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How tramps, idle youth, and busy entrepreneurs impeded the soviet  
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SHEILA FITZPATRICK

## SOCIAL PARASITES

### How tramps, idle youth, and busy entrepreneurs impeded the Soviet march to communism

The Soviet Union had a well-established tradition of administrative handling of beggars, tramps, and prostitutes, which was to remove them from cities without benefit of judicial process. In 1951, however, it was found necessary to issue a law allowing people's courts to sentence "anti-social, parasitical elements" to five years exile; and in 1957 a revised law on the same topic was drafted and published for public and institutional discussion. The thrust of these laws was significantly different. Whereas the 1951 law focussed narrowly on beggars, tramps, and prostitutes, the 1957 law had a much broader definition of what constituted the "anti-social, parasitical" part of society: its targets included persons making a living from the second (informal) economy (even those who were formally employed in the first economy), as well as other sources of social danger such as young people who were unwilling to work or liked to hang around foreigners. Could such behaviors be tolerated with Communism already on the horizon? Khrushchev thought not, and for almost four years (1957-1961) a Central Committee commission struggled to produce an anti-parasite position that would cover *all* undesirable social phenomena and involve the public (*obshchestvennost*) in the clean-up to boot.

A Leningrad poet, Natalia Grudinina, correctly perceived this as a utopian endeavor: "The decree against the parasites was a sign of the times. Our society was held captive by illusions. We were promised communism within twenty years and this promise was proclaimed from the highest tribune. As it was presented, the decree was a link along the chain that would take us towards our cherished goal. The parasite decree was used to save us from all kinds of speculators, black-marketeers and spongers (*tuneiadtsy*)."<sup>1</sup> As such, it necessarily failed, along the

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1. Quoted in Miriam Jane Dobson, "Re-fashioning the Enemy: Popular Beliefs and the Rhetoric of De-Stalinization, 1953-64," PhD dissertation, University College London, 2003, 268.

way causing great offence to jurists, who were pushing for socialist legality and found the anti-parasite drive pointing the other way, and liberals. But it is neither the struggle on the legal front nor the effort to involve *obshchestvennost'* that are my central concerns in this paper. Rather, my interest is in using the 1961 anti-parasite law and the extensive discussion that preceded it as a lens through which to view Soviet society under Khrushchev. This is an issue whose broad ramifications make it particularly illuminating on the manner that society actually functioned, the way its leaders conceptualized its functioning and trajectory, and the increasingly visible gulf between the two.

### Legislating against “parasites”

In the early modern period, most European states had legislation against vagrancy, though it had generally been eroded or fallen out of use by the twentieth century. Imperial Russia's laws against vagrancy (*brodiazhnichestvo*) were notable for their focus not so much on tramps' behavior per se as on refusal to produce appropriate identification and acknowledge their place in the social scheme: the harsh sentences of 4 years' exile to Yakutia mandated by law in late Imperial times were bestowed on those who either resided in a certain place or moved from place to place “not only without the knowledge of the police and without the appropriate documents (*ustanovlennykh na to vidov*) but also without being able to show identification as a member of a social estate (*sostoianie ili zvanie*) or “stubbornly repudiating” any such membership.<sup>2</sup> The origins of this law presumably lie both in serfdom, that is, in the need to punish runaway serfs, and Imperial taxation practices.

As so often, early Soviet law contemptuously dismissed the repressive laws and practices of Imperial times, but after a while Soviet practice started to revert to them. Writing in the *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* in 1927, A. Estrin asserted that “Soviet criminal law does not recognize the very concept of *brodiazhnichestvo*. Regarding vagrancy and begging as a product of the existence of a so-called ‘reserve army of labor,’ Soviet power at the present transitional period, when unemployment is still not outlived, does not resort to pointless measures of criminal repression in the struggle with this social evil.”<sup>3</sup> In the 1920s, policy towards marginals was debated between advocates of the “soft” line (often associated with the social-security authorities), treating the marginals as “social anomalies” and seeking to help them, and the tougher policy favored by the police, who often used the terms “social parasites” and “social danger.”<sup>4</sup> By the end of the 1920s, however,

2. See entry for “Brodiazhnichestvo” by A. Trainin, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' tov. 'Br. A. i I. Granat i Ko'*, 7th ed., vol. 6 (M.: n.d. [c. 1912]).

3. Entry for “Brodiazhnichestvo” in *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 1st ed., vol. 7 (M.: 1927).

4. G. A. Bordiugov, “Sotsial'nyi parazitizm ili sotsial'nye anomalii? (Iz istorii bor'by s alkogolizmom, nishchenstvom, prostitutsiei, brodiazhnichestvom v 20-30-e gody),” *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 1 (1989): 60-73.

some jurists were recognizing the necessity of “resolving the question [...] of persistent (*zlostnye*) begging and prostitution” by legislating coercive means, namely expulsion from population centers, forced placement in labor institutions, incarceration, and so on.<sup>5</sup> After collectivization and dekulakization flooded towns and countryside with uprooted persons, the “social danger” line definitively prevailed.

The kulak deportations that accompanied collectivization brought something like vagrancy back into the foreground as an administrative problem, since one of their by-products was that many of the deported tried to escape the settlements they had been sent to and return home. Then, with the reintroduction of internal passports in 1933, large numbers of “socially-dangerous” individuals were expelled from big cities after the police refused to issue them with new passports and urban residence permits.<sup>6</sup> Thus once again (as in Imperial times) absence of documentation of social position (in this case, however, not wilful) provided the pretext for punishment. Instructions from the NKVD and the Procuracy in 1935 gave local officials new license to “sweep away criminal-déclassés and itinerant (*brodiachie*) elements,” including “professional beggars,” speculators, and gypsies.<sup>7</sup> A West Siberian official warned in 1937 that the “large populations of itinerants, gypsies, beggars, orphans, and criminals” gathered in the Naryn and Kuzbass regions, along with the equally formidable population of “Whites” and “bandits” exiled to the region as special settlers, constituted a hidden fifth column that would surely rise up against Soviet power in the event of war.<sup>8</sup>

This new “runaway” phenomenon was recognized as a major threat to social order in the decision of the Politburo of July 2, 1937 to dispose of “kulaks who have returned home [from exile or imprisonment] and criminals” by summary execution or banishment.<sup>9</sup> The NKVD’s Order No. 00447, which elaborated this, gave regional quotas for the numbers that were to be executed or sent to GULAG, extending the category at risk to include religious sectarians and those whose past political activities suggested a propensity to counter-revolution.<sup>10</sup> High as the initial quotas were, they were regularly exceeded in local implementation: as a result of Order No. 00447, about 800,000 persons were sentenced, of whom 350,000-400,000 in the “1<sup>st</sup> category” were executed.<sup>11</sup> Runaway kulaks evidently formed

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5. A. A. Gershenzon, “Nishchenstvo i bor’ba s nim v usloviakh perekhodnogo perioda,” in E. K. Krasnushkin, G. M. Segal, and Ts. M. Feinberg, eds., *Nishchenstvo i besprizornost’* (M.: 1929), 51-53.

6. On the passportization process, see Nathalie Moine, “Système des passeports, marginaux et marginalisation en URSS, 1932-1953,” *Communisme*, 70-71 (2003): 87-108.

7. David Shearer, “Social Disorder, Mass Repression, and the NKVD during the 1930s,” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 42, 2-3-4 (April-Dec. 2001): 525-529.

8. David Shearer, “Elements Near and Alien: Passportization, Policing and Identity in the Stalinist State, 1932-1952,” *Journal of Modern History*, 76, 4 (Dec. 2004): 856.

9. Mark Iunge and Rolf Binner, *Kak terror stal ‘bol’shim’. Sekretnyi prikaz No. 00447 i tekhnologiia ego ispolneniia* (M.: AIRO-XX, 2003), 78-79.

10. *Ibid.*, 84-93. The order was dated 30 July 1937 and signed by N. Ezhov.

11. *Ibid.*, 136.

the largest group of victims, though some regions like Moscow focussed particularly on “criminals” (*ugolovniki*), a category that included persons without fixed occupation and brothel-keepers.<sup>12</sup> By 1939, the GULAG population included almost 300,000 prisoners classified as “socially-harmful” or “socially-dangerous elements” — almost a quarter of the whole.<sup>13</sup>

Around this time, it was officially claimed that begging and adult homelessness no longer existed in the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> However, it is clear that even the draconian measures of 1937-1938 failed to have any lasting impact in eliminating the criminal and marginal population. In Moscow, which had particularly targeted criminals in its implementation of Order No. 00447, arrests for a variety of crimes ranging from armed robbery to passport violations were running at 30,000 a month at the beginning of 1939, and 300 to 400 persons were detained every day for being without employment or fixed abode.<sup>15</sup>

We have little data on social marginality and the state’s attempt to cope with it in the (mainly wartime) decade after Order No. 00447. This is undoubtedly not because the problem disappeared but because the state’s attention was elsewhere. In 1948, however, the issue resurfaced with slightly different terminology — the addition of the term “parasitical” to the old lexicon of “socially-harmful elements” who refused to do “socially-useful work.” Nikita Khrushchev, party leader in the Ukraine at this point and having trouble with recalcitrant Ukrainian peasants, proposed giving kolkhoz general assemblies the right to send delinquents — “parasitical (*paraziticheskie*) and criminal elements, [...] parasites (*tuneiadtsy*) on the neck of kolkhozniki” — into exile.<sup>16</sup> As he noted, there was a useful precedent for this in Imperial Russian legislation.<sup>17</sup> His suggestion was adopted in an All-Union law of 21 February 1948, “On exiling from the Ukrainian republic persons who maliciously avoid labor activity in agriculture...,” that was the first piece of legislation to incorporate the phrase that was to become central in the discourse of the 1950s and early 1960s: “anti-social, parasitical way

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12. *Ibid.*, 80, 164. Among those who received the death sentence were “A., born 1915, criminal, twice convicted, without work or fixed abode, linked with criminal milieu, lives by theft” (*ibid.*, 165).

13. N. Dugin, “Otkryvaia arkhivy,” *Na boevom postu*, 27 December 1989, 3. Besides the category of “socially-dangerous/socially harmful” elements, the two other categories were “political” (convicted of counter-revolutionary offences, treason, terrorism, espionage, etc.) and “criminal” (convicted by courts of other violations of the Criminal Code: crimes of violence, crimes against the person, speculation, stealing state property, abuse of official position, violation of passport laws, etc.)

14. Bordiugov, “Sotsial’nyi parazitizm ili sotsial’nye anomalii?,” 73 (citing *Sotsial’noe obespechenie*, no. 12 (1938): 10).

15. Iunge and Binner, *Kak terror stal ‘bol’shim’*, 167.

16. For text of this letter, see *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) i Sovet Ministrov SSSR 1945-1953*, comp. O. V. Khlevniuk et al. (M.: ROSSPEN, 2002), 250-254.

17. He cited article 683 of *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (St. Petersburg), vol. 9, which in the 1899 edition reads: “Rural societies are allowed to remove (*udaliat’*) harmful and vicious members according to the rules attached.”

of life.”<sup>18</sup> Over 33,000 persons were exiled as parasites (with no definite term attached to their sentences) in the period 1948-1953, most of them in the first half of 1948.<sup>19</sup>

While Khrushchev's 1948 law applied only to the rural population, it was followed in 1951 by a secret decree against “anti-social, parasitical elements” that has been interpreted as its urban counterpart.<sup>20</sup> That decree, aimed specifically at beggars and vagrants, mandated court-imposed sentences of five years exile with compulsory labor at the place of settlement for able-bodied persons taken into custody for begging who “persistently refuse socially-useful work and lead a parasitical way of life,” as well as tramps “who have no definite occupation and place of residence.”<sup>21</sup> It is possible that in practice the law affected other alienated categories of the population as well as beggars and tramps, though as a result of its secrecy, information on implementation is hard to come by.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, justification for nonjudicial exiling of persons resident in major cities and “not engaged in socially-useful work more than three months” (with the exception of invalids, pensioners, men and women of retirement age, women with children under 11, pregnant women, and dependents) existed in the 1953 Passport Statute, which allowed police to expel them from cities for a term of up to two years.<sup>23</sup>

Reporting to the XXth Party Congress in February 1956, Khrushchev took up the theme of work-shirkers, criticizing “people who do not participate in productive labor, do not carry out useful work either in the family or in society,” and noting that “administrative measures alone” could not cope with such anti-social behavior and that “a big role belongs to the public (*obshchestvennost*).”<sup>24</sup> Western

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18. Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR of 21 February 1948 “O vyselenii iz Ukrainskoi SSR lits, zlosto ukloniavshchikhsia ot trudovoi deiatel'nosti v sel'skom khoziaistve i vedushchikh antiobshchestvennoi, paraziticheskoi obraz zhizni,” followed by law of 2 June 1948, extending scope to other territories of USSR (excluding Baltics and Western Ukraine). Text of the law of 2 June in *Otechestvennye arkhivy*, no. 2 (1993): 37-38. Khrushchev's original draft of the law referred to those liable to exile as “harmful (*vrednye*) elements”: *Politbiuro i Sovet Ministrov*, 254.

19. *Otechestvennye arkhivy*, no. 2 (1993): 38.

20. Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR of 23 July 1951 “O merakh bor'by s antiobshchestvennymi i paraziticheskimi elementami.” The “urban counterpart” characterization comes from V. F. Zima, *Golod v SSSR 1946-1947: proiskhozhdenie i posledstviia* (M.: 1996), 181.

21. Text (unclear if full text or excerpt) in a 1960 document in the Soviet Procuracy archives, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (henceforth, GARF), f. 8131, Prokuratura SSSR, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 87. A full text of the (unpublished) law, evidently located both in central FSB archives and the Presidential Archive of the RSFSR, used by Zima and a few other Russian scholars, is currently unavailable (information from A. Livshin).

22. Zima, *Golod*, 217, writes that “of course, the new Ukaz affected not so much urban beggars and tramps as persons who disagreed with the regime, later called ‘*inakomysliashchie*,’” but gives no evidence for this and goes on to discuss only beggars and tramps.

23. “Polozheniia o pasportakh,” approved by Council of Ministers of USSR 21 October 1953, quoted in V. Samsonov et al., “Spravka o neobkhodimyykh meropriiatiakh po usileniiu bor'by s antiobshchestvennymi i paraziticheskimi elementami,” GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 87.

24. N. S. Khrushchev, “Otchetnyi doklad TsK KPSS XX s'ezdu partii, in *XX s'yezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza 14-25 fevralia 1956 g. Stenograficheskii otchet*, part 1 (M.: Gos. Izdat. Polit. Lit., 1956), 95.

observers interpreted this as a personal initiative of Khrushchev, part of his “efforts to increase public participation in the hope of deprofessionalizing law enforcement and social control.”<sup>25</sup> There was no visible follow-up, however, for a year, when a draft law, to be issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, was prepared by a subcommittee headed by V. G. Nabiullin,<sup>26</sup> but apparently failed to win favor. A few months later, a revised version of this draft law surfaced — but now, curiously, it had dropped from all-Union to republican level; and instead of being presented immediately to the relevant republic legislatures, it was published as an item for public discussion in a number of republics, beginning in the spring of 1957 with the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Baltics.<sup>27</sup> All the republican draft laws had the same title, “On strengthening the struggle with anti-social, parasitical elements,” and texts that seem to have been virtually identical.

The preamble of these draft laws paraphrased Khrushchev’s remarks at the XXth Party Congress, with the addition of the phrase “parasitical way of life,” which he had not used. Two major forms of parasitism were cited: people who have jobs only “for the sake of appearances” since they actually live off nonlabor income (listed first in the drafted decree); and people “who carry out no useful work either in the society or in the family but engage in vagrancy and begging and often commit crimes” (listed second). It should be noted that only the second of these had been covered by the 1951 law or was traditionally the object of disciplining by the police; the first was new as an object of legal discipline. According to the draft laws, “parasites” were to be punished by two- to five-year terms of exile, with obligatory labor at the place to which they were sent. Unlike the 1951 law, the sentences were to be imposed by neighborhood-based “general assemblies of citizens,” not the courts. In towns, this meant either apartment-house or street committees, who were given jurisdiction over all types of parasites except vagrants and beggars (subject to the same penalty of exile imposed by a people’s court).

For five months, the Russian Republic was conspicuously absent from the list of republics publishing draft laws against parasitism.<sup>28</sup> By the time Russia got around to publishing its draft law in August 1957 (using the same text as the other republics), several Central Asian republics had already concluded the phase of discussion and promulgated them (with minor revisions and texts that were no

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25. See, for example, Marianne Armstrong, “The Campaign against Parasites,” in Peter H. Juviler and Henry W. Morton, eds., *Soviet Policy-Making: Studies of Communism in Transition* (New York: Prager, 1967), 165.

26. The text of this first version of the draft law “Ob usilenii bor’by s antiobshchestvennymi, paraziticheskimi elementami,” is in GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 2-5. Nabiullin’s subcommittee is not further identified, but it may have been a subcommittee of the Komissiiia zakonodatel’nykh predpolozhenii Soveta Soiuza, the head of whose secretariat (M. Kirichenko) sent it to Chief Prosecutor of the USSR Rudenko on 4 February 1957.

27. The first draft law (Azerbaijdzhan) appeared in *Bakinskii rabochii* on 17 April 1957, swiftly followed by Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Uzbek, and Kazakhstan, all apparently with similar texts: see *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (henceforth, *CDSP*) IX: 17 (1957).

28. Ukraine and Belorussia also failed to publish draft laws against parasitism, and seem never to have subsequently issued such laws.

longer fully identical) as law.<sup>29</sup> Russia's draft law was published in the newspaper *Sovetskaia Rossiia* in August 1957<sup>30</sup> and ignored (as the other republican laws had been) by the more prestigious *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*.<sup>31</sup> *Sovetskaia Rossiia* noted that the draft would be submitted to the next session of the Russian Supreme Soviet for confirmation, but if this in fact happened, the law failed to pass. This phase of the history of Soviet anti-parasite laws remains shrouded in mystery. In the republics of the Caucasus, Baltics, and Central Asia, anti-parasite laws were issued one after the other in 1957 and 1958, with a couple of latecomers dribbling in in 1959 and 1960.<sup>32</sup> But the central press (except for *Sovetskaia Rossiia*) mainly continued to ignore the issue, leading one to speculate that the Russian Republic's law was encountering problems not only in Russia's Supreme Soviet (and perhaps judicial institutions) but also in the Soviet party leadership.

Although there is a thick file on the making of the anti-parasite laws (1957-1961) in the archive of the Soviet Procuracy, it tells us relatively little about what caused the political log-jam. After the publication of the Russian draft law in August 1957, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the person of N. S. Patolichev, did register an objection that its provision that exiles should be forced to work at their place of resettlement appeared to contravene an international convention against forced labor which the Soviet Union had signed. However, Patolichev's memo suggested ways round this problem, and the State Prosecutor of the USSR, Rudenko, seemed inclined to dismiss it out of hand: "It is the capitalist countries themselves that observe these Conventions least of all," he commented.<sup>33</sup>

Another kind of objection came from jurists who disliked the anti-parasite law because it took judging and sentencing out of the competence of the court and put it in the hands of citizens' assembles and administrative authorities. G. Anashkin, deputy chairman of the Supreme Court of the Russian Republic, made this argument strongly in several articles. He considered that allowing nonjudicial bodies to sentence offenders to exile constituted a usurpation of judicial functions

29. Uzbekistan's law "On strengthening struggle with antisocial, parasitical elements" was issued on 27 May 1957, Turkmenia's on 29 May 1957. See GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 87-88. For extensive extracts from the discussion of the laws in the republics, see *CDSP* IX: 17, 21, and 27 (1957).

30. "Zakon ob usilenii bor'by s antiobshchestvennymi, paraziticheskimi elementami", Draft of Kommissiia zakonodatel'nykh predpolozhenii, Supreme Soviet of RSFSR, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, (21 August 1957): 2.

31. *Pravda* did not join in the parasite discussion until September 1960; *Izvestiia* ran one article under the heading of "Leeches (*Kleshchi*)" (6 June 1958), followed by readers' comments on how to deal with petty corruption, focussing on the trade network, and without reference to the anti-parasite law or the possibility of exiling offenders (2 July, 23 September, 1958).

32. Uzbekistan and Turkmenia, the early birds, were joined by Latvia (12 October 1957); Tadzhikistan (21 January 1958), Kazakhstan (25 January 1958), Armenia (31 January 1958), and Azerbaidzhan (18 June 1958) (GARF f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 87-88). Kirgizia followed on 15 January 1959, Georgia on 5 September 1960 (the text of the Georgian decree is in *CDSP* XII: 44 (1960), 12.)

33. Memo from N. Patolichev (MID) to R. A. Rudenko (Chief Prosecutor of the USSR), 14 December 1957, GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 39-42, 70.



in contradiction to article 131 of the Constitution of the RSFSR, which stated that arrests could be made only by a decision of the court or with the sanction of the prosecutor.<sup>34</sup>

The unhappiness of the Soviet legal profession with the anti-parasite law is well attested.<sup>35</sup> The basic objections were that it took decisions about arrest and punishment out of the hands of the courts, contrary to the Constitution; that it allowed for punishment in the absence of a specific crime; that it confused two quite different categories of offender (beggars and vagrants, on the one hand; persons living off “unearned” income, on the other); and that it deprived the accused of defence counsel and the right of appeal (the latter “an inalienable principle of Soviet democracy,” in the words of one critic).<sup>36</sup> There was also uneasiness with exile as a punishment (too closely associated with Stalinism, perhaps — or, as one critic suggested, with Tsarism).<sup>37</sup> Barry and Berman cited the legal profession’s resistance to the anti-parasite law as “a [...] dramatic example of the influence of jurists on high party policy” and concluded that “the delay in adoption of anti-parasite laws in the major republics until 1961, and the amendments then introduced, undoubtedly reflected, in part, the opposition of the legal profession to the infringements of legality inherent in this legislation.”<sup>38</sup>

This turned out to be too optimistic a reading of the situation. With the typical volatility of policy-making under Khrushchev, those in favor of a Russian anti-parasite law — including, surely, Khrushchev himself, though this was a comparatively minor item on his ambitious agenda — got the upper hand again in mid 1960. A Central Committee commission, headed by Central Committee

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34. A clipping of this article, whose title is “Neskol’ko zamechanii k proektu zakona,” is to be found in GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 38. Unfortunately no place of publication is given, though it may have appeared in *Sovetskaia Rossiia* at the same time as the draft law (which immediately precedes the clipping in the file). Anashkin made similar points in a longer article entitled “Work is a duty and a matter of honor,” published in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, (12 October 1957), the full text of which is translated in *CDSP* IX: 40 (1957), 9-11.

35. See, for example, the comment on the disapproval of Riga’s lawyers by the chairman of Latvia’s legislative drafting commission (*CDSP* IX: 42, from *Sovetskaia Latvii*, 13 October 1957, 2) — though this disapproval did not stop Latvia’s Supreme Soviet from passing the law. Jurists in Moscow, already in touch with a number of Western colleagues, forcefully conveyed similar sentiments to them. See, for example, the report by Barry and Berman that “in 1959 the chief draftsman of the All-Union Fundamental Principles of Criminal Procedure stated to one of the authors of this chapter that in his opinion the antiparasite laws contracted the Fundamental Principles and should be repealed in the republics which had passed them”: D. D. Barry and H. J. Berman, “The Jurists,” in H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, eds., *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 327.

36. George Feifer, *Justice in Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 195-199; N. Bolshakov, Consultant, Ministry of Justice of Tadzhikistan, *CDSP* IX: 27 (1957), from *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, (17 May 1957): 2. Quotation from Bolshakov.

37. For the “Tsarist” suggestion (made by a Latvian worker, not a lawyer), see *CDSP* IX: 21 (1957), from *Sovetskaia Latvii*, (16 April 1957): 2. There was also the problem of contradiction with the noting Ukaz of Presidium of Supreme Soviet of USSR of 10 March 1956 establishing that “from now on sending into exile may take place only by a court verdict.” GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 212.

38. Barry and Berman, “Jurists,” 326-327. See also Feifer, *Justice*, 188.

Presidium member Dmitrii Polianskii, was set up by the Presidium to draft anti-parasite legislation. Unfortunately, little is known of the political context of this decision.<sup>39</sup> It is possible that it was an initiative of the group within the party leadership sympathetic to Russian nationalist trends, concerned with public order and wary of Western influences,<sup>40</sup> though there is no direct evidence to support this. In the submerged debate of the 1960s within the political elite on Russian nationalism, Polianskii is known to have been on the Russian nationalist side,<sup>41</sup> as was the deputy head of the Commission, N. R. Mironov; and a majority of Commission members had the same orientation.<sup>42</sup> This, however, could partially be explained by the fact that Russian nationalist sentiment was strong among officials in the security and ideology sectors, which were also, as a natural consequence of the Commission's mandate to investigate an issue that had both law-and-order and ideological ramifications, well represented in the Commission.

Polianskii's Commission labored mightily from August to October 1960, investigating the many facets of anti-social behavior in contemporary Soviet life and trying to devise ways to root them out. What is notable in the work of this commission is how peripheral to its considerations were what had formerly been the central issue of begging and vagrancy. Even public participation, one of Khrushchev's hobby-horses, was a secondary concern. For the commission, the thing that really mattered was the pervasiveness of different forms of "unearned" income in Soviet society — in other words, corruption and what later became known as "the second economy." The commission understood its task as investigation of the many extra-systemic ways that Soviet citizens found to supplement or substitute regular wages and salaries (or, for kolkhozniks, labor-day

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39. The circumstances of the Commission's establishment are unclear. Conceivably such a Commission was called for in the Central Committee's closed letter "On raising the role of *obshchestvennost'* in the struggle with crime and violations of public order," 5 November 1959, which dealt inter alia with "questions of the struggle with persons refusing socially-useful labor." Cited in Polianskii Commission's memo to the Central Committee of 24 October 1960, GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 219-220.

40. Thanks to the *Cahiers'* anonymous reviewer for suggesting this line of enquiry.

41. See Nikolai Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia. Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR 1953-1985 gody* (M.: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003), 119-123.

42. While no document appointing the Commission has been found, 19 names, headed by Polianskii's, follow the draft memo to the Central Committee of the CPSU of October 1960 presenting the results of the Commission's work: GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 220. Assuming that this is, indeed, the full membership list, 8 out of 19 members are identified by Mitrokhin as part of or close to the "Shelepin group," notable for its Russian nationalist orientation. The eight included the chairman (Polianskii) and deputy chairman (N. R. Mironov, head of the administrative organs department of the Central Committee, formerly head of the Leningrad KGB: see Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia*, 100, 104). The Russian-nationalist predominance is the more striking if one considers that of the eight members of the Commission who may be considered top political figures — P. N. Demichev, Central Committee secretary throughout the 1960s; V. V. Grishin, trade union head; Lev Ilichev (head of the agitprop department of the Central Committee, then CC secretary from 1961); Mironov, S. P. Pavlov (head of the Komsomol); Roman Rudenko (Chief Prosecutor of the USSR), and Aleksandr Shelepin (head of the KGB) — all but two (Grishin and Rudenko) are known to have had Russian-nationalist sympathies.

payments), and legislative closing of the loopholes that made them possible. The data were evidently to be supplied by various institutions, from the KGB to the Finance Ministry, some of whom had representatives on the Commission's 18 working groups.<sup>43</sup> In addition, one working group was instructed to come up with a proposal to establish an all-Union system of registration of persons not engaged in socially-useful work.<sup>44</sup>

The utopian aspirations of this period — which was also the time of preparation and discussion of the new Party Program of 1961 — were clearly visible in the Polianskii Commission's work, which (as will be shown in the next section) also demonstrated a healthy respect for socio-economic data and considerable understanding of how the Soviet economy actually, as opposed to formally, worked. The press, meanwhile, reflected the resurgence of interest in the question of parasitism — even though *Pravda*, a remarkably late entrant to the discussion, steadfastly avoided the term “*parazit*” or even “*paraziticheskii obraz zhizni*” in its coverage.<sup>45</sup> This was a real discussion, in which opposition to the anti-parasite law was clearly visible. A range of critical reactions to the draft law was expressed at a meeting on the problem of parasitism held in the offices of the weekly *Literaturnaia gazeta* in September 1960. Exile sentences, in the view of jurist-turned-writer Lev Sheinin, were just a way of putting the problem out of sight: “Moscow will get rid of its spongers, but will Omsk and Tashkent receive them? How does this change anything?”<sup>46</sup> Nonlawyers shared this concern: a Stalingrad reader of *Komsomol'skaia pravda*'s coverage of one of the Leningrad

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43. The data were collected by working groups, in some but not all cases headed by members of the Commission: for example, N. Stakhanov was the convener on the five-man working group on forbidden trades that included Boldyrev, Sidorov, Korolev, and Uriupin; A. N. Mishutin of the All-Union Procuracy was convener of a six-man group on prostitution that included Ragozin, Tumanov, Korobov, Ivashutin, and Pavlov (TsK VLKSM); and General P. G. Ivashutin, deputy chairman of the KGB, was convener of a three-man group on smuggling, that included Korolev and Morozov (MVT) (See Polianskii's instructions “Ob organizatsii raboty Komissii...,” dated September 1960, in GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 82-84). Of the three conveners listed above (more or less randomly selected out of a total of 18) Stakhanov was a member of the Commission, while Ivashutin was not a formal member, or at least not a signatory of its Commission's documents, though he was on several of the Commission's working groups including the one charged with drafting legislation. Mishutin, an active participant in the Commission's work, may or may not have been a formal member: his name is one of 15 at the end of a memo to Polianskii of 24 October 1960 accompanying texts of the draft laws, but he is not on the (overlapping but not identical) list of 19 names at the end of the memo to the Central Committee drafted around the same time (GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 218, 220).

44. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 84. The convener of this group was V. N. Starovskii (head of the Central Statistical Administration of the USSR); with members Kolpakov and Stakhanov. As far as is known, no such system of registration was ever developed.

45. See above, note 23. “*Tuneiadtsy*” was the general term *Pravda* preferred (see articles of 6 September, 14 September, and 16 September, 1960), though even this word was used sparingly. *Pravda*'s coverage — and *Izvestiia*'s also — was notable for avoiding the usual Soviet convention of identifying issues by a shorthand formulation derived from a relevant law or resolution.

46. A. Lavrov, “Protiv tuneiadstva. Soveshchanie v redaktsii ‘Literaturnoi gazety,’” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, (27 September 1960): 2.

“parasite” trials<sup>47</sup> wrote: “Where are you proposing to send them, Leningraders? You are the ones who failed to educate them.”<sup>48</sup>

In this same month (September 1960), the Georgian Republic finally issued an anti-parasite law — the last of the republics, apart from Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia, to do so — which significantly amended the 1957 draft by removing the right to exile offenders from citizens’ assemblies, which could now only recommend such action to the local soviet.<sup>49</sup> (This, of course, was still some distance from the position preferred by lawyers, which was that only the courts could impose such sentences.) Then in October 1960, one of the major law journals, *Sovetskaia iustitsiia* (organ of the Supreme Court of the RSFSR) came out unambiguously against a key provision of the draft law in an editorial, characterizing the provision that “parasites” be sentenced to compulsory labor as “completely alien to socialism” and suggesting that sentences of exile be replaced with economic sanctions such as annulment of right to private plot if it was being used as source of unearned income, confiscation of private automobiles used for profit, etc.<sup>50</sup>

The Polianskii Commission’s efforts to produce anti-parasite legislation appear to have run into the ground about the same time.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, a strange

47. Despite the lack of a Russian anti-parasite law, nonjudicial public trials of “parasites” were widely reported in the press. *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, which was pushing for passage of the law, ran a long report on one such trial (of *fartsovshchik* Viktor Bogdanov, at the ‘Krasnyi Vyborzhets’ plant in Leningrad) in which the public accuser called for a law against parasites and also asked that the court petition the *ispolkom* to exile Bogdanov from Leningrad, *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, (4 September 1960): 2. In fact, the absence of a law clearly did not prevent the authorities exiling undesirables: see, e.g., the comment by M. Babaev *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, (29 October 1960): 2, that in practice urban “parasites” were often punished by the police rescinding their residence permits.

48. *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, (17 September 1960): 2.

49. Armstrong, 172-3. The text of the 5 September law, published in *Zaria vostoka*, (5 September 1960), was translated in *CDSP*XII: 44 (1960).

50. Paraphrasing Armstrong, 172. For similar suggestions from two doctors (*kandidaty*) of jurisprudence, see *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, (9 September 1960, 2 and 17 September 1960, 2).

51. The Commission decided in October to draft two independent documents, one a resolution to be issued by the Central Committee under the title “Ob usilenii bor’by s litsami ukloniavshchimisia ot obshchestvenno-poleznogo truda i vedushchimi paraziticheskii obraz zhizni,” setting out the ideological importance of mobilizing the public towards intolerance of “parasitism”, the other a decree of the All-Union Council of Ministers entitled “O merakh po ustraneniuiu prichin i uslovii sposobstvuiushchikh paraziticheskimi elementam obogashchatsia za chet chuzhogo truda,” which outlined a range of practical measures directed particularly at the “second economy” aspect of parasitism. They also drafted an Ukaz of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR “O dopolnenii Zakona ob ugovornogo sudoproizvodstva SSSR i soiuznykh respublik” and a law (issuing institutions not given) “O povyshenii roli obshchestvennosti v bor’by s paraziticheskimi elementami i narusheniami sovetskoi zakonnosti i pravil sotsialisticheskogo obshchegzhitiia.” (GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 218, 220; texts of drafts 1. 156-76 and 182-89). None of these appear to have been issued. In addition, at least two more narrowly focussed laws were drafted: “O normakh priusadebnykh zemel’nykh uchastkov” (for the All-Union Council of Ministers) and “O zapreshchenii soderzhaniiia rabochego skota (loshadei, volov) v lichnoi sobstvennosti grazhdan prozhivaiushchikh v gorodakh, rabochikh poselkakh i sel’skoi mestnosti RSFSR” (for the RSFSR Supreme Soviet), and the Polianskii Commission file contains a list of nine other

thing was happening to the “parasites” issue in the press: thanks largely to *Komsomol'skaia pravda*'s energetic embrace of one aspect of the topic, the focus of attention was shifting from small-scale second-economy operators to gilded youth (*Komsomol'skaia pravda* called them “crown princes”) whose privileged family position saved them from the need to work and whose Westernizing inclinations led them to frequent Inturist hotels and consort with foreigners. This was also a strong current concern of the KGB, but despite the presence of Shelepin (head of the KGB) and Mironov (formerly head of the Leningrad KGB) on the Polianskii commission, it was never a central focus of the commission's deliberations.

What exactly led up to the final decision to issue a Russian anti-parasite law in May 1961 remains unclear. But it emerged in the oddest possible form — as a kind of poor relation of a much more spectacular piece of legislation introducing the death penalty for “especially important” economic crimes. The anti-parasite law “On strengthening the struggle with persons avoiding socially-useful work and leading a parasitical way of life” was issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR.<sup>52</sup> The decree on especially important economic crimes came out one day later from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,<sup>53</sup> and it targeted activities like embezzlement and currency offences that had earlier been explored by Polianskii's Commission with a view to their inclusion in an anti-parasite law. By a remarkable but characteristically Khrushchevian jump, however, the maximum penalty had metamorphosed from 5 years exile (under the draft anti-parasite law) to death (under the law on especially important economic crimes of 5 May 1960).<sup>54</sup>

The 1961 anti-parasite law showed every sign of being a compromise. The 5-year exile sentence was retained — but, in an important reversal, the sentences were now to be imposed not by citizens' assemblies but by people's courts. This was clearly a victory for the jurists; on the other hand, there was still no possibility of

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resolutions and *ukazy* on the question of struggle with parasitical elements addressing such questions as forests, horses, secondhand shops, kolkhoz trade, building materials, theft (*khishchenie*), and registration of the able-bodied population (*ibid.*, I. 248-254).

52. “Ob usilenii bor'by s litsami ukloniavshchimisia ot obshchestvenno poleznogo truda i vedushchimi antiobshchestvennyi paraziticheskii obraz zhizni,” *Sovetskaia Rossiia* published the law on May 5 (p. 3), while *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* published summaries on May 5 (p. 4) and May 6 (p. 2) respectively. Similar *ukazy*, reportedly incorporating RSFSR's corrections to their earlier legislation, were issued in the various republics during the summer of 1961.

53. Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 5 May 1961, “Ob usilenii bor'by s osoboi opasnymi gosudarstvennymi prestupleniiami,” *Izvestiia*, (7 May 1961). Text in *CDSP XIII*: 17 (1961). The close relationship of the laws of 4 and 5 May is indicated by their juxtaposition, e.g. in a Central Committee report “On the course of the struggle with persons refusing to do socially-useful work and leading a parasitical way of life, exposure of groups of plunderers of socialist property, bribe-takers, hoarders of gold, precious stones and foreign currency...” and in *Izvestiia*'s editorial of 16 May 1961 linking the two.

54. The death sentence was highly controversial with jurists (see Procuracy file in archives), and its implementation provoked outrage in the West on grounds of anti-Semitism because a number of the early victims were Jewish. Khrushchev personally is usually credited with this initiative.

appeal against the sentences, and the accused still did not have the right to defence counsel.<sup>55</sup> The 1957 draft law's expansive definition of the parasitical way of life was retained, with somewhat greater concrete elaboration: it now included persons engaging in "forbidden trades, private entrepreneurial activity, [and] speculation" along with those using their dachas, living space, and private cars to generate "unearned" income. Moreover, as commentators pointed out, the law's implicit reach was even broader: the parasite has many faces and may be "an embezzler (*kaznokrad*), plundering socialist property, a bribe-taker, a swindler (*zhulik*), a speculator. Or a young idler, a flea-market trader (*barakhol'shchik*). Or a college or technical school graduate who refuses his work assignment after graduation."<sup>56</sup> As for the tramps, prostitutes, and beggars that were the targets of the 1951 law and past and present police practice, they had almost vanished from sight in the 1961 law. Begging, to be sure, was mentioned once in the middle of a long list of parasitical second-economy activities, but neither vagrancy nor prostitution even rated a mention.

### Terms and concepts

Two terms were commonly used for "parasite" in the 1950s: the old Russian *tuneiadets* (from *tune* = for nothing, in vain) and the more Western- and scientific-sounding *parazit*. The extension of *parazit*'s original botanical and biological meanings into the social sphere began in the 1890s, in connection with discussion among psychiatrists and others of the degeneration of modern life associated, in the view of many, with capitalism, which created a "parasitical" upper class.<sup>57</sup> This usage, however, was not sufficiently widespread to win inclusion in the Brokgauz-Efron or Granat encyclopedias: the relevant Granat volume (1915) followed Dal's dictionary in focussing only on botanical and biological parasites, while Brokgauz-Efron (1897), noting the Greek origin of the term, added only a discussion of the ancient Greek and Roman concept of social parasites (idlers, free-loaders).<sup>58</sup> Lenin, no doubt reflecting the psychiatrists' discussion of degeneration, used the term in his 1916 *Imperialism — the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, characterizing imperialism as a phenomenon of degeneration and the "rentiers" living off profits from the colonies as a "parasitical class." This usage was duly noted in the first Soviet encyclopedia,

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55. The lack of appeal is stated outright in the 1961 law. On defence counsel, see Feifer, *Justice*, 193, 199.

56. Shliapochnikov, 20. This is a paraphrase of the *Kommunist* editorial (*CDSP* 1960 #43 notes).

57. I owe this information to Daniel Beer, who discusses the "degeneration" issue in chapter 2 of his manuscript "'Diseases of the Age': Degeneration and Moral Contagion in Revolutionary Russia, 1880-1930."

58. Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyĭ slovar' zhivago velikorusskago iazyka*, 3 (Spb.-M.: 1882); *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, pub. F. A. Brokgauz and I. A. Efron, 44 (SPb.: 1897); *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' 'Br. I. i A. Granat I Ko.'*, 31 (M.: 1915).

which otherwise followed Brokgauz-Efron in recalling the Greek and Roman usage, with the additional remark that the term “is also retained in contemporary European languages in the meaning of *tuneiadets*, one living off other’s labor.”<sup>59</sup> Russian was, of course, one of those languages, and in 1935 Ushakov’s dictionary gave both a biological meaning for the term *parazit* and a social one: “a person exploiting alien labor, living by alien labor (publicistic, contemptuous).” Illustrating usage, Ushakov went further afield than Lenin and found a Molotov quotation (“In our country the parasitical classes, that is, every kind of big and little capitalists, have been liquidated”). He also noted a new phenomenon: the entry of the term into popular speech as a term of abuse (“*Akh ty, parazit proklyatyi!*”)<sup>60</sup>.

By the time of the Second World War, therefore, *parazit* was well established in colloquial as well as literary Soviet Russian, usually (in its literary form) referring to the parasitism of the old privileged classes. As noted earlier, however, the term “social parasite” was also sometimes used in policing and social-welfare circles to describe marginal people like beggars, tramps, and prostitutes, and it was this secondary meaning that came to the fore after the war. In targeting these groups, the 1948 and 1951 laws both referred to persons “leading an anti-social, parasitical way of life,” and the same formulation was used in the 1961 law targeting other “nonproductive” categories. The 1957 draft law departed slightly from these conventions with its identification of “anti-social, parasitical *elements*” as the object of struggle. Letters to the authorities in the 1950s complaining about various social ills, particularly “bandits” and others threatening citizens’ security, frequently used the term “*parazity*.”<sup>61</sup> However, the “reform” media — *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Kommunist*, *Literaturnaia gazeta* — were very sparing in their use even of the adjectival form from *parazit*.

As long as it was the capitalist privileged classes and their surviving post-revolutionary remnants (*perezhitki*) that were identified as parasitical, there was no conceptual problem about the genesis of the phenomenon in Soviet society: it was a legacy of capitalism. As the pre-revolutionary world became more distant, however, this notion of *perezhitki* became increasingly less plausible. It continued to be invoked, but the suspicion that socialist Soviet society itself was generating parasitism could not wholly be avoided. In one of its many draft resolutions, Polianskii’s Commission struggled to reconcile the contradictions. On the one hand, “in our country there is no socio-economic basis for parasitism, private-property psychology.” On the other hand, parasitism unfortunately continues to exist: “remnants of the past (*perezhitki*) such as private-property

59. *Bol’shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 44 (M.: 1939).

60. A. N. Ushakov, *Tolkovy slovar’*, 3 (M.: 1939): *Parazit, parazitizm, paraziticheskii*. In the mid 1920s the linguist Selishchev noted the use of “*gad*, *parazit*, and in a semi-literate milieu *elementy*” to mean “people who are worthless and contradict the party line.” The word is also to be found in Zoshchenko’s *Nervnye liudi*, as Selishchev notes. A. M. Selishchev, *Iazyk revoliutsionnoi epokhi. Iz nabliudenii nad russkim iazykom poslednikh let (1917-1926)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (M.: Rabotnik prosveshcheniia, 1928), 85.

61. Dobson, “Re-fashioning,” 211.

(*chastnosobstvenicheskie*) tendencies and parasitism (*tuneiadstvo*), giving birth to antisocial parasitical elements, still make themselves known,” despite all the successes in “constructing socialism and developing socialist consciousness”; moreover, “bourgeois ideology stubbornly tries to support and kindle these remnants of the past among wavering (*neustoichivye*), backward people of our society.” This “bourgeois ideology” presumably came from the West, which perhaps justifies the assertion (worrying to a Marxist) that these undesirable phenomena will not simply be outlived. “It should be emphasized that the remnants will not disappear of themselves; we must struggle constantly against them...” It was essential that this struggle be carried out since “these remnants are intolerable in the context of the unfolding construction of communist society.”<sup>62</sup>

Such invocations of the imminence of communism were more than the usual propaganda boilerplate. Ideologists were excited about the building of communism, and they were not the only ones. As recollections of contemporaries attest, such notions had considerable resonance in the society, at least that part of it that was attentive to politics.<sup>63</sup> The preparation of the new Party Program provided an occasion for serious debate about fundamental issues, among them the balance between individual and collective interests under Communism, specifically the question of whether, in the coming era of abundance, goods like dachas and automobiles could belong to individuals (households) or only to state and collective bodies. Here there was clearly a contradiction to be resolved. On the one hand, “communism” implied that private ownership of goods (i.e. exclusive individual or household access and control over disposition), even in the restricted and peculiar forms that had emerged since Stalin’s Great Break, would disappear.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, the mass move from communal to separate family apartments (one of the keystones of Khrushchev’s social policy), the burgeoning of dacha-ownership, and encouragement of consumerism in the post-Stalin era all suggested to many people that the promised abundance under communism would mean more of the same.

Hardliners (or utopians) like Academician Strumilin, assuming that private property had no place under communism, argued that it was time to eradicate the remnants, for example by reducing the size of village private plots and the size of dacha allotments, restricting automobile sales to private citizens, and making it

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62. Draft resolution of party Central committee “O merakh bor’by s litsami ukloniaiuschimisia ot obshchestvenno-poleznogo truda i vedushchimi paraziticheskii obraz zhizni,” GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 192-193.

63. See, for example, Petr Vail and Aleksandr Genis, *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (M.: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1988); Fedor Burlatskii, *Vozhdi i sovetniki. O Khrushcheve, Andropove i ne tolko o nikh...* (M.: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1990).

64. For a pioneering exploration of the meaning of “ownership” and “property” in the Soviet Union, see Charles Hachten, “Property Relations and the Economic Organization of Soviet Russia, 1941-1948,” Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 2005.



harder for individuals to build their own houses.<sup>65</sup> “The people themselves will throw away personal cars and dachas and individual houses like so much excess baggage,” Strumilin wrote optimistically, “when modern boarding houses with all the conveniences spring up in the best and most picturesque locations, offering separate rooms, yachts, motor scooters for pleasure rides, helicopters for excursions, etc., and when excellent cars of all models and colors (just pick one to suit your taste!) are lined up in the public garages, just waiting for passengers.”<sup>66</sup> Yet it was having one’s own dacha, one’s “own” separate family apartment, and perhaps even one’s own car that was the dream that most Soviet citizens cherished — and were beginning to hope might actually be attainable.

Despite repeated denials that it was an increase in parasitism that made legislation against it necessary,<sup>67</sup> the kind of parasitism that particularly worried Polianskii’s Commission in 1960, namely parasitism associated with the “second economy,” almost certainly was increasing along with the society’s increasing prosperity and the state’s decreasing penchant for harsh repression. New kinds of “parasitism” were emerging, such as the disinclination of many young people to get a job after finishing school (probably at least partly a consequence of more general secondary education). Moreover, there was a new source of contamination: contemporary bourgeoisie ideology, successfully kept out throughout the Stalin era, was pouring in via “radio, press, cinema, tourism, economic and cultural exchange, international correspondence.”<sup>68</sup> Cultural contact reestablished with the 1957 Youth Festival proved a smashing success, particularly with the younger generation, made international tourism (to, not from the Soviet Union) a large-scale phenomenon and left party leaders and the KGB in a state of chronic alarm about spies, undesirable cultural influences, and smuggling and illegal dealings in foreign goods and currency — all connected with foreigners.

It is clear that in setting the ground rules for his Commission’s operation, Polianskii was particularly concerned about the growth of the second economy and the circumstances that were making it possible. Polianskii’s initial instructions on the scope of its enquiries were extraordinarily broad, given that the concrete topic under consideration was anti-parasite legislation.<sup>69</sup> Vagrants, beggars, and prostitutes were completely secondary issues, if they were considered at all. What mattered were all the “second economy” processes whereby Soviet citizens were getting “unearned income” instead of, or in addition to, their regular wages and

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65. For discussion of these questions, see Ts. Stepanian, “Communism and property,” *Oktiabr*, no. 9 (1960) (text in *CDSP* XII: 42); “He who does not work, neither shall he eat,” *Kommunist*, no. 14 (1960) editorial, and readers’ comments in *ibid.*, no. 3 (1961) (*CDSP* XIII: 12); S. Strumilin, “For all, in the interests of each,” *Izvestiia*, 30 August 1961, 3 (*CDSP* XIII: 35).

66. Strumilin, in *Izvestiia*, (30 August 1961): 3.

67. E.g. *Kommunist*, no. 14 (1960) editorial, from *CDSP* XII: 43 (1960); A. S. Shliapochnikov, *Bor’ba s tsnedtsami — vsenarodnoe delo* (M.: 1961), 28-29. Thanks to Golfo Alexopoulos for sharing her copy of the latter source.

68. M. M. Davtian, *Protiv antiobshchestvennogo otnosheniia k trudu* (Erevan: 1966), 44, 46.

69. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 82-84 (“Ob organizatsii raboty Komissii...,” September 1960).

salaries. The list was even broader than the one that eventually made it into the 1961 law (see above, p. 389), which was itself notably broad. In addition to forbidden trades, speculation, private entrepreneurial activity involving dachas, apartments, and private cars (all specified as “parasitical” in the 1961 law), Polianskii’s instruction appointed working groups on such topics as *valiuta* offences, currency forging, bribery, contraband, cheating customers in stores, and illegal transactions involving land and housing space, as well as demanding investigation of a wide range of illegal trades that included *samogon*-making, folk medicine, fortune-telling, running brothels, and producing and selling pornography. This amounted to a wholesale investigation of the areas involving private ownership and entrepreneurship that had become most controversial in connection with the discussion on the imminence of communism.

The concept at the heart of the anti-parasite law was: “He who does not work, does not eat.” But “work” had a specific meaning in Soviet discourse of the Khrushchev period: it meant employment in a Soviet institution, either as a wage- and salary-earner in a state institution or as collective farmer or cooperative artisan. This was “socially-useful” work, and all other types of activity had only a dubious claim to social utility (housework and childcare on the part of women was a case in point) and probably should not be described as “work” at all. Everybody who was able-bodied (*trudosposobnye*), that is, men aged 16-59 and women aged 16-54<sup>70</sup> who were not officially classified as invalids, was meant to work in the “socially-useful” sense. Those citizens who did not hold jobs and have a workplace — even for fully-legitimate reasons, like pensioners, or quasi-legitimate ones, like housewives — were in practice treated as second-class citizens. Working for oneself outside the state and cooperative structure did not count as work, for it implied a lack of commitment to the common project of building socialism/communism, “a psychology of private ownership, a thirst for profit, a desire to live at the expense of others’ labor, to snatch more from society and give it less.”<sup>71</sup>

Work was generally treated as a self-evident value in the debate on the anti-parasite law. Nevertheless, there were moments when practical economic considerations made their appearance in the discussion, and it is possible that these weighed more heavily with the leadership than the available sources indicate. The main practical economic concern was labor shortage, especially in some regions of the country. According to 1959 census data, out of a total “work-capable” population of 120 million, over 11 million were *not* engaged in socially-useful work.<sup>72</sup> The great majority of these (10 million) were rural residents living off their private plots and *not* working in local collective and state farms.<sup>73</sup> Smaller groups

70. *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda. SSSR (Svodnyi tom)* (M.: 1962), 49, note.

71. Shliapochnikov, *Bor’ba*, 8.

72. *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia... (Svodnyi tom)*, 49.

73. V. Samsonov et al., “Spravka o neobkhodimyykh meropriiatiakh po usileniiu bor’by s antiobshchestvennymi i paraziticheskimi elementami” (September, 1960), GARF f. 8131, op.32, d. 6416, l. 90. See also V. Moskalenko, “The Seven-Year Plan and manpower resources,” *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta*, (7 February 1961), *CDSP XIII*: 5 (1961), 25-26.

were temporarily between jobs: 243,000 persons “do not work and live off savings, renting out of rooms and various buildings and so on; 61,000 of them are men capable of work.” These data were familiar to the Polianskii commission, which indeed began its draft resolution<sup>74</sup> with a lengthy section on the desirability of registering the nonworking but able-bodied population and working out measures “for more rational use of labor resources.” The draft resolution (apparently never passed into law) instructed the Council of Ministers and Central Statistical Administration to compile reports and plans on the balance of labor resources, starting from 1961, “not only by republics, krais and oblasts but also by cities and individual administrative raions...” It also instructed that within the next three months local soviets should conduct a one-time registration of the able-bodied population refusing to work and living off unearned income.<sup>75</sup>

### Popular concerns

In the first two months after publication of the draft law against parasites in August 1957, eighteen million people took part in meetings discussing the law, and 723,000 spoke.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the Procuracy, Central Committee, and other agencies received hundreds of letters from citizens,<sup>77</sup> as did the newspapers. This was, therefore, a large-scale campaign, and it seems to have tapped into some popular sentiment, though the Procuracy’s conclusion that there “overwhelming approval” from the public for the law was no doubt exaggerated. The kind of behavior that ordinary citizens most wanted prevented or punished seems to have involved threats to public order and safety. According to Miriam Dobson, letters from citizens to the authorities calling for action against “parasites” in the second half of 1950s were mainly directed against “thieves and bandits,” “thieves, recidivists, murderers, pillagers, hooligans,” and others threatening public safety.<sup>78</sup> In this connection, it should be recalled that the mass amnesties of the early 1950s, releasing one and a half million prisoners from GULAG in a three-year period (1953-1955),<sup>79</sup> undoubtedly created public-safety and public-order problems, all the more

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74. “Ob usilenii bor’by s litsami ukloniushchimisia ot obshchestvenno-poleznogo truda i vedushchimi paraziticheskii obraz zhizni” (October 1960), GARF f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 156-176. At this point, the Commission was still thinking in terms of a single resolution from the party Central Committee and the All-Union Council of Ministers; a few weeks later, it decided to split it into two separate resolutions.

75. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 158-161. The draft resolution also gave various instructions about resettlement and labor mobilization (*orgnabor*) and instructed that industrial enterprises should allow women with children under 15 to work a reduced work week.

76. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 45.

77. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6418, l. 152; Rossiiskii arkhiv noveishei istorii (henceforth, RGANI, Apparat TsK KPSS, f. 5, op. 30, d. 373, l. 19.

78. Dobson, “Re-fashioning the Enemy,” 211, 212.

79. A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1917-1960* (M.: 2000), 436-447.

because the former prisoners often had difficulty acquiring the bureaucratic documentation required for employment and residence and were sometimes forced to become temporary “vagrants.”

As often happened in the Soviet Union with state repressive measures, a proportion of the population favored even tougher punishments than the law allowed — for example, exile for ten years or even for life, rather than a maximum of five years; prison sentences instead of exile; lowering of minimum age of exile from 18 to 16, and so on.<sup>80</sup> 66-year-old war veteran S. E. Taranov wrote from Novocherkassk: “The people aren’t happy with such mild measures against parasites, and I think that a bandit and anyone who kills a man are class enemies. We need to wipe them from our earth.” Parasites should be “sent off only to the north,” wrote one Dnepropetrovsk resident, “and after the end of their sentence, made to stay there for ever.”<sup>81</sup> At a meeting in the editorial offices of the newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta*, factory brigade-leader Gavrilov passed on the opinion of his shop that “All vicious parasites should be shipped out not to the 101-kilometer line, which is within reach of the electric trains, but to remote and undeveloped regions. There they should be entitled to only what they themselves create.”<sup>82</sup>

In the popular responses to the draft law gathered by the central Procuracy in the late 1950s, public drunkenness was high on the list of behaviors that those who commented on the law particularly wanted punished. Many wanted habitual drunks “dismissed from work with bad recommendation and sent to the North” or, in the case of the elderly, deprived of their pensions.<sup>83</sup> Young people who lived off their parents without working, men who lived off women, and women whose way of life was considered immoral also came in for criticism.<sup>84</sup>

The “shadow economy” parasitism that was (in lawmakers’ view) the central target of the law evoked a more mixed response from the public. Voices were raised to treat kolkhozniki earning few or no labordays, as well as “*shabashniki*” working as contract laborers on kolkhozy and elsewhere (often these same “nonworking” kolkhozniki) as parasites,<sup>85</sup> and resentment was also expressed against people who rented out their dachas and other housing space for a high price.<sup>86</sup> But others who participated in the public discussion were worried about labelling such common activities as dacha-renting as parasitical: after all, many of “the public” engaged in such activities themselves.

After the issue of Westernizing gilded youth was widely publicized in the press at the beginning of the 1960s, the newspapers involved published a few letters from readers endorsing this aspect of the anti-parasite campaign, but most interested

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80. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6141, l. 46, 52.

81. Dobson, “Re-fashioning the Enemy,” 212-213.

82. Meeting in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, reported *Literaturnaia gazeta*, (27 September 1960): 2.

83. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6418, l. 169.

84. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 56, 106.

85. *Ibid.*, l. 54-5.

86. *Ibid.*, l. 56, 106.

readers preferred to write about matters closer to home.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, the Procuracy's sounding of public opinion a few years earlier had not revealed this as a major concern, probably because the milieu was too distant from most people. The same was true of the "parasitism" that local authorities started to ascribe to religious sectarians, which was also more or less unrepresented in this sampling of public opinion, as well as in (published) letters to the newspapers.

### **Implementation: targets of anti-parasite action**

A great deal of the anti-parasite action that occurred in Russia in the late 1950s and first half of the '60s took place outside the framework of law — before the law was passed, using processes that were extra-judicial or different from those prescribed in the law, and so on. It is an indicator of the singularity of the times that a law could simultaneously provoke passionate debate and be so often (either in its presence or absence) irrelevant to the actual practice of social control. Because implementation of the anti-parasite campaign only sometimes took the form of trial and sentencing under the anti-parasite law, figures on convictions are at best a partial guide: they tell us that in the Russian Republic, only about 20,000 persons were actually exiled as parasites in the first year of implementation of the 1961 law, although more than ten times that number were warned that they were at risk unless they got a job,<sup>88</sup> and that after Khrushchev's fall in 1964 prosecutions dropped to 2,000-3,000 by the late 1960s.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the numbers involved in the legal process are relatively small, while other forms of anti-parasite action are difficult, if not impossible, to quantify.

The Komsomol, which was particularly active in the struggle against parasitism and corruption of all kinds (sending out brigades to *tolkuchki* and so on), complained that its efforts were often inadequately supported by administrative and judicial organs: for example, when Komsomol members unmasked O. Sokolovskii as a parasite, based on the fact that he had changed jobs sixteen times in five years and been ten times convicted of petty hooliganism, "it took the efforts of 82 workers in state institutions and the compiling of a file of 179 pages" to get him exiled from Moscow."<sup>90</sup> This was probably a consequence not only of Soviet bureaucratic inertia but also of resistance within the bureaucracy and the judiciary to the 1961 law, as well as Komsomol vigilante practices.

The point of issuing a new anti-parasite law was that the old (1951) law had an old-fashioned concept of parasitism and failed to appreciate its "second-economy"

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87. An exception was the letter from a Novorossiisk dock worker offended at fraternization of young Russians with foreign sailors: *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, (17 September 1960): 2.

88. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 402, l. 115.

89. GARF, Verkhovnyi sud SSSR, f. 9474, op. 16s, d. 965, 3.

90. S. Pavlov, secretary of Komsomol Central Committee, to Central Committee of the KPSS, 27 May 1963, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 429, l. 48.

manifestations.<sup>91</sup> In the course of implementation, however, the anti-parasite campaign swerved in two unexpected directions. The first target, unanticipated by the Procuracy or the Polianskii Commission but encouraged by the KGB and an energetic campaign by *Komsomol'skaia pravda* and some other media, was gilded, Westernizing youth. The second target that neither the Procuracy nor the Polianskii Commission anticipated was religious sectarians. It was possible, with an effort, to stretch the 1961 anti-parasite law to cover both of these. In addition, however, there were some fully unintended and unsanctioned targets of the campaign, namely pensioners and housewives, whose occasional conviction as "parasites" caused dismay in legal circles and was never advocated in print from any quarter.

Let us consider each of these categories of target in turn.

### Beggars, tramps, drunks, and prostitutes

A constant theme in the central Procuracy's discussion of implementation was that, despite the draft law's emphasis on "second economy" offences, police and other local authorities continued to understand the category of "parasites" in more traditional terms: beggars, tramps, prostitutes, and drunks making a disturbance on the street. Of 11,000 persons prosecuted and sentenced in Russian courts for parasitism in the first four months after the passage of the 4 May 1961 law, most were people living off casual earnings or petty speculation, drunks, tramps, and beggars.<sup>92</sup>

Rounding up beggars, tramps, travelling craftsmen and wandering holy men and women, expelling prostitutes from cities, and trying (unsuccessfully) to settle gypsies<sup>93</sup> were familiar practices in the prewar Soviet Union that continued after the war and became the subject of an energetic "antibegging" campaign in 1952-1954. Numbers of beggars almost certainly increased in the wake of the postwar famine (according to one estimate, up to 2-3 million in 1946-1947), but as the police did not keep a count of beggars (*nishchie*), panhandlers (*poproshai*) and tramps (*brodiagi*) until after the 1950 anti-parasite law, such estimates are necessarily impressionistic. There was an energetic campaign against beggars in 1952-1954 led by the MGB that may have contributed to a drop in the numbers to an estimated half a million-one million by the mid 1950s.<sup>94</sup> The state's concern in this campaign was not only indigents who turned to begging but also "professional

91. Samsonov et al., "Spravka," GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 91.

92. GARF, f. 9474, op. 16s, d. 719, l. 42. Note, however, that these figures are small compared to the 150,000 persons suffering "administrative, judicial, and other sanctions" for begging and vagrancy in the USSR in 1959 (Samsonov et al., "Spravka," GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 88). Assuming that the rate in 1961 was at a similar level, it is clear that only a minority were dealt with by the 1961 law.

93. Note, however, that gypsies, although subject to the same term of exile as "parasites," were charged under a special law issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 5 October 1956, « O priobshchenii k trudu tsygan zanimaiushchikhsia brodiachnichestvom » (GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 102; translated text in *CDSP* VIII: 43 [1956]).

94. Zima, *Golod*, 217.

beggars.” While occasional official warnings that apparently indigent beggars might actually be acting a part might be taken with a grain of salt,<sup>95</sup> there is evidence that begging was indeed the professional specialty of whole villages of *otkhodniki* in the Kaluga region — and remained so, despite the MGB’s unsuccessful efforts to deport all the residents of these villages in the early 1950s.<sup>96</sup>

Professional begging aside, many elderly persons and invalids lived by begging, partly because pension provisions were inadequate and state old-age and invalid homes unattractive; thus, one of the issues surrounding postwar antibegging campaigns was whether they could be forcibly assigned to and kept in such homes.<sup>97</sup> In the Khrushchev period, the category of vagrants included many former prisoners (beneficiaries of the post-Stalin amnesties) who had either failed to find work or were not seeking it.<sup>98</sup>

Prostitutes were not explicitly mentioned in either the 1957 draft or the law of 1961, but nevertheless constituted one of the standard categories of implementation of the anti-parasite law.<sup>99</sup> (They were mentioned explicitly in the laws drafted by the Polianskii commission, but as one member of the drafting commission pointed out, this was awkward “since it contradicts the assertion [for example, in the *Bol’shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*] that there is no prostitution in the Soviet Union.”)<sup>100</sup> Local reports indicate that many of the alleged prostitutes were young, and some of them as much like party girls as professionals, like the 19-year old who consorted with men in private apartments, restaurants and hotels and participated in orgies where people got drunk and danced naked.<sup>101</sup> Some of them were orphanage girls who failed to make the transition from orphanage to normal worklife and took to casual prostitution.<sup>102</sup> In Sverdlovsk’s report on parasite cases, begging,

95. See M. Shchetilov, “On beggars and softhearted citizens,” *Sovetskaia Moldaviia*, (6 August 1960): 4, in *CDSP IX*: 30 (1957); also Shliapochnikov, 35, relating a story of a woman claiming to have lost everything in a fire who had built a brick house and a healthy bank account on the proceeds of begging.

96. Vladimir and Marina Grekova, “Neispravimye iakutaly,” *Iat’*, (September 2002): 32-35; and for a different interpretation of same data, Zima, *Golod*, 223-225.

97. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 37, 51 (files of Ministry of Justice of RSFSR).

98. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii “A” (henceforth GARF “A”); n.b. this is the archive of the RSFSR, as opposed to the USSR archive, which is GARF), f. 353, Ministerstvo Iustitsii RSFSR, op. 13, d. 956, l. 39-40, 100-01; f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 3.

99. Of 190 cases of parasitism heard by the Moscow city court in the first months after the passage of the law, 31 were women living by prostitution; in Omsk oblast the figure was lower at 12 out of 357: GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 17, 46. Of a total of 21,000 men and women sentenced to exile under the law in RSFSR as of June 1962, 1,502 were women, mainly considered go be prostitutes: RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 402, l. 116.

100. GARF, f. 8131, op. 32, d. 6416, l. 221. This minority opinion came from L. N. Smirnov of the Russian Supreme Court. Though the majority on the commission overruled him, there was in fact no mention of prostitution in the text that finally became law in 1961.

101. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 85.

102. *Ibid.*, l. 118-19. See, e.g. Zinaida Grigoreva, 21 years old, with eight years schooling, an orphan with no fixed address or employment, had never managed to find a place for herself in life after leaving the orphanage. She tried work in a Siberian factory, in several different

prostitution, and keeping company with “drunks and speculators” were all linked together as a characteristically female form of parasitism.<sup>103</sup>

Local reports on implementation of the 1961 law in the Procuracy files are full of stories of drunks who had ruined their own and their family’s lives as well as arousing the anger of their neighbors. For example, a man in his mid 40s, a bookkeeper by profession, fell foul of the anti-parasite law after he quit his job, lived off his mistress, drank, and “disturb[ed] the peace of a large apartment house both day and night” with his debauches.<sup>104</sup> Men living off wives, mistresses, and parents while making drinking a full-time occupation make frequent appearances in the anti-parasite reports from the localities, e.g. the man “married about 39 times,” seven years without a job, who lived at the expense of cohabitants and parents, whom he bled dry.<sup>105</sup>

### **“Second economy” money-making**

It is not clear how often people were actually sent into exile as parasites as a result of “unearned income” from second-economy activities (the preference of police and local authorities for “traditional” targets has already been noted). The MVD reported that among those exiled as parasites there were “not a few” carpenters, joiners, painters, stonemasons, tailors, shoemakers, coopers and other tradesmen working privately.<sup>106</sup> Sewing women and tailors were likewise liable: there are reports of parasitism charges against women — surely not “getting rich at the expense of the toilers’ state,” to quote the standard anti-parasite rhetoric — who sewed dresses or made bras, paper flowers, and homemade mirrors for sale at the kolkhoz markets.<sup>107</sup> In practice, of course, such small-scale private enterprise was often tolerated. But, as *Izvestia* noted ominously, such tolerance “seems anachronistic in light of anti-parasite law.”<sup>108</sup>

In the countryside, the most common form of parasitism was living off the private plot or a trade and refusing to work for the kolkhoz, or using a private-owned horse for profit. When such people were sentenced to exile as parasites, local authorities (or just locals) often confiscated the horse or tools of trade —

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kolkhozy, but nothing lasted. Then she had a child, abandoned it, and was deprived of parental rights. She destroyed her labor book and passport (“so as not to work,” according to the report), and was in more trouble. At the time of her sentence as a parasite, she was living off men “whose acquaintance she made in cafeterias, railways stations, and simply on the street.”

103. *Ibid.*, 1. 84.

104. *Ibid.*, 1. 27. Since he lived in Magadan, he may well have been an ex-prisoner of GULAG.

105. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 957, 1. 91-2.

106. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 402, 1. 115

107. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 956, 1. 39-40.

108. 11 July 1961, *CDSP* XIII: 28, 28-29.



indeed, such confiscation seems often to have been the point of the whole exercise. Some but not all of the victims were prosperous; a few had even been classified as kulaks in prewar days. But petty “parasites” were sometimes also charged — individuals who raised rabbits and bees for the market, caught fish, picked mushrooms, herbs, berries and nuts. Here we encounter one of the paradoxes of Soviet life: no state agency gathered cedar nuts, for which there was a popular demand, but individuals who did so and sold them were liable to be accused of parasitism.<sup>109</sup>

The anti-parasite campaign was perhaps most effective not in changing or punishing second-economy behaviors but rather in collecting information about them. Reading the reports and newspaper coverage, we learn about the great variety of second economy activity in towns. People were using private cars to provide taxi and removal services, renting out rooms or “corners” of their apartments or houses, renting out individually-owned dachas, and using garden or dacha plots to grow produce for sale. Truck drivers and railway employees were moving goods around the country for “grey market” sale. Workers at electrical and radio factories regularly stole their products and sold them outside the plant. Enterprising persons set up “clandestine miniature factories that turn out the notorious phonograph records made from x-ray film.”<sup>110</sup>

All sorts of “parasitical” entrepreneurial activity went on in the countryside, especially around the collective and state farms. Some farms established unregistered shops on their premises to produce goods that “have no relation to their production profile, for example, electrical fuses, spare parts for textile machines, glass for wrist watches, polyethylene items,” using kolkhozniki and “persons without fixed occupation” as workforce.<sup>111</sup> Kolkhozy also used middlemen to acquire needed spare parts and building materials, and to distribute agricultural produce. They and other enterprises, rural and urban, regularly hired the so-called “*shabashnik*” brigades to do construction and repair work on contract. All this was, of course, in addition to the pettier forms of rural “parasitism” (living off bee-keeping, carting, selling craft items or produce from the private plot.)

Artisans and craftsmen (outside cooperatives) were always an object of suspicion: these were difficult categories for Soviet authorities, who tended to regard non-factory production as both outmoded and potentially capitalist. Even when the trades were in themselves legal, how about the way they got raw materials (often on the black market)? How about the fact that they sold their produce, possibly “parasitically” for profit? There were also *illegal* trades, artisan and craft activities that were explicitly forbidden by law by the Criminal Code or in special statutes. Brewing *samogon*,<sup>112</sup> making religious objects, cutting gramophone records and developing photographs were among the illegal trades, but the list in law and

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109. Shliapochnikov, 31; GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 956, l. 39-40.

110. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, (27 September 1960): 2.

111. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 373, l. 42-5.

112. Davtian, *Protiv*, 38.

practice was probably much longer, including preparation of any goods from precious metals or precious stones, betting, and organizing games of chance.<sup>113</sup>

## Idle youth

Young people who, after finishing school, failed to get a job and stayed at home living off their parents constituted a “quite significant” proportion of those exiled under the parasite law, according to one commentator.<sup>114</sup> In the Procuracy’s reports from the localities in the late 1950s, it was the idleness (and often defiant rudeness and explicit rejection of Soviet “work” values) of these young people that seemed to be considered the major problem. But new themes emerged in the early 1960s: the involvement of the young in speculation, with special reference to contact, via speculation in foreign goods, with foreigners. Two much-discussed articles from *Komsomolskaia pravda*, the pace-setting newspaper on this issue, convey the flavor of these new concerns. In one case, the defendant in a nonjudicial show trial at a Leningrad factory was a working-class youth named Viktor Bogdanov, a school drop-out who got into bad company and engaged petty “speculation” in clothes (always referred to as *triapki*) bought from foreigners.<sup>115</sup> The protagonist/victim in the other case, Vladimir Soldatkin (aka Frank Disney) was a different type, aping Western clothes, a self-styled intellectual, who claimed (as a principled “opponent of socialist realism”) to be persecuted for his politics.<sup>116</sup> The strikingly venomous character of these articles against Westernizing youth — *Komsomol’skaia pravda* regretted the absence of the knout for people like Soldatkin, while one of Bogdanov’s accusers wanted to spit in his face to show his contempt — was surely connected with the alarm being sounded at the same time by the KGB about foreign spies suborning Soviet citizens.<sup>117</sup>

Idle youth was increasingly portrayed as *jeunesse dorée*, spoiled offspring of Soviet elite families. These “crown princes,” in the terminology of one journalist, aped Western styles of dress; hung out with foreigners, buying blue jeans from

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113. A 1989 publication gives a then-active list of forbidden occupations: in sphere of artisan and craft trades, these include preparation of poisons or narcotics, preparation of medicaments, any kind of weapons, munitions, explosives, items from precious metals etc. In sphere of *bytovoe obsluzhivanie*: repair and *peredelka* of items from precious metals, precious stones, *iantar’*, maintenance of games of chance, betting on sports and other competitions, repair of any kind of weapon. In socio-cultural sphere: working in medicine in various specialites, conducting classes in subjects and courses not included in the study plans of schools; organization of spectacles. N. N. Kondrashkov, *Tuneiadstvo: protiv zakona i sovesti* (M.: Iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1989), 25.

114. Shliapochnikov, 33.

115. I. Prelovskaia, A. Skrypnik (Leningrad), “Pozor tuneiadtsam! Rabochie ‘Krasnogo Vyborzhitsa’ sudiat lodyria i spekulianta,” *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, (4 September 1960): 2.

116. A. Sukontsev and I. Shatunovskii, “Frenk Soldatkin — mestnyi chuzhezemets (fel’eton),” *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, (25 August 1960): 2.

117. For vigilance and spying items, see *CDSP* XII: 31 (1960). The highly-publicized Gary Powers trial took place in mid-August: *CDSP* XII: 33 (1960).

them and having anti-Soviet conversations, knew colorful black-market characters, and avoided regular jobs and military service. Such young people often claimed intellectual interests (many had higher education), felt themselves to be elitists with a contempt for Soviet “philistines,” and in general were portrayed as proto-dissidents (to use a term that came into use in the first half of the 1960s).<sup>118</sup> The writer Vasilii Aksenov, who publicly condemned such types but obviously had a sneaking sympathy for them (see his novella *Zvezdnyi bilet*), suggested hopefully that providing more entertainment for the young — evening cafes for dancing, drinking, arguing, and poetry readings<sup>119</sup> — might solve the problem. But a more common reaction was that of vigilantes in Sochi who tore offensive clothes off the backs of visiting *stiliagi*, and the authorities in the same resort town who threatened to expel a Soviet tourist for wearing a shirt with an umbrella pattern.<sup>120</sup>

Early literary dissidents like the authors of the samizdat journal *Syntax* were lashed as “idlers” in the press,<sup>121</sup> and some unfortunates like the young Leningrad poet Joseph Brodsky (a *Syntax* contributor) were actually convicted of parasitism and given sentences of exile.<sup>122</sup>

Cases like Brodsky’s were of particular interest to the KGB because of its struggle with the intelligentsia over samizdat. But the KGB also had another interest in the “idle youth” aspect of the anti-parasite campaign, namely the connection with Westerners and *valiuta* offences. It will be remembered that these initially came with the purview of the Polianskii commission’s exploration of the varieties of social parasitism, but was eventually hived off as the subject of a separate and particularly draconian law, issued on 5 May 1961 (the day after the Russian anti-parasite law). The 5 May law “On strengthening struggle with particularly dangerous crimes” targeted what might be called the high end of the second economy — large-scale swindles based on nationwide criminal networks and including (at least via bribed silence) highly-placed officials, as well as *valiuta* offences — and extended the death penalty to such crimes.<sup>123</sup> Most of the big fish

118. Vladimir Titov, “Crown princes,” *Ogonek*, no. 29 (1960) (text in *CDSP* 1960 #32).

119. V. Aksenov, “Princes with the spirit of beggars,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, (17 September 1960): 2 (text in *CDSP*).

120. *Izvestiia*, (12 October): 6, and I. Kolesnikova, “Patruľ v korotkikh shanishkakh,” *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, (13 December 1960): 2.

121. Ia. Ivashchenko, “Bezdel’niki karabkaiutsia na Parnas,” *Izvestiia*, (2 September 1960): 4.

122. In a case that provoked much unfavorable international comment, Brodsky was accused of being an idler who had no regular job or institutional affiliation, called himself a poet but was not a member of the Union of Writers and earned very little from his poems and occasional translation work. The accusation originally came from some *druzhinniki* with literary connections in an article published in *Vechernii Leningrad*, (29 November 1963), the trial took place in Leningrad district court on 18 February 1964, and his sentence was five years exile. For information on the Brodsky affair and a partial stenogram of the trial, see Andrew Field, “A Poet in Prison,” *New Leader*, (22 June 1964): 10-11; and “The Trial of Iosif Brodsky,” *New Leader*, (31 August 1964): 6-17.

123. Text published in *Izvestiia*, (7 May 1961): 5. In the schizoid mixture of repression and utopianism characteristic of the period, the law provided that “capital punishment by shooting may be applied as an extraordinary penalty [in such cases], *pending its complete abolition...*” (my emphasis).

caught in this net and put on show trial in the early 1960s were longtime black marketeers, but some — including Ian Rokotov, one of those sentenced to death in the most notorious and publicized of the trials — fitted the “crown prince” stereotype. This was noted in a confidential Central Committee memorandum on the case, which focussed particularly on the psycho-social and familial roots of alienation of these young people.<sup>124</sup>

### Religious sectarians

There was nothing about religious sectarians in any of the drafts of the anti-parasite law. However, the 1961 law did include the phrase “and other anti-social acts” at end of its list of parasitical behaviors like speculation and engaging in “illegal” trades, and this evidently provided the pretext for treating sectarians as parasites. With regard to leaders of sects, the argument used was that even though they might hold down jobs, they did this for the sake of appearances only, while actually living off the contributions of their followers.<sup>125</sup> The atheist journal *Nauka i religiia* called those studying for a religious life “in reality the same as parasites.”<sup>126</sup> Mainly, however, the inclusion of religious sectarians among the targets of the anti-parasite law seems to have been the result of the initiative of local authorities. In the RSFSR Ministry of Justice’s reports on implementation, leaders and activists of religious sects are quite prominent, accused of “living by deceiving believers.”<sup>127</sup>

The state’s conflict with religious sectarians went back to the 1930s but was revived with a vengeance in Khrushchev’s campaign against religion, launched in 1959. Virtually all local prosecutors’ reports in RSFSR in the early 1960s mentioned sectarians (Jehovah’s Witnesses, True Orthodox Christians and others) as targets.<sup>128</sup> These were often peasants who declined kolkhoz membership and lived off their private-plots and crafts. Whereas sectarians had tended to refuse military service and kolkhoz membership on religious grounds in the prewar period, by the late 1950s they were apparently articulating an objection to *any* kind of employment in a state or collective institution. In Sverdlovsk, for example, a peasant bee-keeper stopped working on the kolkhoz after he joined the local Tikhonovite sect, and also stopped shaving and withdrew his daughter from

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124. Memo from Moscow *gorkom* secretary P. Demichev to the Central Committee, giving background, including family history, on Rokotov and others accused of *valiuta* speculation: RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 373, l. 33-36. Note that Demichev had been a member of Polianskii’s anti-parasite Commission.

125. Barry and Berman, “Jurists,” 328.

126. Armstrong, 174, citing *CDSP* XIV: 7 (March 14, 1962), 10.

127. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 3.

128. In Voronezh — though this is an exceptional example — 81 out of 173 persons sentenced to exile under the May 4 law in 1961 were members of sects declining to work out of religious conviction. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 956, l. 76-7; GARF, f. 9474, op. 16s, d. 851, l. 33, lists also members of the *molchal’niki* and *molokane* sects.

school.<sup>129</sup> According to a survey court practice in the period 1962-1964 in the Soviet Supreme Court archive, 162 participants in sectarian and other religious organizations were prosecuted under anti-parasite law of 4 May 1961. Some of the convictions were later overturned by the higher court: for example, one where Komsomols had raided a Baptist meeting in a private house; another involving two sectarians in Kazan holding services in their homes who, by virtue of the fact that one held a job as a metalworker and the other was a pensioner, could not be considered “parasites.”<sup>130</sup>

Sectarians usually reacted defiantly when charged, refusing even to consider getting a job;<sup>131</sup> and it turned out to be pointless to exile them because they wouldn’t work in their places of exile either.<sup>132</sup> Among jurists in the All-Union Procuracy, and no doubt elsewhere, there was uneasiness about the way local authorities were using the May 4 law against any sectarians, including those who could *not* be described as parasites because they were pensioners or held jobs in state enterprises.<sup>133</sup>

### Pensioners and housewives

The anti-parasite law was not intended to target persons who were unemployed because they were invalids, old-age pensioners, pregnant women, housewives with young children. In fact, however, there are a number of reports of such people being accused and sentenced by local courts<sup>134</sup> — so many, in fact, that one senses a climate of intolerance on the part of officials (and perhaps also the population?) towards anyone who did not work at a regular job.

Formally speaking, according to the 1956 pension law,<sup>135</sup> men were entitled to retire and receive a pension at 60, providing they had a work *stazh* of 20 years, while women could retire and receive a pension at 55 with the same proviso. But pension provision was still inadequate, and some people on retirement and disability pensions supplemented them by begging or petty trading, both activities that could be construed as parasitical. The 1957 drafts of the law (though not the 1961 law itself) gave local soviets powers forcibly to confine indigents of this type in “closed” homes for old people or invalids (*doma prestarelykh* and *doma invalidov*, the latter term still often used for both groups); but as conditions in these

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129. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 79.

130. GARF, f. 9474, op. 16s, d. 851, l. 31. 33-34.

131. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 956, l. 100-101, 109.

132. *Ibid.*, l. 43-45.

133. GARF, f. 9474, op. 16s, d. 851, l. 33.

134. Though these sentences were often annulled by higher courts later.

135. On the new Law on State Pensions of 14 July 1956, see Alan Barenberg, “‘For a Single, Clear Pension law’: Legislating and Debating Soviet Pensions, 1956-1965,” unpublished seminar paper, 2000.

homes were usually appalling, most people did their best to avoid such placement, however difficult it was for them to survive outside.

After the publication of the 1957 law, it quickly became evident that old-age and invalid pensioners were vulnerable to local prosecution or police action as parasites. For the aged, begging was generally the cause of prosecution, though public drunkenness was probably also a factor. Invalids with disability pensions were usually targeted in connection with craft earnings — a Second World War invalid working as a tailor in Sverdlovsk, for example; a diagnosed schizophrenic who bred doves for racing.<sup>136</sup> For those disabled by mental illnesses, there was often a “Catch 22” that landed them with a parasitism charge even if they wanted to work: for such people, work was often hard to find as well as keep, as actual and potential employers were put off by bizarre behavior or histories of suicide attempts and hospitalization.<sup>137</sup>

Mothers with young children were considered exempt from the general expectation that all able-bodied adults engage in socially-useful work. According to one commentator on the parasite law, housework and child upbringing “now” (note the caveat as far as the future was concerned) demanded a large amount of time and should be considered “socially useful, especially on the part of women”; thus, housewives could be regarded as parasites only if they committed “antisocial acts.”<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, on publication of the 1961 law, many citizens were worried that it might be applied to housewives.<sup>139</sup> In fact, there were cases when local officials (or neighbors) accused women whose primary work was childcare and housekeeping of parasitism; and this may have been particularly common (in connection with on-going Sovietization efforts on the part of the authorities?) in territories acquired in the 1940s like Kaliningrad and the Baltics.<sup>140</sup> But there were also such cases in the “old” Soviet Union. In Irkutsk, for example, a 50-year-old grandmother who lived in her daughter’s house and looked after her 3-year-old grandson fell victim to the parasite law (though the sentence seems to have been subsequently reversed).<sup>141</sup>

In their defence, such women often said they were forced to stay home because of lack of available places in state child-care facilities.<sup>142</sup> The same plea was occasionally made by stay-at-home fathers like Arteev in Komi ASSR, a hunter and casual laborer who did not seek regular work because his wife had a full-time job

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136. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 80, 22.

137. For two such cases, see GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 957, l. 55-6; and GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 145-146.

138. Shliapochnikov, 39.

139. See materials of Biuro TsK KPSS po RSFSR, report of 30 June 1961 on citizens’ letters on the anti-parasite law, RGANI, op. 5, op. 30, d. 373, l. 30.

140. See, for example, the Kaliningrad case in GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 956, l. 94.

141. Shliapochnikov, 39-40.

142. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 957, l. 42.

and he had to care for their three children under six.<sup>143</sup> Such behavior was less acceptable on the part of men than women, however: house-husbands who let their wives go out to work while they stay at home and drink were categorized as “shirkers” by *Izvestiia*.<sup>144</sup>

## Conclusion

Implementation of the 1961 law proved difficult and frustrating. Those accused of parasitism by no means always hung their heads in shame and promised to mend their ways. Defiant responses were common, especially from young people, who were likely to tell the court rudely that they “had not worked, [were] not working, and [don’t] intend to work,”<sup>145</sup> and why should they anyway, given that they were living well as it was.<sup>146</sup> Tramps, particularly ex-prisoners accused of vagrancy, were also notable for their lack of respect for admonitions about the sanctity of work.<sup>147</sup> Religious sectarians totally refused to listen to such advice; indeed, they tended to read lessons about God’s law back to their admonishers, or stubbornly insist that their own work (on the private plot or at a trade) was useful to society.<sup>148</sup> Even non-sectarian peasants tended to take a similar line (e.g. the beekeeper mentioned above, who rejected suggestions that he should rejoin the kolkhoz or get a proper job, “saying that his bees would be left with no-one to look after them.”<sup>149</sup>

Choosing places to send convicted parasites was a major problem, as was supply of food, housing, and bedding — not to mention work — when they arrived.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, as Sheinin and others had warned, exiling people who won’t work didn’t solve the problem, because they were liable not to work in their place of exile either. This was so of a significant number of those exiled, about one in ten of whom were subsequently sentenced to corrective labor or imprisonment in their places of exile for refusing to work. Their presence also had a disruptive effect on the labor force wherever they were sent: as one commentator noted, “sometimes the collective is influenced (negatively) by the parasites rather than vice versa.”<sup>151</sup> As an anguished report on the behavior of exiled “parasites” sent to work in a sugar factory in Belgorod complained, “these are the kind of people who do not succumb

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143. *Ibid.*, l. 51.

144. *Izvestiia*, (4 February 1961): 4.

145. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 85.

146. *Ibid.*, l. 118.

147. GARF “A” f. 353, op. 13, d. 957, l. 41.

148. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 955, l. 109.

149. GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 957, l. 101.

150. For summaries of implementation problems, see MVD report of 10 June 1961, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 402, l. 116-17, and report from Arkhangelsk in GARF “A,” f. 353, op. 13, d. 956, l. 43-45.

151. Davtian, *Protiv*, 89.

to measures of ideological education (*vospitanie*) ... You can't explain anything to them because they are never sober..."<sup>152</sup>

Within a few years, Western scholars were hearing reports of "failures of re-education" of "parasites" in their places of exile; it was said that "in Siberia, the authorities have gone so far as to protest the transportation of parasites" because of their disruptive behavior and corrupting effect on the local population.<sup>153</sup> The law's long-delayed passage, they heard from their Soviet sources, was simply the preface to "a rearguard action by the courts against abuses of the antiparasite laws. The Supreme Court of the USSR, in reviewing sentences under the laws, began insisting on procedural guarantees for persons charged: they were entitled to public trial, they were entitled to counsel, and so on;<sup>154</sup> and its internal memoranda on implementation of the anti-parasite law at the end of the 1960s emphasized the decline in prosecutions in the course of the decade and in general, without explicitly saying so, treated the law as an experiment that had failed.<sup>155</sup> In 1965, an amendment to the RSFSR law eliminated references to living off unearned income and working for the sake of appearances, removed the power to impose punishments on "parasites" not guilty of specific criminal acts from the courts as well as citizens' assemblies, and dropped the exile penalty, except from Moscow and Leningrad. Henceforth, only the executive committees of the soviets had power to act against such "parasites," and action now took the form of sending them to work "in enterprises located in the district of their permanent place of residence or in locations within the limits of the province, region, or autonomous republic."<sup>156</sup>

This marked the end of a 14-year experiment in using *law* to discipline those who refused to do socially-useful work. Administrative disciplining continued in the 1970s and 1980s, however, becoming a particular cause of complaint by human rights' organizations.<sup>157</sup> In addition, anti-parasite laws introduced in Eastern Europe and the GDR at the beginning of the 1960s — following the Soviet example but (at least in the GDR case) sending offenders to work colonies rather than into exile — appear to have had a longer life than the parent.<sup>158</sup>

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152. GARF "A," f. 461, Prokuratura RSFSR, op. 11, d. 1514, l. 50.

153. Leon Lipson, "Hosts and Pests: The Fight against Parasites," *Problems of Communism*, March-April 1965, 80.

154. Barry and Berman, "The Jurists," 327.

155. See GARF, f. 9474, op. 16s, d. 965.

156. Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR, 20 September 1965, "O vnesenii izmenenii v Ukaz Prezidiuma... ot 4 maia 1961 g." (GARF, f. 9474, op. 16, d. 965, l. 5-6. On the 1965 amendment, see Armstrong, 179; Barry and Berman, "Jurists," 328; Valerii Chalidze, comp., *Andrei Tverdokhlebov — v zashchitu prav cheloveka* (New York: "Khronika," 1975), 60-61.

157. See Chalidze, *Andrei Tverdokhlebov*, 47-77.

158. On the GDR, see Sven Korzilius, "Asoziale" und "Parasiten" im Recht der SBZ/DDR: Randgruppen in Sozialismus zwischen Repression und Ausgrenzung (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2005).



In the long run, the 1961 law is interesting not so much for its direct results as for the way in which it exposed various fault lines in the society and confusion in the minds of the leaders about where the society was going. The party ideologists claimed that the society was moving inexorably towards communism, that is, ever further away from capitalism and the remnants of capitalist consciousness and habits that were the soil in which parasitism grew. Yet to an outside observer, it might have appeared that its trajectory was exactly the opposite — not away from “capitalism” (that is, a situation allowing scope for individual economic initiatives and acquisition and use of goods) but towards it. It was very striking, too, just how many kinds of parasites there were when one looked closely, as the Polianskii Commission did: it was as if a “second society” of parasites coexisted with the “first” society of toilers (or, even worse, that every toiler was a potential parasite). The discussions surrounding the anti-parasite law gave a vivid and informative picture of the great variety of stratagems and social niches developed by individual citizens, reminding one of Fred Starr’s observation that the great thing one learned as a foreign student in Russia in the 1960s was that everything that mattered went on not in the formal structures of the society but in the interstices between.<sup>159</sup> Polianskii’s Commission would of course have rejected this insight, yet the findings of its enquiry into sources of parasitical behavior in effect confirms it. With hindsight, it is easy to see the error of Khrushchev’s assertion that the toilers of the Soviet Union were marching towards communism. Perhaps a better characterization of the country’s trajectory, in light of what was to come, would be that even in the late 1950s and early ‘60s the Soviet Union was already sidling into capitalism — “parasites” in the vanguard.

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159. See his essay in Samuel H. Baron and Cathy A. Frierson, eds., *Adventures in Russian Historical Research. Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present* (Armonk, New York, and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2003).