, interim leadership, and later Nikita Khrushchev, oversaw the significant scaling down of the Gulag system, including the granting of amnesty to millions of camp prisoners with the hope of their rehabilitation and reintegration back into society. The mass return of former prisoners into civilian society generated public panic across the Soviet Union, and the crime waves that followed were a matter of grave concern for the Soviet government.²⁷ In 1956, a petty hooligan decree was implemented across the USSR which unveiled a new zero-tolerance approach to antisocial behaviour, including insolence, drunkenness, the use of obscenity, noise disruption and 'other indecent acts', committed both in public or domestic spheres.²⁸ In the late 1950s and early 1960s, anti-parasite laws were enacted across the Soviet republics, which targeted individuals who made a living from informal economies, refused to work or socialized with foreigners.²⁹

At the 22nd Party Congress in 1961, Khrushchev reassured anxious citizens that as the goal of full-blown communism was now imminent, any deviant or criminal behaviour would no longer be tolerated and antisocial parasites, hooligans or immoral individuals would be removed from the wider Soviet community.³⁰ At the Congress, Khrushchev also issued the 'Moral Code of the Builder of Communism': a set of 12 vaguely worded tenets articulating the code of 'communist morality', an ideology that was to govern all aspects of both public and private life. The Code consisted of moral prescriptions that had been unwritten, but enforced, in earlier decades, including a devotion to Communism, patriotism towards the socialist Motherland, friendship between socialist societies, respect for the family, and concern for the upbringing of children.³¹ Although not explicitly mentioned in the Code, sex was also subject to communist morality in the Khrushchev era and beyond. Official and expert discourse discouraged sexual behaviour that did not conform to normative heterosexuality or that was outside marriage.³²

During this period of intense concern about morality and social order, individuals who engaged in criminal manifestations of sexuality, including queer sex and sex that resulted in disease, were targets for state intervention.³³ Although prostitution was not illegal, the Soviet police made full use of the passport regime and criminal justice system to target women thought to be engaging in prostitution. In September 1956, a senior police officer from the Leningrad police explicitly instructed officers how to prosecute suspected sex workers or ensure their removal from the city.³⁴ If a woman did not have a permanent place of residence, she was to be prosecuted for vagrancy. If she violated public order by insulting citizens or police officers, she could be charged with hooliganism or non-compliance with law enforcement. If she was believed to have infected another person with syphilis or gonorrhoea, she could be prosecuted for transmitting venereal diseases, a crime in the Soviet Union.³⁵ If her documents were not in order, she

could be expelled from the city for violating the passport regime. From the late 1950s, republican decrees confirmed that the police had the right to cancel the residency permits of women who had been repeatedly detained for prostitution and expel them from various Soviet cities, including Moscow, Leningrad, Riga, Kyiv and Baku.³⁶ Although prostitution itself was not a crime, the Soviet police had plenty of tools within its arsenal to enforce the de facto criminalization of commercial sex and cleanse urban space of sex-working women. The police were not required to produce robust evidence of a woman's engagement in prostitution in order to prosecute, so it is likely that women who were perceived to be sexually transgressive but did not practise paid sex would also have been targets for repression or police harassment.

The second objective in the policing of prostitution, preventing reputational damage to the USSR, was especially pertinent in the decades after Stalin's death, which were coloured by a deep unease about increased contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners. From the mid-1950s, Soviet leadership initiated dramatic shifts in foreign policy, departing from Stalinist isolationism to encourage peaceful coexistence and knowledge transfer with the West, and promote Soviet socialism in the decolonizing world.³⁷ These changes brought about the partial opening up of the Soviet Union to foreign tourists and a relaxation of restrictions on foreign travel for Soviet citizens, which resulted in a surge of foreigners visiting the Soviet Union.³⁸ This partial 'opening up' brought heightened self-consciousness about perceptions of the country on the world stage, especially as the USSR competed for ideological and cultural supremacy. Tourism officials expected Soviet tourists to act as cultural ambassadors, and worried about the impact of the ill-mannered and uncultured on the international reputation of the USSR.³⁹ Within the borders of the Soviet Union, Party officials endeavoured to choreograph interactions between Soviet citizens and foreign visitors to prevent ideological contamination, and attempted to strictly control which aspects of life foreign tourists and students were permitted to see.⁴⁰ Urban 'clean up' operations often preceded the mass influx of foreigners, as individuals who signified the failures of state socialism were removed from major cities to prevent reputational damage. Before the 1957 Youth Festival, thousands of sex workers, along with other 'socially dangerous elements', were removed from Moscow.⁴¹ Similar 'clean up' operations preceded the 1980 Olympic Games in cities across the Soviet Union.⁴²

In the Latvian SSR, a popular tourist destination for both Soviet and foreign tourists, the authorities professed a desire to 'protect' tourists from predatory sex workers. In Riga in 1971, permanent police patrols were established at the main entry points to the city, the railway and bus stations, as these locations were allegedly the main hangouts of sex-working women, as well as gay men.⁴³ The Latvian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) also branded the nearby seaside town of Jūrmala (a popular tourist destination from the late 1950s onwards), a magnet for sex workers during the summer months.⁴⁴ The Latvian MVD ordered a series of enhanced policing measures, including the compiling and sharing of photographic registers of suspected sex workers between regional police forces, so that women who sold sex could be targeted in any city.⁴⁵ Regional executive committees were instructed to establish close contact with the Latvian SSR's Administration for International Tourism to prevent groups of foreign tourists and seamen coming into contact with 'loose women' (*zhenshchiny legkogo povedeniia*, often a term used synonymously with 'prostitutes').⁴⁶ Viktors Krūmiņš, the deputy chairman

of Latvia's Council of Ministers, hoped that these measures would prevent further reputational damage for the republic, as he alleged Riga had a reputation as one of the 'seediest place[s] in the entire Soviet Union'.⁴⁷

The final objective in the policing of prostitution was to prevent the unauthorized transfer of foreign (or hard) currency, a coveted asset for the Soviet state. One of the principal roles of the Soviet Union's tourist agency, Intourist, was to generate profit in foreign currency so that the Soviet state was able to purchase equipment, construction materials and technology from abroad.⁴⁸ Intourist sold package tours to the USSR to foreign tourists, who paid in their local currency. The Soviet state extracted foreign currency from tourists through confiscatory official exchange rates, as well as foreign currency souvenir shops, hotels, bars and restaurants.⁴⁹ To ensure that the state had the monopoly on foreign currency exchange, currency speculation and exchange were illegal under Soviet law, carrying a prison sentence of three to 15 years.⁵⁰ From 1 July 1961, large-scale currency speculation was punishable by the death penalty.⁵¹

Sex workers who catered to foreigners (known colloquially as 'hard currency prostitutes', *valiutnye prostitutki*) greatly concerned the Soviet authorities because they were paid in foreign currency or goods. Police in popular tourist destinations attempted to prevent these women from meeting clients. In the Estonian SSR, the port of Tallinn was a common entry point for foreign tourists arriving on package tours, especially after the establishment of the Helsinki–Tallinn ferry line in 1965.⁵² The Estonian MVD reported an annual rise in the number of foreign tourists entering the city throughout the 1960s and 1970s.⁵³ Tallinn city police insisted that staff working at hotels frequented by foreigners compile photographic registers of known sex workers (and black marketeers) and refuse them entry.⁵⁴ In the mid-1980s, CCTV cameras were installed at Tallinn's Olimpiia Hotel to prevent sex workers from entering.⁵⁵

Surveillance, criminal law and the passport system were all tools utilized by the Soviet authorities in their efforts to prevent women from making a living selling sex and remove sex workers from cities. Health authorities also helped to bring sex-working women to the attention of law enforcement. In the Latvian SSR, medical workers were encouraged to attend brothel raids, examine any detainees for signs of venereal diseases, enforce the treatment for those found to be infected, and pass on the names of those suspected to have 'maliciously' infected another person to the police to initiate prosecution.⁵⁶ Urban residents were also encouraged to assist the police by taking an active role in crime control as part of the wider campaign for popular justice that began under Khrushchev. From 1959, a joint decree from the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee insisted that voluntary people's squads (*Dobrovol'nye narodnye druzhiny*, DND) were now to be organized in every farm and factory across the USSR. They were charged with patrolling the streets, identifying any individuals suspected to threaten social order, and informing their workplace or the police.⁵⁷ From the late 1950s, thousands of comrades' courts, which were voluntary organizations charged with keeping order within workplaces and apartment buildings, were established throughout the country. Comrades' courts could hear cases on antisocial behaviour that did not technically contravene written law, including poor work discipline, drunkenness, neglect of children or damage

to public property, and could apply sanctions including public warnings or fines, or even initiate eviction proceedings.⁵⁸ By 1964, there were 197,000 such comrades' courts across the USSR.⁵⁹

Volunteer organizations and comrades' courts played an active role in the policing of prostitution. Volunteer squads were permitted to patrol parks, squares and other city spaces to identify and detain suspected sex workers. In Riga, DNDs were instructed to interview and photograph detained women before transferring them onto the police.⁶⁰ In 1960, the Latvian MVD reported that the DND connected to the Latvian State University were 'particularly active in the struggle against prostitutes' in Riga.⁶¹ In 1960, comrades' courts in the city initiated the eviction of 34 people who had been accused of running brothels.⁶² In Tallinn, DNDs and Komsomol squads (*Operativnyi Komsomol'skii otriad družinnikov*, OKOD) were drafted in to intensify the policing of prostitution in the mid-1980s. The Estonian DNDs and OKODs collectively numbered 430 people, most of whom were male, and they were instructed by the Estonian Central Committee to conduct surveillance of hotels, restaurants, campsites, motels and dormitories.⁶³ Patrols of key sites frequented by foreigners were to be carried out every single day, including Tallinn's port, railway station, Old Town and the Olimpiia, Tallinn and Viru hotels, which specifically catered to foreign tourists.⁶⁴ Similar volunteer squads operated in the Estonian cities of Narva and Rakvere.⁶⁵ In January 1988, the Estonian Komsomol proudly reported that their volunteer squads had conducted 581 raids throughout 1987 and helped to prosecute 167 people.⁶⁶ Through volunteer squads, urban residents were encouraged to take an active role in ensuring social order and enforcing communist morality within their particular locality.

Resisting policing and 'getting by' under late socialism

Women who engaged in prostitution adopted strategies to circumvent the stringent policing and surveillance of urban centres. In Leningrad and Riga, many sex workers met with their clients in secluded suburban parks, dark staircases and the courtyards of quiet apartment buildings, away from the watchful eyes of residents' organizations and volunteer squads.⁶⁷ Drivers of state-owned taxis also transported women who sold sex to known remote locations for a fee, or rented out their back seats to allow women to engage in sex with clients while in transit around the city or suburbs.⁶⁸ According to the MVD in the Latvian SSR, this arrangement was also common in Riga in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁶⁹ At the 'Tallinn' restaurant in the centre of Riga, taxi drivers allegedly dropped off and picked up 'loose women' and 'drunken men' from 9pm until closing time.⁷⁰ In an attempt to put an end to this practice, in Leningrad in the late 1950s, the city police insisted that taxi drivers who entered into such financial arrangements ought to be prosecuted as pimps under the Soviet criminal code, but sex workers continued to cluster around taxi ranks in the city centre into the 1970s.⁷¹

Common locations for sex work in major cities also raise questions about the gulf between official discourse regarding the intensification of policing and the reality. In Leningrad, women solicited clients in central city locations, including the square in front of Moskovskii railway station, in the Ekaterininskii Garden, outside the Gostiny Dvor shopping centre, and in the Metropol, Baltika and Severnyi restaurants.⁷² Paid sex then took place at either the woman's or client's apartment, or in a rented room at a 'den'

(*priton*, synonym for brothel). Engaging in, or helping to facilitate, paid sex within apartments would have carried the constant risk of detection, especially given that the housing shortages of the post-war period put neighbours in extremely close proximity to one another. In 1957, Khrushchev launched a large-scale construction project, vowing to alleviate the mass housing shortages brought about by the wholesale destruction of the Second World War and provide each Soviet family with an apartment within 12 years.⁷³ By the mid-1960s, 964.7 million square metres of floor space had been produced and a third of the total Soviet population had been rehoused.⁷⁴ The results were impressive, but there was a huge gulf between the visions of Soviet leadership and the corresponding reality. Overcrowded living conditions persisted throughout the 1960s and beyond, as separate apartments were cramped, and millions continued to live in squalid housing or communal apartments with shared kitchens and bathrooms.⁷⁵

The fact that paid sex within apartments was on the rise in Leningrad in the late 1950s hints at the limitations of the intensification of civic policing under Khrushchev. Approximately 20% of Leningrad's housing had been destroyed in the Second World War: 3174 buildings had been razed to the ground and a further 7143 were severely damaged.⁷⁶ Despite a wholesale programme of post-war reconstruction, the spatial consequences of the destruction were evident throughout the 1950s and 1960s, especially as the city continued to act as a magnet for labour migrants. In 1951, an average of 3.3 families lived in each Leningrad apartment, and the city began to meet the national average of 80% of all families living in their own apartments only at the end of the 1970s.⁷⁷ Given the overcrowded nature of Leningrad housing, it is highly likely that many tenants were well aware that commercial sex was happening within their buildings and chose to turn a blind eye. Other tenants helped to facilitate prostitution for their own financial gain, such as O. A., a 58-year-old woman living in the city centre on the Fontanka River, who allowed women to bring their clients to her apartment for a fee of 15 roubles.⁷⁸ She was identified as a woman with a disability, which meant that she could work only under special conditions.⁷⁹ Under the social security system, she should have received between 23 and 90 roubles to account for her limited ability to engage in paid employment, so the extra 15 roubles that she received from each sex-working woman would have made her life more comfortable, or even just more feasible.⁸⁰ As well as providing a helpful top-up of wages or benefits, renting rooms for prostitution could also be an extremely lucrative endeavour. In 1969 in Moscow, three individuals were convicted for renting their rooms to sex workers and foreign clients. When the three properties were raided, the police found a substantial amount of foreign currency, including 57 US dollars, 225 Finnish marks, 69,000 Italian lira, 100 German marks, 200 Danish kroner and 50 Swiss francs.⁸¹ Brothel keeping carried a sentence of up to five years' imprisonment, but perhaps the financial gain was worth the risk.

Likewise, the lucrative nature of selling sex also likely made engaging in prostitution worth the risk of detection. In 1956, the Leningrad police reported that the women they detained as suspected sex workers charged between 25 and 100 roubles per transaction.⁸² In Riga in 1960, the police set the price at between 50 and 150 roubles.⁸³ To put this in perspective, the average monthly income of a Soviet citizen in 1956 ranged from 519 to 724 roubles.⁸⁴ Extra cash would have helped women purchase goods through informal channels that were either unavailable, or much more expensive, in state-owned shops. It

is impossible to decipher the complex and multifaceted reasons behind why a woman might engage in paid sex from a police report, but the biographies of women detained by the police in Leningrad in 1956 illustrate how state policy could make the financial benefits of sex work particularly attractive. There was 25-year-old K. B., who lived alone with her two-year-old child. She was working as a nurse, earning around 572 roubles per month.⁸⁵ Her child had been born outside marriage, which meant that under the conditions of the 1944 pro-natalist Family Law, B. was not able to claim child support from the father and instead had to rely on state-sponsored benefits.⁸⁶ Women were supposed to receive monthly payments of 150 to 300 roubles depending on the number of children, but these allocations were cut significantly both as the law was being drafted and again in 1947.⁸⁷ K. B. told the Leningrad police that she received between 50 and 100 roubles per client, which would have significantly increased her monthly income. Almost half of the women whose biographies were included in the Leningrad 1956 police report had dependent children. In 1959–60, a third of all women detained for prostitution in Baku had young children, and the Kyiv police claimed that most ‘loose women’ who were brought to the police station for were single mothers, or people who were unable to work because of health reasons.⁸⁸

The restrictive nature of the Soviet passport regime also likely made prostitution one of the only viable employment options for some women who lived within certain towns and cities without official permission. Living with urban centres was attractive as often these regions had higher quality and more consistent supplies of goods, both cultural and economic, than rural areas.⁸⁹ Through the internal passport system and complex plethora of urban residency restrictions, the Soviet government attempted to control population movement and prevent ‘undesirables’ from residing in urban centres, as well as direct industrial and urban growth. In order to live in the largest urban areas of the Soviet Union, citizens had to be in possession of a valid passport with a residency permit, and have an established place of employment.⁹⁰ Legal migration to ‘closed’ cities, including Moscow, Leningrad and Kyiv, was not possible without official approval.⁹¹ Violation of the passport regime was a criminal offence, but people routinely found ways around the passport regime by buying false residency permits on the black market or bribing officials.⁹² Engaging in paid sex was a strategy for remaining in restricted urban centres without a valid passport or residency permit, so long as the individuals could avoid police detection. When the police did become aware of women selling sex, they were able to cancel their residency permits in an attempt remove them from the city.⁹³ Despite this desired outcome, the cancellation of a residency permit likely increased a woman’s engagement in the commercial sex industry and the second economy, as it removed opportunities to earn money and rent accommodation through legal means.

In certain regions, the police begrudgingly admitted that official and popular efforts to prevent prostitution were not working. In 1960, the Latvian MVD acknowledged that tactics of shame and stigmatization were actually having the opposite effect.⁹⁴ Sex workers and brothel keepers who were evicted from Riga just continued their work in other regions within the republic. The social pressure applied to suspected sex workers or brothel keepers by comrades’ courts often resulted in the accused leaving their apartment or job and slipping outside networks of surveillance. The police invited sex workers for informal ‘chats’ (*besedy*), which were a method of prophylactic policing in which the accused was lectured about Soviet values and warned against allowing their antisocial

behaviour to develop into criminal activity.⁹⁵ In Riga, the police also invited a detained woman's parents or husband along to the 'chat', but they admitted that this very rarely had any positive influence on the woman's behaviour.⁹⁶ Sometimes women vocally rejected the moralizing of the Soviet police during informal 'chats'. In Odessa in 1960, N. S., a 21-year-old woman detained for prostitution, told the police that her way of life was her own business and in her opinion, the only right way to live (*takoi obraz zhizni – eto ee lichnoe delo i ona schitaet ego edinstvenno pravil'ny*).⁹⁷

Soviet officialdom continually overestimated police officers' and urban residents' ideological commitment to policing prostitution. Like other elements of the second economy, hard currency prostitution thrived in the USSR because of the compliance of the police, volunteer squads and Intourist employees. In August 1979, the USSR's Main Directorate for International Tourism noted that 'loose women' looking to engage in paid sex with foreigners were able to enter hotels as the entrances were often unguarded, or the guards did not conduct thorough checks of documentation.⁹⁸ The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Estonian SSR reported that Intourist employees regularly allowed individuals unauthorized access to hotels.⁹⁹ In 1987, doormen at the Viru Hotel in Tallinn (a first-class hotel reserved for foreigners paying with hard currency) were dismissed from their posts for allowing sex workers and black market traders to bribe their way onto the premises.¹⁰⁰ Volunteers of Komsomol brigades specifically formed to police prostitution often did not turn up for their shifts, and, by March 1988, these units had ceased operations in Tallinn.¹⁰¹ In June of the same year, the main office for the Estonian Voluntary People's Squads reported that their volunteers had been abusing their right to enter first-class Intourist hotels, although the report does not specify exactly what they did while they were inside.¹⁰²

Police also had to contend with inadequate facilities, as well as lukewarm commitment. In Tallinn, the city police had a dedicated unit for the suppression of prostitution and black marketeering, with headquarters at the Viru Hotel. The headquarters consisted of one single windowless room, in which police officers had to simultaneously deal with detained sex workers, black market traders and foreign citizens seeking to lodge complaints.¹⁰³ These inadequate facilities apparently caused the Soviet Union reputational damage, as Finnish tourists returned home and gave statements to the press about the shady deals that they had witnessed between the Soviet police and detainees. This was especially damaging as complaints about the Soviet police by Finnish tourist groups increased in the late 1980s, as did the number of sensationalized articles about 'hard currency prostitutes' and black market traders that appeared in Finnish newspapers.¹⁰⁴ To make matters worse, the authorities complained that porters, waiting staff and bartenders in Intourist hotels were 'loyal' to sex workers and black market traders, and continued to allow them to enter the premises illegally throughout the 1980s.¹⁰⁵

Prostitution was stigmatized labour in the Soviet Union, but moral condemnation was certainly not unanimous. Whereas some Soviet citizens were willing to assist the police in rooting out sex workers, others helped women avoid police detection, facilitated prostitution within their apartments or taxis, or were simply indifferent. Attitudes towards 'hard currency prostitution' were similarly varied. Women who engaged in paid sex with foreigners were able to access a world from which the vast majority of Soviet citizens were excluded, as their accumulation of hard currency granted them greater purchasing power and the ability to pay bribes. Following the relaxation of publication restrictions in the

late 1980s under the process of *glasnost* (openness), countless exposés of the glamorous and decadent lives of women who engaged in paid sex with foreigners appeared in Soviet newspapers.¹⁰⁶ This mass media campaign was orchestrated from above to coincide with the insertion of prostitution into legal code for the first time in Soviet history in 1987, when selling sex became an administrative offence punishable by a small fine.¹⁰⁷ Most articles were moralizing and even dehumanizing in tone, as journalists positioned 'hard currency prostitutes' as incompatible with Soviet society, advocated harsh punishment and questioned whether they were even able to feel human emotions, like shame and love.¹⁰⁸ However, consistent moralizing about hard currency prostitution did not necessarily have the desired effect. In 1989, the most popular film in the Soviet Union was *Interdevochka* (*Intergirl*), which explored the trials and tribulations of Tania Zaitseva, a 'hard currency prostitute' working in Leningrad.¹⁰⁹ Although the film was reportedly a propaganda piece commissioned by the MVD, it presented a largely positive image of hard currency prostitution, emphasizing the humanity and comparative material comfort of women who sold sex to foreigners.¹¹⁰ The depictions of glamour, foreign travel and material abundance in *Interdevochka* evidently struck a chord with some groups of young people, as soon after its release, hard-currency prostitution was listed as one of the most desirable professions in a poll conducted amongst teenagers in Riga and Leningrad.¹¹¹

The classification of prostitution as an administrative offence in 1987 did not act as a deterrent for women engaging in sex work. In June 1989, the USSR's Council of Ministers complained to the Supreme Court that there had been an increase in the number of women detained for prostitution, but that the administrative fine was too low to actually discourage women from continuing to engage in paid sex.¹¹² Under the 1987 legislation, a woman caught engaging in prostitution was to be fined 100 roubles in the first instance and 200 roubles for repeated offences, and the Council of Ministers judged this amount to be insignificant in comparison to a sex worker's total income.¹¹³ Other sources indicate that police in certain cities were reluctant to even issue fines in the first place, which suggests that bribery still played a key role in efforts to police prostitution. Legal scholars working for the MVD, Iurii Karpukhin and Iurii Torbin, reported that between 1987 and 1990, only 18 of the 1327 'hard currency prostitutes' detained in Moscow were actually fined.¹¹⁴ In the Estonian SSR, the number of women detained for prostitution fell each year after 1987.¹¹⁵ The lack of fines and declining numbers of detentions suggests that police surveillance functioned in ways that diverged from the intentions of the highest rungs of Soviet government, as perhaps police officers preferred to take hard currency bribes from the sex-working women that they caught while on patrol, rather than writing them up for an administrative offence.

Despite these problems, there was not widespread support for increasing the fine for prostitution within the state bureaucracy. In autumn 1989, the Council of Ministers proposed increasing the fine for selling sex (to 200 roubles for the first offence and 300 roubles for repeated offences) and transferring responsibility for prosecuting the administrative offence of prostitution from local executive committees to people's courts.¹¹⁶ In December 1989, the MVD, Committee for State Security (*Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*, KGB) and Main Administration for Tourism expressed support for these proposed changes in principle, but they cautioned against the use of All-Union law to address the issue of prostitution in the current political climate, especially given the

‘recent significant expansion of autonomy to the republics’.¹¹⁷ After a few months of silence on the issue, the Supreme Court of the USSR flatly rejected the Council of Ministers’ proposed changes in March 1990.¹¹⁸ Through apathy, indifference or resignation about the state’s inability to curb prostitution, the 1987 legislation remained in place until the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. Even in the present-day Russian Federation, prostitution has retained the status of an administrative offence punishable by a small fine.¹¹⁹

Conclusions

[Professional prostitutes] are outside the labour collective and not interested in anything outside their own idle existence. They easily fall under the influence of morally-degenerate and spiritually-desolate people, who are alien to us because of their rotten capitalist morals.¹²⁰

The quotation presented here was included in a report from the Ukrainian SSR’s MVD on prostitution that was sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR in September 1960. Hyperbolic and highly emotive, it epitomizes official attitudes towards prostitution in the final decades of the Soviet Union. Rather than a consequence of inadequate resources, gender hierarchies, social exclusion, stringent residency restrictions and a desire for upward social mobility, prostitution, in the eyes of the Soviet authorities, was a foreign, capitalist problem and activity engaged in only by those who fell outside norms of communist morality and inhabited the dark fringes of Soviet society. Rather than acknowledge the home-grown aspects of widespread commercial sex, or tackle the social and economic causes, the state subjected sex workers to administrative sanctions.

In the USSR, prostitution was a visible reminder of the broader challenges facing the Soviet state in the post-war era, namely reconstruction following the destruction of the Second World War, and the risks of increased contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners after the end of Stalinist isolationism. Attempts to prevent women from selling sex in urban space were entangled with the spatial politics of the long post-war era. The Soviet police used the de facto criminalization of prostitution to assert control over the urban environment and cleanse urban spaces of unwelcome reminders of the failures of state socialism. Even though prostitution itself was not a crime, the police had the power to expel sex workers from cities on charges of vagrancy, violation of the passport regime or parasitism. As the USSR became more accessible to foreign visitors, the need to impose order upon urban space became more urgent, as Soviet officials worried about the impact of visible ‘antisocial elements’ on the country’s reputation. Women who sold sex to foreigners were especially troubling for Soviet officialdom. Not only did their existence invalidate the official myths of the eradication of prostitution in the USSR, but their accumulation of foreign currency both deprived the treasury of a valuable commodity and allowed these women to violate class norms and gain access to supposedly restricted spaces, like first-class hotels reserved for foreigners.

Throughout the post-war period, the gulf between the Party line and the corresponding reality grew wider. Calls for the intensification of policing did not deliver the desired results, as women selling sex developed strategies to avoid detection, and collaborated

with apartment owners, taxi drivers and Intourist hotel employees to continue engaging in prostitution. Even after the classification of prostitution as an administrative offence in 1987, the Soviet police imposed only a handful of fines, perhaps preferring to collect bribes and issue official warnings. The specific conditions of late Soviet socialism, particularly the contrast between the deficit-based state economy and the thriving informal second economy, created fertile conditions for the growth of prostitution.

Notes

1. Latvijas Valsts arhīvs (Latvian State Archives, LVA) f. PA-101, apr. 37, l. 47, lp. 104.
2. The literature on Soviet post-war propaganda is vast, so to name a few select examples: Tsipursky, "Domestic Cultural Diplomacy and Soviet State-Sponsored Popular Culture"; Varga-Harris, "Between National Tradition and Western Modernization"; and Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen."
3. Dolinsek and Hetherington, "Socialist Internationalism and Decolonising Moralities."
4. Hetherington, "Prostitution in Moscow and St Petersburg."
5. Hearne, *Policing Prostitution*; and Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters*.
6. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 295. For Marx, prostitution was a manifestation of the exploitation of workers under capitalism, as he noted in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 that 'prostitution is only a specific expression of the general prostitution of the labourer'.
7. Bernstein, "Prostitutes and Proletarians," 113–28.
8. Hearne, "Liberation and Authoritarianism," 237–42; and Waters, "Victim or Villain," 160–77.
9. Waters, "Restructuring the 'Woman Question,'" 13.
10. Stevenson Sanjian, "Prostitution, the Press, and Agenda-Building," 287–92.
11. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 111–16; Hearne, "Liberation and Authoritarianism"; and Bernstein, "Prostitutes and Proletarians."
12. Waters, "Victim or Villain"; Bernstein, "Envisioning Health in Revolutionary Russia," 206–11; and Hazanov, "Porous Empire," 155–223.
13. Healey, "Masculine Purity and 'Gentlemen's Mischief'; and Lebina and Shkarovskii, *Prostitutsiia v Peterburge*.
14. Marcinkeviciene and Praspaliauskiene, "Prostitution in Postwar Lithuania," 651–60.
15. Waters, "Restructuring the 'Woman Question'; and Stevenson Sanjian, "Prostitution."
16. Brüning, *Prostitution in der DDR*; Brenner, "Behind the Crime of 'Parasitism'; Komaromi, "Hunters, Hotels, and Hungarian Girls"; Hynson, "Count, Capture, and Reeducate"; Marcinkeviciene and Praspaliauskiene, "Prostitution in Postwar Lithuania"; and Havelková, "Blaming all Women."
17. Fürst, "Introduction: To Drop or Not to Drop?"; and Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality*.
18. Hazanov, "Porous Empire," 157; and Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours*, 49–51.
19. Cohn, "A Soviet Theory of Broken Windows," 774; Risch, "A Soviet West," 73–5; and Leps, "Comparative Analysis of Crime," 81.
20. Lipša, "Prostitution in Riga City," 185–90.
21. *Istochnik dokumenta: istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, 394–5, 402, 405.
22. Hazanov, "Porous Empire," 183.
23. Havelková, "Blaming all Women."
24. Shearer, "Elements Near and Alien," 840.
25. Lebina and Shkarovskii, *Prostitutsiia v Peterburge*, 132–78.
26. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, 405–36.
27. Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*.

28. Broad definitions of hooliganism created what Brian LaPierre has termed an ‘avalanche of offenders’ as millions of people were detained, fined or briefly incarcerated: LaPierre, “Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale” and LaPierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev’s Russia*.
29. On the drafting and implementation of these laws, see Fitzpatrick, “Social Parasites.”
30. Dobson, *Khrushchev’s Cold Summer*, 239.
31. Field, *Private Life*, 24.
32. Field, *Private Life*, 51–7.
33. Healey, *Russian Homophobia*, 40–5; and Alexander, “Soviet Legal and Criminological Debates.”
34. “Spravka UM g. Leningrada o rasprostraneniі prostitutsii,” 517. [q]/[q]
35. Hearne, “Sanitizing Sex in the USSR.”
36. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, RGANI) f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 34, 43, 48–49, 50. Fitzpatrick, “Social Parasites,” 397.
37. For an overview of this shift, see Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 94–192.
38. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*.
39. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World*, 100–16.
40. Hornsby, “The Enemy Within?”; and Roth-Ey, “Loose Girls on the Loose?,” 75–95.
41. Koivenun, “The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival.”
42. Shelley, *Policing Soviet Society*, 111. On ‘clean up’ operations in Tallinn, see Pagel, “Finnish Tourists in Soviet Estonia,” 386.
43. LVA, f. PA-101, apr. 37, l. 47, lp. 87.
44. LVA, f. PA-101, apr. 37, l. 47, lp. 88. On the popularity of Jūrmala see Zake, “Soviet Inturist and Foreign Travel,” 48.
45. LVA, f. PA-101, apr. 37, l. 47, lp. 99. In 1971, there were 2600 women suspected to be engaged in prostitution known to the police in the Latvian SSR. It is unclear whether all of these women appeared on these photographic police registers.
46. LVA, f. PA-101, apr. 37, l. 47, lp. 88.
47. LVA, f. PA-101, apr. 37, l. 47, lp. 111.
48. Salmon, “Marketing Socialism,” 186–202.
49. Hazanov, “Porous Empire,” 183; and Salmon, “Marketing Socialism,” 193–7.
50. This was under article 88 of the 1960 Criminal Code. The full text of the article can be found in Tikhonova and Bol’shakov, ed. *Kommentarii k ugovnomu kodeksu RSFSR, 1960 g.*
51. On shifting conceptions of socialist legality and morality in relation to death penalty sentences, see Hardy and Skorobogatov, “We Can’t Just Shoot Everyone.”
52. On domestic and foreign tourism to the Estonian SSR, see Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, 49–78.
53. Pagel, “Finnish Tourists in Soviet Estonia,” 377–9; Rahvusarhiiv (National Archives of Estonia) ERAF.17SM.4.608, lk. 111.
54. ERAF.17SM.4.608, lk. 116; ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 8.
55. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 8.
56. See Hearne, “Sanitizing Sex in the USSR.”
57. Dobson, *Khrushchev’s Cold Summer*, 142.
58. Field, *Private Life*, 30.
59. Gorlizki, “Delegalisation in Russia,” 403.
60. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 44.
61. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 44.
62. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 44.
63. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 3–5. In June 1988, the main office of People’s Voluntary Brigades in the Estonian SSR reported that in the Tallinn special unit they had just 33 female volunteers out of a total of 521. Just under half of the volunteers were ethnically Estonian and Party members. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 17.
64. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 33.
65. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 12.

66. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 10.
67. "Spravka UM g. Leningrada," 514. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 40.
68. Official Soviet policy did not encourage the sale of private cars to citizens until the mid-1960s. Khrushchev in particular was an advocate of state-owned taxis over private car ownership; Gronow and Zhuravlev, "Soviet Luxuries," 134.
69. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 40.
70. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 41.
71. "Spravka UM g. Leningrada," 517; Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (Central State Archive of St Petersburg, TsGASPB) f. R8975, op. 11, d. 91, l. 2. Under article 155 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, 'coercion or recruitment of a woman to engage in prostitution, pimping, and maintenance of a den of debauchery' were all punishable by up to five years imprisonment with the confiscation of property. Ministerstvo Iustitsii RSFSR, *Ugolovnyi kodeks RSFSR*, 102.
72. "Spravka UM g. Leningrada," 512; TsGASPB, f. R8975, op. 11, d. 91, l. 2.
73. On the impact of the Second World War on Soviet housing stock see Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home*, 4–5.
74. Field, *Private Life*, 28; Attwood, *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia*, 170.
75. On the limitations of the Khrushchev-era housing project, see Attwood, *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia*, 170–3 and chapter 5 of Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*.
76. Dale, *Demobilized Veterans*, 44.
77. Ruble, *Leningrad*, 65.
78. I have chosen to not include the names of women that appear in police files throughout the article. "Spravka UM g. Leningrada," 513.
79. In the Soviet Union, disability classification divided 'invalids' by their ability to work. There were three groups: first, those who could not work and needed constant nursing care; second, those who did not require constant care and could work under special conditions; and, third, those who were able to engage in part-time or casual work. Phillips, "There Are No Invalids in the USSR!"
80. Andreeva was identified as an 'invalid of the second category'. On minimum and maximum disability pensions, see Madison, "Programs for the Disabled in the USSR," 178.
81. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation, GARF) f. A461, op. 12, d. 131, l. 392.
82. "Spravka UM g. Leningrada," 512.
83. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 39.
84. Ironside, "Between Fiscal, Ideological, and Social Dilemmas," 872; and Zakharova, "Dior in Moscow," 107.
85. "Spravka UM g. Leningrada," 515. Zakharova, "Dior in Moscow," 107.
86. The 1944 Family Law was introduced to increase the birth rate following the colossal loss of life in the Second World War. Under the law, men were no longer obliged to pay child support to children born out of wedlock and women were given various financial incentives for bearing children. Nakachi, "N. S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law."
87. Nakachi, "N. S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law," 55.
88. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 47, 52. This trend continued in later decades, Stevenson Sanjian, "Prostitution," 280.
89. Buckley, "The Myth of Managed Migration," 900.
90. On the mechanics of the passport system, see Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, 246–53.
91. By 1956, a total of 48 cities were 'closed' to migrants without official approval and a further 23 had strict migration restrictions in line with their planned economic development, Buckley, "The Myth of Managed Migration," 905–6.
92. See Dale, *Demobilized Veterans*, 140.
93. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 34, 43.
94. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 43.
95. On the use of this method of prophylactic policing by the KGB, see Cohn, "A Soviet Theory of Broken Windows."

96. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 43.
97. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 57.
98. ERA.R2288.2.64, lk. 38–39.
99. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 5.
100. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 24. On the preferential treatment of foreigners at first-class hotels, see Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, 69.
101. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 17.
102. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 18.
103. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 29.
104. Saarinen, “The Soviet Union and Soviet Citizens in Finnish Magazines,” 99–100; ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 22.
105. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 37.
106. For an overview on the impact of Gorbachev’s reforms on the Soviet media, see McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Soviet Media*.
107. Waters, “Restructuring the ‘Woman Question’,” 4; and Stevenson Sanjian, “Prostitution,” 285–91.
108. Waters, “Restructuring the ‘Woman Question’,” 11; Hazanov, “Porous Empire,” 220–1.
109. The film was based upon a story of the same name, published by Vladimir Kunin in the magazine *Aurora* in 1988.
110. Hazanov, “Porous Empire,” 221.
111. Karpukhin and Torbin, “Prostitutsiia: zakon i realnost,” 112.
112. GARF, f. R9474, op. 10, d. 1078, l. 2.
113. GARF, f. R9474, op. 10, d. 1078, l. 3.
114. Karpukhin and Torbin, “Prostitutsiia,” 115.
115. ERAF.1.4.7263, lk. 43–44.
116. GARF, f. R9474, op. 10, d. 1078, l. 7.
117. GARF, f. R9474, op. 10, d. 1078, l. 28. The statement likely refers to the legislative election of March–May 1989, the first relatively free election held in the Soviet Union. On the impact of the elections on the USSR’s political system, see Lentini, “Reforming the Electoral System.” In 1988, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian were reinstated as the official languages of each respective republic. Estonia also declared national sovereignty in November of that year. On the influence of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Popular Fronts on demands for sovereignty across the Union republics, see Muiznieks, “The Influence of the Baltic Popular Movement.”
118. GARF, f. R9474, op. 10, d. 1078, l. 30.
119. Hetherington, “Prostitution in Moscow and St Petersburg,” 142.
120. RGANI, f. 5, op. 47, d. 353, l. 57.

Acknowledgements

This research was generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust. I would like to thank Yana Skorobogatov, Philippa Hetherington and the other contributors to this issue for their extremely helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. Special thanks must also go to the anonymous reviewers for their kind, insightful and encouraging remarks.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was supported by the Leverhulme Trust under grants [SAS-2017-040] and [ECF-2018-268].

Notes on contributor

Siobhán Hearne is a historian of gender and sexuality in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. She is currently a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at Durham University (UK). She is the author of *Policing Prostitution: Regulating the Lower Classes in Late Imperial Russia* (Oxford University Press, 2021), as well as various articles about prostitution, venereal diseases and pornography in imperial Russian and Soviet history.

ORCID

Siobhán Hearne  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6442-6543>

References

Primary sources

- Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga. Konets 1920-x–pervaia polovina 1950-x godov, tom 1: massovye repressii v SSSR* [The History of the Stalinist Gulag from the late 1920s to the early 1950s. vol. 1: Mass repressions in the USSR] edited by S. V. Mironenko and N. Werth. Moscow, Rosspen: 2004.
- Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (State Archive of the Russian Federation).
- f. A461 – Prosecutor of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic.
- f. R9474 – Supreme Court of the USSR.
- Latvijas Valsts arhīvs* (Latvian State Archives).
- f. PA-101 – Latvian Communist Party Central Committee.
- Rahvusaarhiiv* (National Archives of Estonia).
- ERAF.17SM – Ministry of Internal Affairs, Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.
- ERAF 1.4 – Estonian Communist Party Central Committee.
- ERA.R2288 – Department of Foreign Tourism under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers.
- Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii* (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History).
- f. 5 – Apparatus of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
- Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga* (Central State Archive of St Petersburg).
- f. R8975 – Leningrad Prosecutor's Office.
- “Spravka UM g. Leningrada o rasprostraneniі prostitutsii.” In *Na ‘kraiu’ sovetskogo obshchestva: sotsial'nye marginaly kak ob'ekt gosudarstvennoi politiki, 1945–1960-e gg.* [On the ‘edge’ of Soviet society: the socially marginalised as an object of state policy, 1945–1960] edited by E. Zubkova and T. Zhukova, 512–517. Moscow: Rosspen 2010.

Secondary sources

- Alexander, R. “Soviet Legal and Criminological Debates about the Decriminalisation of Homosexuality (1965–75).” *Slavic Review* 77, no. 1 (2018): 35–37. doi:[10.1017/slr.2018.9](https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2018.9).
- Attwood, L. *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia: Private Life in a Public Space*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.
- Bernstein, F. “Envisioning Health in Revolutionary Russia: The Politics of Sexual-Enlightenment Posters of the 1920s.” *The Russian Review* 57, no. 2 (1998): 191–217. doi:[10.1111/0036-0341.00018](https://doi.org/10.1111/0036-0341.00018).
- Bernstein, F. “Prostitutes and Proletarians: The Soviet Labour Clinic as Revolutionary Laboratory.” In *The Human Tradition in Modern Russia*, edited by W. B. Husband, 113–128. Lanham: Scholarly Resources, 2000.
- Bernstein, L. *Sonia's Daughters: Prostitutes and Their Regulation in Imperial Russia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

- Brenner, C. "Behind the Crime of 'Parasitism': The Hidden History of Prostitution in Socialist Czechoslovakia." In *Prostitution in the History of Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by S. Dolinsek and M. Saryusz-Wolska. Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, forthcoming 2021.
- Brüning, S. *Prostitution in der DDR: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel von Rostock, Berlin und Leipzig, 1968 bis 1989*. Berlin: be.bra verlag, 2020.
- Buckley, C. "The Myth of Managed Migration: Migration Control and the Market in the Soviet Period." *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 896–916. doi:[10.2307/2501398](https://doi.org/10.2307/2501398).
- Cohn, E. "A Soviet Theory of Broken Windows: Prophylactic Policing and the KGB's Struggle with Political Unrest in the Baltic Republics." *Kritika* 19, no. 4 (2018): 769–792. doi:[10.1353/kri.2018.0044](https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2018.0044).
- Dale, R. *Demobilized Veterans in Late Stalinist Leningrad: Soldiers to Civilians*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Dobson, M. *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Dolinsek, S., and P. Hetherington. "Socialist Internationalism and Decolonising Moralities in the UN Anti-Trafficking Regime, 1947–1954." *Journal of the History of International Law* 21, no. 2 (2019): 212–238. doi:[10.1163/15718050-12340112](https://doi.org/10.1163/15718050-12340112).
- Field, D. A. *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.
- Fitzpatrick, S. "Social Parasites: How Tramps, Idle Youth, and Busy Entrepreneurs Impeded the Soviet March to Communism." *Cahiers du monde russe* 47, no. 1–2 (2006): 377–408. doi:[10.4000/monderusse.9607](https://doi.org/10.4000/monderusse.9607).
- Fürst, J. "Introduction: To Drop or Not to Drop?" In *Dropping Out of Socialism: The Creation of Alternative Spheres in the Soviet Bloc*, edited by J. Fürst and J. McLellan, 1–20. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Gorlizki, Y. "Delegalisation in Russia: Soviet Comrades' Courts in Retrospect." *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 46, no. 3 (1998): 403–425. doi:[10.2307/840839](https://doi.org/10.2307/840839).
- Gorsuch, A. E. *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Gronow, J., and S. Zhuravlev. "Soviet Luxuries from Champagne to Private Cars." In *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by D. Crowley and S. E. Reid, 121–146. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010.
- Hardy, J., S., and Y. Skorobogatov. "'We Can't Just Shoot Everyone': Supreme Soviet Discussions of Death Row Pardons, 1953–1964." *Cahiers du monde russe* 59, no. 4 (2018): 473–498. doi:[10.4000/monderusse.10532](https://doi.org/10.4000/monderusse.10532).
- Harris, S. E. *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013.
- Havelková, B. "Blaming All Women: On the Regulation of Prostitution in State Socialist Czechoslovakia." *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 36, no. 1 (2016): 165–191. doi:[10.1093/ojls/gqv022](https://doi.org/10.1093/ojls/gqv022).
- Hazanov, A. "Porous Empire: Foreign Visitors and the Post-Stalin Soviet State." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2016.
- Healey, D. "Masculine Purity and 'Gentlemen's Mischief': Sexual Exchange and Prostitution between Russian Men, 1861–1941." *Slavic Review* 60, no. 2 (2001): 233–265. doi:[10.2307/2697270](https://doi.org/10.2307/2697270).
- Healey, D. *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Hearne, S. "Liberation and Authoritarianism in the Early Soviet Campaign to 'Struggle with Prostitution'." In *The Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution: Illiberal Liberation, 1917–1941*, edited by L. Douds, J. Harris, and P. Whitewood, 231–244. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.
- Hearne, S. *Policing Prostitution: Regulating the Lower Classes in Late Imperial Russia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Hearne, S. "Sanitizing Sex in the USSR: State Approaches to Sexual Health in the Brezhnev Era." *Europe-Asia Studies*, forthcoming 2021.
- Hetherington, P. "Prostitution in Moscow and St Petersburg, Russia." In *Selling Sex in the City: A Global History of Prostitution, 1600–2000s*, edited by M. R. García, E. van Nederveen Meerkerk, and L. H. van Voss, 138–170. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

- Hornsby, R. "The Enemy Within? The Komsomol and Foreign Youth inside the Post-Stalin Soviet Union, 1957–1985." *Past & Present* 232, no. 1 (2016): 237–278. doi:[10.1093/pastj/gtw011](https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtw011).
- Hynson, R. "Count, Capture, and Reeducate: The Campaign to Rehabilitate Cuba's Female Sex Workers, 1959–1966." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 1 (2015): 125–153. doi:[10.7560/JHS24106](https://doi.org/10.7560/JHS24106).
- Ironside, K. "Between Fiscal, Ideological, and Social Dilemmas: The Soviet 'Bachelor Tax' and Post-War Tax Reform, 1941–1962." *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 6 (2017): 855–878. doi:[10.1080/09668136.2017.1344189](https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2017.1344189).
- Karpukhin, I. G., and I. G. Torbin. "'Prostitutsiia: zakon i realnost'" [Prostitution: law and reality]. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 5 (1992): 111–117.
- Koivenun, P. "The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival: Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union." In *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, edited by M. Ilić and J. Smith, 46–65. London: Routledge, 2009.
- Komaromi, P. "Hunters, Hotels, and Hungarian Girls: Moral Panic at the Intersection of Prostitution and Tourism under Hungarian 'Consumer Socialism.'" In *Prostitution in the History of Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by S. Dolinsek and M. Saryusz-Wolska. Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, forthcoming 2021.
- Kunin, V. *Interdevochka*. Moscow: Avropa, 1988.
- LaPierre, B. "Making Hooliganism on a Mass Scale: The Campaign against Petty Hooliganism in the Soviet Union, 1956–1964." *Cahiers du monde russe* 47, no. 1–2 (2006): 349–375. doi:[10.4000/monderusse.9606](https://doi.org/10.4000/monderusse.9606).
- LaPierre, B. *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.
- Lebina, N. B., and M. V. Shkarovskii. *Prostitutsiia v Peterburge (40e gg. XIXv. – 40e gg. XX v)* [Prostitution in Petersburg (1840s–1940s)]. Moscow: Progress Akademiia, 1994.
- Ledeneva, A. V. *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Lentini, P. "Reforming the Electoral System: The 1989 Election to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies." *Journal of Communist Studies* 7, no. 1 (1991): 69–94. doi:[10.1080/13523279108415072](https://doi.org/10.1080/13523279108415072).
- Leps, A. "Comparative Analysis of Crime: Estonia, the Other Baltic Republics, and the Soviet Union." *International Criminal Justice Review* 1, no. 1 (1991): 69–92. doi:[10.1177/105756779100100106](https://doi.org/10.1177/105756779100100106).
- Lipša, I. "Prostitution in Riga City." In *Trafficking in Women, 1924–1926: The Paul Kinsie Reports for the League of Nations, Vol. II*, edited by J.-M. Chaumont, M. R. García, and P. Servais, 185–190. Geneva: United Nations Publications, 2017.
- McNair, B. *Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Soviet Media*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Madison, B. "Programs for the Disabled in the USSR." In *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory, and Practice*, edited by W. O. McCagg and L. H. Siegelbaum, 167–198. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1989.
- Marcinkeviciene, D., and R. Praspaliauskiene. "Prostitution in Postwar Lithuania." *Women's History Review* 12, no. 4 (2003): 651–660. doi:[10.1080/09612020300200378](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020300200378).
- Marx, K., and F. Engels. *Collected Works*, vol. 3. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing, 1975.
- Ministerstvo Iustitsii RSFSR. *Ugolovnyi kodeks RSFSR* [The Criminal Code of the RSFSR]. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1950.
- Muiznieks, N. R. "The Influence of the Baltic Popular Movements on the Process of Soviet Disintegration." *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 1 (1995): 3–25. doi:[10.1080/09668139508412242](https://doi.org/10.1080/09668139508412242).
- Nakachi, M. "N. S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law: Politics, Reproduction, and Language." *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 20, no. 1 (2006): 40–68. doi:[10.1177/0888325405284313](https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325405284313).
- Pagel, O. "Finnish Tourists in Soviet Estonia: Security Considerations." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 50, no. 3 (2019): 375–391. doi:[10.1080/01629778.2018.1517813](https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2018.1517813).
- Phillips, S. D. "There are No Invalids in the USSR?: A Missing Soviet Chapter in the New Disability History." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2009). doi:[10.18061/dsq.v29i3.936](https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v29i3.936).

- Reid, S. E. "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev." *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (2002): 211–252. doi:[10.2307/2697116](https://doi.org/10.2307/2697116).
- Risch, W. "A Soviet West: Nationhood, Regionalism, and Empire in the Annexed Western Borderlands." *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 63–81. doi:[10.1080/00905992.2014.956072](https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.956072).
- Roth-Ey, K. "'Loose Girls' on the Loose?: Sex, Propaganda and the 1957 Youth Festival." In *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by M. Ilić, S. Reid, and L. Attwood, 75–95. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004.
- Ruble, B. A. *Leningrad: Shaping a Soviet City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Saarinén, T. "The Soviet Union and Soviet Citizens in Finnish Magazines." *Nordliit* 31, no. 31 (2014): 91–108. doi:[10.7557/13.3058](https://doi.org/10.7557/13.3058).
- Salmon, S. "Marketing Socialism: Intourist in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s." In *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Socialism and Capitalism*, edited by A. Gorsuch and D. Koenker, 186–202. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Shearer, D. R. "Elements near and Alien: Passportization, Policing, and Identity in the Stalinist State." *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 4 (2004): 835–881. doi:[10.1086/427570](https://doi.org/10.1086/427570).
- Shearer, D. R. *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924–1953*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Shelley, L. I. *Policing Soviet Society: The Evolution of State Control*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Stevenson Sanjian, A. "Prostitution, the Press, and Agenda-Building in the Soviet Policy Process." In *Soviet Social Problems*, edited by A. Jones, W. D. Connor, and D. E. Powell, 270–298. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.
- Tikhonova, G. P., and A. A. Bol'shakov, ed. *Kommentarii k ugolovnomu kodeksu RSFSR, 1960 g.* [Commentary on the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, 1960]. St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo leningradskogo universiteta, 1962.
- Tsipursky, G. "Domestic Cultural Diplomacy and Soviet State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Cold War, 1953–1962." *Diplomatic History* 41, no. 5 (2017): 985–1009. doi:[10.1093/dh/dhx043](https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhx043).
- Varga-Harris, C. *Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life During the Khrushchev Years*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Varga-Harris, C. "Between National Tradition and Western Modernization: Soviet Woman and Representations of Socialist Gender Equality as a 'Third Way' for Developing Countries, 1956–1964." *Slavic Review* 78, no. 3 (2019): 758–781. doi:[10.1017/slr.2019.233](https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2019.233).
- Waters, E. "Restructuring the 'Woman Question': Perestroika and Prostitution." *Feminist Review* 33, no. 1 (1989): 3–19. doi:[10.1057/fr.1989.27](https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1989.27).
- Waters, E. "Victim or Villain: Prostitution in Post-Revolutionary Russia." In *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union*, edited by L. Edmondson, 160–177. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Wood, E. A. *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Zake, I. "Soviet Intourist and Foreign Travel to the Latvian SSR in the Post-Stalin Era: A Case of Ethnic Tourism." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 20, no. 2 (2018): 38. doi:[10.1162/jcws_a_00816](https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_00816).
- Zakharova, L. "Dior in Moscow: A Taste for Luxury in Soviet Fashion under Khrushchev." In *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, edited by D. Crowley and S. E. Reid, 95–120. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010.
- Zubok, V. *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*. Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.