

# “Regulating Prostitution and Controlling Venereal Disease in the Bohemian Lands at the End of the ‘Long’ Nineteenth Century”

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Habsburg Monarchy — Bohemian Lands — Social History — Venereal Disease — Prostitution

Arguments over prostitution raged in turn-of-the-century Europe as abolitionists, feminists, members of the bourgeois women’s movement, neo-regulationists, and others debated whether prostitution should be tolerated, legalized, or done away with altogether.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, between 1899 and 1910, *Madchenhandel* (“white slave” trafficking or trafficking in women) and “venereal peril,” issues intimately associated with prostitution, were internationalized.<sup>2</sup> In the Habsburg Monarchy, rhetoric increased in the wake of the arrest of the Viennese bordello keeper Regine Riehl in July 1906, and reached a crescendo in November 1906, following her conviction for crimes that included embezzlement, fraud, limiting the personal freedom of others, procuring, and suborning testimony. The outcry over the treatment of prostitutes at Riehl’s bordello and her subsequent trial forced the Austrian government to address both the specific issues raised in this case—dependence and exploitation—and broader issues connected with regulation throughout the Monarchy. The

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- 1 See discussion of the debates in Vienna in Karin J. Jušek, *Auf der Suche nach der Verlorenen: die Prostitutionsdebatten im Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, Vienna 1994. For discussions elsewhere in Europe, see Alain Corbin’s classic, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, Cambridge, Mass. 1990; and Mary Gibson, *Prostitution and the State in Italy, 1860–1915*, second edition, Columbus 1999.
  - 2 *Conférences internationales sur la prophylaxie des maladies vénériennes* were held in Brussels in 1889 and 1902; the First International Congress on the White Slave Trade took place in 1899. Subsequently, national chapters of anti-trafficking organizations were founded and bilateral international treaties were signed. The *Österreichischen Liga zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandels* [Austrian League to Combat the Trade in Women], founded in 1902 and headquartered in Vienna, had branch offices in Czernowitz, Prague, Trieste, and other large cities of the Monarchy. See discussion of the “internationalization” of the “venereal peril” and “white-slave” trafficking in Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, Cambridge, Mass. 1990, pp. 260–80. For a contemporary discussion of the assumed connections among prostitution, trafficking in women, and venereal disease, see Lavinia Dock, *Hygiene and Morality: A Manual for Nurses and Others, Giving an Outline of the Medical, Social, and Legal Aspects of Venereal Diseases*, New York 1910. See also Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Physician and the Fallen Woman: Medicalizing Prostitution in the Polish Lands*, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, No. 2, 2011, pp. 270–90.

Riehl trial, which resulted in an Austrian-wide review of regulatory practices, continued to influence debates over tolerated prostitution in the Monarchy until its demise in 1918.<sup>3</sup>

The Reichsrat was the site of lively debate on regulating prostitution, when on 6 November 1906 deputies demanded that Interior Minister Richard von Bienenrath explain what measures his ministry was taking in response to the criminal proceedings. They called for the reform of the vice police, who were charged with regulating prostitution, the ensuring of tolerated prostitutes' freedom, the protection of these prostitutes' property, and the enabling of their transition from prostitution to another trade. At the 12 November parliamentary sitting, Bienenrath acknowledged that owing to the trial the government had become aware of the need for a sweeping reform of police surveillance of prostitution. Alluding to the Riehl trial, Bienenrath asserted that he would shine a light into the "darkest corner" of his ministerial preserve, by which he meant the vice police, who oversaw the regulation of prostitution.<sup>4</sup> He asserted that the police headquarters and the governor's office in Vienna had already taken steps to thoroughly review prostitution regulations and making necessary changes. Moreover, the Interior Ministry planned to ask other political agencies to propose modifications to the system.<sup>5</sup> Responding to the public outcry over the trial, and calls for reform of the vice police, Viennese and Lower-Austrian officials began their review of regulation in the imperial capital almost immediately.<sup>6</sup> Reacting to Ministry of the Interior and provincial decrees from late 1906 and early 1907, provincial police and administrators provided descriptions of prostitution practices and proposed changes of regulations in their jurisdictions.

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3 The trial was widely covered in the Bohemian Lands, especially in Prague and Brünn. See: Bohemia, "Gerichtssaal," 4, 6, 7 Nov. 1906; Čas, "Soudní síň," 8 Nov. 1906, pp. 9–10; Čech, 9 Nov. 1906, p. 1; Friedländer Zeitung, "Ein Schandprozeß," 10 Nov. 1906, p. 15; Lidové noviny, "Ze soudní síně," 3–8 Nov. 1906; Prager Tagblatt, "Gerichts-Zeitung," 4, 7, 9, 10 Nov. 1906; and Právo lidu, "Soudní síň," 3, 4, 5, 8 Nov. 1906. The Ostrauer Zeitung, 6 Nov. 1907, 2, carried a report from Brünn/Brno that the Viennese press provided excellent coverage of the trial, but the provincial press, which feared bringing such reading material into "the family," did not. There was silence in at least some provincial papers. Another of Mährisch Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava's German-language newspapers, the Ostrauer Tagblatt, mentioned the trial only briefly, "Der Prozess Riehl in Wien," 8 Nov. 1906, 2, describing the main defendant as "die schamlose B..wirtin [the brazen b\_\_\_ keeper] Regine Riehl." Neither the word *prostitution* nor *bordello* appeared in the article.

4 Deutsches Volksblatt, 9 Nov. 1906, 7.

5 Interpellation, 444 Sitting, 6 Nov. 1906; and Haus der Abgeordneten 448 Sitting, 12 Nov. 1906, 39711.

6 On calls for reform, see Germania, 6 Nov. 1906, 2; and Reichenberger Zeitung, "Großstadtbilder," 8 Nov. 1906, 1. A copy of the "Interpellation ... betreffend de sittenpolizeilichen Zustände, 6 Nov. 1906" can be found in 9550/06, Kart. 2121, Mädchenhandel 1900–1918; Prostitution in genere 1900–1906, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (hereafter AVA), Allgemeine Reihe (hereafter Allgem), Ministerium des Innern (hereafter Mdl), Österreichisches Staatsarchiv [hereafter ÖSA]; on the police committee, see K.k. Polizei-Direktion Wien, Aufnahmeschrift, 13 Nov. 1906, 6033/06, Box 2121, AVA, Mdl, ÖStA.

Attitudes toward prostitution varied among the police and the bureaucrats, but there was broad support for confining prostitutes in closed bordellos as the best alternative. The discussion highlighted the contrast between the ineffectiveness of regulation in the large and increasingly anonymous metropolises in Habsburg Central Europe, like Prague and Vienna, where the vice squads were allegedly rife with corruption, and the efficacy of regulation in small-to-medium-sized towns and cities, where much of the population was known to the local police, who were tasked with regulation. The comments reflected general concerns about protecting public morals, but focused on protecting the wider public from venereal infection. Indeed, city and town authorities repeatedly raised concerns about clandestine prostitutes operating in public places, above all as waitresses in bars and inns, where they could spread venereal disease. Police and administrative authorities—all male—who participated in this discussion shared contemporary attitudes about men's sexual "needs."

## REGULATING PROSTITUTION IN THE BOHEMIAN LANDS

Prostitutes were registered with the police and placed under their control rather than that of the courts in the Austrian scheme of tolerated prostitution, a system whose efficacy, like that of tolerated prostitution elsewhere in Europe, was heatedly debated at the turn of the century. In some of the Monarchy's larger cities, there were also "independent" prostitutes, that is, tolerated prostitutes living outside bordellos. Some cities had a "mixed" system of prostitution with both kinds of tolerated prostitutes. Clandestine prostitutes were those women who engaged in commercial sex without being under police surveillance, and in some places, when apprehended, were given medical exams, registered, and placed under police control. These were by far the largest number of prostitutes in large cities. The term, "clandestine," was very broad one, encompassing also women who "occasionally" or "temporarily" engaged in commercial sex, and might be applied to women who did not consider themselves prostitutes.

Most of the responses to the Ministry of Interior's queries about the state of regulated prostitution in the provinces, and attempts to reform it, date from early-to-mid 1907. They reflect efforts to protect middle-class clients and the greater population from venereal disease and prostitutes from exploitation, especially at the hands of bordello keepers. In the decades before the commercial use of penicillin, provincial and local officials were concerned about the spread of venereal disease through prostitution, especially clandestine prostitution, with which it was closely associated. Almost all respondents advocated safeguarding public health, stressing the strict regime of medical examinations to which local prostitutes were subjected. In most cases, invasive vaginal exams employing a *Vaginalspiegel* were conducted twice and sometimes thrice weekly, either in the confines of their bordellos, at the police headquarters, or sometimes at other designated locations. The mayor of Brünn/Brno conveyed the attitude, typical among provincial officials, when he argued that prostitution was "a necessary evil," that a man's sexual urge was invincible, and that

satisfaction of his physiological need was necessary for his health.<sup>7</sup> He added that “so long as instinct acts more strongly than the demands of propriety, morals, and legal precepts, prostitution must be treated as a necessary evil and strongly regulated instead of repressed.” Other officials expressed less certainty that the evil was “necessary,” but rather that it was “unavoidable,” and therefore required control.<sup>8</sup>

Many Czech archives house material on the attitudes of local governmental officials, police, and residents toward prostitution, the last-named mainly in the form of letters of denunciation of clandestine prostitutes and tolerated bordellos. The archives also contain the responses of affected commercial and trade organizations to local attempts to crack down on clandestine prostitution. Local, popular concerns were more often moral than hygienic, and they could also be economic. Other than the records of activist organizations, there is relatively little discussion in these sources of the contemporary worldwide moral panic about trafficking in women, a specter raised at the Riehl trial.<sup>9</sup> While Prague, like several other provincial capitals in the Monarchy, had a branch of the *Österreichisches Liga zur Bekämpfung des Mädchenhandel*, headquartered in Vienna, there appears to have been rather less public concern about this phenomenon than elsewhere in Austria, above all Bukovina and Galicia, two poverty-stricken provinces in the eastern reaches of the Habsburg Monarchy, which were closely associated with trafficking.<sup>10</sup> Although they sometimes used the terms interchangeably, Prague officials appear to have been more concerned with procurers, who moved prostitutes between bordellos, than “traffickers,” who allegedly supplied white, innocent, young girls to bordellos worldwide. Occasionally the voices of those involved in the world of prostitution: bordello keepers, pimps, even the prostitutes themselves, can be found, above all in responding to legal complaints, where they sometimes employed the language of regulation to defend themselves against the legal system. This material, together with the responses to the Ministry of Interior decrees, enriches our understanding of the world of prostitution in the late imperial Bohemian Lands.

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7 For example, Brünn's Bürgermeister to K.k. mähr. Statthalterei Präsidium, 1 Jan. 1907, 8008/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem Mdi, ÖStA.

8 K.k. Oberstaatsanwalt to K.k. Staathalterei in Graz, 14 Mar. 1907, 13479/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, Mdi, ÖStA.

9 Nancy M. Wingfield, “Echoes of the Riehl Trial in Fin-de-Siècle Cisleithania,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 38 (2007): 40.

10 While not absent from the newspapers of the Bohemian Lands, there was less discussion about trafficking than in the newspapers of Bukovina and Galicia. See for example *Czerowitzner Tagblatt* and *Wiek Novy*, which in the last decades before World War I printed often lurid stories of innocent young women being taken abroad to bordellos in Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro, and Shanghai, or less often about European women rescued from the harems of the “Orient.” The articles were, in part, a reflection of concerns about wholesale immigration from these two provinces in the decades before the war. See Nancy M. Wingfield, *Destination: “Alexandria, Buenos Aires, Constantinople; ‘White-Slavers’ in Late Imperial Austria,”* *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, No. 2, 2011, pp. 291–311.

## REGULATION IN THE LARGER CITIES OF THE BOHEMIAN LANDS

Prague, Pilsen/Plzeň, and Ostrau/Ostrava, all industrial centers, had seen great increases in population before World War I, as did the working class suburbs around Brunn/Brno.<sup>11</sup> Although officials in each city addressed somewhat different issues, they all expressed grave concern about the connections between prostitution and venereal disease. Procuring and the economy of prostitution were also among the issues they discussed. In all four cities, the majority of respondents advocated bordello-based tolerated prostitution as the least bad option to protect public health and morals, and secondarily, the prostitutes.

Prague had the largest number of bordellos, regulated prostitutes, and highest estimated number clandestine prostitutes in the Bohemian Lands.<sup>12</sup> The responses of Prague Police Ober-Kommissäre Ludwig Chevalier and Franz Protivenski offered opposing views of prostitution. The former advocated bordello-based tolerated prostitutes to protect public health, morals, and the prostitutes. The latter was one of few administrative/police voices in the Bohemian Lands, or indeed, Cisleithanian Austria, raised in opposition to tolerated prostitution, which he claimed did not help limit the spread of venereal disease.<sup>13</sup> Chevalier and venerologist Ferdinand Pečírka, the long-time head police physician in Prague similarly criticized both clandestine and independent tolerated prostitutes and advocated tolerated prostitutes in closed bordellos as the best solution.

Chevalier offered a brief, recent history of prostitution in the capital. Following the development of independent prostitution and the rise in popular opposition to bordellos, the practice developed in Prague and its surrounding suburbs of employing female staff in the wine locales. In reality, Chevalier asserted, these locales were nothing other than *Animierstuben*—where women (the so-called *Animiermädchen*, who sometimes also worked as prostitutes) acting as bar hostesses were meant to encourage male patrons to drink—and clandestine bordellos. If a “better guest” entered the establishment, and that guest had “something more in mind” than merely a glass of wine, he was immediately shown to a private room, which contained a bottle of wine. Because wine consumption was not the main goal of the encounter, the

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11 Prague’s population was in 1900: 201,591, including 194,471 residents and 7,120 soldiers; in 1910 (with recently annexed Lieben/Libeň): 223,741, including 218,573 residents and 5,168 soldiers. Hlavní výsledky popisu obyvatelstva ze dne 31. prosince 1910 v král. hlavním městě Praze a obcích okolních..., Prague 1911, 27–28.

12 Estimates of clandestine prostitutes were exactly that: estimates. There was no way for police, or anyone, really, to provide an accurate estimate of their numbers, especially since clandestine prostitution might also include women who sometimes, or even, one time, engaged in commercial sex. There have been few recent studies on prostitution in the late imperial Bohemian Lands. See Milena Lenderová, *Chytila patrola aneb prostituce za Rakouska i republiky*, Prague 2002; and Milan Myška’s local study, *Kněžky Venušiny aneb z historie prostituce v průmyslovém velkoměstě, Ostrava 2006*; also relevant articles in the special issue of *Dějiny a současnost*, “Prostituce a české země a 19. a 20. Století,” 7/2013.

13 Bericht des K.k. Polizei-Oberkommissärs Franz Protivenski in Prag, n.d., Box 2121, AVA, Algem, MdI, ÖstA. All of Protivenski’s comments come from this report.

mostly full bottle would later be retrieved, and refilled, often with water from the Moldau/Vltava. It was then saved for the next guest to use the room for commercial sex. The bacillus content of the river water meant that the “wine” was not good for the imbiber’s health. More detrimental to public hygiene, however, was the fact that these wine bars were also centers for venereal disease.

Owing to the complaints of city residents, hundreds of waitresses employed in these locales were eventually placed under police surveillance. Some were found to be infected with venereal disease. Indeed, their infections were sometimes “much worse” than physicians had ever seen in bordellos. Following numerous reports from the public health insurance company, which had to cover the costs of these women’s illnesses, the Bohemian governorship was able to get the trade authority, which was in charge of issuing licenses, to close many of the wine bars.<sup>14</sup>

Chevalier asserted that following the civic protests through deputations and petitions against bordellos in the late 1890s, came the development of “independent” prostitution (permitted since 1890), and a concomitant drop in the number of bordellos. The clients of the ever-decreasing number of bordello-based prostitutes, some 250 to 290 women between 1900 and 1905, came to the 31 bordellos where these women were housed in the first decade of the twentieth century. (This number was down from 86 bordellos four decades earlier in 1866 at the end of the Austro-Prussian War, in part owing to the complete reconstruction of Prague’s former Jewish ghetto, Josefstadt/Josefov, where many had been located, at the turn of the century).<sup>15</sup>

Although Prague police had long sought to keep prostitutes out of the public eye in the interest of physical and moral health,<sup>16</sup> clandestine and independent prostitutes walked the city streets in the evenings and frequented nightspots in search of prospective clients. The behavior of both categories of prostitutes caused the Prague police much chagrin, according to Pečírka. Among the moral issues he raised was the danger clandestine and independent tolerated prostitutes posed to unsuspecting members of the bourgeoisie: independent prostitutes, unlike bordello prostitutes, could go virtually anywhere in public. They met clients on the street, in trams, bars, churches, and theaters: almost anywhere people congregated. Some women lived on the mezzanines or in the attic apartments of middle-class buildings whose residents had earlier had “no idea” about tolerated prostitution. In addition to aggravating property owners, these independent prostitutes came into contact with bourgeois daughters, having a deleterious effect on the less intelligent of them. In the evening, Pečírka claimed, these women shared the center city’s streets with the sons and daughters of the better classes who were returning from the theatre or other social evenings, sometimes with their families. Indeed, the “good” women of Prague sometimes copied the expensive, even luxurious, dress of some “higher-end” prostitutes.

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14 Bericht des K.k. Polizei-Oberkommissärs Ludwig Chevalier in Prag, 3 Jan. 1907, Box 2121, AVA, Algem, Mdl, ÖStA.

15 Bericht des Prof. M.U. Dr. F[erdinand] Pečírka, K.k. Polizei-Chefarztes in Prag, 9 Jan. 1907, p. 13, Box 2121, AVA, Algem, Mdl, ÖStA. All of Pečírka’s comments come from this report.

16 Bericht des K.k. Polizei-Oberkommissärs Ludwig Chevalier in Prag, 3 Jan. 1907, Box 2121, AVA, Algem, Mdl, ÖStA.

Protivenski's abolitionist argument contradicted Chevalier's remarks on moral and public hygiene grounds. He did not oppose regulation because it limited prostitutes' freedom rather he condemned it as "worthless" because only one tenth of prostitutes were under police surveillance. Regulation meant that the government recognized prostitution as something "necessary" and "useful," which offended the moral sensibilities of much of the population. Indeed, bordellos led to sexual debauchery and the most extravagant orgies, which could all too easily enter [bourgeois] family life. In addition, he argued, regulation might have some justification if it really prevented the spread of venereal disease, but it did not. One of few respondents to discuss trafficking, Protivenski concluded that the greatest plague of the bordello economy was trafficking in women, the result, he argued, of competition among bordellos to regularly "refresh" their residents with the youngest, prettiest, attractions. As a result, "an entire army of agents without conscience" sought to populate the bordellos when possible with inexperienced virgins.

As in Prague, Brünn/Brno's 22 bordellos with 100 to 120 tolerated prostitutes were located primarily on the side streets of the city center. In addition to venereal disease, the mayor discussed prostitutes' criminality, a topic of great currency at the turn of the century, and trafficking.<sup>17</sup> In his city, not all women suspected of commercial sex were under police surveillance. In contrast to some other cities in the Bohemian Lands, only exceptionally were those *heimatszständigen* (a reference to the jurisdiction where Habsburg citizens were registered and legal permitted to live, which was responsible for their insurance and poor relief) women who despite criminal convictions, continued to lead an immoral life subjected to a regime of regular medical examinations. Police in that city protected bordello patrons by refusing to register those women found to have records of threats of bodily harm or against property based on Austrian criminal law. The Brünn/Brno report noted the regrettable situation that in many circles men considered the possibility of contacting VD to have been minimized or avoided altogether when the women who serviced them were under police control. The mayor also raised the issue of procurers who provided prostitutes to the bordellos.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Brünn/Brno, in Pilsen/Plzeň, authorities subjected not only prostitutes in bordellos, but also the so-called "street walkers," as well as waitresses and barmaids who moonlighted as prostitutes to bi-weekly medical examinations, a practice first instituted there in 1868. Street walkers together with waitresses and chambermaids employed at inns where prostitution was known to occur were to be examined once a week at city hall or the inn. The K.k. Hofrat who described conditions in the city argued that for tolerated prostitution to function optimally, it should be limited to

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17 On female criminality and prostitution, see the influential study of criminologist, physician, and founder of the theory of anthropological criminology, Cesare Lombroso, and his son-in-law, Guglielmo Ferrero, *La donna delinquente, la prostituta, e la donna normale* (1893).

18 He included the names of men associated with trafficking locally. Some of their names appear in the vice police records at the Polizei-Direktion in Vienna, which was responsible for issues of prostitution.

bordellos. Moreover, tolerated prostitutes should be under “intensive surveillance” from different relevant groups, including the police physician. His remark reflected concerns about the anonymity and transience of the larger cities of the Bohemian Lands.<sup>19</sup>

Brünn/Brno’s Privy Councillor noted that in contrast to the rest of Moravia, the regulation of prostitution left much to be desired in Mährisch Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava and surrounds, a rapidly growing and ethnically mixed — Czech, German, Jewish, Polish, Slovak — industrial region of some 140,000 people on the Moravian-Silesian-Galician border. There were four closed bordellos in Mährisch Ostrau/Moravská Ostrava, each housing three to six women, but city officials repeatedly addressed the issue of clandestine prostitutes operating in public places, above all as waitresses in local inns, after the turn of the century, similar to the situation in Prague before the turn of the century. Attempting to prevent “drunkenness and fornication,” the city council sought to control the behavior of the immoral and “unhealthy,” that is, infected, female waitresses and staff in some inns. These women’s actions should have been no surprise, however, because if the city physician were to be believed, many of them had earlier been prostitutes. Having contracted venereal disease, and fearing hospitalization as a result, they turned to waitressing during their illness.

Authorities could limit the employment of female staff in some inns without placing limits on all of them. Moreover, employing a prostitute as a waitress was sufficient to be banned from using female waitresses altogether. In July 1910, the Moravian provincial governor’s office informed the local gendarmerie of plans to regulate, indeed, limit female service in some hospitality and drinks concerns to prevent the spread of prostitution. The proposal foresaw a ban on most female employees serving guests in those soda water and nonalcoholic drink concessions connected with inns that had repeatedly and in “notorious” ways violated rules related to their operation. Of particular interest as possible sites of commercial sex were wine bars, especially those with an extra room, and drink concessions, which fell under the purview of the trade-police control.<sup>20</sup> Local and provincial representatives of the *Verband Deutscher Genossenschaften Gast- und Schanklokalen* had spoken to competent authorities in Ostrava concerning the illegal sale of alcohol by grocers, whom they accused of unauthorized serving of liquor on their premises and nearby. They alleged that the grocers also had “women on hand.” It was here, in locations that police did not supervise, that “drunkenness and immorality” were found. Workers packed these locations, where the harmonica was played and prostitutes gathered. Association members wanted to put an end to “immoral and unprofessional” practices, which they considered an offense to their professional standing. The organization opposed the police solution for the problem: a proposal in February 1909 to institute closing hours for taverns and inns in Ostrava and surrounding areas of

19 K.k. Hofrat to K.k. Statthalterei in Prague, 1 Feb. 1907, 31633/07, Box 2121, AVA Allgem, MdI, ÖStA.

20 See Stadtvorstand MO, 12 Nov. 1908, inv. č. 143, Sig. Ga 40, and K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft, 2 July 1910, inv. č. 143, Sig. Eb 44, Box 160, Okresní úřad MO, Archiv města Ostravy.

Silesia and Moravia. This correspondence underscores the complexity of regulating the behavior of prostitutes in the more anonymous larger cities.

## REGULATING PROSTITUTION IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED TOWNS

Reactions of police and other authorities in the wake of the Riehl trial clearly reflect the differences between monitoring in many small-to-medium-sized towns, where police knew the actors personally, and the anonymity that prevailed in Prague and other large cities. Contrasting their experience in towns with the experience of Austrian metropolises, a number of these officials argued that closed bordellos were the best way to keep prostitutes off the street, enabling them to be more easily observed, and thus the best means of guarding public morals and public health.<sup>21</sup> Although the police argued for local transparency in terms both of prostitutes and their clients, claiming that this helped in their task of surveillance, most of them too believed that the general public should be shielded from these establishments. These officials' paramount concern was to remove "independent," but especially clandestine prostitutes from inns and taverns, and above all from the streets.<sup>22</sup>

Silesia's provincial capital, Troppau/Opava, was one of few mid-sized cities with a "mixed" system of toleration: fifteen of the city's twenty tolerated prostitutes lived in two bordellos, while the others lived in low-end guest houses where they worked as chambermaids or waitresses. Because no tolerated prostitutes lived in private dwellings, the city avoided the problem of streetwalkers. Moreover, police appeared unexpectedly at the bordellos two-to-three times weekly in order to carefully oversee them. Through these measures, as well as educating individual prostitutes about their rights and responsibilities, city authorities hoped to avoid prostitutes' exploitation, abuse, restriction of personal freedom, and the like, at the hands of the bordello and inn keepers who housed them. As a result, it was unlikely that other greater grievances might arise. However, irrespective of what kind of surveillance was used, it could not be assumed that there would be no excesses owing to the kind of people who visited prostitutes. Troppau/Opava's mayor planned for the city to maintain its existing system of "closed houses", which concentrated prostitutes in one place, the better for police and health surveillance, because this was the only way to keep prostitution off the street, while tightening some existing measures.<sup>23</sup> Among the new measures envisioned was to register, insofar as possible only "older" women, that is, those more than twenty-four years old, because officials believed that these prostitutes were both more or less insensitive to infection and more aware of their rights vis-à-vis the bordello keeper and thus less likely to be exploited.

21 Aufnahmeschrift, 13 November 1906, 6033/06; K.k. schlesische Landesregierung to K.k. MdI, 6 Mar. 1907, 8008/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, MdI, ÖStA.

22 K.k. Hofrat to k.k. Statthalterei in Prague, 1 Feb. 1907, 31633/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, MdI, ÖStA.

23 K.k. schlesische Landesregierung to K.k. MdI, 6 Mar. 1907, 8008/07, Box 2122, AVA, Allgem MdI, ÖStA.

Aussig/Ustí nad Labem's mayor explained how his city's prostitutes were regulated for public safety. This also demonstrates the role of the well-known Habsburg bureaucracy in regulation. Prospective prostitutes had to have a medical examination immediately upon arrival in town and, if healthy, could then register with the police. In contrast to Viennese practice, prostitutes were compelled to register and unregister personally with the local police, who made them aware of their rights and responsibilities, as well as of any changes in the regulations. Women seeking to register as prostitutes with vice police in the city had to satisfy four requirements: that she be at least seventeen years old; that she had already been registered with vice police elsewhere, that she be able to produce a *Heimatsschein*, a *Dienstbotenbuch* and an *Arbeitsbuch* from her *Heimatgemeinde* or a passport; and that she be certified by a physician as completely healthy. The prostitute's registration involved a series of printed forms: The numbered form containing her name, date and place of birth, place of official residence, and civil status. It included three questions: had the woman in question already been under vice police control; was she aware that she was registering as a prostitute; and was she voluntarily placing herself under vice police surveillance? Other forms included a police-issued certificate of registration, an extract from the regulations governing regulated prostitution, also signed by the prostitute; and a health book, in which the prostitute's medical examinations were recorded.<sup>24</sup> Only after they had fulfilled these requirements could the prostitutes enter the bordello to take up their employment.

Aussig/Ustí nad Labem's mayor asserted that the "situation that occurred in Salon Riehl could not have happened" in his city, where prostitution was tolerated in seven closed bordellos, which housed between two and twenty prostitutes each. The number of tolerated prostitutes never exceeded forty. Unlike other towns in Cisleithania, there had apparently never been any opposition to the police practices of regulation in the city. Had there been, the mayor confidently asserted, the relevant inspection organs would not have hesitated to close the establishments.<sup>25</sup>

Jägerndorf/Krnov, Teschen/Těšín/Cieszyn, and Friedek/Frýdek in Silesia also had only bordello-based prostitutes. The world of prostitution in Teschen/Těšín/Cieszyn, an ethnically mixed (Czech, German, Jewish, Polish), rapidly industrializing city (population 21,550 according to the 1910 census), was more akin to nearby Ostrava than the rest of Silesia. Liquor was served in both the city's bordellos—at a very high price—and tobacco was also available. If the prostitutes failed to fulfill their [sexual] "obligations," with clients, who included soldiers, servants, students, and apprentices, they were immediately fired, often without their street clothes. Moreover, each bordello had a so-called "salon" in which liquor was available and the prostitutes regularly had intercourse in this room.

City physicians had begun conducting strict health inspections but the police surveillance in general had not been well handled given the disorderly conditions. The

24 Bürgermeister to K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft, 21 Dec.1906; and Annexes, Aussig, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem Mdi, ÖStA.

25 Bürgermeister to K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft Aussig, 21 Dec. 1906, 20/3, Box 2122, AVA, Allgem, Mdi, ÖStA.

prostitutes for the most part were “typical”: “mentally slow,” lazy maids or factory workers, but also young women from nearby rural areas and poor families brought to the bordello by intermediaries. Without moral support, they soon fell victim to the immoral atmosphere. Bordello keepers’ lack of concern for their prostitute employees was no surprise. These businessmen, who paid an annual tax of about 1,100 Crowns on “soda water consumption,” ran their bordellos in “ruthless” pursuit of their own interests. They found profit in the disorder and enriched themselves at the expense of the poor women who had fallen into prostitution to such an extent that they could soon retire.

The provincial government recommended new regulations for Teschen/Těšín/Cieszyn bordellos, including banning spirits, denying entry to drunks, the abolition of the entertainment lounge, and individual rooms for the prostitutes. Also proposed were three weekly medical examinations in a well-lit space in the bordello. Health books, standard elsewhere in the Bohemian Lands, in which the physician visits were recorded, were also to be introduced. These visits offered the opportunity to teach the prostitutes about “occupational diseases” and warn them about congress with men who appeared to be infected with venereal diseases.

Developments in Friedek/Frýdek echo remarks made by officials about prostitution in other rural areas.<sup>26</sup> Until a bordello housing two to four prostitutes was opened four years earlier, the situation had been similar to that elsewhere in the countryside: “waitresses, dissolute factory workers, and maids” practiced prostitution, more or less clandestinely, but during the summertime often the out of doors and completely “impudently.” Police kept the tolerated prostitutes under strict surveillance, ensuring twice weekly medical examinations. The prostitutes often changed because they were regularly hospitalized owing to disease [venereal], and they were even more often disappointed over their relatively meager earnings and sought better positions elsewhere. These women were “professional” prostitutes because bordello keepers, owing to business considerations, did not employ girls known locally.<sup>27</sup>

Like officials elsewhere in the Bohemian Lands, the Friedek/Frýdek magistrate concluded that prostitution was a “necessary” evil. Paralleling the comments of Aussig/Ustí nad Labem’s and Troppau/Opava’s mayors, the magistrate asserted that bordello-based prostitution was the best solution for his town, because it offered the possibility of control, especially in terms venereal disease surveillance. Physicians had earlier observed syphilis, chancre, and vermin as a result of commercial sexual congress, but the level had dropped noticeably as a result of greater cleanliness and medical control in the bordello. He concluded that closed bordellos offended public morals far less than clandestine prostitutes, who are actually not so clandestine, living as they did in the public’s midst.

Officials in Jägerndorf/Krnov and Friedek/Frýdek highlighted the difficulties of treating prostitutes who became infected with venereal disease. The former’s local

26 Friedek/Frýdek’s population was 9,730 in 1910; *Die Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 31. Dezember 1910 in Schlesien*, compiled by Ludwig Patryn, Troppau, 1912, 8.

27 K.k. schlesische Landesregierung to the K.k. MdI, 6 Mar. 1907, 8008/07, Box 2122, AVA, Allgem MdI, ÖStA.

hospital was small and its beds often occupied. Those with VD constituted a sort of unloved “stepchild” among patients whom doctors and nurses saw only reluctantly. If hospital administrators denied admission to these women, they had to be transported to Troppau/Opava, some 24 kilometers away. Police accompaniment was “too noticeable” and too expensive, but without it, there was no guarantee that a prostitute would go to the hospital. Moreover, relevant correspondence sent by post arrived too late and telephone calls were too expensive. Among the changes made to Jägerndorf/Krnov’s prostitution regulations in response to the Ministry of the Interior decrees was obliging the bordello keeper to take the infected prostitute to the hospital. Friedek/Frýdek’s magistrate proposed the construction of a separate addition to the local hospital, or to one of the regional hospitals. Specialists would run this section of the hospital, which would be dedicated to healing venereal disease.<sup>28</sup>

Especially in smaller towns, prostitutes did not live in bordellos, but rather in inns, sometimes working as waitresses, for example, in Leitmeritz/Litoměřice, Gablonz/Jablonec, and Jungbunzlau/Mladá Boleslav.<sup>29</sup> Many towns were home to fewer than ten tolerated prostitutes. Twice-weekly examination of prostitutes was also standard practice in these towns. Local regulations laid out who paid for the examination; in Leitmeritz/Litoměřice, the prostitute did. (Authorities across Austria were concerned that forcing prostitutes to pay for their examinations only served to encourage the spread of sexually transmitted infections because women would avoid examinations.) District authorities also noted that should a prostitute be found to have venereal disease, she would be delivered to the hospital for care and healing. Up to four weeks of hospital care was to be paid for by those who housed the prostitute, in the case of Leitmeritz/Litoměřice, the innkeeper.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to larger cities where closed bordellos were often found in the city center, Leitmeritz/Litoměřice district authorities argued that tolerated prostitution should be permitted only in the outlying, less frequented parts of their town, and when possible, not in guesthouses. Indeed, it would be best to prohibit prostitution in guesthouses altogether in order to prevent night-time disturbances and violence. This is one of few times when prostitution was explicitly connected to violence in these reports, although the boulevard press and even more serious newspapers contained regular mention of bar fights, homicides, and theft connected with the world of prostitution at the fin de siècle. Jungbunzlau/Mladá Boleslav’s five tolerated prostitutes also lived in inns located away from the town center.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to regular medical examinations, in Leitmeritz/Litoměřice there were proposals for at least one weekly, unannounced police inspection that was to follow

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28 K.k. schlesische Landesregierung to K.k. MdI, 6 Mar. 1907, 8008/07, Box 2122, AVA, Allgem MdI, ÖStA.

29 K.k. Statthaltereirat to K.k. Statthaltereie in Prague, 30 Jan. 1907, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, MdI, ÖStA.

30 K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft Leitmeritz, 23 Jan. 1907, 23042/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, MdI, ÖStA.

31 K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft Jungbunzlau, 25 Jan. 1907, 23042/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, MdI, ÖStA.

strictly particular rules. Repeated violations of regulations would result in the guilty being forbidden to participate in the bordello economy. Prospective prostitutes also underwent medical examinations before being registered in Jungbunzlau/Mladá Boleslav. In a comment showing concern about venereal disease and other ailments related to their work that prostitutes might contract, Jungbunzlau/Mladá Boleslav physician Emanuel Semerád recommended that prostitutes when possible be examined in hospitals, where other appropriate measures could be taken to ensure their health.<sup>32</sup>

In Gablonz/Jablonec, another middle-sized city (population about 30,000 in 1910), tolerated prostitutes were permitted in four locations: two were operated by innkeepers, and two by men with drink concessions. The city physician administered examinations twice weekly at prostitutes' lodgings. As in Aussig/Ustí nad Labem, tolerated prostitutes had to undergo examinations as they arrived in and left the city. In contrast to most other local officials, however, the head of the district commission who responded to the decree advocated abolishing bordello-based prostitution. He noted that as elsewhere, so, too in Gablonz/Jablonec: even where prostitution regulations were closely observed, which he asserted was usually was not the case, tolerated prostitutes were responsible for a "significant" percentage of venereal disease cases. The official, who had previously worked for the Prague police, opposed bordellos in his community because of the "unwanted people" they attracted: "notorious libertines, those with hereditary diseases, old men, and immature boys." Rejecting the argument that bordellos were a "necessity," he sought their closing on grounds of morality, humanity, hygiene, and economy. He cited the Riehl trial as proof that most prostitutes were "treated worse than slaves." Describing competition among bordellos, he asserted that their closing would immediately stop domestic trafficking. Moreover, venereal disease levels would drop because prostitutes would have no economic incentive to hide their illness.<sup>33</sup>

Comments by police and administrators reflected both a general interest in public morals and specific, local concerns about controlling VD. So, too, did other, related comments on topics on the world of prostitution including pandering, bordello clients, and bordello keepers.

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32 The symptoms of primary and secondary syphilis disappeared with or without treatment, but absent appropriate treatment, the infection could progress to the latent and possibly late stages of disease. Medical developments, including German bacteriologist August Paul von Wassermann's discovery of an antibody test for syphilis in 1906, hastened treatment, which remained expensive, in the early twentieth century. Considered effective when begun early, the most common treatment was oleum cinereum (a mixture of lanolin, mercury, and olive oil), supplemented or replaced in 1910 by arsphenamine, an arsenic derivative developed by the German physician-scientist Paul Ehrlich, which the German pharmaceutical firm Hoescht marketed as Salvarsan. Salvarsan had significant side effects and would be replaced in 1912 by Neo-Salvarsan, also developed by Ehrlich. Less toxic and more water soluble, it, too, had considerable side effects. See, for example, Manfred Vasold, *Grippe, Pest und Cholera: Eine Geschichte der Seuchen in Europa*, Stuttgart 2008, 231.

33 K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft to K.k. Statthalterei in Prague, 10 Feb. 1907, Box 2121, AVA Allgem, Mdi, ÖStA.

## REGULATED PROSTITUTION IN GARRISON TOWNS

Some people believed that garrison towns constituted one of the best arguments for bordellos. In these towns, restrictions on bordellos would lead to an even greater evil: the dangerous, unregulated prostitute in private buildings. In one garrison town, where there had initially been neither bordellos nor prostitutes, both the residents and some of the military officers advocated the construction of bordellos. Why? Soldiers, the majority of whom were twenty to twenty-six years old, “exactly the age of the greatest waves of sexual passion, posed a standing danger for the wives of the bourgeoisie and the workers, for their daughters, even for immature children.” Sometimes, given the unavailability of outlets for “normal sexual satisfaction,” soldiers might turn to masturbation or to “perverse sexuality with one another.”<sup>34</sup>

In the garrison town of Theresienstadt/Terezín, local police advocated the registration of prostitutes, while seeking tighter surveillance of clandestine prostitutes whom they considered responsible for the spread of venereal diseases among the troops. Theresienstadt/Terezín had fourteen bordellos attached to inns, each housing one or two prostitutes. The district official who wrote the report noted that rules concerning the separation of prostitutes and guests were rarely followed. Moreover, tolerated prostitutes were not regularly examined twice a week. Sometimes, the examination was not sufficiently thorough. Finally, venereal disease, widespread among the rank and file, owed mainly to the numerous vagrant females not under police control. They had sexual congress with men in hotels, private housing, the barracks, parks, and on the entrenchments. The soldiers they infected then took venereal disease back to the bordellos and to local peasant women with whom they had sexual relations.<sup>35</sup> Vice police in general argued that prostitutes with venereal disease were far more dangerous than infected men, since the sexual function of a man was limited on physiological grounds, while the prostitute, despite the venereal disease, would still long be in a position to ply her trade intensively.<sup>36</sup>

Civilian and military authorities, not only in the Bohemian Lands, but throughout Cisleithanian Austria long argued for tolerated prostitutes in garrison towns to provide for men’s sexual “needs.” For example, in Görz/Goriza/Gorizia, a city of 28,000 near Trieste/Triest/Trst on the Adriatic coast with a barracks of more than 2,500 strong in 1912, officials sought a bordello catering to soldiers was needed to prevent “moral violence.”<sup>37</sup> Calls for tolerated bordellos to serve soldiers continued in Habsburg Central Europe during World War I and into the interwar era.

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<sup>34</sup> Heinrich Grün, *Prostitution in Theorie und Wirklichkeit*, Vienna, 1907, S. 30.

<sup>35</sup> K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft Leitmeritz, 23 Jan. 1907, 23042/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, Mdl, ÖStA.

<sup>36</sup> K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft Jungbunzlau, 25 Jan. 1907, 23042/07; K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft to k.k. Statthaltereie in Prague, 29 Jan. 1907, 23083/07; “Die Regelung der Prostitution in Oesterreich,” 32921/07, Box 2122, AVA, Allgem, Mdl, ÖStA.

<sup>37</sup> K. k. Statthaltereirat [Anton] Rebek to K.k. Statthaltereie im Triest, 23 Oct 1912, file 2419, Luogotenenza del Litorale, Atti Generali, Archivio di Stato di Trieste.

## RESIDENTS VS BORDELLOS AND THE REGULATION OF PROSTITUTION

Residents of the Bohemian Lands sometimes had different concerns about prostitution than did bureaucrats and police. Rarely mentioning public hygiene or trafficking, they were interested in prostitutes' effect on local morals, or less often on economics. In Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary issues of morals and economics converged. Prostitution was regulated "only during the season" in the world-famous health spa, which hosted some 70,000 guests annually.<sup>38</sup> There were no tolerated bordellos in the city, which catered to the well known and well to do, although female employees at a local inn moonlighted as prostitutes. At the turn of the century, these women numbered five or six during the season and one or two in the winter. Like prostitutes in closed bordellos, they were under police supervision and subjected to twice-weekly medical examinations. Prostitutes also came to town to ply their trade when the population burgeoned with visitors. They registered as spa guests, but if their attempts to sell their bodies came to the attention of officials, they were placed under police surveillance.<sup>39</sup>

Residents' concerns with their own economic situation were reflected in the letters about clandestine prostitutes that they sent authorities. The possible economic ill effects of prostitution on a city that depended so much on tourism played a role in these concerns. Indeed, a letter from summer 1908 to the Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary city council reads: "On August 10, [French] Minister President [Georges] Clémenceau will be taking rooms on *Hirschsprungzeile*. We should take care that his friends don't tell this eminent guest at the Karlsbad spas that he shouldn't stay on *Hirschsprungzeile* because there are prostitutes working out of some of the houses on the street."<sup>40</sup> Property owners on the narrow, steep, and above all, picturesque, street just below the famous landmark *Hirschsprung* signed the complaint. They identified Haus "Ludwigs-burg" as home to women of ill-repute who practiced "their trade" in such a way as to cause public nuisance. Its neighbors thus demanded that the city put a stop to the house's "mismanagement," that is, illegal use as a bordello. Their demand was in the public interest, residents claimed, because if it were not met their pensions would lose their value because the rooms could no longer be let to "decent, respectable" spa guests. The city must put an end to this problem once and for all, or, the property owners threatened they would be forced to take the issue to regional officials.

In behavior that presaged the twentieth-century "Not-in-My-Backyard" phenomenon, the bordellos that serviced Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary were not located in the city itself, but rather in the surrounding suburbs. Following municipal improvements, including new sidewalks and better lighting, beginning in 1910, some residents Dra-

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38 Ministerpräsident betreffend die Neuregelung der Prostitutionsüberwachung, 28 Nov. 1907, 32921/07, Box 2122, AVA, Algem, Mdi, ÖStA.

39 Mayor to the K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft Karlsbad, n.d. (stamped Jan. 3, 1907) 17408/07, Box 2121, AVA, Algem, Mdi, ÖSA.

40 Correspondence from 1908, Mravnostní policie — 1915, Kart. 1, B-XIV-188, Spisy, Archiv města Karlovy Vary [hereafter ArMKV], Státní okresní archiv Karlovy Vary [hereafter SOArKV].

howitz/Drahovice, a villa quarter adjacent to the city, sought to have the local bordellos closed, arguing that their presence, even on the edge of the community, on the little-traveled *Friedhofstraße*, kept away members of the “better public.” They thought they had achieved their goal two years later when the local authority voted to withdraw toleration of all three bordellos, which dated from the mid-to-late 1880s.

The bordello owners considered their properties, housed close to one another, discretely in attractive buildings, on spacious grounds, economic investments. They indignantly asserted that the bordellos, which were not visible from the street, posed no threat to public morals. They also deployed against local officials the standard arguments about public hygiene made by proponents of regulation as they vigorously defended their investments. Enumerating the improvements she had made to her recently purchased bordello, Anna Heissler argued against its closure on grounds of public health, claiming that the “need for prostitutes in Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary was great and the number of available bordellos was insufficient, so that annually several hundred [clandestine] prostitutes walked Karlsbad’s streets.” Precisely these prostitutes posed a danger to public health, she asserted, which the district physician could confirm. In her appeal, Ernestine Wenzel claimed that “bordellos are considered necessary on hygienic-police grounds in all large cities of all civilized countries.” Wenzel also noted she paid high taxes! The provincial governor’s office agreed with the health arguments, noting that the best form of regulation was the closed bordello, because it was the easiest to regulate. Moreover, the alternative to Drahowitz/Drahovice’s bordellos was more streetwalkers in Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary. Wenzel’s bordello was, in any case, permitted to remain open.<sup>41</sup> The other two bordello owners, Heissler and Klemens Trinks, continued to operate their properties while their appeals slowly wended their way through the Habsburg bureaucracy.

Noting that Schloss Schönbrunn had been a bordello when he purchased it, so his plans to continue its operation were no surprise, Trinks waged a long battle to keep it open. A reservist during the Great War, who “followed the call of the fatherland,” he used arguments about loyalty and patriotism in connection with maintaining his bordello. Trinks claimed that a time when each man was “volunteering his assets and blood for his fatherland, was not the time to single out one individual for unequal treatment” [the closure of his and Heissler’s, but not Wenzel’s, bordellos]. Using language like that of other proponents of closed bordellos, he continued that “in a time of spread of venereal disease [during the war], regulated prostitutes constituted the only possible defense for soldiers and civilians alike against future danger.”<sup>42</sup>

When Elisabeth Micheli, a resident of the Trinks bordello, was ordered expelled from Drahowitz/Drahovice for violating regulations for tolerated prostitutes, she appealed the town council’s decision in early 1910 using the rules that governed prostitution. Noting that following numerous complaints, the bordello where she previously lived had been closed in August 1909, but Trinks had purchased it soon afterward. Micheli was under the surveillance there, indeed, the “protection,” of all relevant government officials, as evidenced by the prostitutes’ regular medical examinations. Bor-

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<sup>41</sup> For relevant correspondence, Box 135, OúKV, SOArKV.

<sup>42</sup> See exchange of letters beginning 19 Mar. 1910, Box 145, OúKV, SOArKV.

dello keeper Trinks had never received any complaints about the way he ran Schloss Schönbrunn. Micheli claimed the complaint against her, filed some seven months after her former residence closed, owed to manifold grievances against its management of her former bordello keeper. In her own defense, she noted that she had lived in the area for six years without any problems.<sup>43</sup> Micheli asserted that properly run bordellos like Trinks' where she was resident, played a preventative role in society. With this assertion, she was either manipulating—or actually buying into—the notion that prostitution was “a necessary evil” because men’s sexual urges were invincible and their physiological satisfaction necessary for their health.<sup>44</sup> By “sacrificing” themselves, prostitutes permitted all upright women, as mothers, honorable wives, as well-raised daughters, to live a life that was not endangered by men.<sup>45</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Brünn/Brno’s mayor concluded that even the most intensive efforts to regulate prostitution were useless if they were based on a local decrees rather than unified basic, empire-wide principles. Cisleithanian Austria’s regulatory system, which developed out of local practices, reflecting wide-ranging communal autonomy dating from the February Patent of 1861, was never unified, despite military demands for standardization during the war, nor was prostitution abolished, notwithstanding the calls of minority voices, because it provided officials with what they considered a means to protect bourgeois society from some of the sights—and effects—of prostitution, while giving men the outlet they allegedly needed to maintain a healthy masculinity. Whatever its drawbacks, the general consensus remained that tolerated prostitution in closed bordellos prostitution was the best alternative.

Growing state control of cultural, economic, and social life in Bohemian Lands accompanied the advent of World War I.<sup>46</sup> Czechoslovakia was one of several successor-state governments that drew upon the Monarchy’s wartime experiences in the connections its leaders made among public hygiene, prostitution, sexually transmitted infections, and military strength. It was commonly accepted that the experience of the war had demonstrated that venereal disease was spread primarily through extramarital relations — “from the rendezvous of sexual irregularity to the home” — and prostitutes were still popularly condemned as the main culprits.<sup>47</sup> The rate of sexually transmitted infections with which prostitutes were intimately associated had increased during wartime but did not drop immediately with the resumption

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43 Appeal to the Gemeindeamt Drahowitz, 6 Mar. 1910, SOArKV.

44 For example Brünn Bürgermeister to K.k. mähr. Statthalterei Präsidium, 1 Jan. 1907, 8008/07, Box 2121, AVA, Allgem, MdI, ÖSA.

45 K.k. Bezirkshauptmannschaft Karlsbad, 9 Mar. 1910, SOArKV.

46 See for example Rudolf Kučera, *Život na příděl. Válečná každodennost a politiky dělnické třídy v českých zemích 1914–1918*, Prague, 2013.

47 Walter Clarke, *Venereal Diseases: A Challenge to the Red Cross*, Bulletin of the League of Red Cross Societies, Oct. 1920–Dec. 1921, p. 176.

of peace. The government, the military, and the police voiced similar concerns about prostitutes as a source of venereal disease as their Habsburg predecessors.

Civilian-military collaboration on the surveillance of prostitutes and women suspected of being prostitutes continued because the government was concerned about the restoration and maintenance of social order. Like the Habsburg military before it, the Czechoslovak military was obsessed with venereal disease. Also like the Habsburg police before them, Czechoslovak police raids continued to target as clandestine prostitutes those working-class women “lounging” in coffee houses and pubs. Police in Czechoslovakia continued to employ the wartime methods of the Habsburg police and military. They raided hotels, arresting the women—many young and unemployed; some of them lacking the right of residence—they caught practicing clandestine prostitution, having them examined for venereal disease, and obliging those with infections to report to the hospital immediately. Thus, some women who claimed they were not prostitutes were still placed under vice police supervision.<sup>48</sup> Both the cooperation of the military and police in identifying, arresting, and forcibly testing women suspected of being prostitutes in the wake of the war and the continuing focus on the prostitute as the source of venereal disease, demonstrate continuities between the Monarchy and the First Republic.

Responses to the 1906/1907 decrees show broad support for bordello-based tolerated prostitution as the “least bad” solution to the problem. Following a few false starts soon after the war’s end, however, Czechoslovakia followed the “democratic” route and abolished prostitution for reasons of morals and public hygiene, reflecting the long-held view of first president Tomáš G. Masaryk that prostitution was an evil that society needed to eradicate.<sup>49</sup> On 11 July 1922, the Czechoslovak parliament promulgated Law No. 241, “O potírání pohlavních nemocí.” Section II of the law abolished the existing system of bordellos and all elements of regulated prostitution, including police supervision and health books for prostitutes. Under the new law prostitution was not punishable unless it caused “public scandal.” Both brothels and procuring were forbidden with punishment laid out in Paragraph 14. Continuing practices developed in late imperial Austria, especially during wartime, the law criminalized endangering the health of others by spreading venereal disease. While the law sought to ameliorate the more egregious medical practices vis-à-vis regulated prostitutes in Austria, some postwar medical examinations of prostitutes appear to have been invasive as those in the Monarchy. Infected persons who rejected treatment might still be taken to the hospital for compulsory treatment and those who willfully discontinued

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48 City fathers in Bodenbach/Děčín considered placing *Animiermädchen* under vice police control in autumn 1920, while Reichenberg/Liberec vice police enforced gynecological examinations for sixty local women employed as barmaids in that city the following January. Indeed, Czechoslovak officials continued to administer physical examinations to “questionable” women, not only barmaids, for reasons of vice-police control. Bürgermeisteramt, File 83, Box 59, Státní okresní archiv Děčín, 29 Oct. 1920; and Magistrát města Liberce, G 1904–1907, and, Polizeiamt Reichenberg to the Gesundheitsamt Reichenberg, 5 Jan. 1921, Bordellwesen, Schandwesen u. Dirnen, both in SOArL.

49 T.G. Masaryk articulated his views in *Mnohoženství a jednoženství*, Prague 1899.

treatment might be subjected to a medical examination, but physicians were forbidden to tender their services for treating venereal disease in an intrusive manner.<sup>50</sup> The venereal disease law soon came under fire. Bordello owners were loath to lose their valuable economic property, while other critics noted that bordellos still existed and predicted that the new law would prove no more able to do away with prostitution than the regulatory system it had replaced. Moreover, it did little to control venereal disease.

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<sup>50</sup> Professor Karol Gawalowski of Charles University, "The Campaign against Venereal Disease in the Czechoslovakian Republic" (1921), Box 4, Fond Společnost pro potírání chorob pohlavních, Praha, Národní archiv.