Homosexuality in the USSR (1956–82)

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Abstract

The history of Soviet homosexuality is largely unexplored territory. This has led some of the few scholars who have examined this topic to claim that, in the period from Stalin through to the Gorbachev era, the issue of homosexuality was surrounded by silence. Such is the received view and in this thesis, I set out to challenge it. My investigation of a range of archival sources, including reports from the Soviet Interior Ministry (MVD), as well as juridical, medical and sex education literature, demonstrates that although homosexuality was not widely discussed in the broader public sphere, there was still lively discussion of it in these specialist and in some cases classified texts, from 1956 onwards. The participants of these discussions sought to define homosexuality, explain it, and establish their own methods of eradicating it. In important ways, this handling of the issue of homosexuality was specific to the Soviet context. This thesis sets out to broaden our understanding of the history of official discourses on homosexuality in the late Soviet period. This history is also examined in the context of and in comparison to developments on this front in the West, on the one hand, and Eastern Europe, on the other.

The thesis draws on the observation made by Dan Healey, the pioneering scholar of Russian and Soviet sexuality, that in the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death a combination of science and police methods was used to strengthen heterosexual norms in the Soviet society. Taking this observation as a point of departure, I explore late Soviet debates over whether homosexuality should be viewed and handled as a criminal and/or a medical phenomenon. The examination of these discussions will contribute to our knowledge about the oppression of homosexual men and women in the Soviet Union, providing insight into the roots of contemporary Russian homophobia and expanding our knowledge about Soviet history more broadly.
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Declaration

I declare that:

- The thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
- Due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used; and
- The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliographies
Publications

Published works by the author that have been incorporated into the thesis include:


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I am grateful to my family, who despite not knowing the topic of my thesis and the nature of my research, has always been supportive. Finally, I am indebted to Rhett Miller without whom this thesis would have never come into being and my coming to Australia would have never happened.
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1. Igor’ S. Sumbaev. Source: https://arbat25.ru/o-czentre/o-professore-ai-belkine
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10. Seminar on Sexology in Moscow (1967). Source: Collection of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry.
Abbreviations

GARF Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation)

GDR German Democratic Republic

GULAG Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei (Main Camp Administration)

ITU Ispravitel’no-trudovoe uchrezhdenie (Corrective-Labour Institution)

KGB Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)

MVD Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del (Ministry of Internal Affairs)

MZ Ministerstvo zdravookhraneniia (Ministry of Health)

OITK Otdel Ispravitel’no–Trudovykh Kolonii (Department of Corrective Labour Camps)

RSFSR Rossiiskaia Sovetskaia Federativnaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic)

SIZO Sledstvennyi izoliator (Detention cell)

TsK KPSS Tsentral’nyi Komitet Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza (Central Committee of the communist Party of the Soviet Union)

TsMAM Tsentral’nyi munitsipal’nyi arkhiv Moskvy (Central Municipal Archive of Moscow)

UITK Upravlenie Ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei (Directorate of Corrective-Labour Camps)

UMS MVD SSSR Upravlenie Meditsinskoi Sluzhby Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik (Directorate of Medical Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
Archival citations are accompanied by the following abbreviations:

f. fond, fond

op. opis’, inventory

l. list, page
A Note on Transliteration & Translation

Throughout this thesis I adhere to the Library of Congress system of transliteration. Unless otherwise noted all translations are mine and I am fully responsible for any mistakes contained herein.
Introduction

The history of Soviet homosexuality is largely unexplored territory. This has led one of the few scholars who have examined this topic to claim that in the period from 1934 to 1986 the issue of homosexuality was surrounded by silence.¹ This is the standard received view and in this thesis, I set out to challenge it. My investigation of a range of archival sources, including declassified Interior Ministry reports, juridical, medical and sex education literature demonstrates that although homosexuality was not widely discussed in the broader public sphere, there was ongoing discussion in specialist medical and juridical literature as well as in secret MVD correspondence. These discussions took place in the period from 1956 up to the collapse of the Soviet Union and their main participants were MVD officials, sex educators, sexologists and legal scholars. In their discussions on homosexuality, they defined it and elaborated on ways of dealing with it in the Soviet context.

In my examination of these discussions, I build upon the insights of Dan Healey’s pioneering monograph *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (2001), specifically on his observation that in the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death a combination of science and police methods were used to “enforce a compulsory heterosexual norm”.² I take this observation as a point of departure and argue that those who were discussing homosexuality espoused competing approaches – whether homosexuality should be a matter of “police” or scientific concern. The proponents of a “police” approach regarded homosexuality as a crime and believed that all types of homosexual behaviour between persons constituted a crime; they were strong opponents of decriminalization of sodomy and argued that homosexuality was not a medical condition, but a result of vice and debauchery. By contrast, the adherents of a “scientific” approach posited that homosexuality should be a matter for the medical sphere and sex education; they argued that homosexuality could be of a congenital nature and even a disease. They were strong proponents of sodomy decriminalization and unlike adherents of the “police” approaches, “scientists” gave the issue of homosexuality serious consideration.

In my thesis I will demonstrate that Soviet discussions of homosexuality during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras were influenced by similar discussions in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. In these countries, homosexuality was decriminalized in the 1960s and the issue was largely on medical agendas. By contrast, the view that homosexuality was a normal variant of human sexuality, arising in the US in the late 1940s, was either contested by Soviet doctors or ignored altogether.

Why do we need to know about these discussions? What is their importance? The answer is that these discussions had significant implications for the lives and suffering of gay and lesbian people in the Soviet Union. Key issues in these discussions included the question of whether homosexuality should remain a crime or not, and whether gay people should undergo psychiatric treatment. Most importantly, the examination of these discussions will give us a better insight into the roots of modern Russian homophobia, which, as Dan Healey has argued, stems from the Soviet past.³

Although modern Russian homophobic sentiment had been brewing since the early 2000s, it intensified after the adoption of a notorious law banning propaganda of “non-traditional sexual relations” on a federal level in 2013.⁴ As Alexander Kondakov has explained, this law rendered “the repression of sexualities” an “official policy”.⁵ In the wake of its adoption, the Russian government unleashed a campaign of hatred towards gay people in Russia, legitimized gay bashing and censored any media that did not cover homosexuality in a negative way.⁶ This hostility extended to the realm of academia, where research on homosexuality came under attack from Russia’s conservative activists, while academics accused of “promoting sodomy” were even forced to leave their jobs and the country.⁷ Russian homophobia took a more sinister turn in April 2017, when reports appeared about the brutal torturing and killing of gay people in the Russian region of Chechnya, sanctioned and condoned by the regional leaders.⁸ Russian homophobia remains a serious issue which needs addressing. But in order to address it, we need, in Dan Healey’s words, “historical information about the mechanisms and scale of Soviet homophobic persecution”, since such knowledge is able to

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⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid., 108.
⁷ Ibid., 113.
“provide a much-needed evidence base for arguments in favour of strengthening the human rights of LGBT citizens in Russia” and “explain the dangers of official homophobic persecution to their fellow citizens”. 9

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The existing scholarship on Imperial Russian and Soviet sexuality has drawn on the work of Michel Foucault, examining how medical and legal experts constructed and regulated sexuality. 10 This regulation of sexuality through the production of knowledge was perceived by Foucault as a main ingredient of modern society. 11 My thesis is informed by different research questions and approaches. Rather than exploring discourse on homosexuality in terms of modernity, I look at how discussions on homosexuality and approaches to it evolved throughout the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras; what informed these discussions and how they influenced the official decision-making about homosexuality. I also examine what these discussions meant for Soviet plans to create a New Soviet Person; what implications they had for public and private boundaries in Soviet society as well as for the lives of homosexual men and women more broadly.

Apart from building on the literature devoted to gender and history during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods, in this thesis I draw on scholarly discussions of Soviet experiments on raising a special type of citizen – a New Soviet Person. The creation of such a person was the cornerstone of Soviet plans to build a new society; with the help of this person, the Bolsheviks attempted to uphold their political decisions and promote social stability. 12 Scholars, training their gaze on this historical theme, have identified a set of characteristics that this New Soviet Person was expected to possess. John Haynes has argued that such a person was “the figurehead of the people’s government of the revolutionary Soviet Union, the populist proselytiser of a qualitative change in human nature”. 13 Such a person was expected to have “a high-principled personality, placing the social, the public interest first, and sharing the aims and principles of the communist ideology”. 14 Other characteristic features of the New Soviet

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9 Healey, Russian Homophobia, 154.
10 See for example: Healey, Homosexual Desire; and Laura Engelstein, The Keys to Happiness, Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).
Person included “youth, fitness and energy, particularly as expressed in the fields of manual labour and “physical culture”.

The moulding of the New Soviet Person, as Catriona Kelly has argued, was contingent on the inculcation of Soviet people with a set of behavioural ideals to which they were expected to conform and measure up. These ideals were designed in the early years of Soviet power and they were “clearly recognizable in later generations, even if they had started to seem controversial, or even absurd, to some members of these”. The creation and proliferation of ideal models of “new men” and “new women” were “to function as incentives to the creation of a new society” and “to act as a proof that this society already existed”. Scholars have pointed out that Soviet leaders used a variety of methods with a view to raising such a person – one such way was making the lives of Soviet people inseparable from the collective. Under Stalin, for instance, Soviet citizens were taught to “sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of the collective” and the official propaganda linked personal fulfilment with a close association with the collective. Under Khrushchev, as Oleg Kharkhordin has shown, the collectivization of life was further intensified and its role in the formation of a consciousness of the New Soviet Person continued to be important. Apart from instilling collectivist values and consciousness in Soviet people, the government relied on educational methods. One such method consisted of encouraging people to “work on oneself”, that is to work towards self-transformation and self-perfection. Popular Soviet brochures on “working on oneself” started to appear in the late 1950s and proliferated during the late Soviet era. The authors of the brochures offered a variety of methods on how one should work on oneself and according to Kharkhordin they all included three main stages: first “self-evaluation”, which included “the realization of certain personal deficiencies”; then “self-compulsion or self-stimulation” and the final stage of “self-control and self-command”.

Building on these insights, I attempt to discern the ethos of Soviet man in discussions of homosexuality between GULAG officials, sex educators and Soviet sexologists, suggesting

16 Ibid., 3.
17 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 241.
21 Ibid., 242.
that eradication of homosexuality was also part of the Soviet project of creating a New Soviet
Person, albeit one that was discussed mostly behind closed doors. Indeed, the participants of
the discussions on homosexuality often evoked the collective as an important instrument of
elimination of homosexuality: as shown in Chapter 1, GULAG officials and doctors expressed
their certainty that the forces of the collective would help prisoners engaging in homosexuality
to forgo their perverse inclinations. Similarly, the authors of the Khrushchev-era sex education
manuals, examined in Chapter 2, stressed the role of the collective in diverting children and
young people from excessive thinking about sex and masturbation, which was perceived to be
conducive to homosexuality. Finally, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, some texts by Soviet
sexologists on medical treatment of homosexuality were highly reminiscent of the concept of
“working on oneself” and its main stages, examined by Kharkhordin. Indeed, some sexologists
argued that for the treatment of homosexuality to be efficient, a prospective patient was to
realize his disadvantageous sexuality and its inconsistency with the Soviet society. The success
of the treatment, some of them believed, depended not on medication, but on the patient’s will
and self-control and, most importantly, the patient’s individual work on diverting his attention
from individuals of the same sex to those of the opposite.

My research also has implications for the understanding of public and private
boundaries in the Soviet society of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. Earlier scholarly works
noted that from the onset of the Soviet state, its leaders sought to appropriate private realms for
public needs. Eric Naiman has demonstrated that during the early Soviet years, Bolshevik
leaders sought to subject the personal life of their citizens to societal needs.\(^22\) During the Stalin
period, as Jeffrey Brooks has argued, collectivization significantly diminished private space;
Brooks went so far as to argue that “the press shrank private space still further during these
years by enlarging and sacralising public places and structures”.\(^23\) Vladimir Shlapentokh
asserted that since the mid-1950s the Soviet state had started to gradually lose its authority over
“all strata of the population” and the process of “privatization” of the society had begun.\(^24\) Such
“privatization” manifested itself in the emergence of “totally private institutions” of family and

University Press, 1997).

\(^23\) Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton:

\(^24\) Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia*
friends; the growth of “unofficial public life” in civil society and the exploitation of Soviet citizens’ positions for personal gains.25

Recent studies of Soviet private and public boundaries have offered a more nuanced examination of this theme. Deborah A. Field has argued that despite the growing aspirations of the Khrushchev government to introduce new types of social control, during this time Soviet people managed to find new ways “to evade, to resist, and make use” of the state’s interference.26 She also challenged Shlapentokh’s view, whereby Soviet public and private were sharply distinct, proposing that there was a fluid relationship between them.27 Similar to Field’s argument, Lewis H. Siegelbaum contended that Soviet private spheres were “neither hermetically sealed nor necessarily in antagonistic relation to public spheres”, as opposed to being viewed as merely “the beleaguered antithesis of state power”.28 Drawing on Siegelbaum’s framework, Juliane Fürst examined the networks of like-minded friendship circles among Soviet youth in the 1950s and 1960s filled “with a spirit of political and social reawakening”.29 Although, as Fürst has argued, one would be inclined to assign these networks to the private realm, they “demonstrated a desire to ‘be’ or ‘create’ a public sphere”.30 My thesis supports both Shlapentokh’s argument about growing privatization and more recent scholars’ descriptions of a fluid relationship between public and private in the Soviet society after Stalin’s death, demonstrating that these two positions are mutually inclusive rather than exclusive.

The lives and experiences of Soviet homosexual people is a particularly fitting object for the examination of public and private dynamics: male homosexuality was criminalized, which meant that Soviet same-sex desiring men had to carve out private spaces to pursue their sexual desires. Dan Healey has shown that homosexual men established their bonds through the use of “private sites”, which included “all-male drinking parties (popoiki), workplace

26 Deborah A. Field, Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev’s Russia (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 55.
27 Ibid., 102.
30 Ibid., 244.
fraternization, mentoring, and comradeship”. Healey also argued that these men “were helped by a strong and growing popular sense of entitlement to a private life that was less intrusively policed by the state and its agents”.

In my thesis, I demonstrate that it was not only homosexual men who were helped by this growing “privatization”: Soviet legal scholars and sexopathologists made extensive use of this trend, framing homosexuality not as a matter of the state’s concern, but a private matter of a given individual. Indeed, as I show in Chapter 4, Brezhnev-era legal scholars, who suggested decriminalizing consensual sex between men, implicitly appealed to the notion of privacy; they stated that consensual homosexual relations were not worthy of penalizing, since they were located in the private realm, unreachable for the state. In Chapter 5, I examine medical discussions of homosexuality by Soviet doctors in the 1970s, who underscored the importance of privacy for the success of medical treatment of homosexuality. Likewise, in this chapter I reflect on the place of such medical practice on public and private boundaries. Certainly, since male homosexuality was officially a crime and medical treatment of homosexuality was not an institutionalized practice, those doctors who administered medical treatments of homosexuality had to do so in private.

Literature Review

It is only recently that sexuality and homosexuality came to be accepted as a valid topic of historical research. Inspired by the sexual revolution of the 1960s, with the help of feminist and gay liberation movements, historians started looking at sex as a historical problem. These scholars dispelled the hitherto prevailing notion of sexuality as a biological category, arguing that it was a socially constructed concept. Since then a large body of literature has been produced on the history of homosexuality and homosexual emancipation in the West. An

32 Ibid., 26.
impressive number of scholarly works is emerging on the history of homosexuality in the countries of Eastern Europe. But as far as the history of homosexuality in the Soviet Union is concerned, the amount of scholarship on the history of homosexuality remains modest.

In the Soviet era, the social-scientific study of homosexuality remained largely taboo until the final years of Soviet rule, and research on homosexuality was conducted through the lens of medicine. The problem of homosexuality was practically never studied from a historical or sociological point of view. The impossibility of historicizing the problem of homosexuality under the Soviet regime was well demonstrated in the memoirs of pioneering scholar of Russian sexualities Igor Kon. In one of his books, Kon recalled how in 1974 he

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attempted to examine homosexual relations in an article “The Concept of Friendship in Ancient Greece” – he attempted to publish it in a historical journal Vestnik Drevnei Istorii (Ancient History Review). The censors demanded that he avoid using words such as “pederasty” or “homoerotic” in the article and eventually Kon had to opt for a more appropriate euphemism: “those specific relationships”.38

Considering such hostile attitudes towards any studies of homosexuality in the Soviet Union, it comes as little surprise that the first ground-breaking historical studies on Soviet homosexuality came from the West, where homosexuality had come to be acknowledged as a valid historical topic since the late 1960s. One of the most notable scholars here was Simon Karlinsky, who started looking at homosexuality in the context of Russian history and literature from the late 1970s. Karlinsky’s primary focus was literary, for example, he explored the depiction of homosexual love in the work of a Russian poet Mikhail Kuzmin.39 Karlinsky also provided a historical overview of how homosexuality was handled in Russia from Petrine era to the post-Stalinist decades.40 Some of Karlinsky’s findings, however, as I will show below, were subsequently called into question by scholars who approached Russian history via new sources.

The fall of the “iron curtain” and the opening up of Soviet state archives facilitated the growth of scholarship on the history of Russian and Soviet sexualities. With this new access to sources, Western scholars began to examine sex in the context of pre-revolutionary Russian and early Soviet history.41 The most important research for the purposes of my thesis was conducted by Dan Healey. From the early 1990s Healey began to study the history of same-sex love in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, making use of the newly available archival materials. In his early work Healey focused on the handling of male homosexuals and lesbians

38 Kon, Sexual Revolution in Russia, 328.
by early Soviet specialists, history of the urban populations of homosexuals in Moscow and psychiatric treatment of Soviet lesbians in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{42} Healey’s findings challenged some of the arguments made by Simon Karlinsky in his works on the history of homosexuality in Russia and the Soviet Union. For example, he disagreed with Karlinsky on the point that medicalization of homosexuality occurring in the 1920s in Soviet Russia was entirely “morbidizing”, arguing that this process was more compassionate.\textsuperscript{43}

This thesis builds upon Healey’s two important monographs. The first monograph I draw on is the pioneering study \textit{Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent} (2001) – the first full-length monograph to examine the history of same-sex love in late Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{44} Its first part examines the emergence of an urban male homosexual subculture and female homosexuality in the period from 1870 to 1927. The second part explores the regulation of homosexuality in the late Imperial period and the Soviet periods, looking at how medicalization of homosexuality was taking place during these times. In this part Healey also discusses the criminalization of male homosexual relations under Stalin across the entire Soviet Union in 1934, reflecting on the possible reasons for this change. In the third part Healey looks at how Stalinist sodomy law was enforced: here Healey examines several criminal cases on sodomy initiated in the 1930s and discusses how female homosexuality was dealt with at that time. The book ends with an epilogue, which discusses the treatment of homosexuality in Soviet society after Stalin’s death and up to the demise of the Soviet Union.

I also draw on Healey’s recent monograph \textit{Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi} (2018), which further explores the roots of contemporary Russian homophobia. In the first part of the monograph Healey explores the development of Soviet homophobia, both in the post-Stalin GULAG and Soviet society at large, arguing that Khrushchev’s Thaw “was paradoxically a time of sharpening homophobic”.\textsuperscript{45} In the second part of the monograph Healey examines “aspects of the rise of queer visibility in modern Soviet and post-Soviet Russia”.\textsuperscript{46}


\textsuperscript{46} Dan Healey, \textit{Homosexual Desire}.
Most relevant for the purposes of my study in this part are Healey’s discussions of the Brezhnev era – a time of comfortable economic growth, accompanied by growing availability of housing and general improvements in people’s standards of living. These developments expanded opportunities for Soviet homosexual people to have a relatively comfortable life and enjoy urban gay male cruising in the largest cities. In the third part of his monograph, Healey ponders the obstacles to uncovering the history of Russian and Soviet homosexuality and interrogates how future historians, biographers and activists could overcome them.

In both of his monographs, Healey discusses the GULAG and the handling of same-sex desire there by its authorities at different junctures in Soviet history. Of particular significance to my thesis are Healey’s discussions of the struggle of GULAG directors and doctors with homosexuality in the second half of the 1950s. Healey argued that during this period, as the dismantlement of the GULAG was under way, its authorities were worried about the possibility of homosexuality spreading into wider society. It was one of these anxieties, as I show in Chapter 1, which apparently triggered a host of measures against homosexuals and lesbians in the GULAG from 1956 to 1959. These measures, proposed by GULAG directors and doctors, encompassed “police” and “scientific” approaches, the collision of which was most evident in the discussions of lesbianism – GULAG directors suggested criminalizing it, while GULAG doctors regarded it as a physiological phenomenon which would go away on its own, once the problem of sex was resolved.

Healey also considers the handling of same-sex love in the late-Soviet penitentiary system, arguing that “the late Soviet decades appear to have hardened the homophobia in prisoner subcultures, especially among male convicts”. This homophobia was most evident in the proliferation of homosexual violence, wherein “degraded” men – passive partners in anal intercourse – were raped by other prisoners and branded with shaming tattoos, underscoring their low status. Building on these insights, I demonstrate in Chapter 5 that throughout the 1970s, Soviet MVD officials were worried about these practices and were eager to resolve the problem of homosexual sex in prisons with the help of a newly-established medical science – sexopathology, which emerged in the mid-1960s and included homosexuality in its research agenda. MVD officials commissioned sexopathologists to produce manuals on medical

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47 Healey, Russian Homophobia, 93 – 147.
48 Ibid., 149 – 209.
49 Ibid., 27 – 51.
50 Ibid., 45.
51 Ibid., 45 – 46.
treatment of homosexuality in prisons; they did so on numerous occasions in the 1970s and despite the official status of male homosexuality as a crime.

In his 2001 monograph, Healey reflected on the fate of the Stalin-era anti-homosexual legislation after the dictator’s death, pointing out that the following “energetic renewal of ‘socialist legality’” did not “lead to an examination of the value of the 1934 anti-sodomy statute”. In his recent monograph, Healey provided a new perspective on this question – he argued that the decision to retain the anti-homosexual legislation was made by the MVD officials in 1958, as part of their decision to strengthen the struggle with sodomy with a new decree, issued the same year. Healey construed this decree as “rare evidence that Khrushchev’s reformers deliberately discussed Stalin’s law against male homosexuality, and chose to keep it”. In my thesis, however, I demonstrate that it was Soviet legal scholars, drafting the new Republic Criminal Codes in 1959, rather than MVD officials, who were responsible for retaining the anti-sodomy statute. In Chapter 4, I show that these legal scholars did examine the law on sodomy; some of these scholars even suggested eliminating the article penalizing consensual homosexual relations between men; yet their suggestions fell by the wayside and the law was retained.

By the time Western scholars started perusing the opened archives, some Russian scholars had examined the problem of sex, albeit from a slightly different perspective. The most prominent scholar here was Igor Kon, who examined Russian and Soviet sex from both historical and sociological points of view. His first monograph *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today* (1995) did not draw on archival material; instead, as the author noted, it drew on “literary and scientific data” from various areas of knowledge. What makes Kon’s work especially valuable is the fact that it was the first such work written by a Russian and a person who could offer an “inside story” on Soviet discussions of sex. By Kon’s own admission, in Soviet times he was “the organizer of or a participant in virtually all Soviet undertakings concerned with the study of gender and sexuality, as well as functioning as the most important conduit of information about Western research and ideas on these subjects”.

52 Healey, *Homosexual Desire*, 258.
53 Healey, *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi*, 43.
54 Igor Kon, *Sexual Revolution in Russia*, 4.
55 Ibid., 5.
Despite the uniqueness of Kon’s work, it contains various contradictory generalizations. Most important for the purposes of my study is Kon’s contention that since the 1930s “a complete and utter silence on the subject [homosexuality] had descended”, that “homosexuality was simply never mentioned” and it “had become an ‘unmentionable vice’ in the full sense of the term” throughout the Soviet period. In support of his argument that the issue of homosexuality was shrouded in silence under Brezhnev, Kon remembered a time when in 1974 censors did not let him use the word “pederasty” in one of his articles. Contradicting his own statement that homosexuality was never mentioned, Kon noted that the first sexopathology books appearing in the USSR in the 1970s, labelled homosexuality a “sexual perversion”. Kon published works about sexuality and homosexuality in the Russian language as well. These were the first Russian language monographs to talk about sexuality and homosexuality from a historical and sociological perspective. They included *Strawberry on the Birch: Sexual Culture in Russia* (1997) – which was very similar in content to the English monograph and *Faces and Masks of Same Sex Love: Moonlight at Dawn* (1998). The latter was the first Russian language full-length study on homosexuality that approached the issue from different angles. There Kon discussed the theories on the origins of homosexuality, explored how it was constructed across different cultures throughout history (including in the Soviet Union) and presented a psychological and sociological portrait of “modern” gay culture.

One of the intriguing themes that the existing literature has been unable to explore in great detail is the issue of medical treatment of homosexuality in the Soviet Union, particularly with reference to the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. The absence of any in-depth studies of this question for these periods stems largely from the unavailability of illuminating sources; as Catriona Kelly has explained, Soviet medical materials dated from the mid-1960s onward are subject to confidentiality rules and many of them were not even archived. Therefore it stands to reason that the present accounts of medical treatment of homosexual people during these

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
periods generally rely on the interviews of former patients and doctors who knew about such practices.

Scholarly discussions of the medicalization of homosexuality in the second half of the twentieth century in the USSR usually start with a nod to the report *The Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men in the Russian Federation: An International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission Report* (1994) by Masha Gessen, which was the first to provide a glimpse into this uncharted territory. In her report, Gessen observed that during Soviet times “punitive psychiatry was employed against homosexuals and lesbians”, explaining that it was often the relatives of a homosexual person that initiated such treatment. Gessen based her conclusions on a range of interviews with Soviet lesbians, which she conducted in Russia in the period from 1991 – 1993. Gessen’s interviewees revealed that the medical treatment of lesbianism typically occurred as follows: a parent or any other guardian learnt that there was a sexual relationship between two young women and initiated hospitalization of one or both of them in a psychiatric hospital. There, the women would typically be subjected to treatment with psychotropic drugs – this lasted for about three months. After discharge from hospital, women were to be registered as psychiatric outpatients and had to visit a local psychiatrist for regular monitoring.

Echoing Gessen’s account and drawing on her own interviews with eight Soviet lesbians, American sociologist Laurie Essig, in her monograph *Queer in Russia: A Story of Sex, Self and the Other* (1999) revealed that apart from being forcibly hospitalized, Soviet lesbians succumbed to medical treatment; they would “give themselves over to the Experts, secure in the knowledge that only with medical intervention could they go on living”. Essig also addressed the issue of medical treatment of male homosexuality, suggesting that some Soviet homosexual men consented to undergoing sex-change operations in order to avoid prosecution for sodomy. Lesbians, according to Essig, did likewise, not out of fear of criminal prosecution, but “in order to conform to societal restrictions”. Essig wrote: “in the past and the present many young females have sex change operations, not because the doctors diagnosed

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62 Ibid., 16.
63 Ibid., 17.
65 Ibid., 36.
66 Ibid.
them as ‘transsexuals’ but because they labelled them “lesbians”’.67 These conclusions were subsequently criticized by Igor Kon, who questioned the reliability of Essig’s data. 68

More recently, scholars have shed some new light on the Soviet medical treatment of homosexuality, primarily that of Soviet lesbians. Looking at the lives of homosexual women during the late Soviet period, Francesca Stella suggested that forced psychiatric treatment of lesbians was not “a universally accepted practice among medical practitioners”. 69 Stella revealed that in some cases, Soviet doctors who became aware of their female patients’ homosexuality suggested the option of “heterosexual re-education”, instead of medicated approach. 70 Stella also revealed that there were doctors who “ruled out medical treatment as ineffective in changing an individuals’ sexuality”. 71 Despite the illuminating potential of these stories, some scholars have expressed their caution about taking them at face value. For instance, Ira Roldugina expressed scepticism about the existing accounts of forced medical treatment of lesbian women, pointing to the difficulty of supporting such stories with hard archival evidence. 72

If the existing literature, albeit very sketchily, reveals how medical treatment of female homosexuality was conducted in the Soviet Union, this is not the case when it comes to the issue of medical treatment of male homosexuality. Indeed, the existing literature on Soviet homosexuality says very little about it, especially with reference to the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods. 73 The neglect of this topic would seem to be partly a result of the assumption that male homosexuality’s status as a crime would discourage any medical studies of the problem; conversely, lesbianism, which was not prosecuted, was thought to be subject to psychiatric treatment. 74 Yet, medical treatment of homosexual men did occur, despite the existing criminal penalties for it. Such a peculiar position on male homosexuality – between the prison and the clinic – invites a host of questions, with the most intriguing ones being as follows: Could a medical diagnosis of homosexuality save those accused of sodomy from

67 Essig, *Queer in Russia*, 36.  
70 Ibid.  
71 Ibid., 48.  
74 Healey, *Russian Homophobia*, 96.
incarceration? How did Soviet courts distinguish between the disease and the crime? Did the regular police know about the fact that medical treatments for homosexuality existed?

Some scholars have argued that it was indeed possible for Soviet gay men to obtain legal immunity with the help of doctors. Sonja Franeta tells us about an interviewee who recounted that in the 1980s he escaped criminal punishment for sodomy due to his “diagnosis” – he simply shared his problem with a local psychiatrist, who then sent him to psychiatric hospital for medical examination. The medical examination revealed that he was indeed a homosexual; from now on this new status rendered him immune to the police. In her recent book *My Pink Road to Russia: Tales of Amazons, Peasants, and Queers* (2015), Franeta provides another interview with a man who deliberately underwent medical treatment for homosexuality to escape criminal prosecution. The testimonials of Franeta’s interviewees were confirmed in Arthur Clech’s article “Between the Labor Camp and the Clinic: *Tema* of the Shared Forms of Late Soviet Homosexual Subjectivities” (2018), where he demonstrated that both women and men were subject to medical treatment and that in some cases psychiatric treatment could save homosexual men from prosecution.

The existing literature on medical treatment of homosexuality ignores the attempts of doctors to argue for decriminalization of sodomy. It also focuses on the last decades of the Soviet period, rather than the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods. Finally, it deals with ordinary doctors and psychiatrists, who were often not sexopathologists. Drawing on the existing work on medical treatment of homosexuality, I set out to explore discussions and practices held and performed by Soviet sexopathologists, who stood at the vanguard of the Soviet sexological science and were leading experts in the field. Although male homosexuality remained a crime, Soviet leading sexopathologists examined it through a “scientific” lens nevertheless and sought to provide medical treatment for such individuals. Some sexopathologists sought to claim homosexuality for the sexopathological profession, by arguing for decriminalization of sodomy and pointing out that existing criminal sanctions prevented homosexuals from seeking medical help due to fear of prosecution. Some of them made less explicit attempts to change the status of homosexuality from a crime to a disease, by proposing to establish medical treatment of homosexuality as an official practice. Others theorized on the issue of whether a homosexual

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could be spared serving a sentence in prison and instead sent to a psychiatric hospital for treatment, due to his “disease”. While some sexopathologists’ “scientific” stance on homosexuality accounted for their “lenience” towards the problem (many of them insisted that homosexuality could be cured only if one strongly desired to do so and even discouraged some homosexuals from treatment altogether), there were sexopathologists who believed that homosexuality had to be treated against a homosexual’s will. The cooperation of sexopathologists with MVD officials on the issue of homosexuality, which I explore in Chapter 5, and MVD requests to sexopathologists to provide methods of “identification of homosexuality”, may suggest that some sexopathologists were in fact helping the police to enforce sodomy law.

Discussions on homosexuality examined in this thesis took place across different realms and within different timeframes; in their examination, I draw on the emerging scholarship on Soviet society of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev era, which allowed me to consider these discussions against the backdrop of specific historical contexts. In Chapter 1, where I examine the discussions on homosexuality in the GULAG, I consider the findings of Jeffrey S. Hardy’s monograph *The GULAG after Stalin, Redefining Punishment in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union, 1953-1964* (2016), where he explores the GULAG’s fate in the period of de-Stalinization and reform.78 Hardy gives a detailed account of the attempts of Stalin’s heirs to tackle crime in the GULAG and turn it into the place of “re-education”, rather than labour extraction. This emphasis on “re-education” of prisoners, as I will demonstrate, was reflected in the decrees of GULAG officials on the struggle against homosexuality, which suggested the importance of “educative work”, rather than mere punishment. Yet, despite this new thrust in the GULAG policies, GULAG directors struggled to conform to it: many still preferred to tackle homosexuality with punitive measures, going so far as to suggest the criminalization of lesbianism. In his monograph, Hardy reveals that in the late 1950s the GULAG leadership was concerned with the issue of criminal gangs: various decrees were

adopted in order to fight and put an end to it. My thesis will contribute to knowledge on this subject, by demonstrating that GULAG officials put the problem of homosexuality on a par with the problem of criminal gangs.

My thesis aims to contribute to the growing scholarship on the Brezhnev era, which insists on re-evaluating this period and argues that despite its reputation for cynicism and moral decline, there still were developments in political, cultural and social realms as well as genuine attempts by the state and people to initiate and lead changes. One of the first attempts to offer the re-evaluation of this period was made in a collection of works Brezhnev Reconsidered (2002).79 Of particular relevance to my thesis are discussions of intellectual life during this period. Mark Sandle argued that despite the often tendentious understanding of the Brezhnev era as an “era dominated by the orthodox platitudes of the official ideology”, intellectual life in the Brezhnev era was in fact characterized by “struggle, conflict and creativity”.80 Serious thinking and more careful consideration of the Brezhnev era was offered by another volume Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964 – 1985 (2014), which examined the social, political, and cultural life of the Soviet society.81 The authors of the volume also sought to challenge the familiar picture of the Brezhnev era as “backward, oppressive, irrational, and immoral”, arguing that this period was accompanied by “the liberalization of social, economic, and political life” as well as “a dialogue among different socialist publics as well as state authorities”.82 Most recently attempts to lend a new interpretation to the Brezhnev era were made in another volume Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange (2016).83 It is in the context of these interpretations and considerations of the Brezhnev era that I view the discussions between Soviet sexopathologists, jurists and MVD officials. Indeed, as I will demonstrate, their discussions about homosexuality, from legal and medical perspectives, had deep implications: legal scholars pushed for decriminalization of sodomy, sexopathologists insisted on establishing medical practice of homosexuality and even the conservative and “oppressive” Interior Ministry, despite its reluctance to decriminalize homosexuality, gave in to the new understandings of homosexuality as a medical matter.

79 Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, eds., Brezhnev Reconsidered (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
82 Ibid., 2.
Sources

As I have mentioned above, one of the difficulties facing a historian working on the history of homosexuality in the Soviet Union is the problem of mostly inaccessible sources. Their inaccessibility is largely dictated by the policies of the Russian archives, which do not allow access to personal files whose age does not exceed 75 years and it is in these files that the most illuminating information on the lives of Soviet homosexual people can be found. As far as the archival material dealing with homosexuality is concerned, the access to such files can be even more difficult, despite the expired privacy limitations of the requested files. On some occasions, as Ira Roldugina explains, historians may even be denied permission to peruse archival materials if their content is considered to be inappropriate by the archivists.

The chief sources and materials employed in this thesis fall into three groups by their location – first, archival material; second, sources that I located in Russian libraries, and third, sources that I acquired through my personal interaction with former Soviet doctors who performed medical treatment on homosexuals. Most of these documents have not been hitherto explored, therefore it is worth elaborating on them at some length.

Firstly, my research draws on the archival material from the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and the State Archive of Latvia. Most of these sources are GULAG documents, produced between 1956 and 1959 and examined in Chapter 1. They include decrees by GULAG directors on the struggle against homosexuality, their internal correspondence and reports on the measures taken to prevent it, as well as reports of GULAG doctors on venereal disease and a brochure by a GULAG psychiatrist on lesbianism. Another intriguing archival source in this group is a manual on “physical education”, produced in 1958 for the officials of

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86 Ibid. The archives holding the most illuminating materials, namely the Federal Security Service (successor to the KGB) and the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation are also likely to remain inaccessible in the foreseeable future. My attempts to approach these institutions, even under the guise of a more “appropriate” research topic, were unsuccessful.
87 I was alerted to some of these sources by Dan Healey’s reference to them in his article. See: Dan Healey, “From Stalinist Pariahs to Subjects of ‘Managed Democracy’: Queers in Moscow 1945 to the present” in Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe Since 1945, eds. Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).
juvenile colonies. In this manual, the author gave recommendations on how to prevent “sexual perversions” among adolescents in places of confinement – this manual is considered in Chapter 2. Other archival materials include the minutes of the RSFSR Legislative Commissions, which participated in the drafting of a new RSFSR Criminal Code in 1959 – these commissions considered the first part of the law on consensual sodomy, and some of its members proposed eliminating it altogether. This group of sources also encompasses archival materials located in the State Archive of Latvia – a draft of the Latvian Criminal Code, proposed by the Latvian SSR’s law commission in 1960, containing a proposal to criminalize lesbianism and a draft proposal of the Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR to introduce harsher penalties for “perverted” sexual practices such as oral and anal sex in 1977. I obtained these files during my fieldwork in Russia and Latvia in autumn 2016. I was unable to find similar files in the state archives of Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Estonia, which I also consulted in the course of this research trip.

The second group of sources comes in the main from the Russian State Library and the Russian National Library, specifically, from a reading room containing materials designated “for official use only” [dla sluzhebnogo pol’zovaniia]. In this room, I discovered manuals and handbooks for Soviet investigators and cadets of the MVD Higher School on the investigation of sex crimes, which featured debates on the criminal status of homosexuality in the USSR – these sources are considered in Chapter 4. Sources from this group also include brochures with recommendations on how to combat sexual perversions in prisons intended for Soviet penal officers – these are considered in Chapter 5. I have also consulted the Central Scientific Medical Library, where I located monographs on sexopathology with medical discussions on homosexuality as well as unpublished dissertations on treating lesbianism – these files are considered in Chapter 3.88

The third group of sources is represented by materials that I obtained in the course of my communication with Soviet sexologists. Some of these scholars still work in the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Institute of Psychiatry, whose establishment dates back to 1965. This institution was the main sexological centre in the USSR, where research on sexopathology was conducted and patients with sexual disorders, including homosexuality, were treated. During my fieldwork in Moscow in March 2017, I had an informal communication with the doctors of the Department, who kindly shared some of the

88 I am grateful to Dan Healey for advising me where this dissertation is located.
documents that they stored in their bookcases. These documents included an unpublished dissertation “Materials on the Sex Life of Male Workers of an Industrial City of Central Kazakhstan” (1968) by Soviet sexopathologist I. A. Popov. This dissertation was the first study to examine sexual behaviour of Soviet people, where the author compared the prevalence of homosexuality in Soviet and Western societies. Another source in this group is a type-written outline of scientific tasks, put before the doctors of the Department of Sexopathology by the MVD in 1973, requiring sexologists to design methods of medical treatment of homosexuality to be used in Soviet prisons. One more illuminating source here is a report produced by the doctors of the Department in 1973, where they documented their meetings with the KGB and MVD officials on the issue of homosexuality in 1973 as well as their work on designing new drugs for treatment of homosexuality.

Another doctor I approached is Yan Goland, a Soviet psychiatrist-sexopathologist, who has been practising medical treatment of homosexuality in the city of Gorkii since the mid-1960s. After decades of medical practice, Goland accumulated a sizable collection of files and documents, which he kindly allowed me to use. These included Goland’s unpublished papers on homosexuality, his correspondence with Moscow sexopathologists, Goland’s letter to Soviet journal Zdorovie on the subject of homosexuality and many others. When providing treatment to his patients, Goland required them to keep a diary, where they described their lives prior to the start of the treatment and documented the progress of their treatment. These diaries were meant to be part of the treatment – the documented progress would be discussed with Goland, who would then decide what course of action to take. Once the treatment was over, Goland typed out these hand-written testimonials, anonymizing their identities and eliminating any other personal details. These former patients’ type-written testimonials were then shown to other patients, who were expected to be encouraged by them – in my thesis I use some excerpts from these. I also use an excerpt from Goland’s interview with a former patient conducted in the 1990s and recorded on a videotape. Finally, I rely on an interview with Goland himself, which I conducted with him in March 2017 in Nizhnii Novgorod.

A few words should be said about the limitations of the sources employed in this thesis. The goal of this thesis is not to identify the authentic voices of Soviet homosexual people, but to document discussions on homosexuality held between Soviet officials and specialists, therefore my analysis is mostly state and intelligentsia-centered. I also examine the officially published sources, considering the individuality of the views expressed in them and the authoritative regime and censorship constraints within which they existed. Diaries from
Goland’s collection are also analysed with great caution – I am aware that since Goland promoted his treatment using these diaries, some information, especially on the treatment outcomes, cannot be considered totally trustworthy – some of his patients would certainly report positive results just to meet the doctor’s expectations. However, in my analysis of these diaries, I focus not on technical questions of treatment efficacy, but the patients’ stories of how they first came to sexologists with the problem and how they first consulted the doctor.

**Thesis Overview**

This thesis consists of five chapters, each of which examines discussions on homosexuality within a specific realm and timeframe. The timeframes chosen are dictated by the available sources. Chapter 1 examines the correspondence between GULAG officials (1956-1959), Chapter 2 looks at sex education manuals (1956-1964), Chapter 3 draws on books and texts on sexopathology (1960-1970), Chapter 4 considers the realm of criminology and law (1960 – 1975), Chapter 5 examines texts on sexopathology and MVD manuals (1970 – 1982).

In Chapter 1 I examine how homosexuality was dealt with in the GULAG in the period from 1956 to 1960. Here I will argue that while both GULAG directors and doctors espoused police approaches to male homosexuality, contending that it was better dealt with by punitive measures, their opinions on lesbianism diverged. GULAG directors advocated police methods: they framed it as a crime and argued for the introduction of criminal penalties for female same-sex liaisons. GULAG doctors, on the contrary, preferred to examine it through a scientific lens and offered alternative solutions: they asserted that in most cases prison lesbianism was a temporary phenomenon that would disappear once the woman prisoner was released. Only hardened lesbians, the doctors argued, should be tackled with punitive measures.

Chapter 2 looks at how Soviet educators discussed sex and homosexuality in a series of manuals published under Khrushchev in the period from 1956 to 1964. It first considers the framing of sex in these manuals, arguing that during this period their focus shifted from the initial task of eliminating ‘the vestiges of the capitalist past’, to a focus on confronting ‘ideological diversions’ of the West. Here I explore the sex educators’ advice regarding the importance of keeping young people’s sexual activity at bay, and I demonstrate how this advice could be related to the sex educators’ fear that it could be conducive to homosexuality. Then the chapter turns to the discussion of homosexuality in these manuals, demonstrating that there
was no clear consensus among Soviet sex education as to what homosexuality was: they presented it both as a crime and psychiatric aberration. Special attention is given to the fact that the first Soviet manuals to discuss homosexuality were two brochures from Czechoslovakia and East Germany, published in Russian language.

In Chapter 3 I consider how homosexuality was explained and constructed within the field of Soviet psychiatry – sexopathology, which emerged in the 1960s. Theoreticians and practitioners of this newly-made science constructed a new image of the homosexual, which differed from the hitherto common understandings of homosexuality as a criminal psychopathy. I argue that the attempts of Soviet sexopathologists to “cure” homosexuality can be viewed in terms of the larger Soviet project of creating a New Soviet Person. The pioneers of Soviet sexopathology argued that the therapeutic effect of the medical treatment of homosexuality depended largely on the individuals’ self-training and self-command. These concepts fitted into the popular educational narratives on “working on oneself” during the late Soviet era, which were promoted with a view to raising a new consciousness of the New Soviet Person. This chapter will also look at the attempts of Soviet sexopathologists to frame homosexuality as a matter of medical science, rather than a police concern – their attempts to do so were influenced by the similar trends in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Finally, this chapter will look at how Soviet sexopathologists responded to the claims of an American sociologist Alfred Kinsey, who believed that homosexuality was a normal variant of human sexuality.

Chapter 4 examines manuals, textbooks and dissertations on sex crimes and on the sodomy law, produced by Soviet experts in crime and law in the period from 1960 until 1975. It focuses on the debates over whether the part of the law criminalizing consensual sex between two men should be retained. These debates took place between scholars who could be divided roughly two into groups – those affiliated with the MVD, and those who worked in relatively “liberal” university environments. This chapter will demonstrate that the positions of these two groups regarding the retention of the anti-sodomy statute were moving in different directions during the period in question: the views of the scholars, working outside the MVD, were becoming more liberal, while the view of MVD scholars were growing more conservative. In this chapter I demonstrate that the views of legal scholars outside the MVD aligned with Soviet sexopathologists and sex educators – they argued that homosexuality should be presented as a medical matter and should be a focus of sex education, rather than a police concern. Finally, I demonstrate that just like sexopathologists, legal scholars outside the
MVD drew on the developments in the countries of the East Bloc, where sodomy laws penalizing same-sex relations between consenting adults were abrogated.

Chapter 5 examines discussions of homosexuality among Soviet sexopathologists and MVD officials in the 1970s. It will argue that during this time, MVD officials were increasingly influenced by the work of Soviet specialists in sexopathology, who posited that homosexuality was a treatable medical condition. The influence of sexological expertise, however, did not result in the dominance of scientific approaches to homosexuality in the MVD texts. Instead, MVD officials preferred to advocate for a combination of police and scientific approaches to homosexuality, viewing it both as a punishable crime and a treatable disease.

This chapter will also explore another facet of this peculiar relationship between sexopathology and MVD officials, by examining the medical practice of the treatment of homosexuality, as performed by Yan Goland, a Soviet sexopathologist. Although homosexuality was officially a crime and medical treatment of homosexuality was not an established practice, Goland administered treatment to his patients and even tried to institutionalize his practice.

In the conclusion, I summarise the views of the contributors to the discussion of homosexuality, examining points of convergence and divergence. Here I also provide a brief overview of how their stance on homosexuality evolved, after Brezhnev and up until the collapse of the Soviet Union.
A Note on the Soviet Sodomy Law

A few words should be said about the existing anti-sodomy law in the USSR. Male homosexual acts became illegal with the adoption of the anti-sodomy law – Article 154a of the USSR Criminal Code - under Stalin in 1934. The article consisted of two parts – the first (154a – I) criminalized consensual sodomy (punishable by deprivation of liberty for a term of 3 to 5 years), while the second part (154a – II) criminalized so-called “forcible” sodomy (with a more severe penalty of 5 to 8 years). Female homosexuality was never criminalized.

The few historical accounts of the adoption of this law point out that no announcement was made explaining the rationale for its introduction. The existing sources are too scant to deduce with certainty why the Stalinist leadership chose to do so. Historians have made some attempts to investigate this question. Dan Healey and Laura Engelstein agree that political reasons were an important factor and link the adoption of the law to the Stalinist leadership’s drive to tighten control over the Soviet people’s intimate lives and to deter political disloyalty, which the Stalinist leadership associated with homosexuality. Dan Healey also suggests that anxieties about the declining birthrate were relevant. Dan Healey has also pointed out that the Stalinist leadership deemed it unnecessary to criminalize female same-sex life, preferring instead to reinforce the motherhood cult using it as an important reminder of the purpose of women’s sexuality and in later Soviet period resort to medical controls.

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94 Ibid., 204.
Chapter 1

Homosexuality in the Soviet GULAG (1956-59)

On 27 January 1956, the head of the corrective and labour camps and colonies of the MVD, Sergei Yegorovich Yegorov, signed a new decree, which featured an unusual subject. The document drew the attention of GULAG directors to the growing problem of homosexuality in colonies and prisons, which as Yegorov wrote, was “likely to have serious consequences”, if measures to prevent it were not taken:

The Central Administration of prison camps and colonies of MVD USSR has information about increased instances (both among male and female prisoners) of sodomy [muzhelozhstva], lesbian love and other types of sexual perversion, including rape and syphilis infections resulting from this. Considering that this state of affairs is abnormal and that it is likely to have serious consequences, I request that you study this phenomenon on the ground and in detail and then submit an elaborate report [dokladnaia] to the Central Administration of prison camps and colonies of MVD USSR by 15 March 1956.

Yegorov went on to specify a list of the issues that the chiefs of the GULAG colonies across the Soviet Union were expected to address in their reports. Among other matters, Yegorov required that they provide statistics on “frequency of the instances of sexual perversions among prisoners”; “types of sexual perversions”; “instances of mental, venereal and other illnesses due to this [na etoi pochve]”; and information on “the cohort of prisoners engaging in sexual perversions, their age, gender, physical state and the type of conviction”. Furthermore, Yegorov sought suggestions on “the measures of the regime [rezhimnyi], educative or whatever measures of influence on prisoners, required to be employed in the struggle with sexual perversions”. The head of the GULAG also suggested that apart from

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1 For a brief biography of Yegorov see: Aleksandr Kokurin and Nikita Petrov, eds., GULAG: (Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei), 1917 – 1960 (Moscow: MFD, 2000), 815.
2 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2882, l. 78. The original typed text reads “15 February” but has been changed by hand to “15 March.” Yegorov’s untitled decree.
3 Ibid.
4 “…ili kakogo-libo drugogo vozdeistvia, kakie neobkhodimo primenit’ dla bor’by s polovymi izvrashcheniami”. Ibid.
prison officers, specialists in psychiatry, forensic medicine and venereology should also be engaged in the effort to eradicate homosexuality in the GULAG system.\textsuperscript{5}

In his recent book, \textit{Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi} Dan Healey examines homosexuality in the GULAG with new sources and approaches.\textsuperscript{6} He starts by considering it in the GULAG under Stalin, observing that during this period homosexual relations there were visible and that camp authorities even displayed lenience towards lesbian couples.\textsuperscript{7} Healey then looks at the period after 1953, showing that Stalin’s successors accorded more attention to the problems attributed to homosexual activity in camps, among which were venereal disease and violent conflicts among prisoners.\textsuperscript{8} In response to these problems, as Healey shows, GULAG authorities suggested a variety of measures, ranging from criminal sanctions to “educational measures”.\textsuperscript{9} In this chapter I will explore this claim in more detail, focusing on the early Khrushchev years, specifically the period from 1956 to 1959. The timeframe of this chapter is determined by the available sources. My account is principally based on reports and memoranda produced by GULAG commandants and doctors, where they discussed homosexuality and proposed various means to respond to its presence.

A close examination of these documents reveals that GULAG directors and doctors held differing views of homosexuality. While both concurred on the point that male homosexuality was better dealt with by criminal law, their opinions diverged when it came to the issue of lesbianism. GULAG operatives mostly framed lesbianism as a crime and argued for introduction of criminal penalties for female same-sex liaisons, while GULAG doctors contended that in most cases prison lesbianism was a temporary phenomenon that would disappear once the woman prisoner was released.

This chapter will also seek answers to the following questions: how was homosexuality understood by the MVD officials and doctors and how did their understanding change in the period from 1956 to 1959? What did the measures to tackle homosexuality in the GULAG have in common with the broader attempts of the Soviet leadership to tackle deviance outside of the GULAG? What fuelled the MVD officials’ determination to suppress homosexual activity and how did this anti-homosexuality campaign evolve?

\textsuperscript{5} GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2882, l. 78.
\textsuperscript{6} Dan Healey, \textit{Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi} (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 35 – 37.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
This chapter will start by examining Yegorov’s decree, presented in the introduction. It will then proceed to the reports written by GULAG commandants, examining the way they framed male homosexuality and lesbianism. It will consider discussions of homosexuality among GULAG medical workers, reflecting on the striking differences and similarities in understandings of the GULAG same-sex love by camp commandants and doctors.

**Yegorov’s Decree: Aims and Rationale**

In this section, I will examine Yegorov’s decree presented above and offer possible reasons for its adoption. I will then examine the only available report, which was produced in response to it by a director of the Siberian GULAG Velikanov, which proposed a list of measures to address the problem of homosexuality. So why did Yegorov, the head of the GULAG, issue such a decree in the early 1956? Why did homosexuality which had long accompanied the life in the GULAG, become such an urgent matter to tackle at this time? In order to proceed with offering possible answers to these questions we need to consider the events that unfolded after Stalin’s death, since these had immediate effect on the fate of the GULAG.

After Stalin’s death, it became obvious for his heirs that the GULAG was in urgent need of reform. The system of prison camps and colonies was indeed in deep crisis: it was economically inefficient and due to the rapid growth of the prison population it was becoming more difficult to control. Prisoners actively sought to undermine the camp administration’s authority, taking part in acts of mass disobedience, refusing to work and instigating uprisings. Messages about the GULAG system’s degradation were quickly reaching the Party leadership: the party bosses were inundated with an avalanche of complaints coming from camp prisoners about their dire living conditions and the rampage of criminality in the camps.

One of the immediate responses to the GULAG crisis made by the Party leadership was the decree on amnesty issued in 1953 shortly after Stalin’s death, which triggered the release

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10 Yegorov’s decree was not the first attempt to tackle homosexual activity in the GULAG. One of the first attempts to do so after Stalin’s death could be traced back as far as May 1954, when the USSR Interior Ministry issued a decree “307-c” on the struggle with sodomy, the content of which remains unknown to date. I came across the mention of this decree in a report prepared by camp doctors. GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1, delo 2894, 107. Perepiska s UITK-OITK soiuznych respublik po voprosam mediko-sanitarnogo obsluzhivaniia.
of 1.2 million prisoners from the camps and colonies.\textsuperscript{13} Far from resolving the GULAG crisis, this decision led to more problems and concerns. The mass exodus of able-bodied “positive contingent” (polozhitel’nogo kontingenta) from camps and colonies, the resulting deficit of a qualified labour force in the camp system and the sharp increase in the cohorts of especially dangerous criminals (osobo opasnnykh prestupnikov) further intensified tensions in the GULAG and even led to more prisoner uprisings.\textsuperscript{14} A wave of crime overwhelming the entire country was another undesirable consequence of the mass exodus of prisoners.\textsuperscript{15} Despite that, the Soviet leadership continued with its commitment to a significant reduction of the GULAG size, placing the blame for such a state of affairs on the camp system and particularly its officials, who had ostensibly failed to re-educate prisoners and prepare them for life outside the GULAG.\textsuperscript{16}

Dan Healey’s examination of homosexuality in the GULAG provides more details on the context in which Yegorov’s decree was issued. Healey tells us that as the dismantling of the GULAG was under way, camp authorities and medical professionals were anxious about the possible spread of the prisoners’ homosexual relations into the wider society.\textsuperscript{17} They were also anxious about the possible proliferation of syphilis and other venereal diseases (which were believed to be a consequence of sodomy) within and beyond the places of confinement.\textsuperscript{18} These fears may well have been among the main catalysts for the MVD leadership’s increased attention to the problem of homosexuality in the GULAG in the late 1950s.

Apart from its timing, the content of the decree is also intriguing. Yegorov stated that he “deemed it necessary” to involve “doctors familiar with psychiatry, forensic medicine and venereology” in the effort to tackle homosexuality.\textsuperscript{19} He also emphasized the importance of employing “educative” measures against homosexuality.\textsuperscript{20} Such an approach appears to represent what Dan Healey has called “a classic Foucauldian incitement to discourse about queerness”, which facilitated the ensuing search for new methods of “control and cure” of the GULAG homosexuals.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{13} Barnes, \textit{Death and Redemption}, 205.
\textsuperscript{14} Kozlov, \textit{Istoria Stalinskogo GULAGa}, 86.
\textsuperscript{16} Barnes, \textit{Death and Redemption}, 207.
\textsuperscript{17} Healey, \textit{Russian Homophobia}, 44.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{19} GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2882, l. 78.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Healey, \textit{Russian Homophobia}, 42 – 44.
Yegorov’s emphasis on educative measures also appears to be a result of Stalin’s heirs’ determination to “diminish the economic focus” of the GULAG “in favour of re-education” of prisoners, demonstrated by Jeffrey S. Hardy. GULAG inmates were no longer to be perceived as merely a labour force; rather, camp administrators were encouraged to view them as “wayward citizens in need of encouragement, support, trust, training and education”. As part of the “re-education” shift, the party leadership adopted other decrees between March and July 1954. These required that GULAG officials prepare inmates “for an honest working life” through the improvement of the use of labour, education and political work. Yet, as Hardy has argued, Stalin’s heirs did not have a clear strategy on how to transform the GULAG into a place of re-education. The lack of such strategy is also palpable in the GULAG commandants’ approach to homosexuality, which will be examined further: although they reported the usefulness of “educative talks” as far as the struggle with homosexuality was concerned, some of them still suggested that criminal sanctions were more efficient.

Yegorov’s decree was circulated to the directors of the corrective-labour camps across the entire Soviet Union. However, only one short memorandum responding to Yegorov’s inquiry is available in the archives – signed by the head of the Siberian GULAG Velikanov. This report was addressed to the new director of the GULAG, Pavel Nikolaevich Bakin, who took over from Yegorov on 4 April 1956.

In his report, Velikanov admitted that in the Siberian corrective labour camp there were instances of “lesbian love” among women. This could be primarily found among hardened criminals:

In the MVD Siberian corrective labour camp there are instances of sexual perversions in the female camp sections [lagernye punkty]. So-called lesbian love is common among female prisoners. This type of sexual perversion is mainly

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23 Ibid., 73.
24 Ibid., 33.
25 Ibid.
26 GARF, P.-9414, op. 1, delo 2882, 79. Raznariadka. Among other corrective-labour colonies where Yegorov’s decree was circulated were the following: Karagandinskii, Vorkutinskii, Kargopol’skii, Angarskii, Ivdel’skii, Severo-Kuzbasskii, Unzhen’skii, Usol’skii, Sibirskii, Viatskii and North-Eastern corrective-labour camps. The decree was also circulated to the Directorate of Corrective-Labour Camps and Colonies (UITLK) of Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Khabarovskii krai.
28 For a brief biography of Bakin, see: Kokurin and Petrov, *GULAG*, 800.
prevalent among women prisoners at the age of 20-40 years, who come from criminal-bandit and thief cohorts [ugolovno-banditstvuushchii i vorovskoi element] with multiple convictions for various crimes.29

Velikanov noted that in the camp sections, where “thieves-recidivists and criminal-bandit cohorts with multiple convictions are housed, 50-60% of all prisoners engage in sexual perversions. In those camp sections that house inmates convicted for the first time and those convicted under the article 58… the instances of sexual perversions are not of great dimensions [ne nosiat massovogo kharaktera]”.30

Similar framing of homosexuality as a phenomenon specific to the criminal underworld rather than to the prisoners convicted for political crimes can be found in the memoirs of the GULAG survivors. As Adi Kuntsman has shown, “in many memoirs the political prisoners are repeatedly and consistently heterosexualized while descriptions of the criminal inmates contain many references to same-sex relations”.31 Apparently, it was this understanding of homosexuality as a product of the criminal underworld that led GULAG officials to offer punitive measures as the most effective measure against it. Out of four suggestions offered by Velikanov to tackle lesbianism, two recommended punitive measures. Velikanov suggested imposing administrative penalties on lesbians who violated the camp order: “Sexual perversions are to be considered a breach of the camp regime and the perpetrators are to be punished administratively like in cases of other breaches of the camp discipline”.32 Most importantly, Velikanov advocated criminalizing female homosexual acts by petitioning the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR “for imposition of a penalty for individuals engaging in sexual perversions”.33 As I will demonstrate further in this chapter, other GULAG commandants made similar suggestions.

Other measures proposed by Velikanov included the enforcement of nocturnal surveillance over prisoners’ barracks and “conducting of regular competent conversations [kvalifitsirovannykh besed] on the harm of sexual perversions” among them. The latter was consistent the Khrushchev-era vision of the GULAG as a place for re-education of prisoners,

29 GARF, P-9414, op. 1, delo 2896, l. 144.
30 GARF, P-9414, op. 1, delo 2896, l. 144. Political crimes, that is “counterrevolutionary crimes” were prosecuted under Article 58. See: Oleg V. Khlevniuk, The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004), 365-366.
32 GARF, P-9414, op. 1, delo 2896, l. 144
33 GARF, P-9414, op. 1, delo 2896, l. 144.
which I have noted above. Velikanov also cited the opinion of medical workers who worked in the Siberian colony regarding lesbianism: “The medical personnel believe that the main reason for sexual perversions among women are physiological needs, arising as a result of their long isolation from men”.\textsuperscript{34} As I will show further, other GULAG doctors held similar opinions on the origins of homosexuality – they argued that female homosexuality would disappear on its own once women engaging in lesbianism had access to men. Apparently, Velikanov did not consider these views to be important, because, unlike GULAG doctors, he proposed no such measures.

**Homosexuality and GULAG directors**

This section will continue the discussion of how GULAG directors elsewhere viewed male and female homosexuality in their reports, demonstrating that most of them were inclined to frame these phenomena exclusively as crimes and argued that punitive measures were the most effective means of eradicating them. Fresh scholarship on the GULAG reveals that in the late 1950s the GULAG leadership was deeply concerned about the rise in criminal activity in the camps. Of primary concern were criminal gangs that undermined the camp order. As early as 5 April 1956 the MVD leadership observed that more than 25 precent of all camp prisoners were recidivists, who committed robberies, murders and other grave crimes, adversely influencing the camp life.\textsuperscript{35} Jeffrey Hardy tells us that the guard department of the GULAG was so worried about these problems that it wrote more than a thousand pages on the issue between October 1957 and July 1958.\textsuperscript{36} It was in the context of anxiety around the growing criminal activity in the GULAG that its directors came to problematise the phenomenon of homosexuality.

The GULAG operatives’ framing of homosexuality as a crime in their reports was apparently stimulated by the fact that official decrees on the fight with crime in the GULAG often included homosexuality. A similar tendency to regard “sexual perversions” and criminal activity as inextricably related was evident in official correspondence between the MVD USSR

\textsuperscript{34} GARF, P.9414, op. 1, delo 2896, l. 144.
\textsuperscript{35} Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, 250.
\textsuperscript{36} Hardy, *GULAG after Stalin*, 89.
and the Central Committee of the Communist Party. A decree, released by the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee of the Communist Party on 25 October 1956, apparently also lumped criminality and homosexuality together. The text of the decree is not available; yet, the responding reports by camp directors on its enforcement suggest that sodomy and lesbianism were listed among other crimes to be tackled.

One such report in response to the decree was produced by the head of the Directorate of Corrective Labour Colonies of Belarus Soblov on 1 July 1958. In the report, Soblov briefly summarized the tasks set out by the decree: “The Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and Central Committee of the TsK KPSS from 25 October 1956 that focused on the struggle with crime in camps and colonies, demanded that the leadership of the UITK and corrective-labour colonies undertake the most energetic measures to prevent sodomy and other sexual perversions among prisoners”. Measures that had been adopted in the colony and which were listed by Soblov in his report included increased surveillance over prisoners’ behaviour with a view to identifying those “inclined to sodomy and other sexual perversions”, enforcement of nocturnal surveillance over bunk beds (spal’nye mesta), “educational” (vospitatel’naia) and “sanitary – educational” (sanitarno-prosvetitel’skaia) work, which was “systematically conducted among prisoners in the colonies.” Soblov also suggested that the prisoners’ collective was an important means of struggling with sodomy – “to fight this evil, the societal forces of the collective have been engaged to create an environment of intolerance and condemnation of these instances [of sexual perversions]”. The collective – a central element of Soviet ideology and an important tool in shaping the consciousness of the New Soviet Person – was apparently believed to be effective in the struggle against homosexuality. The fleeting mention of the collective’s potential to eradicate homosexuality, made by Soblov and the absence of similar mentions in other directors’ reports may suggest that they did not deem it as efficient as measures of order enforcement. On the contrary, GULAG doctors strongly emphasized the significance of the collective, by expounding on its instrumentality in eradicating homosexual behaviour.

37 Steven A. Barnes also quotes a report the MVD USSR to the Central Committee produced on 5 April 1956, which mentioned that recidivists engaged in “drunkenness, drug addiction and sexual perversions”. See: Barnes, *Death and Redemption*, 251.
38 The document did not mention Soblov’s name or patronymic.
39 GARF, P-9414, op. 1a, delo 604, l. 78. Dokladnaia zapiska o rabote operativnykh apparatov podrazdelenii UITK MVD Belorussskoi SSR po bor’be s prestupnost’iu i po likvidatsii gruppirovok sredi zakluuchennykh za 1957 – 1958.
40 Ibid., l. 79.
41 Ibid.
Another report responding to the decree, produced by the Deputy Interior Minister N. Gordienko and the head of the corrective labour colonies of Udmurtskaia ASSR lieutenant-colonel Kuznetsov on 2 July 1958, emphasized the utility of criminal penalties, both for male and female homosexual prisoners.\(^{42}\) In a section titled “The Struggle with Sodomy” Gordienko and Kuznetsov reported that in the colonies of Udmurtiia male prisoners caught in homosexual acts were prosecuted under the Soviet criminal code, while women engaging in lesbianism were punished administratively. Gordienko and Kuznetsov noted that “all services of the camp have been mobilized for the struggle with ‘lesbian love’ and primarily operational personnel [operativnyi sostav]”.\(^{43}\) As a result, forty lesbians were identified and punished: “Due to a variety of agent-operative [agenturno-operativnykh] and investigative measures, 40 individuals were revealed to have committed sexual acts in perverse forms and strictly punished administratively. Some of them were transferred to the strict regimen [perevedeny na strogii rezhim]”.\(^{44}\) Kuznetsov and Gordienko observed that “lesbian love” spawned quarrels and scandals between women in such liaisons.\(^{45}\) These were accompanied by fights and hooliganism, having a negative impact on the camp regime and discipline.\(^{46}\)

In response to the increasing demands to address the problem of homosexuality coming from the top, other GULAG directors sought to demonstrate that they had bolstered the enforcement of the sodomy law in their colonies. For example, the head of the Usol’skii labour camp colonel Varakin, in his report to the GULAG directorate produced on 24 July 1958, presented a table of convictions for various crimes in the colony from 1956 to 1958, which demonstrated that the rate of sodomy convictions in the colony had increased by 1958.\(^{47}\) Explaining why this was the case, Varakin noted that “the increase in the number of inmates prosecuted under the article 154a can be explained by intensifying the fight with this kind of crime, rather than by its growth”.\(^{48}\) Following the table, Varakin offered an overview of the crimes considered in the table. Just like the head of the corrective labour camps in Udmurtiia Kuznetsov, Varakin chose to open his discussion of crimes by talking about the “struggle with

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\(^{42}\) GARF, P-9414, op. 1a, delo 604, 64. Dokladaia zapiska o rabote operativnykh apparatov podrazdelenii UITK MVD Belorussoi SSR po bor’be s prestupnost’iu i po likvidatsii gruppirovok sredi zakliuchennykh za 1957 – 1958.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 65.
\(^{44}\) Ibid, 66.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., 65.
\(^{47}\) GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1 dop, delo 606, l. 153. Dokladaia zapiska o bor’be s prestupnost’iu i likvidatsii vrazhduushchikh gruppirovok v Usol’skom ITL.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 158.
sodomy”—apparently Varakin viewed this problem as a priority. Yet, unlike Kuznetsov who showed preference solely for a hard-line approach, Varakin mentioned that some educational work was conducted with some prisoners, through instruction on the “harm” of sodomy for the human body and the existing criminal liability for such a crime.\footnote{GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1 dop., delo 606, l. 158.}

The struggle with sexual perversions was a task whose importance was constantly stressed to the camp authorities between 1956 and 1958. The “dangerousness” of homosexual acts between men and women was reaffirmed in a decree, signed by a new GULAG director Mikhail Nikolaevich Kholodkov, who stepped into the office on 1 May 1958.\footnote{Ibid.} The decree was issued on 31 May 1958 and code-named “128-c”. We do not know the content of this decree for it still remains classified, but from the responding reports of the GULAG officials on its enforcement we know that this decree contained instructions on how to tackle “especially dangerous criminals and thievish groups [vorovskie gruppirovki]”.\footnote{For a brief biography of Kholodkov see: Kokurin and Petrov, GULAG, 1917 – 1960, 854.} Writing in response to this decree, GULAG directors provided updates on what was being done to struggle with sodomy and lesbianism, which again suggests that the original decree discussed these phenomena.

A report responding to this decree and produced by a Colonel Ivanov, the deputy head of Vladimir corrective labour colonies on 8 July 1958, revealed that the 128-c decree concentrated on three major tasks: the fight with “organized speculation of narcotic substances” among prisoners; sodomy, and the struggle with “organized warring groups”.\footnote{GARF, P-9414, op. 1 dop., delo 605, l. 225. Nachal’niku pervogo otdela GUI TK MVD SSSR, na № 128c ot 31 maia 1958 goda.} Just like the GULAG directors, whose reports I have examined above, Ivavov began his report by talking about sodomy. He reported that two prisoners, Koriagin and Ganabin, who attempted to commit sodomy with other inmates on 11 June 1958, were prevented from doing so and were eventually removed from the colony. “Explanatory work” [raziasnitel’naia rabota] was conducted with other male prisoners.\footnote{GARF, P-9414, op. 1 dop., delo 605, l. 106. Nachalniku GUI TK MVD RSFSR polkovniku tov. Serebriakovu.}

As far as lesbianism was concerned, Ivanov reported the use of police and “explanatory work”:

\footnote{Ibid.}
Among the women prisoners held at Golovinskii ITK there were instances of ‘lesbian love’, that is, co-habitation of a woman with a woman. In order to reveal the fact of such a liaison between prisoners the entire net of agents [agentura] was mobilized. On receiving the information from agents, individual explanatory work is conducted, social organizations of the colony [obschestvennye organizatsii kolonii] condemn worst offenders of the regime [zlostnye narushiteli regime] and those co-habitating are confined to a strict regimen and prosecuted. Thus, five individuals were transferred to strict regimen in 1957-1958 and prisoners Karpova and Berezovskaia were prosecuted. Out of jealousy [na pochve revnosti] towards other prisoners, they were engaging in hooliganism [sovershali huliganskie deistviia].

Other camp directors were worried that female homosexual relations not only undermined camp discipline, but led some lesbians to suicide. Describing lesbian relations in the camp in response to Kholodkov’s directive 128-c, Colonel Kisilev from Saratov wrote that: “these acts of sexual perversions exert a rather harmful influence on most women prisoners. Because of homosexuality, so-called lesbian love emerges among women, the accompanying jealousy leads to fights, scandals and in some cases to the suicide of cohabiting women [sozhitel’nits]”. Kisilev’s report produced a familiar spiel on the effectiveness of “explanatory work” in the struggle with lesbianism: “the struggle with homosexuality in subdivisions of OITK is conducted by means of explanatory talks on the harm of this act of sexual perversion, constant surveillance over cohabiting women and measures of a political and educational character and disciplinary action”. Yet, Kisilev deplored the inefficacy of these measures in comparison to imposing criminal responsibility on lesbians: “These measures do not produce a positive effect to the full extent and it is impossible to prosecute this type of crime”. In the absence of criminal penalties for female homosexuality Kisilev was determined to take harsh measures and punish lesbians anyhow, by removing the most trouble-making lesbians from the colony altogether: “On 25 June 1958 in GUITK MVD RSFSR we raised a petition №2/I-328 to convoy a group of prisoners Bystrova, Bubnova, Tikhonova, Tsigilina, Chertoeva, Chernyshova, Kartushina and Gorshkova engaging in

55 GARF, P-9414, op. 1 dop, delo 605, l. 106.
56 GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1 dop, delo 606, l. 11. Dokladnaia zapiska po ispolnenniu raspriorazhenii GUITK MVD SSSR 8-us ot 25.IV I 128c ot 31.V-1958 g./.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 12.
homosexuality to the camps of strict regimen outside Saratov oblast’. We ask that this petition not be declined”.  

Apparently, GULAG directors attached little importance to explanatory work and displayed preference for a hard-line approach. This can be judged by the way some GULAG directors only briefly discussed the effectiveness of educative measures towards homosexuality, according much more attention to the descriptions of the actual punitive measures. Some of them went as far as to openly suggest criminalizing lesbianism. It is likely that by their allusions to the efficacy of educative measures, GULAG directors merely paid lip service to the educational efforts promoted from above, while trying to punish lesbians with the available legal tools. Jeffry Hardy tells us that the GULAG leadership was struggling to promote the importance of education among GULAG directors. While some of GULAG directors demonstrated good results in this area, still others neglected the importance of educational work with prisoners. For all intents and purposes, despite the GULAG directors’ preference to treat lesbianism as a crime, it was never criminalized.

**Homosexuality and GULAG doctors**

This section will examine medical reports produced by GULAG medical staff and examine their discussions of male and female homosexuality. Unlike GULAG operatives, who mostly advocated for the use of legal sanctions, GULAG doctors seemed to advocate for a more differentiated approach to the problem of “sexual perversions”. From their discussions, it appears that their attitude to sodomy was as hostile as that of the GULAG operatives, yet when it came to lesbianism, doctors espoused different views. In order to better understand how doctors handled the question of homosexuality we need to consider the broader history of medical service in the GULAG, which, as scholars of the GULAG note, has not been given proper scholarly attention.

Few existing examinations of the GULAG medical service emphasize its inconsistency with the harsh treatment of prisoners in the camps. For example, Anne Applebaum

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59 GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1 dop, delo 606, l. 12.
60 Hardy, *GULAG after Stalin*, 85.
61 GULAG directors were not unique in their willingness to criminalize lesbianism – in the following chapters of my thesis I will demonstrate that similar suggestions were made outside the GULAG.
characterized the GULAG medical service as one “of the many absurdities found in camp life”.  

Dan Healey has recently challenged Applebaum’s understanding of the GULAG medical service as an “absurdity”, arguing that its existence had a purpose. Drawing on a Foucauldian framework, Healey argued that GULAG medicine constituted a form of “biopower” geared at exercising tighter surveillance mechanisms over the GULAG prisoners. Healey also tells us that after Stalin’s death, the GULAG medical service “adumbrated an ostensibly more humane view of the prisoner as meriting medical rather than ‘sanitary’ attention.” This shift to a more “humane” approach to prisoners after Stalin’s death is discernible in the camp doctors’ discussion of sodomy and its detrimental effect on young newcomers, which will be examined further.

Although both sodomy and lesbianism were in the purview of the GULAG medical workers, the latter was either not given ample attention or was framed as a phenomenon that was not as dangerous as sodomy. The absence of discussions on lesbianism is especially evident in the reports by doctors who discussed venereal disease. One such report comes from a conference for directors of medical departments of corrective-labour camps held between 6 and 11 March 1956. The presenter of the report noted that “the number of those infected with syphilis in some camps is significant” and that the problem was urgent “especially against the backdrop of the decrease in syphilis rates among civilian populations”. Attributing the rise of syphilis to sodomy, the report deplored the prevalence of both phenomena in various labour camps:

According to numerous oral and written reports by medical workers of the camps and colonies, the spread of syphilis among prisoners is largely due to sodomy. It is transmitted by recidivist criminals, who because of their long stint in camps and prisons, without families, indulging in casual sex, acquired the vice in the form of sodomy … as well as syphilis. Their partners, or rather, victims are young inmates, whom recidivist criminals under the threat of punishment [pod ugrozoi raspravy] rape and convert [their victim] into passive pederasts and infect with syphilis. In some camps like Ust’vymlag, USVITL, Iuzhkuzbasslag and Sevkuzbasslag

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 535.
67 GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1, delo 2888, l. 91. K soveschaniu nachal’nikov medotdelov ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei i kolonii MVD SSSR 6–11 marta 1956 goda. The last name of the author at the end of the report is illegible.
sodomy among recidivist criminals and the ensuing infection of the youth with syphilis have assumed great dimensions.

This passage demonstrates that medical professionals and camp operatives held some similar views on sodomy in the camps: both believed that it was prevalent among “recidivist criminals”. Likewise, GULAG’s medical department’s shift to a “humane approach” is palpable here: doctors appear to be genuinely concerned about the young inmates who were drawn into homosexuality.

Scholars have identified that the party leadership under Khrushchev was concerned about the moral health of the younger generation of Soviet citizens, especially about their moral purity and “sexual morality”. As I will show in Chapter 2, Khrushchev-era educators and physicians sought to inculcate “sexual morality” in the younger generation, preventing the youth from engaging in casual sexual relations, pre-marital sex and promiscuity and “sexual perversions”. Apart from issues of sexuality, party officials were troubled by the increasing juvenile delinquency and its apparent appeal to young people. The concern that “criminal recidivists” were drawing young inmates into sodomy can be interpreted as a reflection of these broader anxieties. Perhaps the homosexual acts between a hardened criminal and a young newcomer were perceived by doctors as an act of initiation of the latter into the prison world. Moreover, the act of rape, making someone a “passive pederast”, signified one’s firm incorporation in the lowest caste of the prison hierarchy with all corresponding consequences. Such a “pederast” would be ostracized by other prisoners and in order to survive he would have to come to terms with his new role of a sexually accessible object, further losing his dignity and stepping deeper into the criminal underworld.

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68 GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1, delo 2888, l. 91.
69 Similar anxiety about the younger inmates being drawn into homosexuality was voiced by scholars studying American prisons in 1955: Martin, Break Down the Walls, 168 – 169.
The anxiety that hardened criminals would draw young newcomers into criminal activities through homosexual sex was pointed out in a report presented by the Colonel of the Medical Service Ustinchenko at a conference for the chief GULAG doctors held in Kiev on 11 September, 1956. Ustinchenko wrote: “the proliferation of syphilis occurs mainly through sodomy and active pederasts are usually criminals from the cohorts of physically strong criminals-recidivists. As a rule, they don’t work, take drugs and finally they rape young inmates, who don’t belong to the criminal underworld, infect them with syphilis and corrupt them morally and physically”.

GULAG psychiatrists examined the issue of lesbianism in more detail. In contrast to GULAG operatives’ general preference for punitive measures in dealing with sodomy and lesbianism, psychiatrists held different views as to how female homosexuality in the GULAG should be dealt with. Dan Healey has suggested that such interest in female, rather than male, homosexuality on the part of GULAG psychiatrists could be explained by the existing criminal statute for sodomy, which criminalized male same-sex relations, thereby rendering studies of same-sex relations between men “rare and subordinate to police requirements”. Lesbianism, which was not technically a crime, was to be dealt with medically.

Healey tells us about one of the earliest studies on female same-sex love in the GULAG, which appeared in 1954 in the Karaganda women’s corrective labour camp. This study was conducted by a trainee psychiatrist Elizaveta M. Derevinskaia and her academic supervisor psychiatrist Avram M. Sviadoshch and was titled “Materials on Clinical Picture, Pathogenesis, and Therapy of Female Homosexuality”. The very title of the dissertation suggests that GULAG psychiatrists viewed female homosexuality as a medical problem rather than a police matter.

New evidence shows that Derevinskaia’s study on female homosexuality was not unique. A somewhat similar study, although far less ambitious in scope and engagement with related scholarship, emerged in a psychiatric hospital of the Yaroslavl’ corrective labour colony.

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73 GARF, P-9414, op.1, delo 2888, l. 186. Doklad na soveshchaniy nachal’nikov medsluzhib lagerei i kolonii v g. Kieve 11 sentiabria 1956 g.
74 Ibid., l. 205 – 206.
75 Healey, Homosexual Desire, 241.
77 Healey, Homosexual Desire, 240 – 244.
78 Derevinskaia’s dissertation is examined in Chapter 3.
in 1958. It was produced by a psychiatrist V. S. Krasuskii, who titled his treatise “On the issue of study of perverse forms of sexual relations among women prisoners”. While it is not clear why Sviadoshch and Derevinskaia embarked on their project, Krasuski’s research appears to have been produced in response to Yegorov’s decree of January 1956. The examination of Krasuskii’s work demonstrates that the position of GULAG psychiatrists in regard to homosexuality was different from that of GULAG operatives: psychiatrists were somewhat more lenient towards female homosexuality than were GULAG operatives.

It should be said that the Soviet psychiatrists’ fascination with the prison lesbian in the second half of the 1950s coincided with that in the United States, where shortly after World War II a mass anti-homosexual crackdown was launched. As Estelle B. Freedman has argued, amidst the anti-homosexual policies of the McCarthy era, prison lesbianism was placed under increased surveillance and condemnation. What is also interesting is that, similar to the GULAG, in some American prisons contradictory stances on lesbianism on the part of psychiatrists and court officials could be found, with the former being reluctant to cast women as homosexuals and the latter willing to mete out harsh punishment for lesbians.

Krasuskii demonstrated a similar reluctance to label women prisoners as homosexuals, arguing that female homosexuality was merely due to the absence of sexual outlets that led women prisoners to resort to same-sex intimacies. Such a problem of the lack of sexual fulfilment confronted by women prisoners was framed by Krasuskii as a “sex question” [polovoi vopros]. Krasuskii reasoned that it could be alleviated by allowing female prisoners to have occasional meetings with their spouses for a “natural resolution of the sex problem”. Yet, he was quick to note that since a limited number of inmates enjoyed such a privilege, some prisoners “settled the sex question themselves, doing it exceptionally poorly, resorting to unnatural forms of sex life”.

82 Ibid., 431.
83 American prison officers also framed the problem of lesbianism in prison as “sexual problem”. Estelle B. Freedman tells us that by the 1960s, psychologists and criminologists writing on lesbianism suggested that homosexuals ‘present the greatest sexual problem’ in women’s prisons. See: ibid., 423.
84 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 172.
These “unnatural” forms of sexual fulfilment were particularly popular among a certain category of inmates – “morally degraded recidivists with a record of multiple convictions”. This perspective on lesbianism overlapped with that of GULAG officials who, as we have seen, reasoned likewise. Krasuskii wrote that female prisoners from this category “entice [female prisoners] easily-led [vnushaemye], unstable [malo ustoichivye], sometimes first time offenders and in some cases having families”. What was more disturbing was that such homosexual relations between women seemed to continue after the GULAG in some cases. Krasuskii wrote: “Some women prisoners get accustomed to same-sex forms of co-habitation to such an extent that they seek to retain them after their release from the camp – in some cases, this leads to the family dissolution and perverse forms of same-sex co-habitation go beyond the places of confinement”.

These anxieties about the experienced lesbians “preying” on the younger ones with the concern that released lesbians could spread homosexual contagion into the broader society were hardly unique to the Soviet penal operatives. Similar concerns were rife among American legislators who observed “unnatural acts” among women in prison and deplored the fact that some parolees were spreading homosexuality outside the prisons in the second half of the 1950s. Yet, in the Soviet case, fears about homosexual contagion were especially intense and were worsened by the profound anxieties and dilemmas characteristic of the de-Stalinization campaign launched by Khrushchev. The declining birth rates were still a great concern and the Khrushchev leadership sought to settle this problem by strengthening the family institution. Former prisoners who carried their apparent perversions into the society threatened to bring these plans to naught. The efforts to study lesbianism in the GULAG, undertaken by psychiatrists at this period in the Soviet Union, and the reasons for the emergence of such research, should be understood considering this specific context.

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85 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 172. It did not differ much from the American prisoners: “hard-core” lesbians were perceived to be the most dangerous ones. See: Freedman, “The Prison Lesbian”.
86 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 234 – 235.
87 Freedman, “The Prison Lesbian,” 430. Freedman tells us about a book on prison lesbianism by Katherine Sullivan in 1956, which argued that after engaging in homosexuality in prison, former women prisoners developed an addiction to lesbianism and built their life around such practices on the outside.
The GULAG system itself offered plenty of subject matter to study – Krasuskii expressed his appreciation of the role of the GULAG in his attempts to examine lesbianism:

The study of perverse forms of sex life among women in the usual conditions of social co-habitation [sotsial’noe obschezhitie], naturally, runs against significant difficulties. Even if we consider that perverse forms of sex life among women are significantly more widespread than it may seem, under the normal conditions of social co-habitation they constitute a small percent and are a very rare phenomenon. Under the living conditions in the places of confinement, perverse forms of sexual relations among women prisoners can be found more often.90

Apart from concerns that lesbian relationships could filter out through the prison walls, Krasuskii identified other important reasons for conducting research into lesbianism: “These perverse forms of sexual relations between women prisoners inevitably lead to significant violations of the camp regime and discipline, have a negative impact on their health and prevent them from full-fledged participation in labour and production in the camp.”91 In this way, Krasuskii’s understanding of the dangers for the camp discipline posed by homosexuality paralleled that of GULAG operatives.

Yet some of the ways Krasuskii proposed for handling female homosexual relations in the GULAG were markedly different. For example, Krasuskii observed that women upon becoming mothers tended to forgo their homosexual proclivities: “It is interesting that pregnancy and child-bearing, evoking the woman’s biologically inherent aspiration to become a mother, even after lasting perverted forms of co-habitation with women before pregnancy, decisively eliminate these abnormal forms of sexual relations”.92

Krasuskii’s understanding that maternal instinct would overshadow lesbian proclivities appears to be a result of the same old entrenched thinking that maternity was the primary cure for any deviations. He was not unique in his belief – other medical professionals also emphasized the necessity of heterosexual relationships for women and their potential to

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90 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 182.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., l. 193. Krasuskii related a case of one female prisoner who maintained sexual relations with many fellow prisoners, until she entered a sexual relationship with a man and got pregnant. Krasuskii wrote: “It is interesting that after her release, the prisoner Mirovaia wrote a letter to the head of the camp subdivision, in which she expressed condemnation of her behaviour during her stint, writing that now she is leading a normal way of life and will continue to do so from now on”.

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eradicate perversions. More recently scholars have showed that the emphasis on women’s biological role as mothers was reinforced under Khrushchev. They reveal that despite the revival of a debate on gender equality, gender stereotypes continued to prevail. As Susan E. Reid has argued, despite the Party’s commitment to engage more deeply with the problem of women’s equality, gender stereotypes continued to prevail and woman’s biological role as a mother and a housekeeper was confirmed by Khrushchev’s speeches and policies from 1958.

Another important measure in the struggle with lesbianism was involving prisoners in labour, thereby re-channelling the sex drive into a more productive activity: “The first and foremost task in the struggle with the emergence of unnatural relations among women prisoners is to create conditions for re-channelling of sexual drive [polovoe vlechenie] to productive-labour activity”. Such a strategy was also nothing new – mentions of the efficacy of the power of labour to distract from sex were characteristic of the Stalin era and were expressed in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1940). Under Khrushchev, labour was to serve a variety of purposes. Apart from the potential to “re-channel the sex drive” of Soviet people, labour was used in the Khrushchev-era anti-hooliganism campaign as “a reformative instrument”, which could help transgressors “mould themselves into useful Soviet subjects”. The same held true for GULAG operatives, who believed that labour was foremost for prisoners on their way towards correction.

Unlike GULAG operatives, who believed that female homosexuality could be disciplined most effectively by means of punitive measures, Krasuskii was more inclined to believe in the efficacy of the educational approach and collective intervention. Krasuskii wrote: “It is beyond doubt that all forms of administrative measures, particularly various forms of punishment, are inferior in their influence to societal condemnation exerted by the prisoners themselves”. Such evocation of the importance of “societal condemnation” in the struggle

93 See Velikanov’s report, where he stated the opinion of medical professionals working in the Siblag under his leadership.
96 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 218.
97 Kon, Sexual Revolution, 101. The stress on the necessity to “re-channel” sexual energy of Soviet people for the good of the collective work and life was a common trope in the Khrushchev sex-education campaign, which will be examined in Chapter 2.
98 LaPierre, Hooligans in Khrushchev’s Russia, 120.
99 Hardy, GULAG after Stalin, 77 – 78.
100 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 222.
against homosexuality appears to be a ramification of what Oleg Kharkhordin has called “the all-out collectivization-of-life”, which took off during the 1950s. This process was accompanied by encouragement of social self-policing and introduction of the system of comprehensive mutual surveillance within Soviet society. One of the most telling manifestations of this process was consolidation of so-called “people’s patrols” and the “comrades’ courts”, which, despite having existed since the early Soviet years, became widespread in the 1950s. These bodies of societal surveillance were not meant to punish violators, rather they were supposed to correct violators’ behaviour and admonish them to live righteously. The effectiveness of these bodies of control was higher, since they “were more meticulous and closer to the people: they were the people policing itself, and thus escape was hardly possible from their omniscient gaze and omnipresent power”. Kharkhordin also noted that this process of the “all-out collectivization-of life” applied to “every site where people regularly met for a substantial period of time”, including the prison.

More recently, scholars have examined Khakhordin’s argument about “all-out collectivization of life” during the 1950s in more specific contexts. Brian LaPierre, for example, examined how the Soviet state attempted to delegate the policing and prosecution of deviants to the public, by attempting to create “a mass infrastructure of grassroots volunteer organizations”. One such organization was the druzhina – the people’s auxiliary police. LaPierre tells us that one of the most important instruments for the druzhina’s fight with deviants was “the use of public shaming techniques, such as exposing offenders to the gaze of the assembled collective through satirical cartoons, wall newspapers, and public displays of offenders’ photographs”. These measures had a profound meaning, for “being publicly displayed as a hooligan, the deviant was stigmatized in the court of public opinion, exposed to the ridicule of his collective, and started on the long road to rehabilitation”.

Krasuskii advocated the use of similar methods – public shaming and exposure of lesbians to the gaze of the collective – to combat lesbianism in the GULAG. He recommended

102 Ibid., 282.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 286.
105 Ibid., 294.
106 LaPierre, Hooligans in Khrushchev’s Russia, 145.
107 Ibid., 132.
108 Ibid., 151.
109 Ibid.
“issuing leaflets with caricatures, depicting different sides of life between co-habituating women prisoners such as ‘the partition of property’ [razdelenie imushchestva] between quarrelling women, scuffles and fights [draka i ssora] between them”. Krasuskii went so far as to suggest that prison radio should broadcast talks by prisoners who formerly engaged in sexual perversions, encouraging other similar inmates to follow suit.\footnote{GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 227.} Wall newspapers with articles highlighting the negative influence of lesbianism on the colony regime were also suggested.\footnote{Ibid., 228.}

One of the most effective ways to shame lesbian prisoners into stopping the practice of homosexuality was the involvement of activist councils (sovety aktiva). These were one of the various “self-governing” institutions established by the GULAG leadership in 1954 in order to facilitate the management of the corrective labour camps. Activist councils were elected by inmates themselves.\footnote{Hardy, \textit{GULAG after Stalin}, 82.} Krasuskii pointed out that the influence of the activist council on the struggle with homosexuality was most effective when a “co-habitating couple” (sozhitel’stvuiushchaia para) was summoned by the chairman of the council for a reprimand at the council’s meeting. Krasuskii explained: “It is precisely the fact that they have to confront not just the camp administration, but their own comrades, where all things are called as they are and merely denying the guilt bears no results, that in some cases makes them promise to stop maintaining perverse forms of sexual relations”\footnote{GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 228.}.\footnote{Edward Cohn, \textit{The High Title of a Communist: Postwar Party Discipline and the Values of the Soviet Regime} (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2015), 187.} The educative effect of such meetings, Krasuskii argued, was significant.

Krasuskii’s incitement to stigmatize and shame lesbians with the help of collective intervention appears to go hand in hand with the continued efforts of Soviet leaders to shape the New Soviet person. As Edward Cohn has argued, “the 1950s and 1960s…were a time when the regime was trumpeting the arrival of the ‘New Soviet Person’ and hailing the efforts of Communist and other citizens to vanquish ‘the vestiges of the past’”.\footnote{Ibid., 228.} To fulfil these goals, the regime’s rhetoric attacked various forms of deviance, ranging from hooliganism to drunkenness and divorce. It argued that all these kinds of deviance could be eliminated if the consciousness of the population was transformed and this reasoning concerned all strata of society – the wrongdoers among the common people and within the party were punished by the collective. Public shaming and collective intervention, used elsewhere in Soviet society,
were apparently believed to be useful in re-educating homosexuals and transforming their consciousness with a view to making them conform to the New Soviet Person.

What role were doctors to play in these educational efforts against lesbianism in the GULAG, according to Krasuskii? First and foremost, doctors were to conduct “educative talks” with female prisoners and explain to them why homosexuality was harmful to their health. Krasuskii wrote: “In the private and intimate setting of the consultation room of the ambulatory, infirmary and especially of gynaecologist, honest confessions about perverse forms of sexual relation may lay the groundwork for conducting conversations with prisoners with detailed descriptions of amorality of such behaviour and its negative impact on one’s health”. 115 Scholars are yet to establish the nature of such “private” conversations between doctors and prison lesbians, however, Krasuskii’s allusion to privacy suggests shifting understandings of sexuality as a private, rather than public matter.

Doctors were also to assist in designing a course on sex education lectures. Yet, the usefulness of such lectures was a matter of debate and disagreement between camp operatives and medical professionals, due to anxiety that such lectures could inspire interest in sexual perversions, instead of preventing them: “The expediency of holding lectures by doctors in the female sections of the camp on the harm of perverse forms of sexual life between women prisoners is often a matter of debate between the camp administration and doctors of the female sections of the camp”. 116 Despite being a doctor himself Krasuskii believed that such lectures were harmful: “it is important to say that such form of struggle with perverse forms of sexual relations among women prisoners is not justifi ed and cannot be recommended: such lecture on the harm of these relations may turn into a lecture sparking interest in such forms of relations”. 117

Yet Krasuskii’s approach to dealing with female homosexuality was somewhat contradictory. While he argued that punitive measures were ineffective for disciplining lesbians, he considered it worthwhile to invite suggestions “meriting interest” coming from the practical workers [prakticheskie rabotniki] of the camps. They suggested adopting more severe measures towards lesbians “performing a male role”, by isolating them in special camps and colonies. Krasuskii also mentioned that the directorate of the ITK MVD USSR as well as the

115 Cohn, High Title of a Communist, 187.
116 As I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, a similar belief prevented Soviet sex educators from talking openly on homosexuality in the sex education manuals.
117 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 225.
directorate of Siblag “had raised the question of the necessity to introduce a criminal penalty for women conducting perverse forms of sexual relations among themselves, just as men are prosecuted for homosexual forms of sexual relations”. However, Krasuskii mentioned that these suggestions were “meriting interest” and refrained from commenting on them further.

Conclusion

On 13 May 1959, a conference for the heads of the GULAG operative departments (operativnyi apparat) took place to share the experiences of dealing with crime in the GULAG. The head of the first directorate of the Karaganda ITL MVD, Lieutenant-Colonel Chekin, prepared a report for this conference. In his report, he announced that the year 1959 “had seen changes in the operative environment [operativnaia obstanovka] in the camp and colonies of the MVD”. These changes were due to the decisive crack-down (reshitel’noe nastuplenie) on the “criminal-bandit element”. Yet, despite these changes, Chekin noted that there were still some problems to solve. The first was the remaining issue of drug-addiction (narkomaniia). The second was lesbianism: “The second problem on which I would like to dwell is the struggle with lesbianism that has assumed great dimensions in the camp. Because of jealousy, women create a scene, fight, knife one another and commit a range of crimes, drawing the youth into this and corrupting the latter. This also prevents other inmates from serving their sentences in peace”.

Chekin suggested taking the following measures:

We need to step up repressions. From the talks with women convicts, engaging in this activity – engaging very actively, talks with medical staff and other GULAG operatives, we have concluded that stable lesbians [ustoichivye lesbianki] need to be isolated and put in the facilities […] which may be called “isolation wards” [meditsinskii izoliator], whose harsh incarceration conditions [zhestkie uslovia soderzhania] would serve as a deterrent. We are contemplating to create such an

118 GARF, f. P-9414, op.1, delo 2896, l. 232.
119 GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1 dop. delo 608, l. 72. Vystuplenie na soveshechaniia nachal’nikov operativnykh otdelov GUMZ SSSR.
120 Ibid., 72.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., 74.
123 Ibid., 75 – 76.
organization [takaia organizatsiia] in the whole republic, unless financial considerations do not thwart our plans [esli opiat’ vopros “bezdotatsionnoi” raboty ne zakroet etomu dorogu].

Yet it appears that Chekin’s proposition was never announced at the conference, since the whole section on lesbianism was crossed out in his report – and apparently this happened before the meeting. The reasons are difficult to establish: they could include the reluctance of camp officials to admit that they were still unable to fight homosexuality, or their conviction that overall the problem was solved. Indeed, Jeffrey Hardy tells us that in 1958 camp authorities were very keen to report that criminal activity in the GULAG was no longer a problem; for example, this year the head of the GULAG Kholodkov reported to the Central Committee that “the criminal gangs are for the most part liquidated, they don’t exist as an organized force”.

The examination of the documents and memoranda of GULAG officials and doctors in the period from 1956 to 1959 reveals that homosexual relations between men and women prisoners came within the purview of GULAG operatives and doctors. Besides some overlapping on the understanding of homosexuality between them, there remained some divergence as to optimal ways to deal with it. The main area of conflict was lesbianism – GULAG operatives framed it as crime, while doctors believed it was a temporary aberration caused by the privations of imprisonment. These debates were occurring alongside the increasing demands of the Khrushchev leadership to incorporate an educative approach in the GULAG and both GULAG operatives and doctors seemed to incorporate this approach. However, it appears that medical professionals were more optimistic about re-education than GULAG directors.

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124 GARF, f. P-9414, op. 1 dop, delo 608, l. 76.
125 Hardy, GULAG after Stalin, 91.
Chapter 2

Sex Education and Homosexuality under Khrushchev (1956 – 64)

In 1960 a major Soviet publisher of medical literature issued a manual on sex education *The Youth Becomes a Man*, which was devoted to a variety of issues pertaining to questions of sex. Towards the end of the manual, the reader could find a passage on a subject that was almost never discussed in public at the time, let alone in the literature for adolescents, which this manual purported to be. This topic was homosexuality. The author warned of the grave danger posed by homosexuals, who were essentially presented as sexual predators preying on young men, and advised his young readers to report such individuals to the police if they ever happened to encounter them: “Don’t let them touch you! Don’t be shy about reporting them to your parents or educators, do not hesitate to report such attempts aimed at you or other young men! Both parents and educators will willingly help: homosexuality is a punishable crime, *gomoseksualisty* are perfectly aware of that: that’s why it’s not difficult to get rid of them!”

Why was homosexuality, which had been referred to as a characteristic trait of the capitalist society in the second edition of the *Soviet Great Encyclopaedia* (1952), discussed in a manual for adolescents? What was the purpose of this manual? Seeking answers to these questions, this chapter will examine unusual discussions about sex and homosexuality that emerged in a series of manuals on sex education, published under Khrushchev from 1956 to 1964. It will argue that during this period the main focus of these manuals’ shifted from a concern to eliminate “the vestiges of the capitalist past” to a focus on confronting “ideological diversions” of the West. This chapter will also examine the discussions on homosexuality in these manuals, hypothesizing on the reasons for its inclusion.

This chapter aims to contribute to our knowledge of the attempts of the Khrushchev leadership to raise a New Soviet Person. As the existing scholarship demonstrates, these attempts were most evident in the endeavours to inculcate Soviet people with new codes of Communist morality and regulate their private life. Deborah A. Field tells us that the state regulation of private life extended to the realm of sexuality; during this period, various

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1 Iosif Gyne, *Yunosha prevrashchaetsia v muzhchinu* (Moscow: Medgiz, 1960), 36.
2 Anonymous, “Gomoseksualizm,” in *Bol’shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia*, 2nd edition, vol. 12 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1952), 35. The anonymous author wrote: “In capitalist society, homosexuality is a widespread phenomenon. It suffices to point out the existence of homosexual professional prostitution in the capitalist countries”. This was not the case in the Soviet society with its “healthy morality”: “In Soviet society, with its healthy morality, homosexuality as a sexual perversion is considered shameful and criminal”.
brochures, sex education literature and didactic materials were published. Their authors sought to impose a particular type of sexual morality on readers, especially younger citizens, stressing the unacceptability of sexually immoral behavior, such as casual sexual relations, pre-marital sex and promiscuity. Taking into consideration Field’s findings, I further explore the history of Khrushchev-era sex education campaign, according particular attention to discussions of homosexuality that featured in sex education manuals of this period. I will demonstrate that Soviet sex educators not only attempted to prevent young people from sexual impropriety, but also sought to deflect them from homosexuality, emphasizing the dangers of this phenomenon. Therefore a new Soviet generation was not only expected to abstain from casual sexual relations, pre-marital sex and promiscuity, it was also expected to be free of “sexual perversions”, namely homosexuality. Soviet sex education manuals, however, discussed homosexuality from different standpoints – some framed it as a crime, others believed it was a disease and the result of poor sex education.

This chapter starts with a brief exploration of the first Stalin-era sex education manual. Then I examine the Khrushchev era, exploring the content of Khrushchev-era sex education manuals, discussing the development of their discourse on sex education. Here I also explore their advice regarding the importance of keeping youth sexual activity at bay and demonstrate how this advice could be related to the sex educators’ anxiety about homosexuality. Then I proceed to examine passages on homosexuality in these manuals and explore its different framings, ranging from a crime to a disease.

The First Soviet Sex Education Manual

New evidence shows that under Stalin some sex educators made unsuccessful attempts to pitch their manuscripts of sex education manuals for publication. One such manual, which was never published, can be found in the State Archive of the Russian Federation. The manuscript was titled On Sex Education (1946) and was written and produced by K. M. Kushnirchuk, a doctor from Poltava. In his manuscript, which dealt with a variety of issues, ranging from sexual

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hygiene to marital life, the author discussed “sexual perversions” in the last section of his manual, which spanned as many as fourteen pages.  

In this section Kushnirchuk asserted that there were two types of homosexuality – “congenital” (vrozhdennaia) and “acquired” (priobretennaia). The latter manifested itself “in the form of pederasty”, which “had a negative effect on one’s behaviour”. While the author was pessimistic about medical treatment of “congenital homosexuality”, arguing that in such cases “the prognosis was negative”, he added that “acquired” homosexuality was merely a “bad habit” and could be eradicated with the same methods employed for combating masturbation: “Acquired homosexuality is perfectly correctable [vpolne ispravim] under the influence of the similar methods employed for correction of masturbation”. In cases of “malignant pederasty” [zlokachestvennaia pederastiia], the author recommended psychotherapy and hypnosis. The author also mentioned lesbianism, using an archaic term “sapphism” (safizm): “One of the types of homosexuality is safism and lesbian love, which can be encountered among women and only among adults”.

The manuscript was strongly criticized by the reviewer – Professor of Biology V. Efimov. On 30 May 1946, Efimov produced a two-page review of Kushnirchuk’s book, blasting the author for daring to speak about sexual perversions in a manual intended for a young audience: “And then the author proceeds to sexual perversions. A question arises here – does the author really cover sexual perversions in his lectures on sex education?” Efimov concluded that the author’s manuscript “cannot be and must not be used in sex education of the youth” and “can only bring harm to the youth”.

Kushnirchuk’s treatment of sexual perversions is illuminating and it should be considered in our examination of the content of the Khrushchev era sex education manuals. The most noteworthy point here is that this Stalin-era sex educator, writing about sex education, equated homosexuality with masturbation, framing both as part of the same construct – sexual perversion. They also believed that homosexuality, just like masturbation, could be “acquired” and was a “bad habit” and therefore, could be eradicated with the same techniques.

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4 GARF, f. 10049, op. 3, delo 98, ll. 1 – 65. K. Kushnirchuk “O polovom vospitanii”.
5 Ibid., 62 – 64.
6 Ibid., 65.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Khrushchev-era sex educators, who talked about masturbation but preferred to avoid discussions of homosexuality, could have similar views.

The publication of the first Soviet sex education manual *Healthy Marriage and Healthy Family* (1948), written by Soviet doctor L.A. Zalkind, seems extraordinary.\(^{11}\) It attests to the fact that despite the rigid ideological controls and total silence about sex peculiar to the Stalinist era, there were still professionals who expressed the need for sex education among young people.\(^{12}\) The reasons why the Stalinist government allowed the publication of this sex education manual remain unclear. New archival materials and sources can offer new insights and possible explanations for its publication.

In the manual, questions of sex education were treated with an overt Marxist gloss. Zalkind heralded the victory of socialism in Soviet society, which, according to him, had brought about women’s liberation and equality of rights with men.\(^{13}\) Likewise, according to Zalkind, the victory of socialism had raised public consciousness and the cultural level of Soviet people; the old “bourgeois morality” was gradually being replaced by “communist morality”, stemming from interest in the building of communism.\(^{14}\) However, to Zalkind’s chagrin, some undesirable phenomena framed by him as “remnants of bourgeois morality” (such as adultery, the disrespectful treatment of women and even depravity) still ailed Soviet society.\(^{15}\) Their elimination was declared to be an important task of communist sex education.\(^{16}\)

The achievements of the socialist revolution and communist morality were contrasted by Zalkind to life in the West and “hypocritical” bourgeois morality, which supposedly permeated Western society. Western youth (gendered as masculine) was depicted as depraved, since, according to the author, it resorted to the services of prostitutes and was generally prone

\(^{11}\) Lev A. Zalkind, *Zdorovyi brak i zdorovaia sem’ia* (Moscow: Medgiz, 1948).

\(^{12}\) The official Stalinist approach towards discussions of sex consisted of re-channelling the sexual energy of Soviet people. See D. Gorfin, “Polovaia zhizn”, in *Bol’shaia sovetskai entsiklopediia*, 1st edition, vol. 46 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1940), 163 – 169. The author stated that the sex question (polovoi vopros) in the USSR did not exist as a problem: “In Soviet society there is no sex question as a complex problem of relationships between sexes, because everything necessary is provided to eliminate disharmony between biological demands and needs of a personality, which is inherent in the capitalist society”. According to the author, there was no need for sex education: “The system of upbringing of children and adolescents in the USSR is based on cultivation of ardent love to the motherland, comradeliness [tovarishchestvo], love to labour, respect for the woman as a comrade in labour. A mass of creative impulses is created, deviating the youth’s attention from excessive sexual pursuits [chrezmernoe polovoe uvlechenie] and re-channelling its energy to joyful labour [radostnyi trud] and healthy recreation [zdorovyi otdyk], combined with physical culture”.

\(^{13}\) Zalkind, *Zdorovyi brak*, 3.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
to promiscuity and sexual depravity. In contrast, the lifestyle of Soviet young people was depicted as completely antithetical: Soviet adolescents were more concerned with the interests of the collective and society, their approach to marriage and family was more “critical and conscious”, their sexual attitudes were said to be more restrained.

Three years later, Healthy Marriage and Healthy Family (1951) was republished, having undergone several changes in its content. In this revised edition, the detrimental effects of “established deleterious habits and prejudice of the past” as well as “vestiges of the capitalist past” lingering in Soviet people’s consciousness were framed with still greater starkness. Some of the chapters were re-worked to emphasise the treacherous nature of these phenomena. Whereas the first chapter of the first edition was simply titled “Marriage in bourgeois society and in our country”, the title of the first chapter in the second edition was more elaborate: “Marriage in bourgeois society and the fight against the vestiges of bourgeois attitudes towards marriage in our country”.

These two editions of the same sex education manual were the only successful attempts by Soviet doctors to examine sex education and bring their ideas within the reach of the Soviet reading public under Stalin. Their publication suggests that different perspectives regarding sex education were apparently allowed within a tolerable range of discord. While Zalkind deplored parents’ inability to engage in the sex education of their children due to their own ignorance, he was also cautious not to challenge the official Soviet policy towards sex, which sought to prevent young children from reaching early sexual maturation. Zalkind constantly reminded his readers that sex education, if conducted improperly, might trigger premature sexual curiosity. Zalkind’s inconsistent views on sex education, as well as his repetitive warnings about the existing “capitalist vestiges of the past”, are discernible also in the narratives of the first Khrushchev-era sex education manuals.

The “Thaw” and the Early Khrushchev-era Sex Education Manuals

After Stalin’s death in March 1953, the so-called period of the “thaw” set in. This was characterised by important transformations in Soviet society distinct from the Stalinist period:

17 Ibid., 36 – 37.
18 Ibid., 37.
19 Ibid., 5.
20 Zalkind, Zdorovyi brak, 62.
millions of Soviet political prisoners were amnestied and released from labour camps and the
Soviet Union became more open to the outside world. Khrushchev’s Secret Speech to the XX
Communist Party Congress in February 1956 launched the process of de-Stalinisation, which
manifested itself in significant relaxation of censorship and gave more freedom of information
in the media. This freedom extended to issues surrounding sexuality, gender and the family:
abortion was de-criminalised in 1955 and the Soviet government started publishing more sex
education manuals.

Juliane Fürst has argued that the young generation “that came of age in the twilight
years between Stalin’s death and Khrushchev’s Secret Speech fell short of Soviet expectations
for the New Man and Woman”. The disturbing signs of this were hooliganism and
drunkenness among the youth as well as the appearance of “fashion-conscious” young people
who defied the uniformity of Soviet attire. Of particular concern to the authorities was the
young people’s “sexual immorality, the undesirable consequences of which were thriving
venereal diseases, pregnancy out of wedlock, clandestine abortions and unwillingness to enter
marital life.” The latter problem was to be the focus of sex education manuals, which would
inculcate the youth with the right moral values and would propagate acceptable ways of sexual
behaviour.

Yet, sex education was a difficult goal to accomplish. The Stalin-era attitudes towards
sex were still fresh in people’s minds, including those of Soviet officials responsible for this
sex education campaign. The reluctance of sex educators of the early Khrushchev era to talk
about topics even distantly related to sex is obvious in the archival transcript of a discussion of
the board meeting of the RSFSR Ministry of Education, which was held on 29 December 1955.
The agenda for the meeting was a manuscript of a new manual on biology titled Human
Anatomy and Physiology.

During the discussion, one of its participants, V. N. Beliaeva, noted that the book had
one significant flaw – its “excessively detailed description of sex cells and reproduction”. She
went on to say: “Its seems to me that we should be more cautious with issues related to sex

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Stalin and Khrushchev,” in The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the
22 Field, Private Life and Communist Morality, 55.
23 GARF, f. A-2306, op. 75, d. 1074, l. 1 – 26. Stenogramma zasedaniia prezidiuma UMS’a po obsuzhdeniiu
rukopisi “Uchebnika po anatomii i fizioligii cheloveka” ot 29 dekabria 1955 goda, Ministerstvo Prosveshcheniia
RSFSR, Moskva. I was first alerted to this document by Deborah A. Field’s book Private Life and Communist
Morality in Khruschev’s Russia (2007).
education. We are talking here about schoolchildren who are 14 years old…. A detailed description of sex cells in the process of fertilization may invite a host of extra questions in the classroom – they are unnecessary and undesirable."

She also argued for a less explicit description of the human body and suggested ignoring the most sensitive topics: “It seems to me that we may skip the descriptions of buttocks and the pelvic area”. She also suggested that the process of reproduction should be sketched out in general terms and preferably using the example of animals: “It is enough to indicate that human fertilization process is like that of mammals, in general terms, ignoring spermatozoon, egg cells, fertilization”.

Despite such prudery and cautiousness on the part of the Khrushchev-era sex educators, sex education manuals continued to be published. The first such manual appeared in 1958 and was titled *Sex Life and the Family*. It was written by Anatolii Stankov, a rural doctor from Ukraine. The author framed his arguments for sex education around the necessity to confront venereal disease, which in turn was blamed on “vestiges of the past”. According to Stankov, it was important to raise public awareness of these “vestiges” since they also allegedly resulted in moral degeneration, sexual disorders and venereal disease. Stankov’s narratives moved along the familiar trajectory laid down by Zalkind: he proclaimed that family and marriage were not private matters in the Soviet Union. Likewise, Stankov demonstrated the same ambivalence towards the issue of sex education, arguing for its introduction on the one hand and warning against excessive elucidation of sex issues on the other.

Stankov also demonstrated a preoccupation with the issue of masturbation. In order to preclude youngsters from doing so, parents were advised on how to prevent their children’s sexual desire from “early awakening”. Stankov advised parents to avoid touching children’s genitals when drying them off in the bathroom to make sure that the adolescent wore comfortable clothes. It was crucial that the adolescent have his hands above the blanket during his sleep and that he get up immediately from bed after awakening.

While Stankov argued that the most harmful effect of masturbation was the exhaustion of the nervous system, his discussion of masturbation and related “early awakening of sexual

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24 Ibid., 1.
25 Ibid., 3.
26 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 121 – 126.
30 Ibid., 92 – 93.
desire” represented another unspoken anxiety – that masturbation put a young man on a slippery slope to sexual perversions and homosexuality.\(^{31}\) This point of view was not unique of Soviet sex educators – as Dagmar Herzog has shown, East German moralists in the late 1950s warned that excessive sexual activity and self-pleasuring could drive people to “perversities”.\(^{32}\) Some Soviet doctors also linked early awakening of sexual desire with homosexuality – this aspect of Soviet perception of homosexuality will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The next Khrushchev-era sex education manual, *Questions of Sex Education* (1959), was written by Soviet physician Tigran Atarov, who put a new emphasis on the importance of “communist morality” in the sex lives of the Soviet people.\(^{33}\) Unlike Stankov’s *Sex Life and Family* which highlighted the importance of raising young people’s awareness of venereal disease and human physiology, Atarov’s book assigned primary importance to moral education. This stance reflected the views of Soviet senior officials, including Khrushchev himself, who stressed the importance of communist morality at the XXI Communist Party Congress in 1959 and explained that it was based on “devotion to Communism”, “consciousness of societal duty”, “active participation in labour for the benefit of society” and “intolerance towards the destroyers of social order”.\(^{34}\) This could be the possible reason for Atarov’s book’s extremely moralistic tone.

Despite this novelty, Atarov’s manual maintained continuity with Zalkind’s and Stankov’s manuals on “bourgeois vestiges of the past”. In fact, Atarov dedicated more attention to them and even examined particular cases, wherein communist morality was violated due to “bourgeois vestiges” at work. The examination of these cases fitted well with the official

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\(^{31}\) Certainly, this point would be extremely difficult to prove using the published sources given the doctors’ cautiousness and the taboo surrounding public discussions of homosexuality. Apart from the sources explored further in this chapter, evidence for this claim may also be found in the Soviet Medical Encyclopaedia, published roughly in the same period. In an entry “sexual perversions” it was stated that sexual perversions arose because of early “arousal” of “children’s and adolescents’ sexuality”. See: Yevgenii A. Popov, “Polovye izvrashcheniia,” in *Bol’shaia Meditsinskaia Entsiklopediia*, 2nd edition, vol. 25 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1962), 951. This entry will be explored in Chapter 3. The link between masturbation and homosexuality along with “early sexual life” was also stressed in handbooks for law-enforcement agencies published under Brezhnev. One such manual stated: “Taking the path of homosexuality is undoubtedly facilitated by the early sexual life, which leads to satiation and leads an individual to seek new emotions. It is also facilitated by protracted masturbation, which psychologically alienates the individual engaging in it and makes him seek fulfilment of sexual desire with the individuals of the same sex”. See: Yurii V. Aleksandrov, *Polovye prestupleniia: prestupniki i poterpevshie* (Kiev: Nauchno-issledovatel’ski i redaktsionno-izdatel’ski otdel Kievskoi vysshei shkoly MVD SSSR, 1975), 41.


\(^{33}\) Tigran S. Atarov, *Voprosy polovogo vospitania* (Moscow: Medgiz, 1959).

\(^{34}\) Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality*, 11.
discourse on the importance of communist morality. Questions of Sex Education (1959) also introduced another element to the discourse: the link between a healthy sex life and healthy daily life (zdorovyi byt). According to the author, only “healthy” environments could prevent young children from early sexual maturation. Elaborating, Atarov offered examples of “unhealthy” environments and conducive factors: for example, if parents allowed themselves to demonstrate excessive affection to one another in front of their child this might infringe on the moral development of their off-spring.

Like Stankov, when discussing early awakening of sexual desire in children, Atarov mentioned one of its undesirable results – masturbation. He recommended that parents prevent their children from “contemplating the sex life of domestic animals and birds” and not allow children to spend time on their own [uediniat’ sia]. Children should never be unattended and must always stay close to the collective. Young people’s dietary habits had to be healthy as well: excessive consumption of sweets, spices and smoked food might trigger “increased sexual arousal”. Working conditions were also of paramount importance: those young people who worked in restaurants or cafes were particularly susceptible to premarital liaisons and the unhealthy awakening of sexual feelings. Atarov advised employers to hire only adults to work in such places.

By 1959, the Soviet Union had thus seen the publication of only three sex education manuals: Healthy Marriage and Healthy Family, re-published for the third time, Sex Life and Family and Questions of Sex Education. The narratives of these manuals moved along a similar trajectory, proclaiming that the primary goal of Soviet sex education was the elimination of “the vestiges of the capitalist past” which were allegedly the reason for all of the undesirable phenomena still lingering in the Soviet society (including venereal disease). Soviet physicians attributed these remnants to “serious shortcomings” in the education of youth. Yet, they were cautious not to challenge the basic essence of the Soviet education system; they claimed that

35 Atarov, Voprosy polovogo vospitania, 59 – 62.
36 Ibid, 29.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 50 – 51.
39 Ibid., 54.
40 Atarov, Voprosy polovogo vospitania, 54. It is worth noting that some law-enforcement operatives believed that “public catering facilities” [predpriatiia obshchestvennogo pitaniia] were often used by homosexuals to find new acquaintances: “many homosexuals deliberately seek employment in the public catering facilities, because it gives them an opportunity to establish a wide circle of acquaintances, discern homosexuals among them and draw new individuals in sodomy.” See: Aleksandrov, Polovye prestupleniiia: prestupniki i poterpevshie, 45.
41 Atarov, Voprosy polovogo vospitania, 59.
“immoral behaviour” was not characteristic of Soviet youth. The authors of these manuals also shared a similar ambiguous attitude towards sex education: on the one hand, they stated that it was important; on the other hand, they made clear that on no account was it necessary to introduce immature children to such topics. This approach towards sex education was combined with the exigencies of communist morality, which was proclaimed by Soviet officials to be the principal guide in Soviet people’s lives.

In 1960 the Soviet State Medical Publishing House brought out several brochures on sexual education: The Youth becomes a Man (1960), written by a Czechoslovakian professor of sexology Josef Hynie and with a print-run of 200,000 copies; The Girl Becomes a Woman (1960) by Rudolf Peter, Vatslav Shebek and Josef Hynie with a print-run of 300,000 copies; and Questions of Sex (1960) by East German hygienist Rudolf Neubert with a print-run of 100,000 copies. These books stood in stark contrast to the previously published Soviet manuals on sex education. They dared to open a relatively frank discussion on sex with young readers, a task which Soviet sex educators so far had failed to accomplish or had been reluctant to attempt. These new publications were less grounded in the ideological underpinnings inherent in earlier Soviet sex education manuals.

It is difficult to say with certainty why these books were published in the Soviet Union. One possible reason is the fact that Soviet physicians were aware of the fact that sexology in Czechoslovakia and East Germany was a full-fledged science. By the late 1950s, sexology was already an established and legitimate field of academic and scientific inquiry in Czechoslovakia. At this time, Czechoslovakia could boast the Czech Institute of Sexology, which had been founded in Prague in 1921, and compared to similar institutions in Berlin and Vienna had a far more sophisticated approach to sexology. Hynie directed the Institute from 1934 to 1974 and clearly had a strong international reputation as an experienced sexologist; his works and those of his colleagues were translated into Russian and presented to Soviet readers.

42 Ibid., 61.
43 Gyne, Yunoshka prevrashaetsia v muzhchinu; Rudolf Peter, Vatslav Shebek and Iosif Gyne, Devushka prevrashaetsia v zhenshchina (Moscow: Medgiz, 1960); Rudolf Neubert, Voprosy pola (Moscow: Medgiz, 1960).
45 Ibid.
countries such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany exerted significant influence on the discussions of homosexuality not only among Soviet sex educators, but also among Soviet doctors and legal scholars.

Compared to earlier Soviet manuals, *The Youth Becomes a Man* and *The Girl Becomes a Woman* indeed seem to be more understanding of the problems and questions which young people might potentially have; the narratives of the manuals were less didactic and more engaging. More importantly, it was Hynie’s profound medical experience (as well as that of his colleagues), which shaped the content of these books and made them less moralistic; for instance, the familiar tropes about “capitalist vestiges of the past” and passages on “communist morality” were absent.

This kind of detour from the mainstream sex educational narrative about “the vestiges of the capitalist past” and “communist morality” was more evident in another foreign sex education manual, also published in the Soviet Union in 1960, *Questions of Sex*. In fact, Soviet doctors responsible for the publication of this manual were aware of its inconsistency with their customary narrative on sex education and that is why they felt compelled to provide an introduction to the manual. There they reminded readers of “the vestiges of the capitalist past” that were allegedly still prevalent in the Soviet society and the importance of “communist morality”, which was supposed to guide every Soviet person (in the editor’s foreword to the book it was noted that Neubert failed to elaborate sufficiently on “communist morality”).

The inclusion of these points in the introduction suggest that by 1960 there had emerged a preferable way of framing and treating such topics among Soviet authors, a template which went hand-in-hand with Khrushchev’s pronouncements on the importance of “communist morality” and earlier discourse on the “vestiges of the capitalist past”.

The following three years saw no publication of any sex education manuals. The possible reasons for this remain unclear. Drawing on some commentaries provided by Soviet professor of psychology V. N. Kolbanovskii in the medical journal *Soviet Healthcare*, it may be inferred that the divergence of opinions regarding sex education could be one explanation. Deborah A. Field has also shown that institutional sluggishness of the Ministry of Education

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and other entities responsible for conducting sex education was another reason for the slowly unfolding sex education campaign.48

**Sex Education and Anxieties about the West**

The publication of sex education manuals, however, was resumed in the wake of the June 1963 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The decision to organise this Plenum was related to specific political developments in Soviet society in 1961 and 1962 that led the Soviet leadership to believe that “detrimental Western influences” were seeping into the Soviet Union, corrupting Soviet people’s minds. What seemed particularly disturbing for Soviet officials were “negative” effects of Western culture, to which Soviet people were now exposed, either on their trips overseas or even at home mingling with foreign tourists visiting the Soviet Union.49

The Khrushchev government became concerned about the potentially undesirable consequences that the exchange of tourists between the Soviet Union and the United States might entail as early as 1955, when for the first time Soviet citizens received permission to apply to travel overseas, including to capitalist countries. Only those Soviet citizens “politically prepared” and “stable from the perspective of morality and everyday life” were permitted to travel abroad. Accordingly, to prevent Soviet citizens from excessive mingling with foreigners, the Soviet press warned Soviet citizens about Americans engaging in anti-Soviet behaviour. As I will show further, there was also anxiety that these increasing interactions with foreigners could result in greater prevalence of homosexuality in the Soviet Union.

According to Khrushchev himself, some prominent Soviet cultural workers, instead of propagating socialist ideals, had fallen prey to the “ideological diversion of the West”, imitating “inferior bourgeois traits” in their art, which were alien to the Soviet people.50 These anxieties

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50 On 1 December 1962, Khrushchev attended an exhibit of paintings and sculptures, organised by the Moscow branch of the Union of the Soviet artists, where he expressed his infuriation at a number of abstract works, which according to him were “alien” to Soviet people even suggesting that homosexual influences might be at work, calling the art “pederasty”). For details, see Abraham Brumberg, “Tempest in a Gallery,” *New Republic* 148, no. 7 (1963): 17 – 20. On the following day the main Soviet newspaper *Pravda* denounced “inferior bourgeois traits” in the works of those Soviet cultural workers, labelling them traitors to the Soviet “realistic art”. For further details, see: “Iskusstvo prinadlezhit narodu,” *Pravda*, no. 3 (December 1962): 1.
essentially legitimized Khrushchev’s move for greater ideological propaganda against bourgeois influences from the West and made him backpedal on almost every front.

The June 1963 Plenum was arranged to tackle this problem. It was devoted to the “tasks of ideological battle in contemporary conditions” and stressed the importance of the strengthening of ideological propaganda in the face of “the bitter ideological fight on the international arena”.\(^{51}\) It was decided to “increase political vigilance” against “imperialist sabotage”, whose displays had already manifested themselves in the Soviet society, in the art of some prominent Soviet cultural workers and in some “depraved” Western theatrical plays shown in Moscow theatres.\(^{52}\) The delegates of the Plenum coincided in the opinion that “imperialist ideologies are trying in every way possible to influence Soviet people; their main objective is unstable elements, that is individuals who are not politically and ideologically case-hardened”.\(^{53}\) Educational work was claimed to be the most effective means of confronting this malevolent capitalist ideology.\(^{54}\)

The Plenum led Soviet sex education authors to reframe their discussions of sex education. Soviet physicians were now expected to address the issues of sex in a similar anti-Western vein. From this point on, sex education discourse became more defensive: it essentially became an effective Soviet instrument for the dissemination of anti-Western propaganda. While earlier sex education manuals were merely expected to set their narratives around communist morality and “capitalist vestiges”, the authors of sex education manuals published in the wake of the Plenum were apparently expected to extrapolate the Plenum’s decisions on their discussions of sex education, suggesting that the main threat to a healthy sex life of the Soviet people was now coming from the West. In fact, in one brochure this point overshadowed all others: the foreword to *On Sex Education* (1964) explicitly stated that the task of sexual education was to prevent young people from acquiring “deleterious views” on sex, as the “deleterious ideological influence of the West with its propagation of the animal importance of sexual attraction is still insinuating itself into our country in different forms”.\(^{55}\)

The authors of another manual, *Marital Hygiene* (1964) stated: “Unfortunately the pernicious

\(^{51}\) Boris P. Bortsov, *XXII s”ezd partii i iyun’skii (1963g.) Plenum TSK KPSS o zadazakh ideologicheskoj raboty v sovremennykh usloviakh* (Kiev: Vyshaya partiinaya shkola pri TSK KP Ukrainy, 1964), 16.


\(^{53}\) Bortsov, *XXII s”ezd*, 16.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 17 – 18.

influence of bourgeois ideology, dominating the literature and arts of the capitalist countries, is taking its toll on a group of less stable representatives of Soviet youth in regards to morals.”\textsuperscript{56} The eradication of negative bourgeois influence required the joint work of parents, educators and doctors.\textsuperscript{57} The anxieties about homosexuality and sexual perversions as a result of Western pernicious influence were also incorporated in the sex education narrative.

The authors of On Sex Education (1964), Marital Hygiene (1964) and Hygiene of Sex Life (1964) devoted more energy to descriptions of Western society’s inherent degeneracy. They suggested that it was the economic structure of the capitalist system that was inherently perverted – they contended that with the emergence of capitalist society and the prevalence of a “buy and sell” attitude, economic inequality had become widespread, and this forced women to indulge in prostitution as the only means they could resort to in order to survive.\textsuperscript{58} The authors of these manuals also claimed that young people in the West, having at their disposal such a wide assortment of potentially corrupting institutions (nightclubs, rampant prostitution, cinema and television), became increasingly susceptible to vice.\textsuperscript{59} In contrast to Soviet young people, Western youth was merely interested in deriving a transient pleasure from sexual relations.\textsuperscript{60} Although these narratives were not new (Zalkind’s Healthy Marriage and Healthy Family had depicted Western society in a similar way), they had now become more pronounced and elaborate, as it was now especially important to expose the “perverse ideological influence” coming from the West.

The professedly high level of unemployment in Western society was now increasingly seen by Soviet physicians as the root of various kinds of antisocial behaviour: “Obvious and veiled vices of the social realm corrupt young people in capitalist countries physically and morally and they often adopt the path of a criminal. This is fostered by the prevailing unemployment in the West, which provokes a desire to live for the day”.\textsuperscript{61} Soviet conditions, then, were presented as an effective and healthy alternative to the depraved Western world. The aptitude of Soviet institutions to help Soviet people engage more deeply in productive labour and social life was contrasted with Western institutions, which allegedly facilitated the pleasure-seeking desires of the individual: “Sexual continence in our country can be feasibly

\textsuperscript{56} Aleksandr A. Gabelov and Elizaveta B. Derankova, Gigiena braka (Moscow: Meditsina, 1964), 67.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Serafim A. Artem’ev, Vasilii D. Kochetkov, and German G. Shtan’ko, Gigiena polovoi zhizni (Moscow: Znanie, 1964), 5.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Chuchelov, O polovom vospitanii, 24 – 25.
\textsuperscript{61} Gabelov and Derankova, Gigiena braka, 27.
achieved, for we have a variety of possibilities for sublimation. Devotion to work, studying, science or social activities alleviate the problem of sexual continence before solemnizing a marriage.” 62

It is noteworthy that Soviet doctors in their private correspondence now attributed homosexuality to the deleterious influences from the West as well. In 1964, the chief veneorologist of the Moscow Health Department A. Obukhova observed in her report on venereal disease: “Widespread exchange of tourists, long overseas trips, the acquaintance with perverted customs of the bourgeois countries have a negative impact on some morally unstable Soviet citizens. Therefore, various sexual perversions, primarily homosexuality and sodomy, have seeped into our country.”63 Such framing of homosexuality suggests that concerns expressed in sex education manuals about the deleterious influences of the West on Soviet citizens “less stable in moral terms” could represent anxieties about the importing of homosexuality from overseas.64

**Homosexuality in Khrushchev-era Sex Education Manuals**

Drawing on the insights of the previous section, this section offers an interpretation of the descriptions of homosexuality in the Khrushchev-era sex education manuals and examines how they were modified in the wake of the June 1963 Plenum on ideology. But first it is useful to look at a handbook on physical and sex education, *On the Question of Physical Development of Wards in Juvenile Colonies* (1958) by a doctor, E. M. Rakhimov, for the official use of the operatives working in juvenile colonies.65 The handbook dealt with questions of health, hygiene and sexual maturation. The consideration of the content of this manual is important to support my argument above – concerns about “early sexual awakening” expressed in published sex-education manuals under Khrushchev in part represented anxiety about the possible contraction of homosexuality by youngsters. This handbook offers evidence for this claim – in the section on sexual perversions the author emphasized the link between “early awakening of

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63 TsMAM, f. 552, d. 1335, l. 69. A. Obukhova. Materialy k doklady N.S. Lapchenko po razdelu dermatoverologii, 14.06.1964.
64 Gabelov and Derankova, *Gigiena braka*, 67.
sexual desire” and sexual perversions, claiming that correct sex education was the best prevention.

Advising the workers of the juvenile colonies on how to prevent “masturbation [onanizm] and other sexual perversions” Rakhimov wrote: “In the conditions of juvenile colonies, one of the main reasons for masturbation and other sexual perversions may be considered breaches of sanitary and hygienic norms: overcrowded dormitories [skuchennost’ v obshchezhitiakh], two pupils sleeping in the same bed or three pupils sleeping in two beds, insufficient supervision over the adolescents, especially at night when sexual perversions become critical [priminaiut ostryi kharakter]”. Such advice bore a striking resemblance to the advice given by Stankov in his manual *Sex Life and Family* (1958) published at the same time: “Under no circumstances should it be allowed that two children or an adult with a child share one bed”. The similarity of the advice is due to the fact that the problem of living space was still acute under Khrushchev and the issue of crowded living arrangements was far from being a problem specific to prisons and colonies alone. Scholars have argued that despite the massive housing campaign, Khrushchev-era apartments were small and remained in “multiple occupancy”, typically because of sets of parents cohabiting with relatives. In such circumstances unwanted homosexual activities indeed could arise. A child sharing a bed with an adult was an even more disturbing prospect of housing crowding – since the latter might be a homosexual. Sex educators were aware of these undesirable consequences, but the sensitivity of the topic apparently prevented them from elaborating on these problems in published manuals.

Rakhimov’s manual, concerning the prevention of masturbation and sexual perversions, advised that young people receive proper information on sex education:

Educators, teachers, masters and medical professionals must consistently, truthfully and carefully talk with youngsters about sex life [polovaia zhizn’] considering their understanding and age. It should be done so as not to focus their attention on unnecessary details and awake unhealthy curiosity. At the same time,

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66 Ibid., l. 86.
67 Stankov, *Polovaia zhizn’ i sem’ia*, 93.
they should be protected from dishonest [nedobrosovestnyi] and vulgar [poshlyi] information, emanating from various sources.69

Rakhimov’s emphasis on preventing children from developing “unhealthy curiosity” also mirrored Stankov’s and Atarov’s attitude.

Rakhimov maintained that good hygiene “plays an important role in prevention of sexual perversions”.70 He advised excluding any external factors that might cause sexual arousal in children. For example, he recommended against hot baths as “they cause a strong rush of blood to sex organs and predispose to sexual perversions”.71 Somewhat similar advice was given by Atarov, who instructed parents not to stroke their children’s genitals excessively as it could lead premature sexual feelings.72

Finally, in order to prevent sexual perversions, Rakhimov advised taking special care with the young people whose “sexual maturation [polovoe sozrevanie] outruns [operezhat’] other features of physical maturation [fizicheskaia zrelost’]”. Such children should be kept away from any external sexual stimuli – be they physical or verbal. Rakhimov urged the operatives of the colony to refrain from “juicy talks” (pikantry razgovory), “salacious anecdotes” (pokhabnye anekdoty) and “seductive dress” (soblaznitel’nye kostiumy) that could lead to “premature development of sexual feelings in children and adolescents”. Similar advice could also be found in Atarov’s sex education manual.73 Therefore, Rakhimov’s manual offers us some evidence that behind the statements on the undesirability of “early sexual maturation” in Stankov’s and Atarov’s sex education manuals, anxieties about “sexual perversions” were hidden.

In 1960 a major Soviet publisher of medical literature issued two manuals on sex education, where homosexuality was discussed more frankly. The descriptions of homosexuality in these manuals seem inconsistent with official Soviet policies: homosexuality had been criminalised in 1934 and the only public mention of it was contained in the second edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1952).74 Thus, a reasonable question arises: why familiarise young people with the phenomenon of homosexuality in a country where it was a

69 GARF, f. P-9412, op. 2, delo 110, l. 89.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid. l. 90.
72 Atarov, Voprosy polovogo vospitania, 52 – 53.
73 Atarov, Voprosy polovogo vospitania, 90.
punishable crime and a taboo for public discussion? How did these descriptions square with the broader concern about the potential of such discussions to spark “unhealthy interest” in children?

The first Soviet sex education manuals to mention homosexuality were, as mentioned, the translated versions of sex education manuals from Czechoslovakia and East Germany: *The Youth Becomes a Man* (1960) by Iosif Gyne and *Questions of Sex* (1960) by Rudolf Neubert. Perhaps the fact that these books were published by well-known foreign sexologists and from socialist countries predisposed Soviet publishers to think that the context of their books could be appropriate for Soviet readership. In these manuals, the descriptions of homosexuality were permeated with anxiety, ranging from the dangers posed by predators—homosexuals to the importance of correct sex education. For instance, Hynie presented homosexuality as a crime, casting homosexuals as insidious and dangerous individuals. In the first Soviet sex education manual to mention homosexuality, Hynie wrote the following:

One can find people who have abnormal attraction to individuals of the same sex; they are called *gomoseksualisty* [homosexuals]. *Gomoseksualisty* are aroused by and satisfy themselves with adolescents and youngsters, even though the latter have a normal interest towards girls. *Gomoseksualisty* go all out to gain the affection of the youngsters’ society; they buy sweets and cigarettes for youngsters, tickets to the cinema, give them money, help them to do homework and generally pretend that they unselfishly love youngsters. However, after such preparation, they sooner or later proceed to act. Do not let them touch you! Do not be shy about reporting them to your parents or educators, do not hesitate to report such attempts aimed at you or other young men! Both parents and educators will willingly help: homosexuality is a punishable crime, *gomoseksualisty* are perfectly aware of that: that is why it is not difficult to get rid of them!75

When we compare the ways in which different problems and “perversions” are treated in *The Youth Becomes a Man*, we see that homosexuality in this book stands out as the most dangerous threat to the healthy sexual life of youngsters: while boys indulging in indecent conversations about sex with their comrades might be talked out of it and the habit of masturbation broken by active participation in social life, homosexuality was a hopeless case of moral degeneration, which could not be disciplined and had to be eradicated from society

75 Gyne, *Yunosha prevrashchaetsia v muzhchinu*, 36.
and even punished by the law. Furthermore, being concerned only with satiation of their abnormal sexual desires and the invention of new tricks aimed at seducing youngsters, homosexuals stood alien to the main foundations of socialist society, such as labour and family life. Homosexuals were not simply useless as their interests were necessarily limited to the infinite search for young men, they were also dangerous as they tried to seduce young boys against their will. Hynie did not provide any explanation for why homosexuals existed in society and why he considered them to be paedophiles; as “a friend of youth” he merely gave his young readers comradely advice: to report homosexuals to their parents or educators. Hynie also did not acknowledge the existence of female homosexuality as no such thing as lesbianism was mentioned in the manual addressed to girls.

While Hynie’s description of a homosexual smacked of overt homophobia, the contemporary views of Czechoslovak sexology regarding homosexuality were not as unequivocal. In the 1950s and 1960s Czechoslovak sexology was instrumental in promoting heterosexual norms and traditional family values, but at the same time it showed concern for the issue of homosexuality. For example, as Věra Sokolová has shown, in 1961, Czechoslovak doctors and sexologists initiated a debate on the abolition of the article in the Czech criminal code criminalising homosexual relations between consenting adults. This debate triggered the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Czechoslovakia in 1961, which rendered Czechoslovakia one of the first countries of the socialist East European bloc to make homosexuality legal. Therefore in 1960, with the publication of Hynie’s sex manual, the Soviet Union began importing ideas and views on homosexuality that had already become somewhat outdated among prominent sexologists from one of the Soviet Union’s closest allies. However, as I will show in the following chapter, in the 1960s Soviet sexologists did begin framing homosexuality as an illness and not a crime.

The topic of homosexuality was discussed in another sex education manual addressed to Soviet youngsters, also published in 1960 (and re-published in 1961) under the title Questions of Sex (1960) by Rudolf Neubert with a print-run of 100,000 copies. Unlike Hynie’s book, where the narrative on homosexuality was incorporated into the chapter

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76 A similar tendency to equate homosexuality with paedophilia could be found in an American sex education movie “Boys Beware” (1961), produced against the backdrop of homosexual hysteria seeping the country at that time. See for example: Catherine A. Lugg, US Public Schools and the Politics of Queer Erasure (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 20 – 21.

77 Sokolova, “State Approaches to Homosexuality,” 86.

78 Neubert, Voprosy pola (Moscow: Medgiz, 1960).
dedicated to masturbation, *Questions of Sex* had a separate rubric for “sexual perversions”, within which homosexuality was discussed. Neubert essentially replicated the Nazi readings of homosexuality, which argued that homosexuality was either the result of seduction perpetrated during adolescence, or that it was necessarily coupled with crime or mental problems. Neubert was an East German hygienist, whose views on homosexuality were typical of East German medical thinking of that time. According to the current medical and moral definition of sexual norms in East Germany, homosexual desire was a result of one’s seduction by an older homosexual, with the latter being “effeminate and politically unreliable cosmopolitans who threatened to spread their malevolence to the innocent”. Such readings of homosexuality presented by East German sexologists were offered to Soviet readers in the form of Neubert’s book.

It is in no doubt that the reason for the inclusion of “sexual perversions” in the Soviet version was not merely due to the Soviet censors’ and editors’ oversight: they abridged the original version, making it shorter and editing out some details from the original version. Neubert explained that initially he was unwilling to talk about “sexual perversions” as “diseases and morbid phenomena should be in the competence of doctors”; however, since these topics sometimes featured in the conversations of young people and even of adults, the author felt compelled to write a passage about it.

Unlike Hynie’s description of homosexuality as a matter of “police” concern, Neubert took a more “scientific” stance on the issue; he expanded on its presumed causes and suggested some ways to treat it. Neubert emphasised the biological nature of homosexuality: “the reason for such a deviation is the incorrect development of endocrine glands. There are people with alterations in the pancreas, who suffer from childhood with sugar illness. In the same way, there are people whose sex glands develop incorrectly from childhood.” Even in suggesting the congenital nature of homosexuality, Neubert deemed it necessary to treat homosexuality with hormone preparations, surgery and psychotherapy: “Medical science has found ways to

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79 See for example, Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 197.
81 Neubert, *Die Geschlechterfrage* (Greifenverlag, 1956), 80 – 82. I am grateful to Kate Davison for translating some parts of Neubert’s book for me.
82 Neubert, *Voprosy pola*, 43.
83 Ibid., 44.
treat this anomaly partially with hormonal drugs or by means of surgery through the transplantation of glandular tissue. However, more often, an already tried medical method is employed – psychotherapy, that is, an educative influence imposed by the doctor on the patient”\textsuperscript{84}

Unlike Hynie, who advised his readers to report homosexuals to law-enforcement agencies, Neubert’s attitude seems to be somewhat more lenient: homosexuals had to be treated, rather than just removed from society – a similar point of view would be promoted by Soviet sexologists later in the 1960s, as I will show in Chapter 3. He did, however, note that such treatment was essential: “People with such deviations from the norm cannot have healthy relations with people around them and that is why they are to be subject to serious treatment.”\textsuperscript{85}

An incorrect upbringing was also offered as a possible cause of the development of sexual perversions, although these cases were encountered less frequently than those where sexual perverts were genetically predisposed: “Perverted inclinations may appear in individual cases as a result of a depraved upbringing or under some other unfavourable circumstances.” These “circumstances” might occur as a result of parents’ irresponsible attitude to their children: “Deviations from the norm can be prevented provided that parents pay enough attention to their children. If parents are busy with their own business and amusements while children are on their own … there is a danger that this will produce some undesirable phenomena”\textsuperscript{86}

Lack of occupation was another reason for homosexuality and sexual perversions: “A person whose life is not filled with joyful labour seeks to make use of his energy in various follies [sumasbrodstvo].” Thus, in a socialist society, where collective labour was of the utmost importance, instances of perversions were an exception: “All these phenomena are more characteristic of the obsolete, decaying capitalist world, rather than a developing and growing society. Often various perversions are the consequence of satiety and a frivolous way of life. In the majority of cases this can be said about the perverted progeny of rich families or anti-social elements”\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Neubert, Voprosy pola, 44.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
The next mention of homosexuality appeared in *Hygiene of Sex Life* (1964), which was written by Soviet doctors. Once again, more evidence is needed to establish the underlying reasons for the inclusion of information on homosexuality in this manual. It is possible that the authors’ treatment of homosexuality was affected by the June 1963 Plenum’s pronouncements as homosexuality was framed as a phenomenon characteristic of the West. Homosexuality in this manual was presented as a result of unemployment in the West: “the most important reason for homosexuality lies in those conditions of the capitalist countries, which prevent starting a family… unemployment, the uncertainty about the future, lack of housing or its unaffordability, the uncertainty about whether one will be able to provide sustenance for future children – all these factors provide conditions for sexual perversions”. Even though this particular passage does not plainly explain the logic of how homosexuality and uncertainty about the future are linked, a section from another sex education manual published in the same year discloses the inferential link between homosexuality and allegedly precarious social conditions in the Western society: “Sexual debauchery and promiscuity are rooted in a deeply erroneous logic about the necessity to ‘get everything out of life’ [vzyat’ ot zhizni vse]… in bourgeois countries such thoughts are based on the uncertainty about the future, the constant threat of unemployment and the absence of any room for growth for young people in the future.”

Promiscuous sexual activity resulting from uncertainty about the future was believed to be the key reason for sexual perversions: “Promiscuous sexual activity is always related to excess, which leads to satiety, which prompts a desire to irritate the nervous system more actively. This, in turn, leads to sexual perversions.” In the face of ostensibly unreliable Western social institutions and lack of occupation, therefore, young people were believed to become more desperate and sceptical about their future. According to Soviet physicians, they had no other option but to live their lives to the full and walter in endless sexual pleasure (since they could not afford to have a family), which drove them to seek new and sophisticated ways of appeasing their sexual desire, with homosexuality being one of the best options to do that.

When delineating the notion of homosexuality, the authors of *Hygiene of Sex Life* reluctantly admitted that homosexuality was a phenomenon that might also be found in Soviet society, although very rarely: “Along with normal (sexual) attraction in very rare cases an attraction to the same sex is observed, so-called homosexuality”. They continued: “The latter

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is… the result of psychopathic alteration of personality. Socially created reasons for mental perversions, for homosexuality in particular, are military barracks, prisons of the capitalist countries, where many men lead an unhealthy life. The breeders of homosexuality are also private male institutions, which are very common in the West”.  

The authors made sweeping claims about the roots of homosexuality, not providing any credible evidence for their claims and hampering understanding of the logic of their descriptions. Yet, if one places these claims in the overall narrative on sex and sexual perversions contained in this manual, it becomes clear that the authors did not just randomly refer to homosexuality as a “psychopathic alteration of personality”. An explanation for what might trigger such a condition was essentially provided in the preceding section of *Hygiene of Sex Life*, where the authors discussed “excessive sexual desire”, which was a sign of “neurasthenia, hysteria and psychasthenia with signs of sexual obsession”. Since, allegedly, homosexuality, like other sexual perversions, stemmed from “sexual excess”, then it comes as no surprise that a “psychopathic alteration of personality” (that is homosexuality) was its direct result.

**Conclusion**

Although it might initially appear surprising, the first attempts to make a case for sex education in the Soviet Union emerged during the extremely conservative period under Stalin. Sex education first became available to the Soviet public with the publication of *Healthy Marriage and Healthy Family* (1948), which was dedicated to topics dealing with sex that had not been openly discussed: human psychology, and sexual relations between men and women. This book also delineated the overarching goal of Soviet sex education: the fight against the “the vestiges of the capitalist past”, a term that embraced all of the undesirable phenomena existing in Soviet society at the time: venereal disease, extra-marital sex and adultery.

These ideas gained momentum in the sex education manuals published during the Khrushchev era. *Sex Life and Family* (1958) appears to follow the sex education narrative patterns of its predecessor. The goal to fight against “the vestiges of the capitalist past” was complemented here by the idea of imposing communist morality on Soviet people’s sex lives, as evident in *Questions of Sex Education* (1959). This development apparently was consistent with the official discourse amongst Soviet politicians, including Khrushchev himself, who

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92 Ibid., 19.
stressed the importance of communist morality in his official speeches. The authors of these manuals also carefully discussed the undesirability of “early sexual awakening”, which as they stated, could have negative implications for young people’s sexual lives. I suggested that these discussions represented unspoken anxieties about the potential of “early sexual awakening” to put the youth on a slippery slope to homosexuality. These anxieties were especially evident in a sex education manual, intended for juvenile penal colonies, published in 1958; its author directly associated “sexual perversions” with early sexual maturation.

In 1960, the Soviet government decided to introduce two sex education manuals, from Czechoslovakia and East Germany, that took a slightly different perspective from earlier Soviet sex education manuals with their focus on “vestiges of the capitalist past” and “communist morality”. Furthermore, these new books also talked about homosexuality, which was viewed both through a police lens – as a crime, and from a scientific perspective – as a disease. It is hard to establish with certainty why such a topic was allowed to appear on the pages of Soviet translated versions, but it is clear that this was no mere oversight on the part of Soviet editors; it was a conscious decision. The New Soviet generation of New Soviet Persons, after all, was expected to be not only sexually appropriate, but free of sexual perversions.

As cultural contacts between the Soviet Union and the US expanded under Khrushchev and the Soviet government became more anxious about the consequences, Soviet sex education manuals saw corresponding changes. After the June 1963 Plenum, which was devoted to strategies for confronting the “ideological influence of the West”, Soviet sex education changed its focus from the goal of eliminating “vestiges of the past” to the fight against the “advancing bourgeois ideology” that allegedly sought to influence “unstable elements” in Soviet society. These changes affected the discourse on sexual perversions and homosexuality. Rather than emphasizing “early awakening of sexual desire” as a core rationale for sexual perversions, the authors of sex education manuals published in 1964 claimed that it was Western influences that were the real reason for sexual perversions.

After Khrushchev’s removal from power, Soviet sex education manuals continued to be published in the Soviet Union, with their content now less influenced by anxiety about the “ideological influence of the West”. Instead, Brezhnev-era sex manuals became more focused on increasing young people’s awareness of the physiological aspects of their bodily maturity. Throughout the ensuing “stagnation” period, homosexuality was mentioned even less frequently and the few allusions to it were apparently informed by the Soviet “sexopathology”,
which emerged in 1964 and defined it as a medical condition. The emergence of a medical definition of homosexuality will be explored in the following chapter.
Chapter 3
Homosexuality and Soviet Sexopathology (1960 – 70)

In 1967, a young woman named Nadezhda arrived at a psychiatric clinic in the city of Gorkii to seek medical advice from Yan Genrikhovich Goland, a psychiatrist and sexologist, on her relationship with her husband.¹ Her one-year marriage with her husband Andrei was fraught with conflict and antagonism, teetering on the brink of collapse. Besides, there was no sexual intimacy in their relationship. Andrei had gone so far as to suggest a divorce, yet both decided to retain their legal status as spouses in order to keep their flat. Nevertheless, Nadezhda kept nurturing a hope of saving their marriage and that hope had brought her to Goland’s patient room. Later, in a written account of her family life with Andrei, written at Goland’s prompting, Nadezhda recalled:

We have always had an ‘interesting’ relationship. We could talk or be silent for hours, but any sort of intimacy that happens between young people was out of the question. I thought he was modest. I was certain that he didn’t have an affair with another girl [devushka]. Our town was small and I would have known about that. Besides, I kind of knew [primerno znala] how he was spending his time. Always with young men… […] At that time I was not paying attention to that. I was not thinking the worst, besides, I did not know that such things existed…²

The lack of sexual intimacy was not the most problematic aspect of her relationship with Andrei. In fact, what bothered Nadezhda most was her husband’s unusual craving for the company of young men, which often took precedence over their family life. Andrei’s friendships with men seemed far too intimate, a fact made clear when one evening in January 1966 she saw her husband kissing one of his young male friends at a party. Nadezhda sketchily described the unpleasant episode in her diary:

¹ To preserve the anonymity of the protagonists of the cases explored in this chapter, each one was assigned a pseudonym.
² A type-written feedback of a wife of Goland’s former patient (hereinafter Nadezhda’s feedback), which she provided in September 1968 after her husband had completed psychotherapy course for homosexuality. Yan Goland’s personal collection, 2.
I saw him kissing a boy – both were drunk. He had always been cold with me – and here he wasn’t. I could barely restrain my temper. On seeing me, he was embarrassed. I started paying more attention to his relationships with boys. One of his admirers told me: “He told me that he liked guys more than women”. And one day, after reading some literature, I asked him directly. He replied affirmatively. That drove me mad. I forbid him to talk with boys and I told him if I saw him again with them – I would report him to the procuracy. […] I raised the question of treatment, but he was against it.³

After carefully listening to Nadezhda’s complaints, Goland instructed her to bring her husband in for an appointment. In short order, Andrei turned up in Goland’s office and his story confirmed Goland’s suspicions: Andrei was a homosexual. After being assured that he could speak frankly without being apprehensive of Goland’s reporting him to the police, Andrei opened up completely, relating all his homosexual pursuits. Andrei also confessed that he feared “lack of prospects” (bezperspektivnost’) and loneliness in the future, noting that he had “become addicted to homosexuality” to the point that he lost his ability to “feel the woman” (oshchushchat’ zhenschinu). The treatment was started immediately and after a series of sessions of psychotherapy, the situation improved: Nadezhda’s husband started paying more attention to her and their sex life slowly normalized.⁴

This vignette illustrates the changes in attitudes to homosexuality taking place in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. These changes consisted of the emergence of a different, “scientific” understanding of homosexuality, now viewing homosexuality as a medical matter, rather than a police concern. This view was promoted by the representatives of a new branch of medical science – sexopathology, which emerged in the 1960s. The emerging medical discourse on homosexuality and its chief creators – sexologists – will be the focus of the chapter.

Theoreticians and practitioners of sexopathology constructed a new image of the homosexual, which differed from the hitherto common view of homosexuality as a criminal psychopathy. I argue that Soviet sexopathologists’ attempts to “cure” homosexuality can be viewed in terms of the larger Soviet project of creating a New Soviet Person. The pioneers of Soviet sexopathology argued that the therapeutic effect of the medical treatment of

³ Nadezhda’s feedback, 2.
⁴ Ibid, 3.
homosexuality depended largely on the individuals’ self-training and self-command. These concepts fitted into the popular educational narratives of “working on oneself” during the late Soviet era, which were promoted with a view to raising a new consciousness of the New Soviet Person. This chapter will also demonstrate that the attempts of Soviet sexopathologists to frame homosexuality as a medical matter were influenced by the similar trends in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Finally, this chapter will look at how Soviet sexopathologists responded to the claims of American sociologist Alfred Kinsey, who believed that homosexuality was a normal variant of human sexuality and promoted this view in his writings.

This chapter starts with a brief examination of discussions of homosexuality in Stalin and Khrushchev-era books on psychiatry. Then it proceeds to the discussion of the emergence of Soviet sexopathology and the trajectory of its development in the 1960s. Then it will examine Soviet sexopathologists’ texts written in the 1960s and their suggestions for medical treatment of homosexuality.

**Homosexuality and Psychiatry under Stalin and Khrushchev**

The interest of Soviet doctors, especially psychiatrists, toward the phenomenon of homosexuality can be traced to the onset of the Soviet state. As Frances Lee Bernstein and Dan Healey have shown, early Soviet-era psychiatrists examined the question of homosexuality’s origins and pondered what exactly constituted male homosexual practice. 5 Female homosexuality was also a subject of early Soviet psychiatric inquiry.6 Soviet psychiatrists, such as Vladimir M. Bekhterev, considered options for medical treatment of homosexuality, offering psychotherapy as a possible solution.7 Such scientific interest towards homosexuality as Dan Healey explains, was driven by discoveries in European sexology and endocrinology as well as the absence of criminal penalties for same-sex relations in the new Soviet penal

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code. However, medical discussions of homosexuality were discontinued after 1930, when Stalin outlawed homosexuality and introduced rigid ideological controls.

Despite homosexuality being an “unmentionable vice” under Stalin, Soviet psychiatrists did not lose interest in the topic completely. For example, in 1935 a Soviet psychiatrist Yevgenii Popov produced an article “On classification of sexual perversions”, which featured in a compendium on psychiatry. Popov argued that homosexuality could be both congenital and acquired. Even more unusual was another article “On Psychotherapy of Homosexuality”, published by a Soviet psychiatrist Igor’ Stepanovich Sumbaev (see Figure 1) from Irkutsk in the scientific journal Soviet Psychoneurology in 1936. In his article, Sumbaev presented three cases, in which he delivered psychotherapy to three men in the early 1930s to cure them of their homosexuality. After the treatment was over, the patients reported that their homosexual desire “became weaker” and that they were now able to control it. The article was published two years after male homosexual acts became a crime, yet nonetheless treated it as a psychiatric disorder.

From the memoirs of one of Sumbaev’s trainees, the prominent Soviet psychiatrist Aron Isaakovich Belkin, we know that at the time of the article’s publication Sumbaev was providing psychotherapy to homosexuals, who turned to him for help from all over the Soviet Union. He did so with the help of his trainee Nikolai Ivanovich Ivanov, who would later emerge in the 1960s as one of the founders of Soviet sexology and a proponent of psychotherapeutic treatment of homosexuals. Back then, Sumbaev’s and Ivanov’s practices made Irkutsk, in Belkin’s words, a “place of a genuine homosexual pilgrimage”.

Other mentions of homosexuality as a medical matter appeared in texts on psychiatry towards the end of the 1940s. In a handbook for medical students entitled Psychiatry (1949), a Soviet psychiatrist Mikhail Gurevich framed homosexuality as a “sexual psychopathy” (polovaia psikhopatia), which, he believed, stemmed from a variety of factors, among which were “the social conditions (sotsial’no-bytovoi), sexual impression from early childhood, bad

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8 Dan Healey, Homosexual Desire, 148.
12 Ibid., 60 – 65.
14 Ibid., 266.
example (durnoi primer), and temptations”. Gurevich also acknowledged that “endocrine disorders” could be at work. Homosexuals with such disorders usually displayed “endocrine stigmas” (endokrinnye stigmy), among which were “female-like hair growth” (rastitel’nost’ po zhenskому tipu), “soft skin”, “female like breasts and waist” (grudi i taz zhenskogo teloslozheniia), and a “high-pitched voice”. The behaviour of these men, he said, also resembled that of women – Gurevich claimed that adult male homosexuals “wear corsets, powder their face (pudriatsia) and engage in handcrafts (rukodelie)”. Female homosexuals, on the contrary, he claimed, displayed male-like features and behaviour. Gurevich’s descriptions were accompanied with a photo of a “typical” homosexual (see Figure 2).

After Stalin’s death, the psychiatric interest in homosexuality saw a gradual revival. It was in the GULAG, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 1, where psychiatric interest in homosexuality was most evident. One of those scientists most concerned with homosexuality in this period was Elizaveta M. Derevinskaia, who began examining lesbian prisoners in the Karaganda Corrective Labor camp in 1954 and a decade later defended her doctoral dissertation on the topic in 1965 (her dissertation will be explored later in this chapter). Outside the GULAG, psychiatrists continued to engage with the issue of homosexuality, albeit rarely. In a book titled Psychiatry (1957), a Soviet psychiatrist Izmail Fedorovich Sluchevskii demonstrated the same distorted understanding of homosexuality as that presented by Gurevich in 1949. Sluchevskii also branded homosexuals as “psychopaths” and described what he believed was their habitual way of life: “When [the homosexual] man comes home, he puts on a female dress [zhenskii kostium] and in this dress, does all the housework. Sometimes these psychopaths are even married, because homosexuals may display bisexuality, that is, have sexual intercourse with women and simultaneously display homosexual tendencies”.

Sluchevskii did not propose any treatment options for such individuals; if anything, he apparently believed that homosexuals were criminals rather than medical subjects deserving compassion and medical help. His description of a special category of psychopathic disorders – “perverted psychopaths” – to which he attributed homosexuals, attests to that. The representatives of this category were described thus: “deceitful [lzhivyi] and immoral,

15 Mikhail O. Gurevich, Psikhiatriia: Uchebnik dlia meditsinskikh institutov (Moscow: Medgiz, 1949), 471.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
merciless, indifferently cold to the sufferings of other people, egoistical, heartless and cruel. They are rude and shameless. In order to achieve their goals they go all out; to satiate their sexual and eating instinct they defy the societal norms of behaviour, they are oversexed [erotichnyi], inclined to sexual perversions”.21 Such framing of homosexuality suggests that in the years immediately after Stalin’s death little changed in Soviet mainstream psychiatric thinking on homosexuality. However “medical” the context in which homosexuality was placed by Soviet psychiatrists, their attitudes remained moralistic and negatively judgmental. The conflation of homosexuality and transvestism appeared to be conventional wisdom and no attempts to suggest changing homosexuality’s status from criminal to medical issue were made.

A more sophisticated discussion of homosexuality through the lens of psychiatry emerged only in the last years of the Khrushchev era in the Great Medical Encyclopedia (1962).22 The entry “Sexual perversions”, written by Soviet psychiatrist Yevgenii Popov (who as I have shown, had already discussed sexual perversions under Stalin in 1935) mentioned homosexuality, and for the first time in such a text, discussed the possibilities of treatment. According to Popov, homosexuality could be treated with psychotherapy, although it was a “difficult task”: “At the center of the contemporary treatment of sexual perversions lies psychotherapy in all its various forms. Sometimes success can be achieved with hypnosis. It is important to remember the importance of ‘re-channeling’ of sexual stimuli in to other fields (physical work, sport, arts and so on)”.23 Popov’s reference to the usefulness of rechanneling “sexual stimuli” is illuminating, since it suggests the link between unrestricted sexual activity and its role in generating sexual perversions, which as I have shown in the previous chapter were depicted as related phenomena by Soviet sex educators. Like the authors of the previously discussed psychiatric texts on homosexuality, Popov reminded his readers that male homosexuality was subject to criminal penalty.24 Such was the verdict of the Soviet psychiatrists of the Khrushchev era: homosexuality was a medical aberration, but it still merited criminal sanctions. However, a new Soviet science – sexopathology, which emerged in 1963 and continued its development throughout the Brezhnev era, offered a different view on the problem of homosexuality.

21 Sluchevskii, Psikhiaatriia, 342.
23 Ibid., 951.
24 Ibid.
Emergence of Soviet Sexopathology (1963)

Igor Kon has argued that “the establishment of [Soviet] sexopathology as a discipline was an attempt to bring sexuality under medical control”. Yet, rather than solely focusing on bringing sexuality under control, it appears that the new science was concerned with the issues of male impotence and its perceived result, family dissolution. The first calls for the establishment of sexopathology were made by prominent Soviet urologist Il’ia Mironovich Porudominskii in his article “Who treats sexual disorders?”, published on 29 November 1963 in Meditsinskaia gazeta (see Figure 3). There, Porudominskii raised important problems – the social impact of male impotence and the virtual inaccessibility of effective treatment for it in Soviet clinics.

Porudominskii warned that neglecting sexual disorders, especially in males, could have far-reaching consequences for Soviet society as a whole, for these disorders affected men’s ability to work and have a family life: “Male sexual disorder is a severe affliction [tiazhkoe stradanie], which often leads to the loss of ability to perform labour [poteria trudosposobnosti] and irreparable family tragedies [semeinye tragedii].” In Porudominskii’s view male impotence made it impossible for a Soviet man to have a family – an important prerequisite for one’s well-being and therefore one’s productivity: “Both the impossibility of creating a family and family conflicts have a negative bearing on the physical and psycho-nervous state of the patient, which eventually has negative bearing on his ability to perform labour and his labour productivity”.

Porudominskii’s concern about the disastrous consequences of male impotence on family life and, most importantly, ability to perform labour, reflected official anxieties on these issues and realities at the time of his article’s publication. Peter H. Juviler tells us that between 1955 and 1965 the Soviet divorce rate increased by 270 percent. Deborah A. Field has shown that Soviet experts under Khrushchev depicted divorce as dangerous for Soviet society and sought to avert it. They identified a variety of reasons that contributed to problems in family

25 Kon, Sexual Revolution in Russia, 95.
26 Il’ia M. Porudominskii, “Kto zhe lechit polovye rasstroistva?,” Meditsinskaia gazeta, no. 96 (29 November 1963), 3.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
life: the inability of young wives to manage a household, material misfortune and adultery. In order to prevent divorce, they suggested that problems should be resolved through education, individual will power and community intervention. 

Porudominskii’s article therefore uncovered another, rarely discussed reason for divorce – male impotence.

The lack of effective treatment for sexual disorders in the Soviet Union, he argued, was a result of the absence of a relevant branch of medicine – sexual pathology (seksual’naia patologiia) – which was essential for treatment of maladies related to the sexual sphere. Soviet medical university curricula did not include training on sexopathology, nor was there any specialized institution in the Soviet Union conducting related research. Porudominskii concluded that it was necessary to establish a research center, dealing with sexual pathologies. To begin with, he suggested holding a symposium to attract medical professionals interested in the promotion of the new science: “In order to coordinate research in this field, it is expedient to hold a special symposium”. This call for action did not fall on deaf ears – Porudominskii’s proposition materialized in a symposium that was held the next month.

That effective treatment of male impotence was a key objective of the new science is also clear from the introduction to the first compendium on sexopathology, Contemporary Problems of Sexopathology (1967). Its author – Pavel Posvianskii, the head of a newly-established Moscow Department of Sexopathology in 1965 – the first research center on sexopathology in the USSR, observed that the establishment of sexopathology was, in part, a compassionate response to the desperate pleas for help coming from male patients suffering from impotence. Embarrassed and desperate, they barraged doctors with letters – some of these men were on the verge of suicide – in which they described their plight and confusion in the face of their ailment. Posvianskii quoted one of these letters: “I cannot call myself a coward, I fought in the war with dignity and I was awarded on numerous occasions, but now I can’t and I don’t want to live. In despair, I grabbed a rope and then I came to my senses – this is not worthy of a Soviet man. So I offer you to use me for any medical experiments needed by science.”

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30 Deborah A. Field, Private Life and Communist Morality in Khruschev’s Russia (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 68.
31 Porudominskii, “Kto zhe lechit polovyie rasstroistva?,” 3.
33 Ibid.
The sexological symposium, proposed by Porudiminskii, took place in the city of Gorkii in December 1963. Gorkii, not Moscow, appears to have been chosen as a venue for the seminar for at least one important reason: Gorkii was the home of Professor Nikolai Vladimirovich Ivanov (see Figure 4), former trainee of the prominent psychiatrist Igor Sumbaev, and therefore a point of personal connection with earlier scientists that had treated homosexuals under Stalin. Since 1954 Ivanov had been heading the department of psychiatry at the Gorkii State Medical Institute, where he led the research on sexual disorders. In cooperation with Porudominskii, Ivanov helped organize the seminar and agreed to share his expertise with the aspiring sexologists. The 1963 seminar was followed by another one, held in 1964. While not much is known about the participants of the 1963 seminar, a photograph of the participants of the 1964 seminar (see Figure 5) shows that it was attended by a total of 67 doctors from all over the Soviet Union. Among them were prominent Soviet psychiatrists – Mark S. Lebedinskii, Il’ia M. Porudominskii, Vladimir M. Miasishchev, Pavel B. Posvianskii and Nikolai V. Ivanov himself as well as aspiring sexologists who would later become prominent in the field – Yan G. Goland, Aron S. Belkin and Sergei S. Libikh.

The formal emergence of Soviet sexopathology was inaugurated on 29 June 1965, when the deputy Health Minister Aleksandr Sergeev decreed the establishment of a Department of Sexopathology within the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry. Professor Pavel Borisovich Posvianskii (See Figure 6) was appointed department head. The department began coordinating efforts of aspiring sexologists across the Soviet Union, organizing seminars and

35 Interview with Yan Goland, 1 April 2017. Nizhnii Novgorod.
36 Seminar vrachei po psikhoterapii i seksologii (1964), g. Gorkii. A photo from Yan Goland’s personal archive. Popov was a trainee psychiatrist under Sviadoshch, who for some reason did not attend any of the seminars on sexology.
conferences where doctors could receive training and exchange expertise. An undated and unauthored report from the Department of Sexopathology (see Figure 7 and Figure 8) reveals that from 1965 to 1969 the Department organized several such conferences – a seminar in Gorkii in 1965, attended by 120 doctors; a conference in Moscow in 1967 (see Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11) attended by 250 doctors and two conferences in Moscow in 1969 attended by 180 doctors and in Riga attended by 200 doctors.\(^\text{39}\) We also know that in 1966 another seminar on sexology, apparently coordinated by the Department was held in Gorkii (see Figure 12).\(^\text{40}\) Once the department was established, the annual number of patients grew from 150 in 1966 to 461 in 1969.\(^\text{41}\) Alongside therapeutic practice, the Department’s sexologists engaged in research work; although the number of their publications remained modest throughout the 1960s, it was growing steadily – from 3 publications in 1965 to 17 in 1969.\(^\text{42}\) Some of these publications were devoted to sexual perversions, mainly homosexuality, which as I will show further, was presented as a treatable condition in the 1960s.

### Sexology Elsewhere in the World

Unlike the Soviet Union, where understanding of homosexuality as a treatable disorder was only beginning to gain recognition among doctors, in some countries of the Eastern and Western bloc the medicalization of homosexuality had already taken place and even led to decriminalization of sodomy statutes. One such country was Czechoslovakia, where, as Kateřina Lišková has shown, prominent sexologists started to decry the existing anti-homosexual legislation as early as 1953, promoting the view that homosexuality was a medical problem and had nothing to do with the police. Among them was sexologist Karel Nedoma, who argued in 1953 that a person’s contribution to the society in the form of his labour was more important than his homosexuality.\(^\text{43}\) Another prominent Czechoslovak sexologist, Kurt Freund, argued likewise. In fact, the two co-authored a paper, “The Problem of Responsibility and Corrective Measures in Sexual Delinquents” in 1959, arguing that homosexuality was not

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\(^\text{39}\) Deiatel’nost’ otdela seksual’noi patologii Moskovskogo nauchno-issledovatel’skogo instituta psikhiatrii po vnedreniiu v praktiku nauchnykh dostizhenii za period 1965 – 1973 g.g. Undated report and unauthored report. Archive of the Department of Sexopathology.

\(^\text{40}\) Seminar vrachei po psikhoterapii i seksologii (1966), g. Gorkii. A photo from Yan Goland’s personal archive.

\(^\text{41}\) Deiatel’nost’ otdela seksual’noi patologii, 2.

\(^\text{42}\) Ibid., 1.

dangerous to society. The authorities heard their arguments and decriminalized consensual homosexuality between two adults in Czechoslovakia in 1961.

Even after the decriminalization of sodomy, Freund retained his scientific interest in homosexuality. Unlike his Soviet colleagues, he believed that homosexuality could not be cured, expressing this view in a report, “On the Problem of Homosexuality in Males” (1965) in a journal Czechoslovak Medical Review. In his article Freund questioned the usefulness of psychotherapy as far as homosexuality was concerned: “Among doctors treating homosexual men, unfounded optimism is still prevalent. This is the case, mainly, with the proponents of psychoanalysis. In most cases, they still imagine that homosexual preference can be turned into heterosexual...”. Freund then argued that such conclusions stemmed from insufficient follow-up examinations of the patients after the treatment and unreliable testimonials from those patients who had problems with the law because of their homosexuality. Such patients, Freund claimed simply wanted to secure a medical certificate attesting to their “recovery”. Freund then concluded that “psychotherapy of homosexuality in the vast majority of cases is not warranted [ne pokazana]”, since even if the doctors managed to instill “heterosexual adaptations” in his patients, the patient’s homosexual desire never ceased.

Medicalization of homosexuality and the corollary decriminalization of sodomy laws were under way in the countries of the Western bloc as well. In the UK, for instance, changes towards medicalization and the decriminalization of consensual homosexual acts began after the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, better known as the Wolfenden Committee, published a report that recommended decriminalizing homosexual sex between two consenting adults and encouraged further research into the etiology and medical treatment of homosexuality on 4 September 1957. This report’s recommendations were greeted with enthusiasm by British psychiatrists, who started trying various methods for medical treatment of homosexuality, with aversion therapy believed to be the most efficacious treatment option. Yet still, there were medical professionals in the UK who espoused views contrary to the mainstream perception of homosexuality as a corrigeable aberration. These

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45 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 21.
48 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 61 – 76.
doctors advised their patients to have psychoanalysis only if they felt out of accord with their homosexuality. Although the Wolfenden Committee recommended criminalizing homosexuality between two consenting males as early as 1957, this recommendation became law only in 1967.

Developments of another nature were taking place across the Atlantic, where as early as the late 1940s a new perspective on homosexuality emerged that framed it as a normal variant of human sexuality. This view was presented in a 1948 study called *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* by an American sexologist Alfred Kinsey. Kinsey’s work refuted the hitherto conventional binary view between “normal and abnormal” sexuality and demonstrated that homosexual activity was far from a rare phenomenon. Most notably, his research revealed shocking statistics: thirty-seven percent of the male population examined by Kinsey had sexual contacts with other men. These findings led Kinsey to design a scale for rating the prevalence of homosexual behavior in a male from 0 to 6, with 0 standing for exclusive heterosexuality and 6 standing for exclusive homosexuality. Kinsey’s study was followed by a series of papers by an American psychologist Evelyn Hooker, who proved the heretofore untested link between maladjustment and homosexuality.

The emergence of these ideas stood in marked contrast with the stepped-up homophobia of McCarthyism and still-existing sodomy laws in the United States, which despite attacks by renowned American jurists and attorneys, remained in place. Furthermore, there was no shortage of scientific studies that continued to relentlessly popularize the view of homosexuality as sickness. One such study was *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study* (1962), written under the primary authorship of psychiatrist Irving Bieber. Bieber believed

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52 Dickinson, *Curing Queers*, 200.
54 Ibid.
that every homosexual could be cured of his “disease” if he was sufficiently motivated.\textsuperscript{58} These pathologizing views of homosexuality came under attack from the members of the homophile movement, which emerged in the 1950s and became more active in the 1960s in the US.\textsuperscript{59} The activism of the movement and later gay liberationists eventually led to the elimination of homosexuality from the list of psychiatric disorders in 1973.

The development of Soviet thinking on homosexuality, as will be evident further, was going in a different direction – towards pathologization and medicalization of homosexuality. Yet, the emerging status of homosexuality as a disease did not have a similar effect in Soviet conditions – Soviet sexopathology was too weak to launch a comprehensive campaign against the existing sodomy law and claim homosexuality for the sexological and psychiatric profession. Soviet sexologists made very few attempts to suggest that homosexuality should be a matter of therapeutic, rather than a police concern, and these attempts did not lead to the decriminalization of sodomy.

Curing Soviet Lesbians: Derevinskaia’s Dissertation (1965)

On 4 June 1965, Elizaveta Derevinskaia, a trainee – psychiatrist, supervised by Soviet psychiatrist Abram Sviadoshch, defended her dissertation: “Materials on the Clinical Picture, Pathogenesis, Therapy of Female Homosexuality” in the Karaganda State Medical Institute.\textsuperscript{60} Derevinskaia’s study examined ninety-six lesbians, most of whom came from the Karaganda corrective labor camp. She examined all of them over the period from 1954 to 1964.\textsuperscript{61} Her research is interesting in several ways. First, it appeared in the 1950s, at a time when Soviet sexopathology was not established as an official science. Dan Healey examined the content of this dissertation and argued that its appearance was apparently due to the anxieties of the GULAG officials regarding the possibility of a spread of camp perversions into society with the former prisoners’ coming back to society.\textsuperscript{62} Second, it appears that Abram Sviadoshch, a

\textsuperscript{58} Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry, 33.
\textsuperscript{59} For instance, in December 1964 four gay protesters showed up at a public lecture “Homosexuality: A Disease” given by one of the psychoanalysts who participated in Bieber’s studies. They demanded an opportunity to rebut the speaker and were eventually allowed to do so inside ten minutes. For a more nuanced account of the emerging homophile movement in the US: Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry, 67 – 100.
\textsuperscript{60} Elizaveta M. Derevinskaia, “Materialy k klinike, patogenezu, terapii zhenskogo homoseksualizma” (Dissertatsia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata meditsinskikh nauk, Karaganda State Medical Institute, 1965). I was first alerted to this dissertation by Dan Healey.
\textsuperscript{61} Derevinskaia, “Materialy k klinike, patogenezu, terapii zhenskogo homoseksualizma”, 39.
\textsuperscript{62} Dan Healey, Homosexual Desire, 241.
prominent psychiatrist and Derevinskaia’s supervisor, did not actively participate in the formative seminars on sexopathology held in Gorkii; perhaps it was due to the fact that at that time he was based in Karaganda or due to some other reason. As such, his work appears to be apart from the burgeoning sexopathological science. This special standing of Derevinskaia’s and Sviadoshch’s work may explain the difference between the treatment proposed by them, which relied mainly on medication, while pioneers of sexopathology Ivanov and Goland, whose work will be examined further, argued that it was psychotherapy not medical intervention that could help homosexuals.

Despite Derevinskaia’s and Sviadoshch’s reliance on medication, it is important to note that their framing of homosexuality refuted the hitherto prevailing understanding of homosexuality as merely a psychopathy. Citing the works of Soviet psychiatrists, who framed homosexuality exclusively as a “psychopathy”, Derevinskaia argued that “a wide range of sexual perversions can be observed outside psychopathy”. 63 She invoked the description of a “typical” homosexual provided by Izmail Sluchevskii in his manual *Psychiatry* (1957), describing them as “deceitful and immoral” and as individuals defying social norms. Derevinskaia noted that “among homosexuals there can be found individuals who do not possess characteristics vividly described by I. F. Sluchevskii”. 64

Most importantly, Derevinskaia presented some lesbians as individuals willing to cure their homosexuality – in her dissertation, she provided terse reports on the objects of her study, looking at their biographies and emphasizing that they were eager to change their sexual orientation. For instance, one of the lesbians was reported to “willingly agree to undergo treatment”. 65 When talking about her homosexuality, the woman reported that “it was disgusting, she considered herself to be a perished woman [pogibshei zhenshchinoi], she asserts that she wants to be like all women, but she cannot do it herself. She asks her to rid her of this ‘shameful desire’ [pozornoe vlechenie]”. 66 Another lesbian patient was reporting similar feelings. Derevinskaia wrote that she “knows that it humiliates her, but she cannot leave her partner herself, she asks to help her get rid of this filthy liaison [griaznaia sviaz’]”. 67 As I will demonstrate further, other sexopathologists also reported that their patients had similar feelings

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63 Derevinskaia, “Materialy k klinike, patogenezu, terapii zhenskogo gomoseksualizma”, 28.
64 Ibid., 29.
65 Ibid., 211 – 212.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 226.
about their homosexuality, trying to distance themselves from it and hoped that doctors would help them.

**Homosexuality and Psychotherapy: Nikolai Ivanov’s Methods**

In this section, we will examine the model of treatment of homosexuality proposed by Nikolai Ivanov, a psychiatrist, who as I have shown above, played a crucial role in the establishment of Soviet sexopathology. Unlike Sviadoshch and Derevinskaia, Ivanov’s practice was focused on medical treatment of male homosexuality, which seems extraordinary, considering that same-sex relations between men were a crime at that time in the Soviet Union. In contrast to Derevinskaia’s and Sviadoshch’s model of treatment, which involved the use of medication, Ivanov proposed a scheme that suggested the patient could work on the eradication of his homosexuality himself, without resorting to any drugs. Crucial in the process were the patient’s self-realization of his deficiency and his strong will to rid himself of it.

Ivanov presented his model of treatment in a monograph *Questions of Psychotherapy of Functional Sexual Disorders* (1966). The monograph was concerned with sexual disorders, such as impotence, female frigidity and sexual perversions. That Ivanov put sexual perversions on a par with these ailments suggests that he viewed them as treatable conditions, rather than a criminal psychopathy, which, as we have seen, was the conventional framing of homosexuality in the books on psychiatry. Opening his discussion of sexual perversions (seksual’nye perversii), Ivanov argued that they stemmed from premature sexual experiences and as demonstrated in Chapter 2, Soviet sex educators shared this view:

Soviet clinicians have gathered convincing evidence that various forms of sexual perversions are due to unfavourable factors of upbringing, especially the conditions in which an adolescent or a young man prematurely experience intense exciting feelings (intensivnye volnyuiuiche vpechatleniiia), being, for example, an onlooker to a sexual scene or being “instructed” by his more experienced peers.

Ivanov’s view and those of sex educators concurred on yet another point: sexual perversions stemmed from excessive sexual desire, a “pathological increase in sexual

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69 Ibid., 128 – 129.
attraction”, which Ivanov believed to be a “halfway house” (perekhodnaia forma) between normal and perverse sexual life. In order to prevent this pathology and its undesirable consequences, Ivanov recommended elimination of all sexual stimuli from the patient’s life.

Echoing the advice of sex education manuals, Ivanov recommended that patients with excessive sexual drive engage in physical labour and sports, which would make them oblivious to “sexual fantasies” (seksual’no okrashennye predstavleniia). More radical measures of tackling excessive sexual desire included prescription of sedative and libido-quelling medications in large doses, mainly bromine and aminazin.70

Among all sexual perversions, homosexuality, according to Ivanov, “occupied a central place”, for he believed it was the most common one.71 Although he did not elaborate on how his view of homosexuality as a medical condition squared with the existing anti-sodomy law, he did imply that all sexual perversions fell in the purview of psychiatry: “Most perversions are to be situated within the competence of psychiatry (otnositia k kompetentsii psikhiatorov), since the most important method for its treatment is psychotherapy”.72 A cardinal feature of Ivanov’s psychotherapeutic treatment of homosexuality was the assumption that a homosexual had to work hard on self-improvement: he was expected to re-channel his sexual desire to the opposite sex by commanding himself to stop thinking about men and by trying to increase his contact with women. As such, Ivanov’s treatment scheme involved not only a psychological, but a social dimension. Recovery was not only about reducing homosexual desire, but reintegrating of the homosexual into the society and the collective. This social dimension, embedded in Ivanov’s practice, was a cornerstone of Soviet psychiatry.73

The concept of working on oneself to become a better Soviet citizen, which lay at the core of Ivanov’s psychotherapy, was not unique. As Oleg Kharkhordin has shown, this concept was an important element of the educational system and ideology of the late Soviet era, with its goal of encouraging Soviet citizens to self-improve and so raise a generation of New Soviet Persons.74 Examining Soviet literature on self-training, published during this period, Kharkhordin summarized the main practices central to the process of working on oneself.

71 Ivanov, Voprosy psikhoterapii, 132.
72 Ibid., 133 – 134.
Generally, it comprised three stages: the first stage of “self-cognition and self-evaluation”, the second stage involved “self-compulsion or self-stimulation, leading to self-training of the will power” and the final stage was that of “self-control or self-command”. Most importantly, the process of working on oneself began with “the realization of certain personal deficiencies, revealed in the process of self-evaluation”.

Ivanov’s treatment scheme appears to draw on a similar framework. Ivanov argued that for treatment to be successful, a prospective patient had to realize what a serious disadvantage his homosexuality was. In other words, he was to realize his personal deficiency to be able to initiate the treatment. Ivanov explained: “In case of homosexuality one of the telling signs [of the patient’s amenability for treatment] is the patient’s attitude to his perversion, whether he has awareness of the inappropriateness of his desire…[neadekvatnost’ vlecheniia]”. Ivanov emphasized this point twice in his text: “It should be noted once again that treatment is successful only in those cases when the patient, suffering, realizes the inappropriateness [neadekvatnost’] of his way of living, wants to get rid of his pathological desire and persistently, purposefully follows the doctor’s corrective suggestions”.

Conversely, patients who were not able to perceive their homosexuality as a serious disadvantage, were not amenable for treatment: “If the patient finds his state burdensome [tiagotitsia svoim sostoianiem], then the conduct of psychotherapy is rational [ratsional’n]. If the patient, as is often the case, has come to terms with his sexual perversion long ago, and does not find it burdensome [ne tiagotitsia im], but on the contrary, thinks of it as something that makes him superior or original, then the treatment should not be started”. Apart from demonstrating the importance of the “self-realization” stage in Ivanov’s model of medical treatment of homosexuality, this shows that in his practice he encountered homosexuals comfortable with their sexuality with no desire to be treated at all. This might suggest the existence of a peculiar self-awareness among some homosexuals. Dan Healey tells us that few homosexuals possessed such self-awareness and these homosexual men usually came from large and sophisticated cities.

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76 Ibid., 242.
77 Ivanov, Voprosy psikhoterapii, 134.
78 Ibid., 139.
79 Ibid., 134.
80 Dan Healey, “Comrades, Queers, and ‘Oddballs’: Sodomy, Masculinity, and Gendered Violence in Leningrad Province of the 1950s,” Journal of the History of Sexuality 21, no. 3 (September 2012): 498. Perhaps Ivanov referred to homosexual men working in the world of art. Dan Healey argued that this world of art offered Soviet
The importance of self-evaluation as a prerequisite for successful treatment is evident in another comment by Ivanov: “In the cases of patients actively leading perverse sexual life, the possibility of a positive psychotherapeutic effect is high, if the patient came to the doctor in a state of acute emotional crisis [dushevnyi krizis] and with awareness that one cannot go on living like this”.81 This realization, Ivanov argued, could also be a result of unreciprocated or betrayed (obmanutaia) love: “Such critical feeling [kriticheskoе perezhivanie] is especially evident in the cases of unreciprocated or ‘misplaced’ [obmanutoi] love. A torturous disappointment [muchitel’noе razocharovanie] and spiritual dejection [dushevnaia ugnetennost’] arising from it, provide a propitious moment for a psychotherapist to intervene, especially when such spiritual crisis is related to deep concerns [osterе perezhivaniia] of an approaching danger and threat of social responsibility for his desire”.82 These fears of some of Ivanov’s patients were far from being unfounded. As Dan Healey has shown, in the late 1950s and during the 1960s, policing of gay men intensified and the KGB occasionally participated.83 The police monitored homosexuals in parks and public toilets and resorted to the help of informants, recruited from other homosexuals who were blackmailed and encouraged to incriminate others.84 Starting from 1965, the USSR health ministry, concerned with the growing rates of STIs, intensified surveillance and monitoring of homosexuals, resorting to the help of doctors working in STI clinics as well as the police.85

After the patient realized his deficiency and the danger of living with it, he was to embark on the long path towards recovery. With the help of self-control and self-command, the patient was “to resist his pathological desire” with his own efforts.86 He was to do so with the help of “autogenic training”, a complex form of self-hypnosis, which Ivanov borrowed homosexuals “the hope of respectability and even prestige”. Healey wrote that “homosexuals believed with some justification that they were tolerated there, and they gravitated towards music, drama, dance, the visual arts and allied professions”. Apparently, some homosexual men from these milieus could believe that their homosexuality was the cornerstone of their talent and this was Ivanov’s main point here. On homosexual men in the Soviet cultural world see: Dan Healey, “Moscow,” in Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories since 1600, ed. David Higgs (London: Routledge, 1999), 55 – 56.

81 Ivanov, Voprosy psikhoterapii, 135.
82 Ibid.
83 Dan Healey, Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 171. Ben de Jong also tells us that it was not uncommon for the police to resort to the help of young boys, who were instructed to entice homosexuals and then subsequently bring them to the attention of militia, see: Ben de Jong “‘An Intolerable Kind of Moral Degeneration’: Homosexuality in the Soviet Union,” Review of Socialist Law 4 (1982): 346.
84 Dan Healey, Russian Homophobia, 171.
85 Ibid., 172.
86 Ivanov, Voprosy psikhoterapii, 137.
from German psychiatrist Johannes Heinrich Schultz, who developed it in 1932.\textsuperscript{87} This self-hypnosis aimed to help the patient subdue any exciting images (budorazhashchee predstavlenie) and make him devise an individual formula of resistance (formula soprotivleniia) against his homosexual urges.\textsuperscript{88} The patient was constantly to repeat to himself one of the phrases offered to him by his doctor, such as “I am now free of my previous desires, I am indifferent to anything that used to excite me”.\textsuperscript{89} Other patients, Ivanov noted, also pledged that they would not succumb to “anything tempting”.\textsuperscript{90}

As the treatment proceeded, the patient was to get into a special state of mind, the so-called “sexual – psychological vacuum” (seksual’no – psikhologicheskii vakuum). This state was characterized by the disappearance of homosexual urges on the part of the patient.\textsuperscript{91} Once the patient reached this state, it was time for the doctor to help the patient to “activate social communication with persons of the opposite sex”.\textsuperscript{92} Here again the patient was expected to summon his concentration to achieve this task. Ivanov recommended that “at this stage, the patient is strongly recommended to concentrate all his attention on the positive qualities of personality [of a woman] as a whole”.\textsuperscript{93} The patient was responsible for creating conditions under which he could successfully obtain heterosexual desire, which would “burst into a luminous flame” [vsykhnut’ iarkim plamenem], once the patient organized his way of life “in such a way that friendly relationships with the individuals of the opposite sex could facilitate the creation of conditions for the emergence of such feelings”.\textsuperscript{94} Importantly, Ivanov assigned little importance to the use of medication in the treatment of homosexuality, stating that “medical therapy of sexual perversions does not have any substantial importance”.\textsuperscript{95} However,

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\textsuperscript{87} This technique was widely practised in Europe, Russia and Japan, but was far less popular in North America. On its history and essence see: Wolfgang Linden, “The Autogenic Training Method of J. H. Schultz,” in \textit{Principles and Practice of Stress Management} (Third Edition) eds. by Paul M. Lehrer, Robert L. Woolfolk and Wesley E. Sime (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 151 – 171. Schultz believed that homosexuality was a result of childhood trauma or seduction during adolescence and that it could be cured by psychotherapy – he advanced these claims in his sex education book, published in 1941. Schultz’s view resonated with a great number of his colleagues and even high-ranking Nazis. See: Harry Oosterhuis, “Medicine, Male Bonding and Homosexuality in Nazi Germany,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary History} 32, no. 2 (April 1997): 193.
\textsuperscript{88} Ivanov, \textit{Voprosy psikhoterapii}, 138.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 136.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 137.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 138.
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if the patient insisted on medical intervention, then the doctor could prescribe such medicine to alleviate the patient’s sexual urges.  

Ivanov’s emphasis on the importance of a conscious decision to undertake psychotherapeutic treatment on the part of the homosexual patient suggests that Ivanov was against coercive techniques and did not seek to force psychotherapy on his patients, unlike other Soviet psychiatrists whom I will discuss later. In some cases he actively tried to dissuade his patients from undergoing psychotherapy for homosexuality. One of Ivanov’s former patients, Leonid, who turned up in Ivanov’s consultation room in 1965, recalled: “I realized that I had an anomaly [anomalia]. I was attracted to men. I made numerous attempts to date girls. Through my acquaintances I came to Ivanov. After reassuring me that our conversation would not go beyond the walls of his office, he asked me: ‘Is it worth breaking the nature [lomat’ prirody]?’ And after I told him that I had had contacts with women, he said that we could try”.

Ivanov’s reassurance of the patient that their conversation would not go beyond the walls of the consultation room, as well as the fact that Leonid was offered treatment for homosexuality, may be construed as a sign of what Vladimir Shlapentokh has called “privatization”, a process that had been underway in Soviet society since the mid-1950s. One of the main features of this process was a growing “unofficial public life” and Ivanov’s medical practice certainly was an expression of such – according to the official views of the state, male homosexuality was a punishable crime. Yet Ivanov not only believed that homosexuality could be natural in some cases, he also offered medical treatment for it, which at that time was not acknowledged by official Soviet medicine. Ivanov’s consultation room offered some degree of privacy for his patients and it was also a place where official views on homosexuality were challenged and alternative, unofficial approaches to this phenomenon were undertaken.

Drawing on Leonid’s terse summary, it is difficult to reflect further on the extent of unofficial and private interactions between the patient and the doctor and their implications for medical treatment of homosexuality during that period. The existing accounts of Soviet psychiatric practice of this time, however, suggest that although a Soviet psychiatrist was no

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96 Ivanov, *Voprosy psikhoterapii*, 139
97 A videotaped, undated interview with Leonid, conducted by Yan Goland in the early 1990s, in the course of which both discussed how they first met each other through Nikolai Ivanov.
private entrepreneur and was usually attached to a public hospital, his relationship with the patient often took on unofficial and informal undertones. For instance, there were no standard psychotherapeutic hours – a session could vary from a half hour to two hours and more; a patient or former patient could see his therapist without advance appointment. Psychiatrists were eager to meet their patients any time, since they believed that “the patient should know that the doctor is available to him whenever he needs him”. The informality of such interactions, and the potential rapport arising with it, could have certainly facilitated the trust between the two in some cases and could have led some homosexuals to open up to their therapists.

Ivanov started administering psychotherapy to Leonid, yet soon he had to discontinue the treatment – Ivanov suffered from a stroke in 1966 and was henceforth unable to work with his patients. Focused on his own health from now on, Ivanov handed his patients over to his ambitious young protégé, a psychiatrist from Gorkii – Yan Genrikhovich Goland, who had been Ivanov’s dedicated trainee since the late 1950s. Following on from the practice of his mentor, Goland further developed the medical treatment of homosexuality.

**Yan Goland and his Treatment Methods**

Like his mentor, Goland promoted the view that homosexuality (he was mainly interested in male homosexuality) was a treatable medical condition, which could be eliminated by the patient’s own efforts under a psychiatrist’s careful supervision. Underlying Goland’s model of treatment were the same conceptions, revolving around the idea that the patient was to become a heterosexual person through control, concentration and work on himself. A new element in Goland’s scheme, as I will show further, was emphasis on the education of the patient on how to “adapt” himself to the individuals of the opposite sex and on how to appreciate their beauty. Goland reported positive outcomes of the treatment of former Ivanov’s patients in a report “On

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100 Interview with Goland, 1 April, 2017.
101 Interview with Goland, 1 April, 2017.
the Question of Psychotherapy of Homosexuality”, presented at a conference on psychiatry in Kharkov in 1968.102

In his report, Goland presented a more elaborate model of medical treatment for homosexuality, which consisted of three stages. The aim of the first stage was to “establish a sexual-psychological vacuum”, a special state characterized by disappearance of homosexual desire; the second stage was aimed at teaching the patient on how to appreciate women’s beauty and establish social contacts with them; the third stage was to help the patient further develop his “heteroerotic” desire towards women.103

During the first stage, the patient was given hypnotic suggestions to develop a “calm, cold and indifferent attitude to men”.104 The patient was to use auto-training, which would help him distract himself from his “fixations” on men.105 Obtaining patient feedback after this stage was completed, Goland noted that they reported “a feeling of liberation and joy of victory over oneself”, “indifference and tranquility” and “freedom from dangerous desire”.106 Here Goland placed special emphasis on the fact that on completion of this stage of the treatment the patient was able to “rationally” (ratsional’no) and “positively” (pozitivno) assess his new state, guided by his intellect, rather than feelings. During the second stage, hypnotic suggestions were accompanied with pictures of women shown to the patient. Here, a special emphasis was placed on educating (vospitanie) the patient on how to develop an “aesthetic interest” towards women and to gain skills of “adaptation among women”.107 The patient was taught to “develop his communicative skills” with women by following the doctor’s instructions and fulfilling the assigned homework.108 Any unwanted sexual feelings towards men were to be controlled by the patient’s will and “re-channeled” to women.109 Finally, during the third stage, the patient was shown more sexually explicit images of women. The outcomes reported by the patients were the following: “jealousy towards women” (chuvstvo revnosti k zhenshchine), “erection from strong heterosexual stimuli”, “erection after touching a woman”, “intensification of erotic

103 Ibid., 434.
104 Ibid., 435.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., 436.
109 Ibid.
feelings during intimate contacts with women” and “the appearance of a vivid stable heterosexual desire”.

Summarizing the techniques and the patients’ reactions, Goland concluded that he managed to “re-channel” the patients to “completely heterosexual activities”. Yet he added that this treatment scheme could be effective only if patients displayed an “eagerness to be treated” and if they considered their homosexual desire to be “an anomaly, preventing them from having a fulfilling social life”.

Goland’s unpublished manuscripts (see Figure 13) give us a new perspective on Goland’s therapeutic approach to homosexuality and a glimpse of what was actually happening in his consultation room. Particularly illuminating are the questionnaires that Goland designed to evaluate his patients’ progress in transitioning from homosexual orientation to heterosexual, in which the patient was offered statements to choose from that best described his state. The questionnaire, contained the following statements:

Have any of the following changes taken place:

I. Fixations of attention [fiksatsiya vnimaniiia] on the persons of the same-sex have become:
   a) extremely rare.
   b) are episodic and do not contain any stirring [volnuiushchii] erotic component.
   c) communication with the persons of the same-sex is smooth and calm.

II. The disappearance of homosexual dreams [gomoseksual’nykh snovidenii]. Even if the persons of the same sex appear in the dream, it happens without erotic emotions [eroticheskoe perezhivanie].

III. Even when being slightly inebriated, there is no display of homosexual tendencies, while previously inebriation used to trigger their realization.

The questionnaire also asked patients to describe their emotional state. The available multiple-choice responses included: “feeling of liberation, joy, victory over oneself”, “indifference,

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110 Goland, “K voprosu psikhoterapii gomoseksualizma”, 436.
111 Ibid.
112 An undated type-written document, describing the first stage of psychotherapy for homosexuality – “sexual-psychological vacuum” (hereinafter “sexual-psychological vacuum”). It also contains a questionnaire for patients, evaluating the progress of their treatment. Yan Goland’s personal archive.
tranquility”, “a sense of ill-being” (chuvstvo neblagopolučia) with elements of confusion”, “fear of losing erotic emotions”, “uncertainty about acquiring heterosexual feelings”, “comfortable, calm” (as I have shown above, these statements were used by Goland in his reports on the success of his enterprise). Even though, as we can see, Goland expected to hear answers that reflected the unsatisfactory state of his patients, he was still convinced that these were initial reactions that would soon go away. The questions given at the end of the questionnaire attest to that: “When did you overcome [pereboleli] the feelings of your new state, get accustomed to it, accept as normal in the course of treatment? When did you start welcoming [privetstvovat’] this state and wait for a new treatment stage?”

Prior to the second stage of psychotherapy, aimed at helping the patient “re-channel” his sexual interest to women, the patient was to tell the doctor how he felt about women in another questionnaire (see Figure 14), which featured the following questions: “Have you had a perverse attitude [prevratnyi vzgliad] to the persons of the opposite sex”? “What is your aesthetic perception [esteticheskoe vospriiatie] of the woman before treatment?” “Was there a total absence of aesthetic perception of the woman?” The patient was also provided with a set of statements to choose from to describe the nature of his relations with women: “calm, just business-like [chisto delovye]”, “tentative [nereshchitel’nyi], shackled [skovannyi], timid [boiazlivye] relations, prevalence of a desire to avoid female society”, “suspicions that the woman can reveal [razoblachit’] your vice” and “a feeling of dislike, an urge to minimize communication”.

Once the second stage was completed, the patient was to document his feelings and impressions in his answers to a new set of questions. These included: “Have you acquired skills of communication with women? Are you able to see the fineness of the woman’s physique [iziashchestvo form], spirituality [odukhotvorennost’] and tenderness [nezhnost’]? Were there a necessity to talk with women? Have you acquired or strengthened communication skills with women? Have you started having dreams where you have situations of non-sexual and sexual communication with women?” The questionnaire included other questions: “Have you come up with a paragon of a beautiful female face? Have you got an idea of a beautiful female face?

113 “Sexual-Psychological Vacuum”.
114 An undated type-written document, describing the second stage of psychotherapy for homosexuality, aimed at re-chanelling the patient’s sexual interest from men to women (hereinafter, “second stage of psychotherapy for homosexuality”). This document contains questions for patients, evaluating their progress and their suitability for further treatment. Yan Goland’s personal archive.
115 Ibid.
Does seeing a female image fill you with positive emotions [svetlye emotsii]?

Goland’s belief that the patient’s start of intimate relations with women was an indicator of the treatment’s success apparently stemmed from his belief that underlying his patient’s homosexuality was the phobia of women. Such belief was also characteristic of some psychiatrists trying to cure homosexuality in the US at that time.  

Apart from the questionnaires, Goland encouraged his patients to produce a written account of their feelings and attempts at dating women, which was part of the therapy. In an unpublished draft for a conference paper, Goland cited the excerpts from his patients’ diaries, presenting them as evidence of success of his therapy. One of his patients wrote on 13 February 1968: “I am in a good mood. I still have full confidence in the positive outcome, but I wish that it all could be happening faster”. Goland then went on to describe his patient’s romantic rendezvous with a woman: “I went out with N., for the second time and we went to the circus. Male and female athletes were performing there, yet I had no curiosity whatsoever in their musculature [muskulatura] or anything else. Somehow, I forgot about it, I was delighted by the performance. Fixations on the lads [khloptsy] are very weak, sometimes I don’t think about them at all. I still find attractive facial features and haircuts of the girls I see on the street”. Several days later, the patient reported a new breakthrough – the appearance of sexual arousal at a woman. Goland provided the patient’s diary entry dated from 29 February 1968, in which the patient described his first sexual emotions, experienced at a flat of his friends, where he saw a girl sitting on bed: “One of the girls was sitting on bed in such a way that her legs were showing above the knees. Looking at that, I felt a slight arousal [nebol’shoe vozbuzhdenie].”

Goland’s report ended with this observation and did not provide any comments. It was not only Goland’s patients who reported their “progress” towards acquiring heterosexuality. Wives who brought their husbands to Goland for treatment of homosexuality also noticed positive changes in the behaviour of their husbands. Nadezhda, who brought her husband Andrei to Goland in 1967, was very content with the treatment outcomes. She noticed positive changes in her husband’s behaviour. Nadezhda reported the following: “He started helping me about the house, beating carpets, doing the shopping [skhodit v magazin].”

116 “Second Stage of Psychotherapy for Homosexuality”.
117 Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry, 29.
118 Yan Goland, untitled and unpublished paper on psychotherapy of homosexuality, 1968 (hereinafter, “Goland’s 1968 paper”). Here Goland discussed the process of one of his patient’s getting accustomed to talking to women Goland cites the diary of an identified patient who underwent psychotherapy for homosexuality treatment in 1968. Yan Goland’s personal archive, p. 2.
119 Ibid., 2.
never leaves me alone, he is always with me everywhere. He flirts with me, whenever we are alone. He started thinking about having a baby”.

Andrei also became more attentive to his wife: “Previously, he never paid attention to the way I dressed or my hair. Now he buys me fashion magazines and gives me presents”. But the most important thing was that Andrei resumed having sexual relations with his wife. Nadezhnda wrote: “He started sexual relations with me very unexpectedly for me. It was after the new 1968 year. […] After the first time he started showing more affection and day after day I could feel his growing desire. The intervals between intimacies [sblizhenie] at first lasted three weeks, then two, now one”.

The renewed ambitions of the Khrushchev-era leaders to mold a New Soviet Person led them to pay more attention to Soviet families, where such a person would be raised. Various collectives were mobilized to “help” spouses, whose marriages were on the brink of collapse, by pressuring them into improving and retaining their relationships. Local party organs, trade-union organizations and voluntary groups also intervened in family life, by advising spouses on how to properly raise their children. Goland’s unofficial practice of medical treatment of homosexuality, which started to get off the ground in the first years of the Brezhnev rule, essentially complimented these efforts, despite not being officially authorized. It addressed homosexuality, a problem that, just like male impotence, had far-reaching implications for marriage and its stability. What’s more, Goland’s psychotherapy not only set out to eliminate perverse sexual desire, it also sought to mold a homosexual into an active contributor to the society, a loving husband and father. Achieving the latter was equally important – after the treatment of her husband was over, Nadezhda noted that her husband started finally participating in their family life.

Performing medical treatment of homosexuality unofficially, Goland attempted to institutionalize his practice. In 1969 Goland wrote a letter to Pavel Posvianskii, the head of the

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120 Goland’s 1968 paper, 3.
121 Ibid., 3.
122 Ibid., 4.
124 Deborah A. Field, Private Life and Communist Morality, 89.
125 Scholars have recently shed new light on the notions of “ideal father” during the Khrushchev era, who was expected not only to provide financial support for the family and participate in disciplining his children, but to be more emotionally engaged in the family life on a day-to-day basis. The issue of whether the Soviet man was supposed to play crucial role in the maintenance of the family home was still ambiguous: Claire E. McCallum, “Man About the House: Male Domesticity and Fatherhood in Soviet Visual Satire Under Khrushchev,” in The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union, ed. Melanie Ilic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 343.
Moscow Department of Sexopathology, in which he talked about an unsatisfactory provision of sexological help in the city of Gorkii.\textsuperscript{126} Goland lamented that the Gorkii psychiatric clinic, operating under the Gorkii Medical Institute, was failing to provide adequate sexological help to the patients with sexual disorders due to their increasing numbers. As an example, Goland noted that in 1968 the clinic’s sexologists provided treatment for 371 people and those wanting to arrange an appointment with the doctor had to wait an average of six months. To resolve this problem, Goland suggested opening a “sexological method center”, staffed with qualified sexologists and providing sexological help for a range of problems.\textsuperscript{127}

Apart from providing neuropathologists, urologists and psychiatrists with special sexological training and offering treatment for a wide range of sexual disorders, the sexological center would be a place where homosexuals could come for medical help. According to Goland’s plan, the center would provide homosexuals with “special psychotherapy”, which as Goland stressed, was “a type of medical aid absent in the clinics of the country”.\textsuperscript{128} Goland’s request was welcomed by Posvianskii, who requested additional information from Goland in order to raise this question before the Ministry of Health, which would have the ultimate right to endorse such initiatives.\textsuperscript{129} Yet, unfortunately for Goland, his plan never materialized and the idea never became reality – as Goland explained to me later, the reason for it lay in the lack of funding. Whether it was genuine lack of finding or whether the Ministry of Health was willfully reluctant to endorse a center whose activities, primarily medical treatment of homosexuality, would conflict the official standing of homosexuality as a crime, remains unclear. Yet, it is no doubt that if such center had been inaugurated, it would have further facilitated the perception of homosexuality not as a crime, but a disease and would certainly have given doctors more leverage to argue for decriminalization of sodomy.

\textbf{Kosarev’s Article: Attempts to Frame Homosexuality as a Disease (1967)}

The emergence of discourse on homosexuality in Soviet medical books inevitably invited another pressing question – how could male homosexuality, which was viewed by some doctors as a disease, square with the existing sodomy law? None of the doctors I have discussed

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{126} Yan Goland, type-written letter to Pavel Posvianskii, 1969. Yan Goland’s personal archive.
\bibitem{127} Ibid., 4.
\bibitem{128} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
above shed light on this seeming inconsistency. In this section, I will examine an article “On the Question of the Forensic and Psychiatric Importance of Homosexuality”, which appeared in a published collection of works on sexopathology, *Current Problems of Sexopathology* in 1967. In his article, psychiatrist V. K. Kosarev, about whom we know very little, proposed to treat homosexuals in hospitals rather than punish them in prisons. He did so with a nod to Czechoslovakia and East Germany, where consensual homosexuality had been decriminalized by that time and sex offenders were treated in hospitals due to their “diminished responsibility”. Likewise, discussing a criminal sodomy case featuring a Soviet citizen, Kosarev depicted him as an individual who had not only been displaying homosexual tendencies since childhood, but was also burdened by his “disease” and wished to receive treatment.130

In his article, Kosarev mentioned that East Germany had already decriminalized consensual sodomy between two male persons: “It should be noted that in the GDR, as well as in other socialist and capitalist countries, homosexuality (except for the cases where it is forcible and conducted in relation to children) is not punishable by law”.131 Then he added the opinion of Czechoslovakian psychiatrists, who believed that decriminalization of sodomy in their country in the early 1960s had had no adverse effects on the prevalence of homosexuality: “Czechoslovakian psychiatrist Bouchal notes that since the adoption of the new legislation in CzSSR (since 1962) on the repeal of punishment for homosexuality, there ostensibly has been no increase in the number of homosexuals or any change in their behaviour”.132 Then he proceeded to his main argument – that homosexuals should be treated in hospitals rather than sent to prison – drawing on an article entitled “The Problem of Responsibility and Corrective Measures in Sexual Delinquents” (1959), by Czechoslovakian sexologists Kurt Freund and Karle Nedoma. The arguments of this article paved the way for eventual decriminalization of consensual sodomy in Czechoslovakia two years later:

Psychiatrists Nedoma and Freund (CzSSR) in their paper “The Problem of Responsibility and Corrective Measures in Sexual Delinquents” (1959) posit that in the cases of sex crimes one may always bear in mind the abnormal mental or sexual state that restricts the freedom of an individual to make a decision. Some of these crimes fall under the category of “diminished responsibility” [umen’shennaja

131 Ibid., 292.
132 Ibid.
vmeniaemost’], adopted in the legislation of some countries. The authors believe that the punishment of such individuals is ineffective, thus, according to the authors, individuals with sexual perversions, dangerous to society, should be treated in a closed medical institution with a specific medical focus.\(^\text{133}\)

It is surprising that Kosarev chose to put homosexuals in the category of persons with “diminished responsibility”, since in their original article, Nedoma and Freund actually argued that it was pedophiles and sadists who fell under this category, not homosexuals. On the contrary, Nedoma and Freud believed that homosexuality was not “dangerous for society” and therefore should not be considered a crime. They also stated that “an exclusively homoerotic person could not be attuned to heterosexuality” and that doctors could not cure such an individual “by prescribing him to get married”.\(^\text{134}\) These statements suggest that Nedoma and Freund did not even consider homosexuality to be a disease. Yet, for some reasons, Kosarev chose to avoid mentioning these important points in his article and whether he genuinely misunderstood or willfully misconstrued remains unclear.

Instead, Kosarev used the framework of “diminished responsibility”, which Nedoma and Freund offered to apply to pedophiles and sadists, some of whom, they believed, could not be responsible for their actions. Kosarev extrapolated this model onto Soviet homosexuals – arguing that some of them were also unable to control their desires. Justifying the importance of applying the framework of “diminished responsibility” to Soviet homosexuals, Kosarev wrote: “On the one hand, it allows us to appreciate the role of social and organic factors in the formation of homosexuality and on the other hand it underlines the necessity to employ a differentiated approach to the forensic and psychiatric examination of individuals suffering from sexual perversions”.\(^\text{135}\)

Kosarev’s extrapolation of “diminished responsibility” onto Soviet homosexuals appears to be somewhat justified if we consider the case study that he presented. The protagonist of this case, a 24-year-old man, was not only accused of sodomy, but depraved acts against minors; technically, he could be construed as a pedophile. As Kosarev explained, while working in a boarding school, the convicted M., (shkola internat) on numerous occasions

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\(^\text{133}\) Kosarev, “K voprosy o znachenii gomoseksualizma,” 293. Karel Nedoma and Kurt Freund, “Otazka Pricetnosti a napravnych opatreni u sexualnich delikventu,” Ceskoslovenska Psychiatrie 4, no. 9 (1959): 264 – 269. Although the article is in Czech, it was supplemented with a summary in Russian which Kosarev appears to have reproduced in his paper. I am indebted to Kateřina Lišková for providing me with the article.


\(^\text{135}\) Kosarev, “K voprosy o znachenii gomoseksualizma,” 294.
invited the school’s children (vospitanniki internata) to his room, where he indulged in mutual masturbation with them. Furthermore, M. indulged in sodomy with one of the school’s teachers, performing a “passive” role. The combination of these offences led M. to being sentenced to five years in prison (Kosarev did not specify the type of the sentence). Apparently, the fact that M. committed not only sodomy with adults, but depraved acts with minors, made Kosarev believe that this case study could be appropriate for his main argument – Soviet homosexuals, just like pedophiles in Czechoslovakia, could also be considered individuals with “diminished responsibility”.

The prison, however, failed to correct M., because his homosexuality appeared to be more than a criminal act – it seemed to be an unflagging pathological desire, that M. wanted to rid himself of. Kosarev wrote: “It was extremely distressing for M. to live among men in penitentiary facilities as the sight of the men always caused him to feel sexual arousal […]. From prison, on numerous occasions, he wrote letters to the editors of Zdorovie journal, Health Ministry and to the chief specialist in forensic psychiatry with a request ‘to investigate his disease and bring back his male happiness [muzhskoe schast’e]’. Such depiction of a homosexual is consistent with the image of homosexuals presented by other sexopathologists: a person suffering from his desire, wanting to rid himself of it and willing to undergo treatment.

M’s request was finally responded to and in 1966, two years into his jail term, M. was sent to the Serbskii Central Research Institute of Forensic Psychiatry, to be scrutinized by psychiatrists. Psychiatrists established that M. had displayed homosexual tendencies from early childhood. Presenting facts from M’s medical history, Kosarev noted that “since his pre-school age M. preferred the society of his female peers”, “he liked to put on women’s dress” and at these moments he “forgot that he was a boy”. A significant milestone in M’s development as a homosexual was the moment when he started masturbating. I have already noted in Chapter 2 that Soviet sex educators carefully sought to prevent young people from acquiring this habit, believing that it could put children on a slippery slide towards homosexuality. This appeared to be the case with M.: “At the age of twelve or thirteen he started masturbating – every time he was fantasizing about the boy he liked. That was also when he started to incline his male peers [mal’chikov-sverstnikov] towards mutual masturbation”. Kosarev also emphasized

137 Ibid.
138 Ibid., 295.
139 Ibid., 293.
140 Ibid., 294.
M’s female habitus, which had been evident throughout his early years: “until the age of 16, M. continued to play with dolls, enjoyed singing and dancing. […] When he was living at his sister’s place, in her absence, he often tried on her dresses, shoes, put on lipstick, painted his brows”. Kosarev especially noted that M. had always been saddened by the fact he was not born a woman.

Although some of these descriptions are congruent with the Stalin and Khrushchev era psychiatric understandings of a typical homosexual as an effeminate individual, Kosarev presented M. as an individual who was genuinely suffering from his perversion and could not do anything about it. Likewise, Kosarev’s attitude to M’s homosexuality appears to be sympathetic, when we consider some other details drawn from M’s medical history: “He often confessed to the doctor that it was difficult for him to be in the society of men, because the sight of undressing men caused him a sexual arousal. At these moments, he becomes as if drunk [slovno pianyi]”. Kosarev depicted M. as an unhappy and profoundly dejected person, who found little understanding from the people surrounding him: “During his stay in the institute [Serbskii Institute], M. had displayed an increased sexual interest towards other young patients in his ward. He attempted to sit on the bed of his ‘chosen one’ [izbrannik], talking about something with him ingratiatingly for a long time, tried to put his arms around him [obnimat’]. He was in despair, if ‘the chosen one’ did not understand his ‘warm feeling [teploe otnoshenie] coming from the soul’. At these moments he was crying in his bed, declaring that he did not want to live.”

Kosarev emphasized the fact that M. was not a psychopath, but a person who was struggling with his desire, who would sacrifice a lot to get rid of his homosexuality. Kosarev wrote: “On numerous occasions he asked doctors to help him ‘regain man’s happiness’ and help him ‘become a full-fledged [polnotsennyi] man’. In our conversations with him, it became clear that his desire ‘to become a full-fledged man’ appeared in the places of confinement, where he realized that the continuation of his previous behaviour would inevitably lead him to run against the law. Somewhat demonstratively, he declares that ‘he would agree to rid himself

141 Kosarev, “K voprosy o znachenii gomoseksualizma,”294.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid., 295.
144 Ibid., 296.
of his sexual feeling [polovoe chuvstvo]’ in order to ‘resign himself fully to the labour’ and ‘profit the people with his labour’”.  

Kosarev added that M. “possessed a store of knowledge”, that his speech was “well-bred” (gramotnaia) and with a “good vocabulary” (khoroshii zapas slov); he also noted that M. was “well-versed in social affairs” (obshchestvennye sobytia) and was able “to critically assess the unfavourable situation he was in”. Perhaps, these observations led Kosarev to hope that M. could still be reclaimable for the Soviet project and society more broadly. Indeed, M. not only expressed his desire to labour “somewhat demonstratively”, he also displayed a certain measure of cultured behaviour or “culturedness” [kul’turnost’]. This was an important instrument in the moulding the New Soviet Person and Soviet leaders struggled to inculcate it in its people from the very onset of the Soviet regime. “Culturedness” implied having wide erudition in classical literature and art as well as knowledge of social etiquette; a “cultured” person was to have a range of personal qualities contrary to vulgarity, cruelty and evil. One of a whole range of methods by which Soviet leaders inculcated “culturedness” in their people was popular advice literature with instructions on how to be a cultured person; during the 1960s, as Catriona Kelly has shown, this literature accorded ample attention to the subject of ‘kul’tura rechi” [culture of speech] and to the task of forming linguistic etiquette in Soviet people. It was the desirable qualities of a “cultured” Soviet person, primarily erudition and good speech, that Kosarev apparently discerned in his patient and these very qualities possibly led him and other doctors to conclude that M’s homosexuality not a vice, but an unfortunate affliction.

After subjecting M. to a battery of medical tests, a commission of psychiatrists came to the conclusion that M. was sick, as he had demonstrated an inclination to sexual perversions in early childhood. The type of sentence that had originally been handed down to him was modified accordingly: his offence was re-qualified under Article 362 of the RSFSR Criminal

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145 Kosarev, “K voprosy o znachenii gomoseksualizma,” 296.
146 Ibid.
147 Catriona Kelly, Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 230 – 393
148 Michele Rivkin-Fish, Women’s Health in Post-Soviet Russia, 12.
149 Field, Private Life and Communist Morality, 89 – 97.
Code, which allowed for relief from punishment due to chronic psychiatric illness. Kosarev summarized the psychiatric commission’s decision:

Taking into consideration M’s organic predisposition and increased sexual arousal [vozbudimost’], which manifested itself quite early and which turned into a syndrome of sexual perversions under the corresponding external circumstances […] , the commission deemed it possible to interpret M’s actions under article 362 UPK RSFSR and send him for treatment to a minimum security psychiatric hospital [obshchego rezhima].

Despite Kosarev’s proposal to regard homosexuality as a pathological condition and thus to free homosexuals of a prison term, Kosarev did not lay out his ideas in more detail. He did not specify whether it was the homosexual himself who had to bring to the attention of the court the fact that he was sick or if it was the court that had to decide whether a homosexual in question had to be sent for medical examination. Another key issue omitted by Kosarev was whether those charged with sodomy could choose either treatment or a prison sentence, as they could at that time in England. In Czechoslovakia, prior to decriminalization of consensual homosexuality, medical treatment of homosexuality was also seen by authorities as an alternative to legal punishment. Was this also the case in the Soviet Union? Scholars have demonstrated that some Soviet homosexual men could consent to undergoing medical treatment in hospitals considering it as a more welcoming alternative to incarceration, yet more evidence is needed to establish how widespread such incidents were.

150 Normally such individuals would be sent for forced treatment or for treatment in conventional psychiatric clinics. See for example: Nina I. Felinskaia, Reaktivnye sostoiания v sudebno-psikhiatricheskoj klinike (Moscow: Meditsina, 1968), 264.
151 Ibid., 300.
152 A prominent Soviet forensic expert Mikhail I. Avdeev wrote in a manual for forensic experts Forensic Examination of Living Individuals (1968) that homosexual proclivities of a sodomy offender could have psychopathological nature: “When investigating the cases of sodomy psychiatric examination may be required, because in some cases sodomy may be a display of psychopathological peculiarities of the subject”. This represented a significant change from his previous framing of homosexuality as a vice that required no psychiatric scrutiny. Yet no instructions or further explanation followed to indicate in which cases such examination was required and what investigators were to do if the perpetrator’s crime indeed was a result of “psychopathological peculiarity”. See: Mikhail I. Avdeev, Sudebno-meditsinskaia ekspertiza zhivykh lits (Moscow: Meditsina, 1968), 323. For Avdeev’s earlier texts see: Mikhail I. Avdeev, Sudebnaia meditsina (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1951), 375 – 376. Mikhail I. Avdeev, Sudebnaia meditsina (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1953), 451 – 453.
153 Dickinson, Curing Queers, 1.
155 Sonja Franeta, My Pink Road to Russia, Tales of Amazons, Peasants, and Queers (Oakland, California: Dacha books, 2015), 203 – 231.
Soviet Sexopathology and Alfred Kinsey

In this final section of the chapter I will explore how Soviet sexopathologists received the ideas of American sociologist Alfred Kinsey, who stated in the late 1950s that homosexuality was a normal variant of human sexuality, claiming that it was a far more widespread phenomenon than previously believed. I will demonstrate that Kinsey’s views regarding homosexuality were questioned by Soviet sexopathologists, who suggested that his findings regarding the prevalence of homosexuality were exaggerated.

Soviet scholars from the fields of sexopathology and sociology were certainly aware of Kinsey’s studies. Some of them, inspired by his work, attempted to undertake similar research, which would examine the sexual behavior of the Soviet people. Igor Kon tells us about his student, Sergei Golod, who in the early 1960s “expressed a desire to study the sexual behaviour of contemporary Soviet young people under the influence of Kinsey’s book.”\(^\text{156}\) Despite Kon’s admonition that the subject would be “nondissertationable”, Golod decided to proceed with his idea. The project was fraught with numerous obstacles: the Party regional committee was reluctant to approve the questionnaires and potential participants were afraid to answer even the most innocuous questions.\(^\text{157}\) Eventually, the party officials branded Golod’s dissertation “an ideological diversion against Soviet youth” and the defense of the dissertation was suspended indefinitely.\(^\text{158}\)

In fact, some Soviet medical professionals had more luck with their studies of sexual behaviour of Soviet people. One of them was Il’ia Popov, a trainee psychiatrist, who defended his dissertation “Materials on the Sex Life of Male Workers of an Industrial City of Central Kazakhstan” at the Karaganda State Medical Institute in 1968 (see Figure 15).\(^\text{159}\) Popov conducted his research under the supervision of Abram Sviadoshch, the psychiatrist who supervised Elizaveta Derevinskaia’s dissertation on lesbianism in the period from 1956 to 1965. Popov’s dissertation was apparently the first successful Soviet attempt to conduct a study of sexual life and behaviour of the Soviet person since Stalin’s crackdown on sex and sexual

\(^\text{156}\) Kon, *Sexual Revolution in Russia*, 86
\(^\text{157}\) Ibid., 87.
\(^\text{158}\) Ibid., 86 – 87.
\(^\text{159}\) I. A. Popov, “Materialy k polovoi zhizni muzhchin – rabochikh promyshlennogo goroda tsentral’nogo Kazakhstana (Dissertatsiia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata meditsinskikh nauk, Karaganda State Medical Institute, 1968).
research. Yet, despite its significance, it was never published. In his study, Popov examined
the prevalence of homosexual behaviour among Soviet men, comparing his findings to those
produced by Alfred Kinsey.

Popov’s dissertation focused on a sample of 500 hundred men, drawn from the city of
Timer-Tau in Kazakhstan Republic. Although Popov did not specify exactly how he chose
the subjects for his study, he noted that all of them were workers and all of them willingly took
part in his research. Between 1965 and 1967 each man underwent physical examination and
was interviewed by Popov. At the interview, each man was offered to ask a set of questions,
which spanned almost twelve pages and concerned various aspects of his sex life. Here the
participant was offered to answer questions regarding the most intimate aspects of his life:
whether he had engaged in sexual play when he was a child and if so whether he did so with
boys or girls; when he first started masturbating and what his attitude to it was; whether he had
extramarital sex and if so at what age first such instance occurred. The participants were also
asked whether or not they had engaged in homosexual relations.

Being cognizant that men participating in the study could not be aware of many terms
he was going to ask them about, before interviewing his subjects, Popov organized a lecture,
where he elaborated on the specificities of male sexual development and male sexual life; he
also explained the objectives of his study in greater detail. Following the lecture and before
the interview, each study subject was told the importance of being honest and giving precise
answers to the questions provided.

For the purposes of this section, we will look at Popov’s findings regarding the
prevalence of homosexual behaviour among the participants of his study. The subject of
homosexuality first appears in the question regarding sexual play during childhood. The
participants of the study were asked about the objects of their sexual play during childhood,
whether these were boys or girls. Before providing his own data, Popov evoked Kinsey’s
findings: “According to Kinsey and his associates (1948), sexual play among children was
homosexual in 60% of cases and heterosexual in 40% of cases”. Popov’s findings in the
Soviet context suggested the contrary. Out of 500 only 428 men remembered their early

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161 Ibid., 67.
162 Ibid., 57.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid., 94.
165 Ibid.
childhood experiences. 353 men stated that their sexual play was with girls, 27 men acknowledged having sexual play with boys, 12 men said they had sexual play with adults and 36 men said they played both with boys and girls. Summarizing his findings Popov concluded: “the data on childhood sexual play derived from the examined men has demonstrated that in most cases they are heterosexual in their essence.”

Another question was whether they had ever indulged in homosexuality. Again, before providing his own data Popov cited Kinsey’s findings regarding the prevalence of homosexuality among American people: “A. Kinsey believes that 37% of the male and 24% of the female population have a homosexual experience in the period between the beginning of sexual maturation and adulthood [starshii vozrast]”. By contrast, Popov’s findings demonstrated that the rates of homosexuality among the examined men were minuscule: “out of 500 men, only 6 state that they had homosexual relations at some points in their lives”. Commenting on his findings Popov noted: “All respondents believed their homosexual liaisons to be a vice and attributed them to a period in their life when they could not be in the society of women (places of confinement, war years, prolonged expeditions). All respondents denied having homosexual liaisons at the time of examination. All six respondents who had such liaisons are now married”.

Although Popov suggested that his views on sexuality were progressive and ground-breaking, his work demonstrated a strong expectation that the prevalence of homosexuality in a socialist country like the Soviet Union was low compared to the US. Such expectation was not exclusively characteristic of Popov’s study. Dagmar Herzog has shown that in the early 1960s East German scientists, examining the sexual life of the country’s young people, were keen to demonstrate that the rates of homosexuality were low. Herzog explains that the East Germany’s ruling party at that time “was always apprehensive and anxious to keep from international attention any empirical data that could possibly be used against socialism by its ‘enemies’; it was no surprise that research that was able to demonstrate an especially low

166 “Materialy k polovoi zhizni muzhchin – rabochikh”, 94.
167 Ibid. Popov clarified that that those 12 men who reported having sexual play with adults during their childhood stated that these games were often initiated by women and that these instances occurred during the war. Ibid., 95.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., 171.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid., 172.
incidence of youth homosexual activity in the GDR was published”.172 Herzog tells us about an East German medical professor, who after conducting a study of sexual behaviour of young GDR citizens in the early 1960s, concluded, “disguising his sense of pride”, that the incidence of homosexual activity was low among them.173 Such stress on low rates of homosexuality in the GDR, in Herzog’s view, was consistent with the GDR’s regime’s preoccupation with normality.174

Other Soviet sexopathologists also wrestled with the issues of normal sexuality and sexual perversions in light of Kinsey’s findings. Pavel Posvianskii, the head of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry was one of them. In his article “Sexual Perversions: Definition of the Phenomenon, Experience of Classification,” Posvianskii theorized on which aspects of one’s sex life could be regarded as perverted.175 In his article, Posvianskii defined “sexual perversions” (seksual’nye perverzii) as “pathological perversions of sexual desire”, which were “different from the physiological (normal) way of sexual intercourse”. Yet he pointed out that in real life this assumption was far from being cut and dried: the phenomenon of sexual perversions was rather complex and it was difficult to tell the normal from pathological: “However, the borders here between the norm and pathology are rather blurred and ill-defined to a greater degree than in other areas of medicine”.176 Posvianskii wrote: “Numerous authors (including Kinsey’s report) stress the difficulty in differentiating sexual perversions as morbid states from ‘perverse’ [perverznyi] acts in normal sex life”. Some authors … go as far as to erase the border between the norm and pathology. Such stance is not correct”.177

Here apparently Posvianskii implied Kinsey’s premise that homosexuality was a normal variant of human behaviour and expressed disagreement with it. The only point that Posvianskii could agree on with his Western counterparts was that sexual practices, other than traditional vaginal intercourse, could be admissible: “in a customary sexual intercourse, during love play [liubovnaia igra], often those forms of sexual intercourse, going outside the limits of

173 Ibid., 328.
174 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid., 145.
normalcy, can be admissible [dopuskaitsa]. Yet, under no circumstances can they be considered as perverse [perverznymi]”.

This statement brought clarity to one of the common misconceptions about sex in the Soviet Union that afflicted almost anyone – that normal sex could not be anything but vaginal intercourse. Such practices as oral, or even more so, anal sex, between individuals of the opposite sex were believed to be a sign of debauchery. Mikhail Stern, a Soviet sexologist, attested to that fact, arguing that “if a husband suggested such a thing, his wife would immediately begin to suspect that he had been leading a life of secret debauchery”.\footnote{Mikhail Stern and August Stern, \textit{Sex in the USSR}: (New York: Times Books), 73.} Some criminologists also suggested that if a wife noticed that her husband inclined her to “perverse forms of satisfaction of sexual desire” than it might be a sign of his latent homosexuality.\footnote{Mikhail N. Khlyntsov, \textit{Rassledovanie polovykh prestuplenii} (Saratov: Privolzhskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1965), 152.} Finally, as I will show in Chapter 4, some Soviet legislators equated oral and anal sex to sexual perversions and believed that they were no less dangerous than sodomy between two men. Posvianskii dispelled these beliefs, thereby partially acknowledging the validity of Kinsey’s findings regarding the variations of human sexual behaviour. Yet, according to Posvianskii, these variations were admissible only between men and women; sexual practices between individuals of the same sex apparently fell under the category of perverse sexual practices.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In a report presented at a scientific conference on sexopathology in Moscow in 1969, a doctor from Kiev, Y. Borisenko stated: “Sexology and sexopathology have great social importance, since they directly concern the issues of marriage, family and education of youth. Increasingly more attention has been paid lately to the theoretical and practical problems of sexopathology on the part of the medical community [meditsinskaia obshchestvennost’]”. At the same conference, another doctor from Riga, Z. G. Russinova, mentioned an issue that Borisenko had not apparently deemed to be very pressing. This issue was homosexuality and the importance of lifting criminal sanctions for it so that Soviet homosexuals could seek medical help without fear of being apprehended: “The question of sexual pathology should be viewed and resolved not only in medical, but in social aspects. In particular, the time has come to raise the question
of revising the existing legislation regarding male homosexuality, since the law deprives these individuals of the possibility to consult specialists for medical help”.

Russinova’s pronouncement represented a significant shift in the medical discussion of homosexuality, which became possible due to the emergence of a new branch of psychiatric science in the 1960s – sexopathology – and its bearing on the Soviet medical thinking on homosexuality. First and foremost, it fostered a new, “scientific” perception of homosexuality, which was different from the hitherto simplistic, “police” understandings of it as a criminal psychopathy. In their texts, Soviet sexopathologists presented homosexuals as individuals who realized their deficient sexuality and sought cure for it. Other homosexuals were depicted as educated individuals with the ability to consider and reflect on their state, which apparently made Soviet doctors think that they could be reclaimed for Soviet society. The ability of homosexuals to reflect on their state was also an important sign that they were amenable for psychotherapeutic treatment, which taught them how to control their desire and educated them on how to communicate with individuals of the opposite sex. The latter two, as I have shown, were consistent with the existing educational and ideological narratives of that time and, therefore, can be viewed as yet one more ramification of the Soviet intent to create a new Soviet Person.

In this chapter I have also shown that sexopathologists raised important questions of the legal status of male homosexuality in their works. Unlike psychiatric texts on homosexuality published in the period from 1930 to 1960, which simply stated that male homosexuality was a punishable offence, sexopathologists of the 1960s discussed whether homosexuals could be spared criminal punishment, considering their “disease”. Some sexopathologists went as far as to suggest that the sodomy law should be abolished altogether so that homosexuals could seek medical help without fear of prosecution. As I will show in Chapter 4, Soviet legal scholars who argued for decriminalization of consensual sodomy drew on the findings of Soviet sexopathology to boost their argument. The sexopathological expertise on homosexuality also came to the attention of the MVD in the 1970s, as I will show in Chapter 5.

Finally, I have demonstrated that Soviet sexopathologists, who argued that homosexuality should be seen as a medical rather than police matter, were drawing on the

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writings of Czechoslovakian and East German sexologists, who had previously moved forward with similar arguments. However, when it came to the findings of American sociologist Alfred Kinsey, who argued that homosexuality was a normal variant of human sexuality, Soviet sexopathologists disagreed and even tried to scientifically prove that the rates of homosexuality in the USSR were lower than in capitalist countries; such a stance was shared with scientists working in other socialist states.
Chapter 4

Soviet Legal and Criminological Debates on the Decriminalization of Homosexuality (1959 – 75)

Those few historians who have attempted to write the history of Soviet sexuality, concur that from the 1930s through the Soviet collapse, Soviet society and especially the Soviet state were deeply hostile to anything that deviated from “traditional” sex in the bedroom.¹ Sex was generally deemed a topic unfit for public discussion and any deviations from “normal” sexuality were condemned and criminalized by Soviet law.² And yet, despite these long-standing and institutionalized prudish attitudes towards sex and hostility towards homosexuality, during the late Soviet period, a group of legal scholars spoke out in favor of de-criminalizing consensual sodomy. This is in sharp contrast to the conventional view of the Brezhnev period as a time of stagnation and sexual conservatism, and offers a window onto a very different dimension of that period – and yet we know very little about it. The fact that these debates took place has been noted by pioneering scholars of Soviet sexuality, Igor Kon, and more recently, Dan Healey, yet neither has discussed them in much detail.³

The emerging scholarship on the Brezhnev era offers a more nuanced account of this period, challenging its characterization as a time of mere stagnation. Mark Sandle has argued that although the Brezhnev years are customarily viewed as “an era dominated by the orthodox platitudes of the official ideology”, the intellectual life during this time was characterized by “struggle, conflict and creativity”.⁴ More recent studies have also emphasized that the Brezhnev era was accompanied by “the liberalization of social, economic, and political life” as well as “a dialogue among different socialist publics as well as state authorities”.⁵ This chapter

will add to this perspective, showing that similar trends were evident among legal scholars, who discussed and challenged the criminal status of homosexuality in their manuals, textbooks and dissertations on sex crimes in the period from 1960 to 1975. Conducting a discourse analysis of these sources, I focus particularly on the debates over whether the part of the law that criminalized consensual sex between two men should be retained. Archival sources, such as transcripts of the proceedings of legislative commissions in the RSFSR and Latvian SSR, which included discussions of sodomy laws in these republics, will also be considered in this chapter.

My analysis of these sources reveals that while all the participants in the discussions on the sodomy statute were scholars involved in the study of law and crime, there was a clear distinction in their position. On the one side stood scholars who were jurists by training and who worked in relatively “liberal” university environments – for clarity, I will refer to this group as “civilian” scholars. These scholars argued for the decriminalization of consensual sodomy – they based their claims primarily on the emerging sexological science and thus espoused a “scientific” approach to homosexuality. On the other side were Interior Ministry (henceforth, MVD, from the Russian initials) scholars who were affiliated in one way or another with the MVD and who were consistently opposed to the decriminalization of consensual sodomy and espoused police approaches to homosexuality. This article will demonstrate that the positions of the two camps regarding the retention of the anti-sodomy statute were moving in different directions throughout the period in question: civilian scholars’ views were becoming more liberal, while the views of MVD scholars were growing more conservative.

The examination of the debates over the criminal status of homosexuality, which started in the late 1950s and continued up to the demise of the Soviet Union adds depth and nuance to our scant knowledge on the history of homosexuality during the Brezhnev era and contributes to our understanding of the interplay between the broader European movement towards decriminalization of sodomy and related debates in the Soviet Union. It also seeks to fathom

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6 I refer to this group as “civilian” scholars, in order to differentiate them from the scholars affiliated with the state’s law-enforcement and security agencies, that is, the MVD scholars. It should be noted, however, that there was considerable overlap across these two categories. Some scholars maintained professional ties with the MVD educational institutions, for example, teaching there, while their principal scientific activities lay within “civilian” universities.

7 Again, I use the term “affiliated” here for the sake of brevity, as shorthand for what was often a more complex relationship between these scholars and the MVD. By “affiliated” or “MVD scholars”, I mean scholars who held positions at the MVD Higher School and/or were commissioned by the MVD to produce manuals for criminal investigators.
why such debates had resulted in decriminalization of homosexual activity elsewhere in the communist bloc but not in the Soviet Union. Finally, it lends fresh insight into the events which preceded the Russian Federation’s eventual decriminalization of sodomy in 1993, demonstrating that calls for decriminalization had in fact been present for decades in Soviet juridical discourse.

The chapter begins by looking at the brief discussions of the law on sodomy that took place in the late 1950s in the Russian Socialist Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and in the early 1960s in the Latvian SSR during the drafting of new criminal codes in these republics. It then turns to examine the discussion between civilian and MVD scholars of the criminal status of homosexuality in the USSR in the period from 1965 to 1975. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the implications of the discussion and the possible reasons why it did not result in the decriminalization of consensual sodomy in the Soviet period.

The Soviet Anti-Sodomy Law and Khrushchev’s De-Stalinization

In 1956, three years after Stalin’s death, Khrushchev launched his de-Stalinization campaign, highlighting the necessity to restore “socialist legality”. The terror of the Stalin era was now curbed and as part of this process, scholars and officials were encouraged to contribute to the liberalization of Soviet criminal law. The study of criminology, which had been effectively proscribed under Stalin, was now gradually revived, allowing for fresh criminological empirical research to emerge within the MVD as early as 1955. This period also witnessed the preparation of new republic criminal codes, as legislative commissions including top Soviet specialists in crime and law were set up and entrusted with the task of reviewing the Stalin–era laws to decide which should remain in force. As we shall see, the law on sodomy was also discussed at the meetings of these commissions; in fact, it seems that there were attempts to moderate the penalty for consensual sodomy, by reducing the maximum sentence prescribed by Article 154a-I from 5 years to three years. Most importantly, at this time there was a

possibility that the article criminalizing consensual homosexual acts between men, could have been abolished at least in the RSFSR.

References to possible liberalization of the law first appear in the minutes of a meeting of a subcommittee of the RSFSR Legislative Commission held on 23 July 1959. This subcommittee comprised seven distinguished jurists and legal scholars, and was chaired by Boris Sergeevich Nikiforov. As a recommendatory body responsible for proposing changes to the law, the subcommittee put forward a list of reforms of the existing Stalin-era laws, including the law on sodomy. The new version of the law, proposed by Nikiforov’s commission read as follows:

**Article 100.**

In the first part of article 100 to introduce sanction [ustanovit’ sanktsiiu] – deprivation of liberty for the term of up to 3 years or exile for the same term.

For the second part of article 100 the draft as formulated is as follows:

“Sodomy committed with means of violence or in relation to a minor or with the use of dependent position, is punishable by deprivation of liberty for the term from 3 to 8 years with exile or without”.

This new version of the law would have reduced the maximum sentence for consensual sodomy from five to three years with no minimum sentence. The proposed amendment to the second article of the law, which penalized aggravated sodomy, would have retained the maximum sentence of 8 years but reduced the minimum from five to three years.

One month later, on 27 August 1959 a Commission of Legislative Propositions [Komissiia zakonodatel’nykh predpolozhenii], consisting of fourteen distinguished jurists and criminologists of the RSFSR, and chaired by Aleksei Gertsenzon gathered to approve the draft prepared by the Nikiforov commission. The archival transcript of this discussion reveals that...
at this stage a proposal emerged to abolish the law on consensual sodomy altogether, despite the reduced maximum sentence for consensual sodomy already proposed by Nikiforov’s commission:

GERTSENZON – […] Article 100 – sodomy.

Any suggestions regarding the first part [on voluntary sodomy]?

NIKIFOROV – The first part of the law is totally incomprehensible.

STEPICHEV – The first part can be abolished.

GERTSENZON – There are suggestions to abolish the first part. I am opening this up to a vote. Does anyone support the abolition of the first part?

KOROTKOV – We can’t abolish this norm. On what grounds do you want to do that?

GERTSENZON – Are we going to open up a discussion or not? Who is in favor of opening discussion of the article? (2) 15 We are not going to discuss it then. The article stays, then. What are the suggestions regarding the essence of the Article? Here the punishment [repressii] is to be reduced compared to the previous penalty. Deprivation of liberty for up to three years or exile for up to three years. So, comrades, are we approving the first part of the Article? We’re approving it.

The second part: Any suggestions? No.

The whole article is approved.16

The brevity of the minutes leaves the participants’ motives largely opaque and it is difficult to say whether other members, apart from Nikiforov and Stepichev who expressed support for decriminalization, were of similar opinion, since almost none of them had previously spoken out on this issue. Nikiforov’s role as chair of the subcommittee which

same year. See the entry for Aleksei Adol’fovich Gertsenzon (1902 –1970), *Vidnye uchenye iuristy Rossii: (vторая половина XX века): Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ biografii*, ed. Syrykh, V. M (Moscow: Rossiiskaia akademiia pravosudii, 2006), 98. Among other participants, the following persons were listed (without initials): Astakhov, Avdeev, Gertsenzon, Grishaev, Durmanov, Kopylovskiaia, Korotkov, Mikhailov, Nikiforov, Poretskaia, Stepichev, Starikov, Urakov, Orlov.
15 Apparently, this number refers to the votes in favour of continued discussion of the law. Presumably, the two people voting in favor were Stepichev and Nikiforov.
proposed reducing the severity of the law and his comment that the law was “totally incomprehensible” would appear to indicate that he was a strong proponent of abolishing the law entirely.

Judging by the reticence of other participants in the discussion on the sodomy law, compared to their extensive contributions on other articles of the Criminal Code, we might speculate that most of the scholars present found discussing the subject in detail quite uncomfortable. As legal experts they would most likely have been inadequately prepared to objectively examine the issue. As Igor Kon has noted, the “suppression of sexual culture” and absence of “adequate understanding of sexuality in the public consciousness”, peculiar to the Stalin era and certainly still prevalent during the early years of Khrushchev’s rule would have inhibited open discussion.17

Interestingly, despite Gertsenzon’s commission approving Nikiforov’s recommended version of the sodomy law, which reduced sentences for both consensual and aggravated sodomy, the proposed changes never became law. The archival sources are silent on the fate of the proposed reforms, which may either have been further reviewed and rejected or quashed by intervention of a higher level authority. Yet, the final version of the law, adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR in 1960, differed from the version first proposed by Nikiforov’s commission and later approved by Gertsenzon’s commission. It read:

Article 121. Sodomy

Sexual intercourse between a male and a male (sodomy) is punishable by deprivation of freedom for a term of up to five years.

Sodomy committed with the use of physical violence, threats or in relation to a minor, or with the use of the dependent position of the victim is punishable by deprivation of freedom for a term of up to eight years. 18

17 Kon, Sexual Revolution, 85.
While minimum sentences both for consensual and aggravated sodomy were eliminated altogether, the maximum penalty for consensual sodomy was increased from three years (as the version approved by Gertsenzon commission had proposed) to five years.

The Latvian Case: Attempts to Criminalize Lesbian Sexual Activity

New sources suggest that the process of revising the sodomy laws of the Stalinist Criminal Code in each of the Soviet republics varied. For instance, in Latvia, discussions about revising the legal treatment of homosexuality had a very different focus. On 24 March 1960 during drafting of the Criminal Code of the Latvian SSR, the head of the Latvian SSR’s law commission considered a proposal from the Riga city directorate of the militia to extend the legal definition of sodomy and to criminalize female same-sex relations. The proposal noted that, “in practice one may encounter cases of satisfaction of sexual desire between the persons of the same sex, which do not fall under the definition of ‘sodomy’, yet these activities also pose a danger to society”.19

The commission reconvened on 14 October 1960 but the minutes of this meeting make no reference to the militia’s proposal. The minutes record that Fridrikson, the chair of the meeting, noted that all the proposals presented to the commission’s meeting in March had been sent to Moscow for review. Fridrikison reported: “As you remember, in March we discussed the draft Criminal Code, which was subsequently discussed by academics in Moscow at a meeting in the Juridical Department of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR”.20 He also acknowledged the significance of the RSFSR draft revised Criminal Code as a template for revising the LSSR’s Criminal Code: “In our work we were essentially using the RSFSR Code; we were borrowing from the RSFSR draft, which has been approved everywhere”.21 It therefore seems probable that the proposals to criminalize lesbianism were rejected, perhaps by the authorities in Moscow.

The Latvian militia’s proposal to criminalize same-sex relations between women represented a significant shift from the existing Stalin-era sodomy statute, which did not

19 State Archive of Latvia, f. 938, op. 6, delo 66, l. 82. “Proekt Ugolovnogo kodeksa i zamechaniia po proektu”.
20 State Archive of Latvia, f. 938, op. 6, delo 64, l. 1. “Stenogramma soveshchaniia po obsuzhdeniu proekta Ugolovnogo kodeksa LSSR”.
21 State Archive of Latvia, f. 938, op. 6, delo 64, l. 71.
criminalize female homosexual acts. Interestingly, the moves to liberalize the law in the early years of Khrushchev’s rule seem to have had a paradoxical effect on the discussion of lesbianism: although lesbianism became the subject of legal discussion for the first time since Stalin’s death, at no point did the liberalizing tendencies of Khrushchev’s era encourage or lead to acceptance or tolerance of female homosexuality.

On the contrary, the first years of Khrushchev’s rule saw a number of proposals to criminalize female same-sex relations. Advocates of such measures could be found in the ranks of Soviet law-enforcement agencies, the GULAG camp directors and the GULAG camp doctors. As I have shown in Chapter 1, support for these proposals continued through the late 1950s. In 1958 the head of the Siberian GULAG I. M. Velikanov, concerned about the increasing incidence of sexual relations between women in the Siberian GULAG, petitioned the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with a proposal to impose a criminal penalty for lesbianism. Such propositions were the result of a curious amalgam of Khrushchev-era liberalization and Stalin-era attitudes to sexuality still fresh in people’s minds. Velikanov’s proposal and similar calls to criminalize female same-sex relations were however never taken up.

In his recent work Dan Healey identified that Soviet authorities preferred to deal with lesbianism in a medical context, rather than through the criminal law. He also noted in his previous work that although female homosexuality was not criminalized by Stalin, the motherhood cult was an important reminder of the purpose of women’s sexuality and thus a deterrent from sexually deviant practices. The motherhood cult persisted during the Khrushchev period. The sex education campaign launched under Khrushchev constantly reminded women about their role as mothers, and doctors who attempted to “treat” lesbianism (these attempts are examined in Chapter 1) seemed to believe that female homosexuality could be “cured” if a woman succumbed to the instinct of motherhood.

The transcripts of the discussions on the sodomy law carried out by Russian and Latvian legislative commissions in the latter half of the 1950s illustrate the emergence of two distinct

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22 For a discussion on why female same-sex relations were not prohibited see: Healey, Homosexual Desire, 196 – 202.
23 GARF, P.-9414, op. 1, delo 2882, l. 144. “Nachal’niku GULAGa MVD SSSR”. I was first alerted to the existence of this document by Dan Healey’s work: Dan Healey, “From Stalinist Pariahs”.
24 Ibid., 99.
25 Healey, Homosexual Desire, 204.
strands of thought about the law. On the one hand, an argument for its decriminalization was proposed by “civilian” jurists, and on the other, calls for its expansion were issued by law-enforcement agencies. These two conflicting approaches to the law would also be reflected in the renewed discussion of the law that followed several years later.

The Legal Argument for Decriminalization

Discussion between civilian and MVD scholars of the anti-sodomy law continued after Khrushchev’s removal from power and it unfolded against the backdrop of the gradual revival of professional and academic expertise in Soviet criminology, a field of social science effectively proscribed under Stalin.27 As this expertise revived and developed under Khrushchev, so did the range of activities in which Soviet legal and law-enforcement experts were involved. These included efforts to improve criminological expertise within the MVD on how to handle the investigations of sexual crimes. MVD officers were often completely unskilled in the investigation of these crimes and lacked much needed training and expertise.28 In response to these deficiencies, the MVD commissioned several scholars to write training manuals for criminal investigators and for its schools. It was in one such manual that the first scholarly examination of the anti-sodomy statute was undertaken.

The manual titled Investigation of Sex Crimes and published in 1965 by criminologist Mikhail Nikitovich Khlyntsov of the Saratov Legal University was specifically intended for students and lecturers of the MVD schools. The author of the manual depicted the dangers of sodomy in these terms: “The extreme danger of this crime lies in its encroachment on the moral foundations of society and demoralizing influence on the psyche of the members of society […]. The victim of this crime is the prevailing mode of sexual relations in our country, which the law seeks to safeguard…”.29

Khlyntsov’s interpretation of the utility of the law on sodomy was consistent with the Soviet public discourse on sex and sexual morality, first widely promulgated by the

29 Khlyntsov, Rassledovanie polovykh prestuplenii, 141.
Khrushchev regime and further promoted under Brezhnev. As Deborah A. Field has shown, the focal point of this discourse was the necessity to prevent Soviet children and adolescents from engaging in sexually immoral behavior, including casual sexual relations, pre-marital sex and promiscuity. The existence of the anti-sodomy statute, according to Khlyntsov’s manual, was justified because it upheld communist morality and the very “moral foundations” of Soviet society. The desire of a homosexual to engage in sodomy was presented simply as a result of “debauchery” (razvrashchennost’): “The propensity for sodomy in certain individuals can be explained by […] their lack of fulfilment with normal means of satisfying sexual desire and the pursuit of new sensations, which attests to their debauchery [razvrashchennost’] and their contempt for moral norms”.

However, not all scholars specializing in crime and law espoused similar views. During the 1960s, new attitudes to the law on consensual sodomy were also emerging. These did not view consensual sodomy as simply a product of “moral perversion”. These viewpoints were advanced by Soviet “civilian” jurists, who were under less pressure to square their views with the practical demands of the MVD. They worked in regular educational institutions and their work was not commissioned or controlled by the MVD. These jurists were members of the Soviet intellectual community, who had developed their criticisms of the consensual sodomy law during the Khrushchev thaw and began to cautiously articulate them under Brezhnev.

Aleksei Nikolaevich Ignatov (see Figure 16) was one such scholar whose pragmatic approach to the law on sodomy was reflected in his manual Liability for Crimes against Morality (1966). Ignatov held a PhD in jurisprudence from Moscow State University. He had taught criminal law at various universities in Moscow since 1953. Although he did not suggest in his manual that the law on consensual sodomy be abolished, Ignatov did argue that not all homosexual liaisons between men should be criminalized under the existing legislation. He contended that since Soviet law only criminalized sodomy (or “pederasty” [pederastiia], which referred to anal intercourse between two men), then other sexual activities between two men should not be deemed illegal. Ignatov directly criticized Soviet judicial decisions on this

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31 Khlyntsov, Rassledovanie polovikh prestuplenii, 141.
32 Ibid., 145.
issue, in a statement that is surprisingly frank: “We cannot approve of the tendency of some courts to expand the notion of sodomy, placing any satisfaction of sexual desire between men within this category. If two men commit consensual depraved acts between one another [without engaging in anal intercourse], thereby satisfying their sexual desire, they should not be subjected to a criminal penalty, since such actions are not perceived by the Soviet criminal code as a crime”. 35

Ignatov had essentially identified a legal loophole: in theory, homosexual men were allowed to engage in any form of sexual activity, other than anal intercourse, since the latter was the only practice to be criminalized by law. However, as this passage suggests, this fact tended to be overlooked sometimes by judges, and homosexual men were frequently brought before court even for technically legal activities. We know that this was the case under Stalin: Dan Healey tells us about a sodomy trial in 1939, in which the advocate of a defendant accused of sodomy argued that his client may have committed depraved acts, but that these did not constitute sodomy and hence were not illegal. In this case, however, the court rejected this argument, asserting that the act of sodomy had nevertheless taken place (but without specifying how sodomy was defined here). 36 Apparently, such incorrect enforcement of the law on sodomy was continuing under Khrushchev; Ignatov was the first jurist to appeal publicly that its enforcement be brought in line with the law.

Unlike Khlyntsov, who asserted that homosexuality was a result of “debauchery” [razvrashchennost’], Ignatov encouraged his readers not to jump to conclusions, and to consider whether other factors could contribute to the development of homosexuality. In doing so, he presented his readers with arguments derived from the pre-revolutionary Russian forensic and medical literature, which suggested that congenital factors could be responsible for homosexuality. 37 Ignatov suggested that the nature of homosexuality should be explored further in order to ascertain whether it was indeed a “pathological phenomenon”; if so, the existing criminal law penalizing it should be reviewed accordingly. He argued that, “the examination of homosexuality’s nature will help to establish the extent to which it ought to be punishable and to facilitate the correct application of the criminal law to it, especially given that the inexpedience of criminal punishment for consensual homosexuality has been

35 Ignatov, Otvetstvennost’ za prestupleniia, 180.
36 Healey, Homosexual Desire, 221.
37 Ignatov, Otvetstvennost’ za prestupleniia, 181.
repeatedly expressed in the literature.” 38 Thus, instead of solely relying on “communist morality” in his approach to homosexuality, as scholars like Khlyntsov had done, Ignatov preferred to ground his arguments in science, reaching back to the pre-revolutionary period to do so.

Ignatov’s tentative suggestion that homosexuality could be a matter of therapeutic, rather than police concern, coincided with the emergence of Soviet sexology or “sexopathology” [seksopatologiia] in the early 1960s, which focused on sexual health issues, including “sexual perversions”. 39 This development came late, compared to some countries in Eastern Europe, where sophisticated knowledge of sexology had already proven instrumental in calls by legal scholars and sexologists for decriminalization of sodomy. As I have shown in Chapter 3, Czechoslovakian sexologists’ argument that homosexuality was incurable had helped them convince the government authorities to cease all forms of legal sanctions applied to homosexual people; this eventually resulted in the decriminalization of consensual sodomy in 1961. 40 The German Democratic Republic followed suit in 1968. There, and one year later in West Germany, homosexual consensual acts between men ceased to be a crime on the grounds that homosexuality was a medical condition and therefore should not be subject to police action. 41 Finally, medical arguments framing homosexuality as a disease facilitated the decriminalization of consensual sodomy in Bulgaria in the same year. 42

In contrast to the success of sexologists in the socialist bloc countries, the findings of Soviet sexological studies were not yet sufficiently influential at this time to provide a rationale for decriminalization of sodomy in the USSR. The development of Soviet sexology as a full-fledged science was significantly encumbered by long-standing negative attitudes towards

38 Ignatov, Otvetstvennost’ za prestupleniia, 182.
sexuality and the consequent unwillingness of party officials to endorse it. In Igor Kon’s words, sexopathology was “an outcast in Soviet medicine”, and this status affected its research output, which in the 1960s was limited to a modest range of scholarly works.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1966 Pavel Pavlovich Osipov, a jurist from Leningrad University, defended his PhD dissertation “Sex Crimes”, which contained a section discussing the law on sodomy.\textsuperscript{44} In this section Osipov explicitly stated that the biological nature of homosexuality warranted decriminalization of consensual homosexual acts between men. Unusually for the time, Osipov did not rely on communist ideology in his reasoning; in fact, in the introduction to his dissertation he came close to dismissing communist ideology as a reliable tool of scientific inquiry, arguing that ideology alone could not be the cornerstone of legal research. He wrote: “In light of contemporary requirements put before legal science, the study of the matters relating to the special part of Soviet Criminal Code [dealing with sex crimes], should not be confined by a dogmatic analysis of contemporary legislation.”\textsuperscript{45}

Osipov’s preference for an empirical rather than ideological approach was consistent with a new strategy of “rationalization” adopted by the Soviet leadership in the mid- and late 1960s. This strategy called for the revival of scientific ethos and encouraged scholars to use “scientific methods” in their research. As Peter Solomon has pointed out, the rationale for this strategy was that it would facilitate the development of society and help the government to address immediate problems through the use of rational and credible expertise.\textsuperscript{46}

The influence of this new “rational” approach extended to legal scholarship and was at the core of Osipov’s arguments for decriminalization of consensual sodomy. His dissertation offered an elaborate and substantiated argument as to why the law on consensual sodomy should be abolished: “First of all, the desire to satisfy sexual need in a homosexual way may be congenital in nature, that is, conditioned by the biological peculiarities of an organism… As a result, for people endowed with this anomaly, homosexuality is a natural means of sexual fulfillment. That is why the widespread contention, according to which sodomy is always a result of moral depravity, cannot be regarded as valid”.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Kon} Kon, Sexual Revolution, 92.
\bibitem{Osipov} Pavel P. Osipov, “Polovye prestupleniia: obschee poniatie, sotsial’naia sushchnost’ i sistema sostavov” (Dissertatsiia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata iuridicheskikh nauk, Leningrad, 1966).
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid, 5.
\bibitem{Solomon} Solomon, Jr., Soviet Criminologists and Criminal Policy, 63 – 64.
\bibitem{Osipov2} Osipov, “Polovye prestupleniia”, 202.
\end{thebibliography}
While his colleague Ignatov had tentatively suggested that criminal prosecution of men for their congenital homosexuality might be futile, Osipov further emphasized the futility of criminalization by explicitly and unequivocally asserting that it was pointless to punish people for desires that were conditioned by nature: “One may ask what goal the legislator pursued when criminalizing non-forcible homosexuality, if at issue here are the people with a biologically distorted sexual instinct? There is no doubt that with the help of criminal law, it is impossible to rectify this biological anomaly and encourage the individuals in question to satisfy their sexual need in a heterosexual way”. Similarly, Osipov dismissed, as far as consensual sodomy was concerned, communist morality as an adequate frame of reference: “In the Soviet legal literature there has never been an attempt to justify criminal liability for consensual sodomy and the only argument, which is usually offered against it – the [resulting] individual’s depravity and his violation of communist morality – cannot be regarded as sufficient”.

An important pillar of the argument that Osipov advanced in his dissertation was that intimate relations between two consenting adults were very difficult to investigate. This was a new note in the debate, and it reflects a significant broader shift in changing of public and private divide within post-Stalin Soviet society. Osipov’s emphasis on “intimacy” is additional evidence of this change. The growing body of recent scholarship on this issue has challenged the customary understanding of Soviet society as a place where private spheres were impossible. It has demonstrated that these private spheres did exist in the Soviet Union and that the expansion of the private domain was actively taking place under Brezhnev. As Lewis H. Siegelbaum has shown, this expansion was facilitated by the growing Soviet economy of the Brezhnev era. The economic growth led to increased availability of separate apartments and individual cars, for example. Expansion of private spaces offered new opportunities for people to pursue their private lives – in Steven E. Harris’ words, separate apartments, “introduced privacy on a mass scale”, while the interiors of parked cars, according to Lewis H. Siegelbaum “might have been used for heterosexual rendezvous and associated activities”.

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49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 204 – 205.
was this Brezhnev-era renegotiation of private and public boundaries within Soviet society and the diminishing ability of the state to intervene in the private domains that appear to underpin Osipov’s argument: “Taking into consideration the exceptionally intimate nature of actions, directed at the satisfaction of sexual desire and hampering the effective control over behavior of the subjects involved, the legislative ban on homosexuality cannot be effective in preventing undesirable forms of sexual desire satisfaction from arising, nor can it stimulate people to behave properly”. Osipov’s arguments were not unique; elsewhere in the world jurists appealed to the legal concepts of consent and privacy, when arguing for decriminalization of consensual homosexual acts between two adult males.

Arguments for decriminalization of consensual sodomy also came from jurists in other Soviet republics, including Iakov Mikhailovich Yakovlev from the Tajik SSR. Like Ignatov and Osipov, Yakovlev was a jurist by training – he graduated from the department of Soviet law at Moscow State University in 1933. Subsequently he had taught judicial law in various universities across the Soviet Union. In his article “Liability for Sodomy According to the Soviet Penal Law” (1968) he supported his argument for decriminalization of consensual sodomy with references to the experiences of other socialist countries, such as Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. Yakovlev noted that over thirty countries in the world had already abolished anti-sodomy legislation. He wrote: “Proposals in favor of elimination of ‘consensual homosexuality’ between two adults have also been made in our literature. We also believe that criminal liability for homosexuality should be eliminated.” Yakovlev also argued that those homosexuals, who did not pose any threat to society, should be referred to doctors for treatment: “Homosexuals, whose sexual perversion was due to pathological alterations of their organism, should be rendered medical help.”

The basis of these arguments appears to derive from Yakovlev’s awareness that in the city of Gorkii such “treatment” was available – he apparently learnt of this from a treatise Questions of Psychotherapy of Functional Sexual Disorders (1966). This treatise was

Lewis H. Siegelbaum, “Cars, Cars and More Cars,” 96. Dan Healey justly suggests that the Soviet car owner’s world might have been used for “homosexual trysts” as well: Healey, “From Stalinist Pariahs,” 114.

54 Ibid., 204.
55 This was the case for example in the UK. See: Dagmar Herzog, Sexuality in Europe. A Twentieth-Century History (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 125.
57 Yakov M. Yakovlev, ‘Otvetstvennost’ za muzhelozhstvo po sovetskomu ugolovnomu pravu” in Voprosy kriminalistiki i kriminologii (Dushanbe, 1968), 38.
58 Ibid, 45.
59 Ibid.
60 Ivanov, Voprosy psikhoterapii, 128 – 139.
published by one of the few Soviet sexologists who specialized in treatment of “sexual perversions” – Professor Ivanov from the city of Gorkii. Yakovlev replicated Ivanov’s contention that an “unfavorable environment” and “incorrect upbringing” could trigger homosexual desire.\textsuperscript{61} He went on to conclude that the effective struggle against deviance could be successful through pre-emptive measures and not legal repression: “the fight against homosexuality in the absence of aggravating circumstances has to be conducted not through legal repression, but through correct sex education in family and school”.\textsuperscript{62}

Thus, with the slow development of Soviet expertise in sexology, which framed homosexuality as a matter of therapeutic concern, legal scholars arguing for decriminalization of sodomy could rely on sexology’s findings to lend scientific credence to their arguments. That appears to be the case with Yakovlev’s arguments. The writing of his article coincided with the publication of Ivanov’s recent work, while previous arguments for sodomy decriminalization promoted by Ignatov and Osipov were grounded in outdated sources.

\textbf{The MVD’s Objections to Decriminalization}

In the period from the mid- to late 1960s jurists enthusiastically developed their arguments for decriminalization of consensual sodomy, relying on the emerging expertise of sexologists at home and acknowledging the importance of the wave of repeals of anti-sodomy laws in Western and socialist countries. Yet their arguments found no support from MVD scholars, who privileged communist morality over science and who began to express strong opposition to the idea of decriminalization of consensual sodomy.

Before we proceed to the examination of the MVD scholars’ counterarguments, we will examine the deliberations of a conference, held in 1970 in the Soviet Republic of Lithuania and which was devoted to the discussion of sex crimes.\textsuperscript{63} The conference was organized by the republic’s procuracy and was attended by forensic experts and criminologists, who maintained close professional ties with law-enforcement agencies. The principles spelled out by one of the speakers in the introductory paper to this conference are crucial for our understanding of what

\textsuperscript{61} Yakovlev, “Otvetstvennost’ za muzhelozhstvo,” 42.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{63} Some of the conference’s papers were included in a conference brochure: Fedor Arkhipov, ed., \textit{Prestuplenia protiv nравственности: Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii} (Vil’niius: Prokuratura Litovskoi SSR, 1970).
stood behind the MVD scholars’ rejection of the proposal to decriminalize consensual sodomy.

The introductory paper to the conference postulated:

[At the basis of the socialist society] there is socialist morality, that is, the complex of rules and principles, defining the citizen’s behavior in all the spheres, including that of sexual relations. Sexual morality is one of the facets of socialist moral consciousness and to deny it means to deny the necessity of moral regulation of the relations between man and woman […]. The fundamental rules of sexual morality, which determine the mode of sexual relations in the USSR, are the following: sexual relations are permissible only between the individuals of the opposite sex.64

It is difficult to say who precisely was “denying” sexual morality; yet, we have already seen that one of the proponents of decriminalization of consensual sodomy, Pavel Osipov, had indeed stated that outlawing homosexuality solely due to its ostensible infringement of communist morality was not justifiable.65 The paper’s stress on the impropriety of same-sex relations in the Soviet Union and “denial” of sexual morality could represent unspoken anxieties associated with the growing voices of the proponents for decriminalization of consensual sodomy among some legal scholars. Yet, more evidence is needed to establish whether this was the case.

The introductory statement of the 1970 conference gives us a better understanding of what motives lay beneath the MVD scholars’ opposition to the decriminalization of consensual sodomy. It also suggests that by 1970, the communist concepts of sex and love, introduced under Khrushchev, had evolved and become more complicated. The Khrushchev-era discourse did not clearly delineate the limits of admissible sexual behavior – sex educators expressed a variety of opinions as to what the demands of sexual morality were. These demands, as Deborah A. Field tells us, generally revolved around the idea that one had to practice “sex within marriage, accompanied by love, preferably for the purposes of procreation”.66 Homosexuality was mentioned only rarely and Soviet moralists never explained its relationship to communist morality.67 However, the conference paper of 1970 clearly defined what sexual practices were permissible in the USSR. It seems plausible that once these rules were clearly

64 Arkhipov, Prestuplenia protiv naravstvennosti, 10.
defined, they became a frame of reference for MVD scholars, which would require them to oppose the arguments of proponents for sodomy decriminalization more strongly.

One of the most outspoken opponents of decriminalization of consensual sodomy was a scholar from the MVD Higher School – Boris Vasil’evich Daniel’bek (see Figure 17), who expressed his views in a textbook *Sexual Perversions and Criminal Liability* in 1972. The textbook was addressed to the students of the MVD schools and “practitioners of the law-enforcement agencies”. In one of his chapters on the law of sodomy Daniel’bek strongly criticized the arguments for decriminalization advanced by Osipov and Yakovlev and concluded that their view on the subject was “unacceptable”.

Exploring each argument promoted by Osipov and Yakovlev, Daniel’bek explained why they were not convincing. Reminding the reader of Osipov’s contention that violation of communist morality was not a sufficient reason to criminalize consensual sodomy, Daniel’bek simply wrote: “Negative personality traits, if they infringe on the principles of socialist morality, may be viewed as criminal”. Osipov’s second argument that consensual sodomy should be decriminalized due to the “intimate nature” of homosexual behavior and the difficulty of dealing with such crimes was also dismissed by Daniel’bek: “The intimate nature of homosexual acts, conducted on a consensual basis, indeed hampers the prosecution of people involved in it; however, it does not mean that the law against consensual sodomy should be eliminated”. Finally, Daniel’bek disagreed with Osipov’s third contention, which asserted that the anti-sodomy law failed to encourage homosexuals to practice heterosexual sex: “criminal prosecution of homosexuality is not the most effective means of its prevention. Indeed, in order to curb this immoral inclination a combination of societal and medical intervention is needed in the first place, however, one cannot dismiss the educational importance of criminal prosecution.”

Osipov was not the only target of Daniel’bek’s attack. Yakovlev from the Tajik University also received his share of criticism. As discussed above, Yakovlev had stated that

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68 Boris Daniel’bek, *Polovye izvrashchenia i ugolovnaia otvetstvennost’* (Volgograd: Vysshaia sledstvennaia shkola MVD SSSR, 1972). This textbook appears to be based on Daniel’bek’s dissertation “Criminal and Legal Fight with Sex Crimes” [Ugolovno-pravovaia bor’ba s polovymi prestupleniami], which he defended in 1970 in the MVD Higher School. I was able to find only the abstract of his dissertation (avtoreferat dissertatsii), which is available in the Russian National Library.
70 Ibid., 89.
71 Ibid., 90.
72 Ibid.
proper sexual education was a better strategy than criminal punishment and that crimes of consensual sodomy were very hard to investigate. Daniel’bek completely disagreed with such claims: “The correct sexual upbringing is indeed an important means of sodomy prevention, including prevention of any other crime in the sphere of sexual relations. However, no matter how tempting it is to base the decriminalization of sex crimes on this assumption, such a proposition is ill-timed”. Then he continued: “The contention that criminal cases involving sodomy are rarely encountered is rather controversial… Criminal punishment plays an important role in homosexuality prevention and constitutes a restraining factor on those, inclined to such vice. Summing up, we express our strong conviction that the criminalization of consensual sodomy in our legislation is justified and there are no reasons to alter the existing legislation”. 

Underlying Daniel’bek’s arguments was the same long-standing conviction that homosexuality was a vice, which had to be controlled by law-enforcement agencies: “Homosexuality in the absolute majority of cases is a result of negative conditions, which formed a personality. […] These very conditions lead some people to such degree of perversion, when normal satiation of sexual desire does not give them normal satisfaction anymore and they resort to perversions in order to experience extra thrills [ostrye oshchushchenia]”.

Daniel’bek’s arguments demonstrate that his views on consensual sodomy had not been altered by medical knowledge on sexual perversions, which the proponents of consensual sodomy decriminalization had readily embraced. Nor was he willing to take into account the fact that by 1970 consensual homosexual acts had been decriminalized in many countries, or to entertain the possibility that the Soviet Union might follow suit. Instead, he preferred to categorize homosexuality as a crime against morality and consider it a threat to the moral foundations of Soviet society. The defensive nature of his arguments and his staunch support of communist morality apparently stemmed from the functions that lay at the heart of the Soviet militia’s activities. As Louise I. Shelley has explained, the Soviet militia played an important role in protecting the security of the state and enforcing political conformity, clearly

73 Daniel’bek, Polovye izvrashchenia, 91.
74 Ibid., 92.
75 Ibid., 87.
communicating the limits of acceptable political behavior in Soviet society. It not only controlled crime, but also ensured citizens’ compliance with official state ideology.\textsuperscript{76}

The MVD scholars’ opposition to decriminalization did not prevent jurists from Leningrad University from expressing contrary views on the subject. Nor did it discourage them from articulating their views in the manual \textit{Course in Soviet Criminal Law}, published in 1973, which included a discussion of the consensual sodomy law and which was intended for wider audience.\textsuperscript{77} The anonymous author of the entry on the consensual sodomy law expressed “serious doubts regarding the expediency of keeping criminal liability for consensual sodomy”.\textsuperscript{78} The entry listed three arguments, summarizing the contentions previously expressed by Osipov and Yakovlev (it is possible that the author of the entry was Osipov himself) in favor of reconsideration of the anti-sodomy statute. In addition to existing arguments highlighting the “biological” nature of homosexuality and the impossibility of controlling it due to its intimate nature, the manual presented a new argument, which invoked decriminalization of consensual homosexual acts outside of the Soviet Union, implicitly suggesting that since such developments occurred in socialist countries, then Soviet Union should also go down the same path: “Thirdly, the development of criminal legislation over the last years, testifies to the gradual departure from criminalization of consensual sodomy, not only in capitalist countries (England and West Germany), but also in socialist countries (East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Poland). The aforementioned arguments testify to the expediency of the exclusion from the existing legislation of the article criminalizing consensual sodomy”.\textsuperscript{79}

It is interesting that although pro-decriminalization scholars were certainly familiar with the monographs produced within the MVD Higher School, they never openly found fault with the MVD scholars’ arguments regarding the sodomy law. Perhaps, they were aware of the potential disadvantages to their careers and other undesirable consequences, which persistent discussion of such a taboo topic might entail, especially in a country, where homosexuality was condemned by society and penalized by law. Nevertheless, legal scholars continued to promote their views.

\textsuperscript{77} Nikolai A. Beliaev and Mikhail D. Shargorodskii, eds., \textit{Kurs sovetskogo ugolovnogo prava. Chast’ osobennaia. Tom tretii} (Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1973).
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 646.
\textsuperscript{79} Beliaev and Shargorodskii, \textit{Kurs sovetskogo ugolovnogo prava}, 647.

In the period from 1970 to 1974 Soviet sexology yielded a number of works which encompassed a wider range of topics, including a more elaborate examination of “sexual perversions”, and methods for treating homosexuality. In early 1970 the first sexological center attached to the city health department of Leningrad began to operate and in 1973 an All-Union scientific method center started coordinating the work of sexologists across the country. Unlike American psychiatrists, who excluded homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses in 1973, Soviet doctors demonstrated their support for the idea that homosexuality was a pathological condition. Yet, even such an out-dated perception of homosexuality offered a justification for the elimination of sodomy from the Soviet legal code, to which Ignatov and other legal scholars could resort. Drawing on fresh evidence, Ignatov advanced his argument that homosexuality was an inherent disposition and should be of therapeutic, rather than police concern:

At present, we may consider it to be an established fact that a certain number of people suffer from congenital perversion of sexual desire. [...] As it stands, people with psychological deviations are most predisposed to homosexuality. Therefore, criminalization of homosexuality is not just a matter of law. It goes without saying that such perversion is of a pathological nature and legal sanctions are not only

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80 Aleksei N. Ignatov, “Problemy ugolovnoi otvetstvennosti za prestuplenia v oblasti polovykh otnoshenii v sovetskom ugolovnom prave. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni doktora iuridicheskikh nauk (Moscow: Vsesoiuznyi institut po izuchenii prichin i razrabotke mer preduprezhdeniia prestupnosti, 1974). Unfortunately, I was able to find only the abstract of the dissertation.


useless, but unjust. The fear of criminal punishment prevents homosexuals from resorting to medical help. In the medical and legal literature it has been stated multiple times that consensual homosexual liaisons between adults neither pose societal danger nor damage the state. […] With all this in mind, the dissertation proposes to exclude the article criminalizing consensual sodomy from the Soviet legislation. This opinion also gained support in Soviet legal scholarship (P.P. Osipov, I. M. Yakovlev). 84

Masha Gessen tells us that Ignatov’s arguments came to the attention of the Party leadership, which accused him of “propagating immorality” and “undermining the foundations of the socialist law in the country”. Only due to Ignatov’s own connections and perseverance did he manage to defend his dissertation. 85

Ignatov’s arguments did not, however, affect the perception of homosexuality by the experts affiliated with the MVD and law enforcement agencies, who continued to maintain their opposition to reform. For instance, a 1975 manual for law-enforcement agencies Sex Crimes: Criminals and Victims by the MVD scholar Yurii Valerianovich Aleksandrov from the Kiev MVD School contained a lengthy nine-page entry on the crime of sodomy, which eloquently described why homosexuality was dangerous: “Sodomy is not an illness. It is … determined by social factors of negative personality formation. …apart from moral degeneration and degradation of the individuals involved in such abnormal sexual liaisons and their breakaway from social activity … sodomy infringes on the health of homosexuals, facilitates the widespread dissemination of venereal diseases...”. 86

Most importantly, Aleksandrov argued that the existing law criminalizing consensual sodomy in Ukrainian SSR should be revisited with a view to introducing stricter penalties: “Our experience has proven that milder penalties (up to 1 year of imprisonment) in the majority of cases do not have the desired effect on this cohort [homosexuals]. The deterrent value of such measure is also insignificant”. Following that contention, the author proposed that the penalty for consensual sodomy in the Ukrainian SSR be elevated to five years of

84 Ignatov, “Problemy ugolovnoi otvetstvennosti”, 28 — 29.
86 Yurii V. Aleksandrov, Polovye prestuplenia: prestupniki i poterpevshie (Kiev: Nauchno-issledovatel’skii i redaktsionno-izdatel’skii otdel Kievskoi vysshei shkoly MVD SSSR, 1975), 38.
imprisonment. Aleksandrov also restated the commitment of Soviet criminal law to penalize consensual sodomy: “It is known that the Soviet penal law insists on penalizing consensual sodomy. Given the high degree of social danger posed by this crime one cannot but agree with such a stance”. Aleksandrov was aware of the view promoted by Osipov, since he noted that Soviet legal schools had suggested decriminalizing consensual sodomy, referring to Osipov’s dissertation of 1966.

Aleksandrov expressed his dissatisfaction at the absence of penalties for other forms of same-sex relationships apart from sodomy, echoing the long-standing inclination of law-enforcement agencies to criminalize female same-sex relations: “Sodomy is only one of different displays of homosexual relations. Other forms of these displays should be considered no less immoral, cynical and corrupt, and therefore, carrying no less societal danger than sodomy. Yet, these forms of sexual relations are not penalized”.

Sex Crimes: Criminals and Victims seems to be the last public source to discuss the value of the law on sodomy in a series of manuals and dissertations produced in the period from 1965 to 1975 by Soviet legal and MVD scholars. Although this discussion then disappeared from public sources, legal scholars made some offstage attempts to push the Interior Ministry for change. Igor Kon tells us that in 1979 A. N. Ignatov sent a memorandum to the MVD, listing arguments for decriminalization of consensual sodomy. Yet, he never received a response. The meaning of this silence was plain and obvious: MVD officials were not going to introduce any changes to the existing legislation.

Fresh evidence suggests that the attitudes of some influential members of the Soviet establishment towards perceived deviant sexual behavior remained extremely conservative. For instance, on 27 June 1977 the Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR advocated for stronger penalties for sex crimes, including for “perverted” sexual practices such as oral and anal sex. The Supreme Court proposed introducing a new article to the Latvian SSR Criminal Code under the title “Satisfaction of sexual desire in perverse forms”. This article would criminalize coercive oral and anal sex as part of rape and coercive oral sex, accompanying

87 Aleksandrov, Polovyie prestupleniia, 87 – 88. In the Ukrainian SSR, consensual sodomy was punishable with up to one-year of imprisonment and exile for up to three years. Ibid. 87. 
88 Ibid. 
89 Ibid., 88. 
90 Ibid. 
91 Igor S. Kon, Klubnichka na berezke: Seksual’naia kultura v Rossii (Moscow: OGI, 1997), 359. 
92 State Archive of Latvia, f. 938, op. 6, delo 1188, l. 10. Zakliuchenie na proekt Ukaza PVS LSSR “O dopolnenii Ugolovnogo kodeksa LSSR stat’ëi 121(1)”. 

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sodomy. The proponents of the new law argued that “forcible satisfaction of sexual desire in perverse form presents no less danger than rape or sodomy and attests for utmost cynicism and depravity of the criminal…”\footnote{State Archive of Latvia, f. 938, op. 6, delo 1188, l. 11. Zakliuchenie na proekt Ukaza PVS LSSR “O dopolnenii Ugolovnogo kodeksa LSSR stat’ei 121(1)”} The emphasis on the “perverted nature” of oral and anal sex, expressed by describing these practices as “disgusting”, “cynical” and simply as “sexual perversions” as well as attempts to distinguish “natural” forcible sex from “perverted” forcible sex, demonstrate the extent to which some Soviet authorities were guided by their prudish attitudes and their own perceptions of “normal sexuality”.\footnote{Ibid., 20 – 24.} Clearly, as long as these perceptions held sway, the decriminalization of consensual sodomy was apparently out of the question. Yet, despite extensive discussion about the proposed law, the draft was eventually rejected on the grounds that it needed further consideration.\footnote{Ibid., 1.}

**Conclusion**

Although it may appear extraordinary, the first attempts to decriminalize sodomy in the Soviet Union were undertaken in the late 1950s, when new criminal codes for Soviet republics were drafted. The different drafts varied considerably. While there was discussion in the RSFSR regarding the possibility of revising the Stalin-era Criminal Code so as to decriminalize sodomy, in the Soviet republic of Latvia the legislators instead considered introducing criminal penalties for female same-sex relations. In any event, ultimately neither of these proposals was implemented.

The archival documents reflecting these unusual discussions demonstrate that as early as the late 1950s some Soviet legal academics advocated for the abolition of the anti-sodomy law, while law-enforcement agencies wanted not only to leave it in place, but to strengthen it. This divide between academic and law-enforcement opinions on the anti-sodomy law persisted into the Brezhnev era, taking the form of a fully-fledged debate, which was reflected in the manuals and dissertations produced by Soviet jurists and criminologists, even if it did not find its way into the Soviet mainstream public domain.

As the discussion unfolded, the positions of the participants in the debate became more differentiated and obvious. On the one side stood MVD officials, who argued for the retention
of the anti-sodomy statute and claimed that decriminalization of homosexuality, espousing police approach. On the other side were the legal scholars, who argued for its abolition – their position was informed by domestic sexopathological science and therefore can be regarded as “scientific”. Whereas legal scholars were refining their arguments in favor of sodomy decriminalization over time, the arguments of MVD scholars remained largely unchanged and unaffected by either Soviet sexology or foreign developments. Throughout this period, MVD scholars consistently relied on “communist morality” to argue that homosexuality was dangerous and detrimental to existing moral norms and criticized legal scholars for their propositions to eliminate the law on sodomy.

When arguing for decriminalization, legal scholars from regular institutes claimed that consensual homosexuality should not be decriminalized since it was a private matter between individuals and due to the private nature of these crimes they were difficult to investigate. These arguments were informed by the growing sense of entitlement to the privacy concomitant of “privatization” of Soviet society, which was gaining more ground due to the growing availability of housing. MVD scholars acknowledged that indeed the intimate nature of consensual sodomy made it difficult to look into such crimes – yet they believed that it was enough reason to remove consensual sodomy from the Criminal Code.

Intriguingly, discussion of sodomy law in these sources came to a halt by 1975. And yet it appeared that the issue of decriminalization never stopped weighing on the minds of those how advocated for it – for example, in a memorandum, written to the Interior Ministry in 1979, A. N. Ignatov argued for decriminalization of sodomy once again. He never received a reply.96 As he later explained, personal distaste for homosexuality, particularly among many Soviet officials, never predisposed them favorably towards decriminalizing sodomy.97

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96 Kon, Klabnichka na berezke, 359.
Chapter 5

Between Disease and Crime: Homosexuality, Sexopathology, and the MVD (1970 – 80)

In his manual for law-enforcement agencies titled Sexual Perversions and Criminal Liability (1972), MVD scholar Boris Daniel’bek made a striking statement: “As is well known, in the Soviet Union, if a person, suffering from homosexuality, goes to a medical institution [meditsinskoe uchrezhdienie], doctors are obliged to provide medical aid and this cannot be considered a reason for starting a criminal prosecution”.

Indeed, throughout his text Daniel’bek argued that homosexuality should be dealt with not only by punitive measures, but with the help of “medical intervention” [lechebnoe vozdeistvie].

What was the meaning of Daniel’bek’s statement that homosexuals could avoid criminal prosecution if they sought medical help? Did it signal a shift from a “police” to a “scientific” approach to homosexuality within the MVD, that is, from their understanding of it as a crime to that of a medical condition? What was the role of Soviet sexopathology in this shift? And how did the medical understanding of male homosexuality square with the existing penal sanctions for it?

This chapter will examine discussions of homosexuality among Soviet sexopathologists and MVD officials in the 1970s. It will argue that during this time, MVD officials were increasingly influenced by the work of Soviet sexologists, who posited that homosexuality was a treatable medical condition. This influence of sexological expertise, however, did not result in the dominance of scientific approaches to homosexuality in the MVD texts. Instead, MVD officials preferred to advocate for a combination of police and scientific responses to homosexuality, viewing it both as a punishable crime and a treatable disease.

This chapter will also consider the implications of these discussions, by examining Soviet sexopathologists’ attempts to claim the phenomenon of homosexuality for sexopathology. It will also examine the medical practice of treating homosexuality as performed by Yan Goland in the 1970s, demonstrating that the ambiguous understandings of homosexuality in the MVD texts and correspondence paralleled a similarly ambiguous standing of homosexuality in Soviet society: despite homosexuality’s official status as a crime,

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1 Boris V. Daniel'bek, Polovye izvrashchenia i ugodovnaia otvetstvennost’ (Volgograd: Vyshhaia sledstvennaia shkola MVD SSSR, 1972), 91.
there were doctors who willingly offered medical treatments. These treatments were unofficial and doctors who administered them had to balance their practices along the borders of private and public.

The chapter will start by looking at the development of Soviet sexopathology over the 1970s, examining how sexopathologists framed homosexuality during this period. It will then examine correspondence between Soviet sexopathologists and MVD officials as well as MVD brochures, where homosexuality was framed as medical matter. Finally, this chapter will explore Yan Goland’s medical practice and his attempts to treat homosexuality throughout the 1970s, showing that although by the 1970s the MVD openly acknowledged medical practices around homosexuality, the standing of these practices in the Soviet society was still ambiguous.

**Soviet Sexopathology and Homosexuality in the 1970s**

In a foreword to a compendium of works on sexopathology published in 1972, Anatolii Portnov, director of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry, within which the Department of Sexopathology was situated, solemnly announced: “There is no question that sexopathology is becoming an independent medical discipline”. He then went on to explain why this was the case: “The fact is that any sexual disorders are both biological and social deviations. For example, male sexual impotence is not only one man’s illness, it is often a direct cause of dissolution of the family, which is the unit of the society [iacheika obshchestva]”. As is evident from the quote, male impotence continued to be a primary focus of Soviet sexological science. Yet, for the first time, the problem of sexual perversions was also highlighted as a matter of priority within the field of sexopathology: “Sexual perversions are not merely an affliction of certain individuals, they threaten to afflict other healthy and predisposed [predisponirovannykh] individuals”. Such an observation was a new note in the discussions of homosexuality among Soviet sexopathologists: not only was homosexuality here presented a disease which afflicted unfortunate individuals, it was also considered a condition that could be passed on to others (GULAG psychiatrists, as I have shown in Chapter 1, held similar views).

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Portnov’s description of the establishment of Soviet sexopathology as an “independent medical discipline” came at a time widely regarded as a period of stagnation. But recent scholarship on the Brezhnev era has demonstrated that despite the moral and economic decline, regarded as axiomatic for this period, there were developments in political, cultural and social realms along with genuine attempts by the state to initiate and lead changes. The development of Soviet sexopathology during the 1970s appears to have been marked with similar tendencies, seesawing from progress to neglect. On the one hand, as Igor Kon has argued, Soviet sexopathology was very slow in its development and was “an outcast in Soviet medicine”. The training in the profession was unsystematic and many sexopathological positions were filled by psychiatrists with no relevant education. On the other hand, Soviet sexopathologists did their best to underscore the importance of sexopathology for society, challenging its status as an “outcast” and arguing that its underdevelopment might have grave implications. For instance, some sexopathologists argued that there was a direct link between the growing divorce rates and the poor administration of sexological health services in the country. For example, Ivan Iunda from Kiev contended that growing divorce rates recorded in the 1960s were largely due to reasons pertaining to the field of sexopathology – infertility of one of the spouses, “physical dissatisfaction” and adultery due to sexual incompatibility. He also noted that the number of patients with sexual disorders was growing. Other sexopathologists complained that many republics did not yet have sexological consultation rooms and training of a new generation of specialists was urgently needed.

Against a backdrop of a deteriorating demographic situation in the early 1970s, the arguments for improving the sexological services available to the population began to hit home with the officials of the Soviet Health Ministry. On 22 November 1973, the Ministry issued a decree titled “On measures to improve therapeutic-prophylactic [lechebno-

7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
profilakticheskaia] aid to patients suffering from sexual disorders.” The decree deplored the poor state of Soviet sexopathological research and treatment: “the state of therapeutic-prophylactic aid to patients with sexual disorders is still unsatisfactory. Research on the pathogenesis […] of sexual disorders is conducted by separate, unrelated research institutes. There is a lack of coordination of scientific research and of specialist training programs”. To address this problem, the Ministry of Health mandated that major improvements in sexological science be initiated. First and foremost, it ordered the opening of specialized consultation rooms in oblast’ and republic-level clinics, where patients with sexual disorders could receive medical help. Second, it ordered that the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR consider expanding scientific research on sexopathology. Finally, it ordered the inauguration of an All-Union Scientific Methodological Centre for Issues of Sexopathology [Vsesoiuznyi nauchno-metodicheskii tsentr po voprosam seksopatologii], which was to operate alongside the already existing Department of Sexopathology. The centre was to become the leading research institute on sexopathology in the Soviet Union with a range of functions, including coordination of research in the field, incorporation of sexopathological findings into clinical practice, preparation and organization of seminars and symposia on sexopathology across the Soviet Union, and dissemination of sexopathological expertise throughout the country and abroad.

Soviet sexopathologists interested in the issue of homosexuality continued to publish their research on the issue, framing it as a treatable disease. Their views significantly diverged from the view that homosexuality was a normal variant of human sexuality, which underpinned the decision of the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders in 1973. Among Soviet sexopathologists practising medical treatment of homosexuality in the 1970s there were three leading experts – Pavel Posvianskii, the head of the Department of Sexopathology in Moscow, Yan Goland from the Gorkii Medical Institute, and Abram Sviadoshch, who had moved to Leningrad by 1973 to establish his sexological practice. Goland continued to advocate for non-

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13 Ibid., 1 – 2.
14 Ibid., 2.
15 Ibid.
medicated approaches to homosexuality, arguing that psychotherapy was the most efficient means of treatment.\textsuperscript{18} By contrast, Sviadoshch believed that homosexuality could be treated successfully only with a combination of psychotherapy and medication – he presented this view in a book \textit{Female Sexopathology} (1974).\textsuperscript{19} Although discussions of homosexuality in the book largely drew on the dissertation produced by Elizaveta Derevinskaia – formerly Sviadoshch’s trainee – and dealt with lesbianism, there was also a passage in the book describing a case of medical treatment of a homosexual man.\textsuperscript{20} The treatment of male homosexuality proposed by Sviadoshch was akin to “aversion therapies” provided by British psychiatrists to homosexuals in the 1960s: vomit-inducing drugs were paired with psychotherapy, whose goal was to create aversion to homosexuality in the patient.\textsuperscript{21} During this stage, the patient would be invited “to look at a photo of the object of his homosexual affection or to imagine homosexual liaisons”.\textsuperscript{22} In his book, Sviadoshch explained that “the nausea and vomiting caused by apomorphine are gradually associated with homosexual fantasies, forming a patient’s negative attitude to them”.\textsuperscript{23} He also noted that this method “had been successfully implemented to eliminate homosexual affection in a man who was an active homosexual”.\textsuperscript{24}

Pavel Posvianskii, the head of the Department of Sexopathology in Moscow, not only discussed possible treatments of homosexuality, but sought to introduce a uniform classification of sexual perversions that every doctor could bear in mind when dealing with such patients. He presented this classification in a lengthy article entitled “Introduction to the Contemporary Study of Sexual Perversions” (1972). Its goal was apparently to educate Soviet sexopathologists about the nature of sexual perversions and draw their attention to this problem. In his introduction to the article, Posvianskii deplored the fact that not all sexual therapists were familiar with perversions: “Unfortunately, wide circles of psychiatrists, sexopathologists and other specialists do not have sufficient information on these questions [sexual perversions]. This, of course, has a negatively effect on both theoretical work on the

\textsuperscript{19} Abram M. Sviadoshch, \textit{Zhenskaia seksopatologiia} (Moscow: Meditsina, 1974).
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{22} Sviadoshch, \textit{Zhenskaia seksopatologiia}, 164.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
problem of perversions and practical work”. According to Posvianskii, a more careful consideration of these phenomena was needed in medical practice, since patients who suffered from them were not a rarity: “In recent years in the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry we have had the chance to observe and examine a quite large number of patients suffering from perversions of various forms.”

Posvianskii maintained that there was a special cluster of “sexual perversions”, which he referred to as “genuine” (istinnye). These he said were “unchangeable” (neizmeniaemye) and “irresistible” (neodolimye). Although such individuals could consciously control their desires and abstain from acting on them, their desires would stay perverse notwithstanding.

Sexual fulfillment for them could be achieved only in the form they genuinely preferred, while any other forms of sexual satisfaction would remain “profoundly alien” or simply impossible to carry out. To make his point clear Posvianskii quoted one of his homosexual patients, who said: “Sexual intimacy with a woman for me is disgusting – if I had to do it, it would be indeed a genuine perversion”. Yet, despite the fact such perversions were “genuine” and, therefore, incurable by implication, Posvianskii still maintained that they were to be treated: “Therefore, individuals suffering from genuine forms of perversions should be the object of medical intervention, provided that their behaviour does not violate the existing laws”.

What, then, was the relationship between these medical understandings of homosexuality and the law-enforcement agencies? Were they known to Soviet police? Did Soviet sexopathologists, like Soviet jurists, try to argue for decriminalization of sodomy on medical grounds? Little has been said in the existing scholarship on this problem: the only fact we know is the account of Igor Kon, who tells us that Grigorii Vasil’chenko, the head of the All-Union Scientific Methodological Centre for Issues of Sexopathology, raised the issue of decriminalization with the Health Ministry, but the latter was “always against”.

New evidence shows that Pavel Posvianskii did discuss homosexuality at his meetings with officials from the MVD and the KGB in 1973. The interactions between the Department

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 82.
28 Ibid., 83.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
of Sexopathology and the law-enforcement agencies and the organs of state security come as little surprise if we consider the context. Sexopathology, after all, was a branch of psychiatry and the main Soviet sexopathological centre was headquartered within the formidable Moscow State Institute of Psychiatry of the Health Ministry of RSFSR. Furthermore, scholars have shown that by the end of the 1960s, Soviet authorities had begun to rely on psychiatry as an effective means of repressing Soviet dissidents – those Soviet citizens who challenged the political regime. During this period, the latter were diagnosed with concocted psychiatric disorders without any clinical evidence and subjected to compulsory hospitalization. These practices represented, in Mark Field’s words, a “deliberate collusion between the Soviet regime and psychiatry” and were most evident in the fact that, for instance, some psychiatrists working the Serbskii Institute had Interior Ministry police ranks.

Harvey Fireside tells us that Professor Lunts, a senior psychiatrist from the Serbskii Institute was both a psychiatrist and a KGB colonel. Fireside presents a quote from the recollections of Petro Grigorenko, a former Soviet General who eventually became a dissident. Recalling his internment at the Serbskii Institute, Grigorenko asserted: “I myself, on more than one occasion, have seen Professor Lunts arrive at work in the uniform of a KGB colonel. True, he always comes into the department in his white coat. I have seen other doctors of this institute in KGB uniform”. This fact should be considered when examining the written accounts of the meetings between Posvianskii and the MVD and KGB officers regarding the problem of homosexuality.

We know from a routine annual report on the activities of the Department of Sexopathology (see Figure 18, Figure 19), produced by Posvianskii, that on 1 November 1973 he presented a paper “On the issue of sexual perversions, primarily homosexuality” (K probleme seksual’nykh perverzii, preimushchestvenno gomoseksualizma) at a conference that brought together doctors and administrative personnel of the MVD and the KGB (konferentsiia

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36 Ibid., 37.
vrachei i administrativnogo personala MVD i KGB). In his report, Posvianskii did not elaborate on how his paper was received by the MVD and KGB staff. The historian is also left to speculate on the subject matter of Posvianskii’s paper – yet it would be reasonable to assume that it was concerned with the issues raised in Posvianskii’s published work on homosexuality, namely his contention that homosexuality was a “genuine perversion” requiring medical care, rather than police attention. According to Yan Goland, who knew Posvianskii personally, Posvianskii approached the MVD several times, suggesting that criminal sanctions for consensual homosexuality were unnecessary. As Goland noted, the reaction of the MVD officials had always been the same – they merely said that they “would take it into consideration” [primem k svedeniui]. In the same report, Posvianskii also listed other conferences in which he had participated. For example, the report tells us that in May 1973, he delivered a paper on “Medical and Juridical Aspects of Sexual Perversions” at a “meeting of Moscow advocates”. Again, we do not know any details regarding the content of this paper, but decriminalization of consensual sodomy might be a possible topic.

Apart from engaging with lawyers, MVD and KGB officers, Posvianskii taught a course titled “Contemporary Problems of Sexopathology: On the Study of Sexual Perversions” at the Department of Psychotherapy of the Central Institute for Doctors’ Advanced Training [Tsentral’nyi Institut Usovershenstvovania vrachei]. The Institute had been the leading Soviet institution responsible for providing Soviet doctors with up-to-date medical knowledge and incorporating the recent developments of Soviet medical research into wider medical practice. The implications of Posvianskii’s lectures on homosexuality within the institute are difficult to establish due to the absence of relevant evidence, yet Posvianskii’s lectures certainly would have further promoted medical models of homosexuality beyond the narrow circle of Soviet sexologists.

38 Interview with Yan Goland, 1 April 2017, Nizhnii Novgorod.
39 Ibid.
40 I have been unable to find any minutes or transcripts of this meeting in the Central Archive of Moscow (TSMAM).
From “Police” to “Science”: Shifting Approaches to Homosexuality within the MVD

Paradoxically, although MVD officials apparently took no heed of either doctors’ or legal scholars’ calls to abolish criminal penalties for homosexuality on medical grounds, in the 1970s, they did frame homosexuality as a medical problem in their secret reports and even turned to the help of sexopathologists to address the problem of homosexuality in prisons. A new willingness of MVD staff to use medical knowledge in the struggle with homosexuality suggests the strengthening of an alternative understanding of homosexuality as a medical problem within its ranks, in parallel with its official stance on homosexuality as a crime.

First mentions of the fact that the Department of Sexopathology began to cooperate with the officials of the MVD on the issue of homosexuality in prisons appear in Posvianskii’s report examined above. There, Posvianskii claimed that the Department was given: “a whole range of tasks commissioned by the Sanitary Directorate of the MVD USSR [Sanitarnoe Upravlenie MVD SSSR].” Among these tasks was a close study of homosexuality with a view to designing methods for its medical treatment in prisons: Posvianskii’s report featured an attached copy of a plan with related tasks for Department doctors to complete in 1973 and 1974 (see Figure 20). These tasks included clinical examination of prisoners engaging in homosexual relations, publication of a handbook for MVD officials on preventing homosexuality and organization of a series of lectures on homosexuality for the doctors working within the MVD. The whole plan is presented below:

### PLAN

Of activities on the problem of homosexuality in the places of confinement for 1973

Tasks: Study of the problem of homosexuality in places of confinement to design recommendations concerning prophylaxis and treatment of homosexual acts among prisoners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Executant</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clinical examination of individuals, with histories of homosexual actions and conditions, conducive to the emergence and spread of these actions in the places of confinement</td>
<td>Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Institute of Psychiatry MZ RSFSR</td>
<td>During 1973</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. On the basis of the conducted examination to design methodical instructions (a letter) on prophylaxis and treatment of homosexual actions among convicts

Same
IV quarter
December 1973

3. Organization of tutorials with the doctors of the UMS and Central Medical Institutions of the MVD on the subjects: contemporary state of debates on aetiology, pathogenesis, clinic and treatment of homosexuality

Head of the Department of Sexopathology, prof. Posvianskii P. B.
II quarter

Compile and circulate the text of the lectures on the subject to medical institutions of the MVD-UVD

Prof. Posvianskii P. B.

4. Receipt and circulation of the collection of works on contemporary sexopathology

UMS MVD
I – II quarter
1974

DIRECTOR OF THE MOSCOW STATE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY MZ RSFSR
Prof. A. Portnov

HEAD OF THE UMS MVD SSSR
V. Strusov 44

Homosexual activity in Soviet prisons was certainly not a new phenomenon. The active struggle of the Soviet officials with homosexuality in places of confinement can be traced as far back as the beginning of the Khrushchev era. As the reform of the GULAG was under way in the late 1950s, MVD leadership resorted to the help of psychiatrists and involved them in their struggle with homosexuality. Since then, the Soviet penitentiary system had undergone significant changes: the previously existing GULAG’s system disintegrated and was turned into a network of light regime penal institutions called “colony settlements”. 45 These were introduced in a move to make the Soviet system of punishment more progressive, rewarding prisoners for good behaviour and preparing them for release. 46 The reforms of the 1950s also introduced improvements in the lives of the prisoners: their nutrition improved, cultural opportunities expanded and medical services became more responsive to their needs. 47

46 Ibid., 195.
Yet as far as prison homosexual activity was concerned, in Dan Healey’s words, “the late Soviet decades appear to have hardened the homophobia in prisoner subcultures, especially among male convicts”. Homosexual violence continued to be part of late Soviet prison life: existing accounts point to the commonplace practices of homosexual rape and physical abuse, which prisoners inflicted on “degraded” prisoners from the lowest caste. “Degraded” referred to those known to play a receptive role in anal intercourse and those convicted under sodomy laws. Some “degraded” prisoners would be forcibly given a shaming tattoo, which would expose their status to other prisoners. It was homosexual violence and the proliferation of criminal subcultures associated with it that led MVD officials to look for new and more effective ways of dealing with this phenomenon. The appearance of the new science of sexopathology in the 1960s, with its studies of or focus on homosexuality, was apparently seen as a viable solution.

A special department within the Interior Ministry coordinated the work between Soviet sexopathologists and the MVD officials – the Directorate of Medical Service. One of the department’s responsibilities was apparently provision of medical services to prisoners, so the problem of homosexuality would naturally be in its purview. The list of tasks put before the Department of Sexopathology by the Directorate of Medical Service, presented above, cannot be characterized beyond the obvious observation that MVD officials were very eager to implement Posvianskii’s knowledge on sexual perversions in practice; they were apparently also willing to assist him with his “fieldwork”, by providing him with unfettered access to prisoners. The findings of Posvianskii’s study were to be disseminated through tutorials delivered across various medical institutions of the MVD; in these lectures, Posvianskii was to educate MVD officials on the “contemporary state of debates on aetiology, pathogenesis, clinic and treatment of homosexuality”. Posvianskii was also expected to produce official

49 In his memoirs, Mikhail Stern, who served a sentence in one of the Soviet colonies in the 1970s, remembered that “homosexual violence was a routine part of life in the camps”. He remembered that: “At night in the barracks we could hear screams that quickly away as a gang of rapists threw a blanket over a fresh victim and smothered his face. There were usually five of them – four to hold the victim’s arms and legs while the fifth raped him. An inmate who had been forcibly sodomized by other inmates was referred to as a ‘pederast,’ and the word itself was the deadliest of insults”. See: Mikhail Stern and August Stern, *Sex in the USSR* (New York: New York Times, 1980), 261. For other mentions of homosexual violence in late Soviet prisons see: Vladimir Kozlovskii, *Argo russkoi gomoseksual‘noi subkul’tury: materialy k izucheniu* (Chalidze Publications, 1986), 95–110.
51 Ibid., 45 – 46.
guidelines on how to treat and prevent homosexuality in the places of confinement, which would be subsequently used by prison officials. I have been unable to find any published results of Posvianskii’s studies; apparently, all of them are still held in the specialized libraries of the MVD institutions or closed medical archives of the still existing Department of Sexopathology. Some of Posvianskii’s studies are likely to contain personal histories of examined prisoners, which means that these files will not be divulged in the foreseeable future.

In his report, Posvianskii also revealed that the Department of Sexopathology was cooperating with the “Laboratory of Psychiatric Endocrinology” – both were parts of the larger Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry – on development of a new drug for medical treatment of sexual perversions: “The Department is working in close contact with the laboratory of psychiatric endocrinology… We have started a joint study of a new antiandrogenic drug for treatment of a range of sexual disorders (homosexuality, transsexuality, nymphomania)”. Although Posvianskii did not elaborate further on the success of these experiments or any other information on the use of this drug in practice, by the end of the 1970s, as I will show further, this drug would have already been used in medical treatment of homosexuality by the Department of Sexopathology and offered to MVD officials as an effective means of combating homosexuality in prisons.

Although the cooperation between Soviet sexopathologists and MVD officials was mostly focused on male homosexuality, female homosexual activity in prisons was also considered by MVD officials. For example, it was briefly discussed at the All-Union Conference for the Deputy Chiefs of female penal colonies held in Moscow in 1973 – the proceedings of this conference are contained in a brochure entitled *Contemporary Problems of Correction and Re-Education of Convicted Women* (1974). Participants of the conference included the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Nikolai Shchelokov and the head of the Medical Directorate of the MVD USSR Vadim Strusov (the latter had commissioned the Department of Sexopathology with tasks related to male homosexuality in the same year). The conference was devoted to the problems of improving the work of female penal colonies and re-education of female prisoners.

57 Ibid., 4 – 5.
The problem of “sexual perversions” with reference to female penal colonies was briefly mentioned in a report “Medical Service for the Individuals, Deprived of Freedom” presented by V. N. Popov, deputy head of the Medical Directorate of the MVD USSR. Popov highlighted the role of doctors working in prisons, whose task was to “return to the society not only an honest, but a physically healthy person, capable of actively participating in productive labour and social life of the workers’ collectives”. He suggested equipping female colonies with more medical specialists so that all morbid phenomena existing in the colonies could be tackled effectively: “It is necessary to consider the issue of staffing medical departments of the ITU with doctors-psychoneurologists, given that in the places of confinement there is a certain proportion of individuals with psychiatric disorders, suffering from psychopathy, alcoholism, drug addiction and sexual perversions.” Popov’s report also featured a vague statement on the necessity to “strengthen the regime of serving a sentence to identify individuals engaging in sexual perversions”. Popov’s discussion of the role of medical professionals in supplying the society with “healthy” former convicts and suggestions that more doctors were needed to tackle sexual perversions, displays, albeit implicitly, a familiar concern about the possibility of homosexuality spreading into the wider society. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, this fear was palpable in the reports of GULAG officials and doctors in the late 1950s. Likewise, as we know from Francesca Stella, it was not uncommon in the 1970s for women practising homosexual relations in the places of confinement to return to their homes after their release with their lovers from prison.

We know very little about cooperation between Soviet sexopathologists and MVD officials regarding lesbianism in the 1970s. It is possible that the Medical Directorate of the MVD displayed little interest due to already existing studies on lesbianism by Elizaveta Derevinskaia (discussed in Chapter 3) – which prison officials could consult for guidance.

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58 V. N. Popov, “Meditsinsko obsluzhivanie lits, lishennykh svobody,” Aktual’nye problemy ispravleniia i perevospitaniia osuzhdennykh zhenschin, 105.
59 Ibid., 103.
60 Ibid., 105.
61 Ibid., 108.
63 Elizaveta M. Derevinskaia, “Materialy k klinike, patogenezu, terapii zhenskogo homoseksualizma” (Dissertatsia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata meditsinskikh nauk, Karaganda State Medical Institute, 1965). Derevinskaia also presented the findings of her dissertation in her conference papers see: Abram M. Sviadoschh and Elizaveta M. Derevinskaia, “K probleme patologii vlecheniia,” in Materialy vseznoi sessii prezidiumov Vsesoiuznogo i respublikanskikh obschestv nevropatologov i psikhiatrov Kazakhstana i respublik Srednej Azii, 21 – 13 aprelia 1964 g. (Alma-Ata: Kazakhskoe respublikansko obschestvo nevropatologov i psikhiatrov, 1964), 64 – 67.
Sviadoshch’s book *Female Sexopathology* (1974), which drew extensively upon Derevinskaia’s dissertation also provided ample examples of how treatment of female homosexuality could be conducted in confinement.\(^{64}\) It is also possible that the MVD directly approached Sviadoshch for guidance on lesbianism, as it did with doctors from the Moscow Department of Sexopathology, yet we need more evidence to substantiate this claim.

Further evidence of the MVD’s inclination to regard homosexuality as a medical problem in the 1970s can be found in a handbook *Recommended Methods on Prophylaxis of Homosexual Behaviour in the Corrective-Labour Institutions* (1978).\(^{65}\) This manual was a product of the collaboration of doctors, affiliated with different institutions – sexopathologists Nikolai Kibrik and Aina Ambrumova from the Moscow Department of Sexopathology; P. M. Rybkin from the Medical Directorate of the MVD SSSR jurists I. Karetnikov, Alevtin Markov and L. Gavrilov from the All-Union Research Institute of the MVD SSSR; and G. Rublinskii from the Main Directorate of the Corrective-Labour Institutions of the MVD SSSR.\(^{66}\)

The handbook drew extensively on the existing discussions of homosexuality among Soviet sexopathologists – their proposed treatment methods and theories regarding its origin. The authors, for example, argued that there were cases of homosexuality deemed as “genuine perversions”; here they repeated verbatim parts of Pavel Posvianskii’s research article “Introduction to the Contemporary Study of Sexual Perversions” (1972). These “genuine perversions”, they contended, were to be treated medically – through pharmacotherapy [farmakoterapiia] and psychotherapy. The former could be performed only with the prisoner’s consent: “It is important to remember that medicated therapy [medikamentoznaia terapiia] as a measure of influence [vozdeistviia] on prisoners is admissible only in relation to the individuals who have given their voluntary consent [dobrovol’noe soglasie]”.\(^{67}\) It is difficult to establish with certainty whether prison officials carefully followed this advice and resorted to medication only on occasions when prisoners consented to it. It may well have been possible that prisoners, caught for homosexual acts in prisons, were presented with a choice – either to have their sentence extended or undergo medical treatment “voluntarily”. I have shown in Chapter 3 that when faced with such dilemma – criminal prosecution or medical treatment –

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\(^{64}\) Sviadoshch, *Zhenskaia seksopatologiia*, 161 – 167.


\(^{66}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 12.
some homosexual men opted for treatment, rather than incarceration. I have also noted above that it was not uncommon for the Soviet KGB to resort to punitive psychiatry, making individuals with no objective signs of psychiatric illness undergo medical treatment; the objects of such treatment were the opponents of the Soviet regime.

As far as psychotherapy was concerned, the authors of the handbook drew on Goland’s texts on the treatment of homosexuality; they invoked his methods of autogenic training and helping the patient to get into a special state of mind called a “sexual-psychological vacuum”, characterized by the disappearance of both homosexual and heterosexual desire (examined in Chapter 3). They also offered to use psychotropic drugs to help prisoners achieve this state more quickly, noting that a similar tactic was applied to homosexual patients receiving medical treatment in the Department of Sexopathology: “In the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry, for the creation of a ‘sexual-psychological vacuum’, psychotropic drugs [psikhotropnye sredstva] – ‘behaviour correctors’ [korrektory povedeniia] have been successfully used.” Among the drugs listed by the authors was “antiandrogen” [antiandrogen], which, as they noted, “led to quick and stable decrease in sexual desire”. This drug was apparently the one Posvianskii noted in his 1973 report to the Health Ministry discussed above. Apparently, the invention and implementation of this drug to treat homosexuality was successful and in 1978 Soviet sexopathologists recommended its use in the places of confinement for homosexual prisoners.

The authors of the handbook distinguished another type of homosexuality – acquired – observable in individuals with “early” or “strong development” of sexual desire. Acquired homosexuality could supposedly be reversed by means of medical and educative intervention. The latter was performed in the form of “individual talks” with prisoners with a view to discouraging them from engaging in sexual perversions.

Additional evidence of the growing willingness of the MVD officials to incorporate new knowledge on “sexual perversions” in the struggle against homosexuality in prisons can be found in a handbook for MVD penal workers titled Psychological Aspects of Re-education of the Convicts in the Labour Corrective Colonies (1979), written by MVD expert Viktor

68 Ambrunova and Kibrik, Metodicheskiie rekomendatsii, 13.
69 Ibid.
71 Ambrunova and Kibrik, Metodicheskiie rekomendatsii, 14.
72 Ibid.
The manual instructed penal officials on how to facilitate “re-education” of inmates in juvenile colonies and aimed to equip them with the necessary knowledge of the convict’s “personality”. Pirozhkov examined the young convicts’ homosexual behaviour in the chapter titled “Characteristic features [kharakteristika] of the young convicts [vospitannikov] suffering from sexopathology: the struggle with sexual perversions”. The title suggests his awareness and acceptance of the existing Soviet sexopathological studies. Indeed, Pirozhkov often reaffirmed the link between “sexual pathology” and homosexuality: “Sexual pathology comprises various deviations [otklonenie] in sexual development of an individual. In VTK [corrective labour colonies] various cases of sexopathology can be encountered, but it is most evident in homosexuality (cohabitation of the individuals of the same sex)”. Pirozhkov also provided lengthy excerpts on the origins of homosexuality, borrowed from Abram Sviadoshch’s *Female Sexopathology* (1974).

Pirozhkov’s discussion of homosexuality displayed a familiar concern about its role in the proliferation of criminal subculture in the penal colonies. This anxiety was akin to those expressed by the GULAG officials in the 1950s, and stemmed from the awareness that more experienced prisoners, associated with the criminal underworld, often raped newcomers, converting them into “passive” homosexuals. Pirozhkov complained about the prevalence of these practices in juvenile colonies: inmates with multiple convictions, so-called “offenders” [obidchiki] raped and abused the “offended” [obizhennyi] – prisoners without the history of such. Penal officials’ attempts to put an end to this, by sending the “offended” to another colony, failed to produce the desired effect, since the remaining “offenders” often found new victims to abuse. Therefore, Pirozhkov argued, doctors’ assistance in this matter was crucial – they could help colony directors to identify homosexuals and design the best strategy to cope with them – either through sex education or medical treatment. It was especially important to identify “offended” prisoners, victims of constant homosexual rape, since many of them experienced serious distress, resulting in a desire to inflict harm on themselves, escape and

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**74** Pirozhkov, *Psikhologicheskie osnovy*, 3.

**75** Ibid., 186.

**76** Ibid., 186 – 187.

**77** Ibid., 187.

**78** Ibid., 189. I have shown in Chapter 1 that similar measures were taken by the GULAG officials, especially with lesbians.
even commit suicide. Some of these prisoners also sought to “seek revenge” for their status, trying to oppress weaker prisoners.

According to Pirozhkov, the doctors’ primary task here was to conduct medical examination of the newly arrived convicts and identify homosexuals among them, or at least those individuals who could potentially be a source of “sexual perversions” in the future. Those convicts who were established to have previously engaged in “active sexual life” or masturbation were deemed to be most prone to homosexual behaviour: “All inmates-newcomers are subject to medical examination, in the course of which individuals previously leading active sexual life and suffering from masturbation [onanizm] are identified. These are registered as individuals from whom sexual perversions may be expected”. Once the convicts susceptible to sexual perversions were identified, they were to be registered in the colony’s medical department and subject to periodic medical examinations: “Underage inmates registered by the medical department are periodically examined by a psychoneurologist and urologist; they are instructed on the questions of sex education, physiology of the organism and the harm of the premature sex life, dangers of venereal disease, the harmlessness of sexual continence, on sexual perversions and their influence on morality and mental health”. This strategy of preventing sexual perversions was essentially a reflection of the premises of Soviet sex education manuals, which as I have shown in Chapter 2, suggested that “premature sex life” along with “masturbation” put the youth on the slippery slide to homosexuality.

Those inmates who could not be helped with sex education were to be provided with medical treatment. Pirozhkov was optimistic about the outcomes of such enterprise: he confidently stated that “both pathological and situational homosexuality is curable”. The most important means of medical treatment was psychotherapy, during which the doctor provided the patient with therapeutic suggestions on the “inadmissibility of sexual desire in a perverted, pathological form”. The patients were also to be provided with “detailed instructions on how to adhere to work-rest routine [rezhim truda i otdyka], engage in physical training, on the importance of being tired before going to bed and on the importance of total

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Pirozhkov, Psikhologicheskie osnovy, 191. Pirozhkov suggested that such medical examination with a view to identifying homosexuals was common practice in penal colonies.
82 Ibid., 192.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
abstinence from various sexual incidents until the next appointment with the doctor.\textsuperscript{85} Pirozhkov’s knowledge of the existence of such treatments also stemmed from Sviadoshch’s book \textit{Female Sexopathology}. For example, Pirozhkov suggested that “conditional treatment of homosexuality” [uslovnno-reflektorne lechenie] with the help of vomit-inducing drugs could also help the inmate eliminate their homosexuality: the inmate was to be shown a photo of the object of his homosexual desire while being administered vomit-inducing drugs.\textsuperscript{86}

Throughout the 1970s, the Medical Directorate of the MVD continued to approach Soviet sexopathologists directly, commissioning them with specific research tasks on homosexuality. Both doctors of the Moscow Department of Sexopathology and Yan Goland of the Gorkii Medical Institute received such tasks in 1979 in a request in the following form (see Figure 21):

\textbf{REQUESTED RESEARCH TOPICS FOR 1979 year}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the task</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. to design methods of identification of individuals with various types of homosexuality</td>
<td>Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry</td>
<td>1979-82g.g.</td>
<td>Request of the Medical Directorate of the Interior Ministry of the USSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. to design methods of treatment of individuals with various types of homosexuality</td>
<td>Gorkii Medical Institute. Psychiatric clinical hospital 1 of the city of Gorkii\textsuperscript{87}</td>
<td>1979-82g.g.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tasks assigned to doctors from Moscow Department of Sexopathology and Yan Goland were different: while Goland was expected to provide methods of treatment of homosexuality, Moscow sexopathologists were expected “to design methods of identifications of individuals with various types of homosexuality” – a new task for the Department of Sexopathology. Considering the context of MVD manuals on homosexuality in prisons, these

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Pirozhkov, \textit{Psikhologicheskie osnovy}, 192.
\textsuperscript{87} Zakaznaia naucho-issledovatel’skaia tematika na 1979 god. Yan Goland’s Archive.
methods were apparently required to identify homosexuals in the cohorts of prisoners with a view of conducting individual educative work with them or providing medical treatment. It is also possible that a request for “methods of identification of individuals with various types of homosexuality” was due to the MVD’s desire to equip police and investigators with not only physical, but psychiatric evidence of the suspect’s homosexuality. Such evidence was important to secure a sodomy conviction, especially under the campaign for “socialist legality”.

Dan Healey tells us that in the 1970s the number of forensic examinations of homosexuals increased and forensic experts sought to come up with new methods of identifying homosexuals.\(^88\) One such expert was Il’ia Bliumin of the Moscow Bureau of Forensic Medical Expertise, whose speciality was forensic detection of sodomy. Bliumin offered to measure sphincter muscle tone to identify receptive partners and take swabs from the suspect’s penis for chemical analysis.\(^89\) The growing availability of this forensic medicine, as Dan Healey argued, could account for the increase in convictions for sodomy observable from the late 1960s.\(^90\) It may well be possible that requests from the Medical Directorate to design methods of identifying homosexuals were dictated by a similar willingness to assist regular police in capturing homosexuals.

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Soviet society “alternative group health clubs” began to emerge: the members of these clubs studied “everything that was forbidden to study”, including astrology and yoga and these clubs “existed half-legally”. 91 New members of the clubs were invited by word of mouth” and although their activities were forbidden, “they were somehow available and actively pursued”. 92

Goland’s practice appears similar to the health clubs described by Honey: although medical treatment of homosexuality was not an institutionalized practice, Goland’s prospective patients managed to find their way to his consultation room. They did so either through mutual acquaintances or by a recommendation from the doctors working in the Department of Sexopathology, where they first went to seek medical help. One of Goland’s patients recalled in his diary his visit to the Department of Sexopathology, where Pavel Posvianskii advised him to go to Gorkii and seek help from Goland: “He [Posvianskii] listened to me, asked several questions and said that he was very optimistic. He said that I needed to go to Gorkii, where a very good doctor Y. G. Goland lived and who had ‘an elaborate system of treatment’ and ‘good results’. I was so happy – a famous sexologist from Moscow told me that I could still be rescued!” 93

Goland’s practice of medical treatment of male homosexuality stood in contrast not only with its official status as a crime – it was also different from the practices of other sexopathologists, who believed that medication was an important part of medical treatment for homosexuality. Although we still need to learn a lot about these practices, from existing accounts we know that it was not uncommon for Soviet psychiatrists to rely heavily on medication when treating homosexuality. Sviadoshch and Derevinskaia advocated their use; doctors from the Department of Sexopathology also acknowledged their use. Masha Gessen has documented the use of heavy medication in medical treatment of lesbians. 94 Against the backdrop of all these personally invasive practices, Goland’s practice stood out as more “lenient” and “alternative”. Goland knew too well what crass and barbaric treatments his patients had been offered by doctors in the local clinics of their cities. In one of his unpublished

92 Ibid.
93 Anton’s diary, 1971. Written account of Goland’s former patient about the treatment for homosexuality that he was administered. Yan Goland’s collection.
reports, presented at a conference in Tambov in 1974, Goland quoted a patient: “When my parents learnt about my malady, they offered to castrate me and in the clinic where I went I was offered to be made sexually impotent [predlozhili sdelat’ impotentsiu]. I spent one month in a psychiatric hospital without receiving any treatment.”

Honey tells us that the alternative health clubs in the 1970s were “a collective space” that offered “support for people to develop their individual talents and personalities”. Similarly, in the 1970s Goland began group sessions of psychotherapy for homosexuality, as opposed to administering it individually to each patient. In one of his reports, produced in the 1970s, Goland explained why group psychotherapy was more effective:

We believe it is expedient to begin first group session, by introducing to the group a patient who had completed his psychotherapy course for homosexuality and who is leading an active heterosexual way of life. Such introduction is a powerful psychotherapeutic factor. It breaks the silence between the members of the group, they become active at once. Soon patients get out of their state of hesitation, getting into productive work [vkliuchaias’ v produktivnuiu raboty]. A working and optimistic atmosphere is created in the group, medical re-education [lechebnoe perevospitanie] in the collective and with the help of the collective starts from the first session… A feeling of belonging to the group is being formed in each patient.

Yet unlike Honey’s alternative health clubs, Goland’s group psychotherapy sessions were not about promoting individuality. The very goal of the treatment, the suppression of the individuals’ desire and its subordination to the needs of the society implies that individuality was suppressed rather than encouraged. Goland seemed relatively intolerant of those who failed to actively participate in the collective treatment and branded such individuals as “passive, weak-willed, unenergetic patients” – these were unsuitable for his psychotherapy.

Health clubs as described by Honey and Goland’s medical practice both thrived on their unique positions on the borders of public and private, official and unofficial. Both benefited from the process of “privatisation”, which as Vladimir Shlapentokh has argued, had been

96 Honey, “Pluralizing Practices in Late-Socialist Moscow,” 139.
97 Yan Goland, “Kompleksnaia sistema psikhoterapii gomoseksualizma”. Goland’s unpublished and undated conference paper, 4
98 Ibid.
underway in Soviet society since the mid-1950s. Such “privatization” manifested itself in the emergence of “totally private institutions” of family and friends; the growth of “unofficial public life” in civil society and the exploitation of Soviet citizens’ positions for personal gains. Goland’s practice is also evidence of the recent scholarly consensus about the fluidity of public and private boundaries in Soviet society, where, as Lewis H. Siegelbaum has argued, “the private is neither hermetically sealed nor necessarily in antagonistic relation to public spheres”.

On the one hand Goland’s practice was a totally private enterprise. It was in the interest of both – the doctor and the patient – that what was going in Goland’s consultation room did not transcend its borders. Goland carefully selected his patients to make sure that they would be genuinely committed to the goal of elimination of their homosexuality and that they would be unlikely to experience a “relapse”. The latter, as Goland explained to me, was very undesirable since if the patient got caught by the police, it could create unnecessary trouble for him. Therefore before starting the treatment Goland conducted a short interview with his patients to establish the seriousness of their intentions, asking his patients whether they would come to him for treatment if homosexuality was not punishable in the Soviet Union. The negative answer would signal the patient’s scepticism and lack of commitment, making him unsuitable for treatment. If a patient hoped that his involvement in psychotherapy would render him immune to the police or at least moderate his sentence in case of his getting caught, then he would also be turned down.

Both Goland and his patients understood the importance of keeping the patients’ identities anonymous. Going to the doctor might be a risky affair – especially if the local law-enforcement agencies knew about the kinds of treatment Goland offered. When writing to Goland, his patients were apprehensive about the possibility of their homosexuality becoming known to their peers and asked Goland to be careful in his responses. Indeed, as Arthur Clech has shown, many gay men feared that their homosexuality would be made public – they feared both criminal prosecution and the publicity given to their homosexuality.

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102 Interview with Goland, 1 April, 2017.
103 Arthur Clech, “Between the Labor Camp and the Clinic: Tema or the Shared Forms of Late Soviet Homosexual Subjectivities,” *Slavic Review* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2018), 19.
the predicament of his patients and elsewhere in his papers argued that privacy was the main prerequisite for successful treatment. In one of them, for example, he insisted that the true diagnosis of homosexual patients should not be known to anyone but the doctor. If anyone else enquired about the diagnosis of homosexual patients, the doctor was supposed to say that they were “neurotics”: “A patient has to be sure that nobody, except for his doctors, knows about his true diagnosis. For everyone else he is merely a neurotic”.  

While Goland spared no efforts to maintain the privacy of his patients, he attempted to institutionalize his practice as an official enterprise, making it public. Such balancing between public and private was characteristic for many unofficial entities and enterprises that had appeared in Soviet society since the 1950s. Juliane Fürst tells us about kompania – a network of like-minded friendship circles among Soviet youth in the 1950s and 1960s. These were not random gatherings of acquaintances, but “friendship circles with a spirit of political and social reawakening”. The very nature of these networks meant that they would be “relegated to the private sphere” (in customary interpretation of the public and private divide), but at the same time, the members of these networks “demonstrated a desire to be” or “create a public sphere”. Regarding the informal health clubs of the 1970s, Larisa Honey noted a similar tendency to “create” a public sphere; she tells us that despite the fact that these clubs existed “half-legally”, the members of these clubs had a “certain modicum of officialdom”, by introducing the system of membership cards.

Yan Goland also desired to “create” public sphere and add a sense of officialdom to his practice. He had tried this in 1969, by suggesting to Pavel Posvianskii that a specialized health centre providing treatment of sexual perversions should be inaugurated in Gorkii. Back then, his plan failed due to the allegedly insufficient funding. On 24 August 1974, Goland made another attempt to institutionalize his practice and bring the problem of treating homosexuality into the public domain; this time he wrote to a major health journal, Zdorovie, asking to advertise his services on the medical treatment of homosexuality (see Figure 22, Figure 23). Writing to the journal, with a print-run of ten million copies, he framed the problem of sexual

106 Ibid., 244.
107 Ibid.
perversions as a public concern which needed to be addressed.\textsuperscript{109} His letter is rare evidence of how Soviet doctors attempted to frame homosexuality as a medical rather than a police problem, and aimed to present this point to a wider readership (as opposed to merely discussing it with their peers in specialist literature):

Dear editors!

Our sexological consultation room provides treatment for sexual perversions, perhaps, we are the only specialists, who provide such treatment – we do that not episodically, but systematically. Over the past eight years we have examined several dozens of patients – thirty patients out of them were cured. We have designed a method of psychotherapy of sexual perversions, which has been described in a number of articles, published in various editions.

Our address to you is inspired by the following considerations. In the milieu of homosexuals (this is the most common type of perversion) there is a widespread opinion that sexual deviations are congenital and cannot be eliminated. These opinions have nothing to do with reality, and most importantly, they prevent homosexuals from seeking medical help and therefore facilitate the reinforcement of homosexual lifestyle and, possibly, spread of homosexuality. The persistence of such view (as well as of other misconceptions) is underpinned by the absence of accessible scientific information on the nature of this disease and possibilities of its treatment. Unsuccessful treatment may also be the reason for it. Besides, the search for medical help often yields no results, since most doctors, including psychiatrists and sexopathologists have no experience in treatment of such disease and do not even know where their patients could be referred. Many of our patients spent several years seeking help, before they reached us. Some of them wrote letters to the editors of Zdorovie magazine and in most cases, they received no response.

In view of the above, we think it is useful for Zdorovie magazine, the only popular science journal, covering the problems of sexopathy, to publish an article on sexual perversions, whose task would be to raise correct awareness

[pravil’no orientirovat’] of the aforementioned patients on the questions of origin as well as possibility of treatment of sexual perversions.

For your information: according to the foreign data, the number of homosexuals alone is about 4% in the whole population. Even if we assume that this figure is lower under our conditions, although the foundation for such an assumption would be minimal, nevertheless, behind this figure there stand a great many of tragic and crippled lives and even suicides.

If you share our opinion about the usefulness and relevance of such an article in your magazine and if you do not refuse to accept it from us, then we ask you to inform us on the size and tone in which this article should be written.

One more important aspect of this publication – (if all aspects can be squeezed into one article) – to indicate to parents the possible consequences of their mistakes and blunders [promakhi] in their education of their children, which often seem rather innocuous.\(^{110}\)

Regards, Yan Goland, Head of the Department

In his letter, Goland argued that medical treatment of homosexuality was meant for public good – if left untreated, homosexuals could facilitate dissemination of a “homosexual lifestyle” and could even “spread” it further. Another aspect of his argument – presentation of homosexuality as a disease that crippled one’s life and led one to suicide – was presented as a matter of public significance. Like male impotence, framed by sexopathologists as an issue with deep societal implications, homosexuality was presented by Goland as an issue meriting similar concern. The allusion to suicide appears to be an especially compelling argument – in the Soviet context such an act would be construed as an affront to the socialist system, which had failed to provide all the necessary conditions for an individual to have a fulfilling life. Kenneth M. Pinnow has noted that in the Bolshevik cosmology of the early Soviet years, suicide violated “idealized conceptions of the collective as a space where the individual would

\(^{110}\) Yan Goland, letter to Zdorovie journal with a proposal to advertise his medical services of treatment of homosexuality, 24 August 1974. Yan Goland’s archive.
achieve genuine self-realization as a member of the group”. Goland’s argument had similar undertones and can be interpreted as a tacit suggestion about the relevance of his enterprise to the plans of the Soviet state to sustain a society with productive citizens untroubled by sexual disorders.

Yet Goland was treading on dangerous ground. As shown in Chapter 2 and 3, most sex educators and sexopathologists sought to downplay the prevalence of homosexuality in the Soviet Union. Goland, in contrast, suggested that the rates of homosexuality in the Soviet Union were akin to elsewhere in the world, thereby challenging the officially authorized discourses. This, apparently, was one of the reasons why his letter was never published. Indeed, from the point of view of the official policy on homosexuality, medical treatment of such individuals in Soviet society was completely unnecessary. Any possible measure had already been taken by the Soviet government to prevent homosexuality from arising – sex education was implemented to discourage children from lust, which could, in turn, lead to homosexuality. Various collectives existed to discourage the citizen to think about his sexual urges, even more so homosexual ones, and re-channel them for the benefit of society. Last but not least, criminal sanctions were in place to make sure that those who decided to live out their homosexuality were not left unpunished. With so many existing preventative options, the advertisement of a medical treatment of homosexuality would be an official acknowledgment that all these measures had failed.

We still have a lot to learn about the attempts of Soviet sexopathologists to convert their unofficial practice of treating homosexuality into an official enterprise; to do so would have legitimised homosexuality as a medical matter and would have inevitably challenged the official framing of homosexuality as a crime. One other sexopathologist, whose practice would be worth investigating was Abram Sviadosch. In 1972, he inaugurated the country’s first family guidance centre, whose aim was to consult families and assist them in having a happy family life. A wide range of specialists was to attend the needs of the centre’s prospective patients: sexopathologists (along with Sviadosch himself), psychotherapists, psychologists and gynaecologists. According to Literaturnaia gazeta, matters between the doctor and the patient would be discussed in private settings and the patients’ anonymity would be a priority:

111 Kenneth M. Pinnow, Lost to the Collective: Suicide and the Promise of Soviet Socialism, 1921 – 1929 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 63.
“There are consultation rooms, designed for private conversations [doveritel’naia beseda] with the doctor… And one more important detail – patients will not be asked to provide documents. Not even a last name”. The author of the article noted that such anonymity inclined patients to a greater confidence and trust in their doctor: “The anonymity of the appointment allows for the patient to ask questions bravely”. Unquestionably, the centre’s emphasis on privacy and anonymity was an act of continuing “privatization” in the Soviet society in the 1970s and such privatization would certainly attract homosexuals seeking treatment while escaping the gaze of the state. The relationship between doctor and patient, bound by shared secrecy and commitment to keep matters private, was an effective push against that state’s desire to intervene in private life.

Lev Shcheglov, a Soviet and Russian sexologist and former Sviadoshch trainee, has confirmed this. As Scheglov has revealed, Sviadoshch actively defended the privacy of his patients. One day, a KGB officer turned up on the doorstep of Sviadoshch’s office, demanding to see a medical file of one of Sviadoshch’s former patients, who apparently interested the KGB. Sviadoshch refused to comply, referring to “patient confidentiality” [vrachebnaia taina].

**Conclusion**

In the 1970s discussions of homosexuality among MVD officials were increasingly influenced by the medical findings of Soviet sexopathology. From 1973 onwards, MVD officials consistently consulted Soviet sexopathologists, commissioning them with scientific projects on designing methods of medical treatment of homosexuality. In their discussions on the struggle with homosexuality in prisons, MVD officials also drew on existing sexopathological texts, acknowledging that homosexuality was in fact a disease. Yet, despite the MVD’s drift toward scientific approaches to homosexuality, police methods remained still relevant – in their discussions MVD officials stated that homosexuals should be both treated and prosecuted.

I have also endeavoured to highlight the implications of this shift from exclusively “police” to a “police/scientific” stance on homosexuality. Indeed, in their interactions with the

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116 One of the Soviet homosexual men interviewed by Sonja Franeta had been in the KGB’s lists of homosexuals from the age of 16: Sonja Franeta, *Rozovye flamingo: 10 sibirskikh interv′iu* (Tver’: Kolonna Publications, 2004), 122.
117 Personal communication with Lev Shcheglov by telephone, 7 March 2017.
MVD and KGB officials, Soviet sexopathologists appeared to present their arguments in favour of decriminalization of consensual sodomy on medical grounds, yet to no avail. The subject matter of these off-the-record discussions remains obscure and the answers are likely to lie in classified MVD and KGB archives. This shift to “scientific” methods of dealing with homosexuality appears to have implications for Soviet homosexual men and women who were now not only under threat of prosecution, but also of being subject to medical treatment. The evidence for this claim can be found in the perestroika press; for example, in December 1988, the Soviet youth journal *Molodoi Kommunist* published a letter sent by a homosexual man who identified himself as “Volodya”. The young man confessed that he had “spent a year and a half in prison and was on “chemo” [khimiia] there”. Although doctors warned that medical treatment of homosexuality in prisons could be conducted only if prisoners’ consent was secured – apparently this recommendation was not always observed.

The ambiguous understanding of homosexuality in the MVD texts throughout the 1970s paralleled a similarly contradictory standing of homosexuality in the Soviet society at large (this was certainly not unique of the Soviet case). Although homosexuality was a crime, some doctors provided medical treatment for it. Their enterprise thrived on the growing privatization of the Soviet society and the blurred boundaries between public and private borders. Locating their practices in the private realm, some Soviet sexologists attempted to go public – they wanted to institutionalize their practice. One such doctor was Yan Goland, who attempted to bring the issue of the absence of medical treatment for homosexuality into the public realm of newspapers. The initiation of such public discussion might have possibly triggered an evolution of social values and understandings of homosexuality and such evolution, in its turn, could have brought the issue of decriminalization of sodomy to the fore. As I have shown in Chapter 3, the establishment of Soviet sexopathology was triggered by a single letter published in *Meditsinskaia gazeta* by a prominent Soviet urologist Ili’a Porudominskii. Goland’s discussions then on the necessity to treat homosexuality also could have had far-reaching consequences. Possibly cognizant of the consequences of such discussions, the editors of the newspapers chose not to publish it and as I have shown in Chapter 4, such was a typical response of the Soviet state to any grassroots initiatives regarding homosexuality.

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Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined discussions on homosexuality between Soviet MVD officials, doctors, jurists and sex educators across various fields and realms, which took place in the Soviet Union from 1956 to 1982. The participants in these discussions proposed a variety of approaches to the issue of homosexuality, all of which can roughly be divided in two main categories: “police” and “scientific” approaches. The “police” approach was characterized by the view that homosexuality was merely a crime; by a preference for introduction of criminal penalties for homosexual behavior as well as by a strong opposition to decriminalization of sodomy and disbelief that homosexuality might be a medical condition. By contrast, “scientific” approaches were characterized by the view that homosexuality was a medical matter, a congenital biological feature or even a disease. The proponents of the “scientific” stance also argued that homosexuality should be relegated to the sphere of medicine.

I have also demonstrated that eradication of homosexuality fitted in with the Soviet plans of creating a New Soviet Person and that the growing “privatization” of Soviet society during this period provided an important stepping stone for the emergence of alternative understandings and practices around homosexuality. In the first part of this conclusion I will summarize the main points of each chapter and in the second part I supply a brief overview on the development of the discourse on homosexuality after Brezhnev and the continued disagreements over whether homosexuality was a “police” or a “scientific” matter.

I began in Chapter 1 with the examination of discussions on homosexuality held between GULAG officials and doctors from 1956 to 1959. While both GULAG directors and doctors concurred on the point that male homosexuality was to be dealt with by punitive measures and criminal sanctions, their views diverged on the issue of lesbianism. GULAG directors offered to employ “police” measures against lesbianism, by criminalizing female same-sex liaisons and introducing other penalties for such behavior. GULAG doctors, on the contrary, argued that lesbianism was a temporary phenomenon, which would clear itself once the lesbian was released. Their lenient approach was informed by “scientific” consideration of the phenomenon of sexual deprivation in the places of confinement and its role in the formation of perverted sexual desire. However, doctors were not necessarily against punitive measures – these, they argued, were to be employed against especially recalcitrant lesbians.
In this chapter I also examined how GULAG officials sought to tackle homosexuality with the forces of the collective; I highlighted the similarities of their approaches to those employed in relation to deviance in Soviet society at large. The “collectivization” of life of the 1950s and 1960s was an important instrument in creating a New Soviet Person and the collective was an important means of shaping such. The eradication of homosexuality with the forces of the collective suggests that such proclivities for same-sex behavior were undesirable and antithetical to the collective ethos.

In Chapter 2 I examined the discussions of sex and homosexuality in sex education manuals, published under Khrushchev in the period from 1956 to 1964. First, I sketched out the discursive background against which discussions of homosexuality took place; I demonstrated that during the Khrushchev period the main focus of the sex education manuals’ discussions shifted from the initial task to eliminate “the vestiges of the capitalist past” to a focus on confronting “ideological diversions” of the West. I suggested that discussions on the undesirability of “early sexual awakening” represented unspoken anxieties of sex educators that such “awakening” could put young people on the slippery slope to “sexual perversions”; as I showed further in Chapter 2, sex education manuals intended for the official use of MVD stated this point explicitly.

I then proceeded to examine discussions of homosexuality in these manuals, pointing out that the first manuals with such discussions were translated versions from Czechoslovakia and East Germany. These manuals – *Youth Becomes a Man* (1960) and *Questions of Sex* (1960) presented homosexuality both through the police lens – as a crime, and from a scientific perspective – as a disease. It is hard to establish with certainty why such a topic was allowed to appear on the pages of Soviet-translated versions and why its presentation was so contradictory, but it is clear that this was no mere oversight on the part of Soviet editors, and it was a conscious decision. The inclusion of such discussions in manuals, meant to facilitate the raising of New Soviet Persons through sex education, was apparently to present homosexuality as a phenomenon irreconcilable with the Soviet project.

In Chapter 3 I examined the discussions of homosexuality in the writings and texts of practitioners of sexopathology – a new branch of psychiatry, which emerged in the 1960s. In their discussions, the practitioners of this newly-established science constructed a new image of homosexuality, which differed from the Stalin and Khrushchev-era understandings of it as a criminal psychopathy. Soviet sexopathologists presented homosexuals as reclaimable
individuals for the Soviet project of creating a New Soviet Person: desiring to work and contribute their labour to the society, able to realize their deficient sexuality, work on it and change themselves for the better. Apart from constructing a new image of homosexuality, Soviet sexopathologists sought to claim homosexuality for their profession, albeit very carefully. One such sexopathologist, V. K. Kosarev, discussed whether homosexuality should be considered a medical problem rather than a criminal one – he did so with a nod to Czechoslovakia and East Germany, where by that time homosexuality had been decriminalized and featured on medical agendas. Some sexopathologists went so far as to suggest that homosexuality should be decriminalized altogether. Other sexopathologists, however, tried to medicalize homosexuality, without openly appealing to decriminalization: Yan Goland, for example, moved forward with an initiative to institutionalize medical treatment of homosexuality, yet to no avail. Sexopathological studies of the 1960s also carefully considered the existing views on homosexuality as a normal variant of human sexuality as argued by American scientist Alfred Kinsey in the late 1940s. Soviet sexopathologists rejected the idea of the ubiquity of homosexual behaviour: some of them, drawing on various evidence, even set out to prove that prevalence of homosexual behaviour was lower than that in the capitalist countries.

In Chapter 4, I examined discussions between Soviet legal scholars and criminologists on the issue of homosexuality between 1960 and 1975, by focusing on the debates about whether the part of the law criminalizing consensual sodomy should be abolished or not. The participants in these debates were all specialists in law and crime, yet there was a clear discrepancy in their positions. One group of scholars, I refer to them as “civilian”, worked in relatively “liberal” university environments. These scholars espoused “scientific” approaches to homosexuality and argued that it was a medical matter, rather than a police one. Another group of scholars, those who were affiliated with the MVD, argued otherwise: they advocated for police methods and were opposed to decriminalization. The positions of these two groups of scholars were moving in different directions during the examined period: civilian scholars’ views were becoming more liberal, while those of MVD scholars were growing more conservative.

In their arguments for decriminalization, some civilian scholars implicitly acknowledged the growing privatization of Soviet society, which intensified under Brezhnev and manifested itself in growing housing opportunities. They argued that since consensual homosexuality was an act hidden in the private realm, there was no point in investigating such
cases. The response of the MVD scholars to such arguments was very simple – yes, indeed, such cases were difficult to investigate, but this was no reason for the police to stop considering such acts a crime altogether.

In this chapter I also demonstrated that these discussions were accompanied by genuine attempts of Soviet jurists to initiate changes and to take practical steps to decriminalize consensual homosexual acts. I have shown, for example, that the first such attempts were made as early as 1959, when a group of Soviet distinguished legal scholars convened to draft a New RSFSR Criminal Code. In the course of their discussions on which Stalin-era laws should remain and which ones should be abolished, jurists re-examined the sodomy statute and some of them proposed to abolish the part on consensual male same-sex. Yet this initiative was never taken up by most of the experts. On the contrary, discussions about revising the legal treatment of homosexuality in the Latvian SSR, which took place in 1960, were accompanied by a proposal to criminalize female homosexual acts, though these also never became law.

In Chapter 5 I looked at the discussions of homosexuality between Soviet sexopathologists and MVD officials in the 1970s. Unlike in the US, where homosexuality was excluded from the official list of psychiatric illnesses in 1973, Soviet sexopathologists continued to frame it as a sexual disorder in their published works in the 1970s. Some of them argued that it could be treatable; others suggested that in some cases homosexuality was of a congenital nature and, therefore, medicine could not help. This growing, albeit still modest expertise on homosexuality, began to attract the notice of the MVD; its officials approached Soviet sexopathologists throughout the 1970s with requests to find medical ways of curbing homosexual activity in prisons. In their correspondence with sexopathologists, MVD officials framed homosexuality as a disease; a similar trend was observable in the handbooks for penal workers intended for MVD schools, where homosexuality was depicted as a treatable illness and works of sexopathologists were extensively cited. Yet, while MVD officials now framed homosexuality as a medical issue, they did not exclude the possibility of using criminal sanctions for homosexuality, preferring a combination of police and scientific approaches.

This chapter also considered the attempts of Soviet sexopathologists to claim homosexuality for sexopathy. It examined Yan Goland’s medical practice of treating homosexuality in the 1970s, demonstrating that the ambiguous understandings of homosexuality in the MVD texts and correspondence paralleled a similar ambiguous standing of homosexuality in Soviet society: despite homosexuality’s official status as a crime, there
were doctors who offered medical treatments for it. These treatments were unofficial and doctors who administered them had to balance their practices along the borders of private and public.

**Coda: Homosexuality After Brezhnev**

In this section I will provide a brief overview of discussions on homosexuality which took place throughout the 1980s and up to the collapse of the Soviet Union, demonstrating that the participants of these discussions continued to disagree on the issue of whether homosexuality was a matter of police or science.

Throughout the 1980s, the issue of homosexuality continued to be on sexopathological agendas – it retained its status as a syndrome and disease, which could be treated, albeit with great difficulty. In his two-volume manual for sexologists and psychiatrists *Private Sexopathology* (1983), Georgii Vasil’chenko, head of the All-Union Research Method Centre on Sexopathology provided a lengthy section on the question, illustrating various types of homosexuality with a relevant case study.¹ Vasil’chenko lamented that it was difficult to establish the diagnosis correctly, even more so to obtain objective measurements of a patient’s type of homosexuality, since many patients sought to conceal their “pathological deviations of sexuality” and doctors simply did not possess any “objective methods” of diagnosing sexual perversions.² The only method which Vasil’chenko deemed credible was penile plethysmography, a method of measurement of sexual arousal first proposed by a Czechoslovakian sexologist Josef Hynie in the 1930s and then later developed by Kurt Freund in the 1960s.³

The evocation of this method by Vasil’chenko is noteworthy. We know that during the Cold War, American and British sexologists designed a great many machines and devices for sex research, including penile strain gauges used in aversion therapies.⁴ In Soviet sexological practice such instruments were not as common – it was only in the 1980s that Soviet sexopathologists started reporting the use of such.⁵ They noted that phallography had been

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² Ibid., 108.
³ Ibid.
conducted [fallografiia] on a “group of individuals who deemed themselves to be homosexuals” and that this method could be used “in sexological practice for a variety of goals”, including “detection of sexual perversions”. They did not specify for what purposes and under which circumstances such detection was needed, yet considering the fact that during the 1970s the MVD was actively exploring new opportunities of finding scientific evidence for the crime of sodomy, discussions of the phallography’s utility in detecting sexual perversions could have been a ramification of it.

Vasil’chenko’s manual also featured a section on the treatment of homosexuality – this was written by Yan Goland. The section built on Goland’s previous work and summarized the main techniques of his psychotherapy method, consisting of three stages and accompanied by autogenic training. Goland listed several contraindications for psychotherapy of homosexuality, that is, signs in a patient, showing that therapy would not lead to the desired effect. These included psychiatric disorders, alcoholism, “intellectual deficiency”, “lack of will and the patient’s passivity”. During the 1980s, Goland continued his practice of medical treatment, securing his role as a leading Soviet specialist on the problem. In 1982 Goland presented his papers “Psychotherapy of homosexuality” and “Psychotherapy of sexual perversions” at a sexology seminar in Riga. There, he also presented his former patients, who had successfully completed psychotherapy for homosexuality and sexual perversions, to other present doctors. As Goland explained to me, his patients were wearing heavy make-up, sunglasses and wigs to conceal their identity. In the same year, Goland delivered these reports and showed his patients to colleagues at the Central Institute for Doctors’ Advanced Training.

While Soviet sexopathologists continued to produce medical knowledge on homosexuality, albeit in very modest portions, the MVD developed further interest to their studies. Throughout the 1980s more brochures for MVD penal officials with instructions on how to address the problem of sexual perversions and homosexuality were published. Among them were Sexual Disorders in the Convicts of the ITU (1980), a paper “Methodic Recommendations on Prophylaxis of Sexual Perversions” (1983), “Prophylactic Medical Examination of Individuals, Suffering from Sexual Perversions in SIZO and ITU” (1984), and

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6 Botneva, Zhdanov and Maslov, “O perspektivakh fallografi,” 64.
7 Vasil’chenko, Chastnaia seksopatologiia, 109.
8 Ibid.
10 Interview with Goland, 1 April, 2017.
a manual *Prisoner’s Sexual Disorders* (1985).\(^{11}\) The titles of these brochures suggest that their authors framed homosexuality as a medical problem. All of them were published by the All-Union Institute for Advanced Training of Senior Officials of the Corrective Labour Institutions of the MVD SSSR [Vsesoiuznyi institut povysheniia kvalifikatsii rukovodashchikh rabotnikov ispravitel’no-trudovykh uchrezhdenii].\(^{12}\) None of these brochures are available in any of Russia’s state libraries and they are likely to be stored in the library of the Institute’s successor – VIPK of the Russian Interior Ministry, which can be consulted only by the Institute’s cadets and officials. I came upon the references to these brochures in a similar manual *Educational Work with the Convicts Suffering from Sexual Perversions* (1989).\(^{13}\) This manual was written by the same author as the previous ones and it offers a window on the possible content of the author’s earlier manuals on the subject.

In his discussions of homosexuality, the author drew on the texts on homosexuality written by Soviet leading sexologists Nikolai Ivanov, Yan Goland, Pavel Posvianskii and Abram Sviadosch.\(^{14}\) The author – Vitalii Volkov – urged the Medical Department of Colonies to take active part in prophylaxis and medical treatment of homosexuality: “Medical Department in corrective-labour institutions must organize prophylaxis and symptomatic treatment of perverted types of sexual desire in individuals located in the places of confinement”.\(^{15}\) He suggested that medical examination of such individuals be conducted in “in a mandatory manner” [v obiazatel’nom poriadke] by the prison psychiatrists.\(^{16}\) Yet the treatment itself, especially involving medications, was to be conducted only with the prisoners’ consent: “The object of treatment can only be the prisoner, who voluntarily consented to it. Compulsion is in such cases out of place and it cannot be effective without the patient’s desire, especially in those individuals who consider their state as a norm”.\(^{17}\) However this statement


\(^{12}\) The Institute was founded on 27 August 1976 and was entrusted with the task to provide advanced training for a range of specialists and officials working within Soviet penitentiary system, including medical department. On the history of the Institute see: Yuriii N. Demidov, *VIPK MVD Rossii: vchera, segodnia, zavtra: posviashchaetsia 45-letiui instituta* (Domodedovo: VIPK MVD Rossii, 2017), 20 – 22.

\(^{13}\) Vitalii Volkov and Aleksandr Pishechko, *Vospitatel’naia rabota s osuzhdennykh, stradaiuschimi seksual’nymi izvrashcheniami* (Domodedovo: VIPK MVD SSSR, 1989).

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 54 – 55.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 30.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 31.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 40.
contradicted Volkov’s own previous remarks where he argued that penal officials must “lead an uncompromising and decisive struggle” with the “convicts’ deviant sexual behaviour” through “primarily medicated and psychotherapeutic “correction” [vypravlenie]. It is notable that in contrast to the similar manuals produced in the 1970s, examined in chapter 5, Volkov’s brochure framed homosexuality exclusively as a medical problem without allusions to the efficacy of punitive measures – this suggests a continuing shift of MVD perceptions of homosexuality from crime to disease.

The advent of the AIDS epidemic in the USSR in the late 1980s stoked anxiety about homosexuality and its perceived social danger: it was now viewed not only as a crime or a disease, but as a phenomenon conducive to the spread of AIDS. Apparently, this anxiety triggered more energetic attempts to study homosexuality and find effective ways of dealing with it. One such attempt was undertaken by psychiatrists A. Kachaev and G. Ponomarev of the Serbskii Institute; in 1988 they published a summary of their study “Age Dynamics and Conditions of Formation of Male Homosexuality”, in the course of which 240 homosexual men from the age of 18 to 50 were examined and medically treated. Expounding on the rationale of their research, Kachaev and Ponomarev explained:

Individuals with homosexual attitudes [ustanovki] are not subject to registration [ne podvergaiutsia uchety], medical examination [dispanserizatsiia] or forced treatment, which they need, considering the criteria of social dangerousness… homosexuality tends to spread [imeet tendentsiiu k rasprostraneniiu] and constitutes a genuine source of venereal, viral (hepatitis, candidiasis, AIDS), infectious and intestinal diseases.

One of the key objectives of the study was the examination of the homosexual men’s psychological and sexual development during infancy and adolescence with a view to identifying the factors which contributed to their perverse desire. Scrutinizing the past lives of each homosexual man, psychiatrists established the most significant milestones in the development of their homosexual desire. Kachaev and Ponomarev discovered that at the age of 5 – 7 years, examined men displayed “heightened sexuality” [povyshennaia seksual’nost’],

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20 Ibid., 79.
characterized by a “heightened interest” in individuals of the same and opposite sex. At the age of 7 – 12 their “heightened sexuality” was reinforced by “environmental influences” – “related information from their peers and other sources”. During these years “homosexual fixations” were beginning to take shape, facilitated by the “close same-sex communication characteristic of this age”. Perverse homosexual desire was then further reinforced at the age from 14 to 16, by means of “mutual masturbation”, due to an “inebriated state” or due to an intention “to stand out”. Finally, from ages 18 to 20 it was “stabilized definitively”.

In light of their findings, Kachaev and Ponomarev proposed a detailed description of measures for “prophylaxis of sexual perversions”. These measures were to be conducted by school doctors, pediatricians and infant psychiatry services [detskaia psikhiatricheskaia sluzhba] and were designed in accordance with the discovered milestones in the development of homosexuality. The proposed measures were similar to those contained in the Khrushchev-era sex education manuals; yet Kachaev’s and Ponomarev’s advice was more age-specific. Children from 5 to 7 were to be instructed on how to “restrain the arousal of erogenous zones and emergence of early sexuality” – these instructions were to have a focus on the “hygiene of sexual organs”. Children from 7 to 12 were to be carefully informed “in a simple and comprehensible form, the physiological basics of sexual development and sexuality”. Teenagers between 12 and 18 were to be instructed on the “harm of masturbation, premature sexual liaisons as well as sexual perversions”.

40 of the examined 240 men underwent medical treatment, in the course of which they were administrated highly aversive drugs – aminazin and sulfazine [sul’fazin]. The treatment with these drugs, as doctors observed, provided “strong theraupetic effect” and made the patients develop a desire “to get rid of homosexuality”. To the doctors’ disappointment, after

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21 Kachaev and Ponomarev, “Vozrastnaia dinamika”, 79.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 81.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 80.
30 Ibid., 81. Generally applied for treatment of schizophrenia, progressive paralysis or catatonic conditions, this drug was also used as punishment in Soviet psychiatric hospitals. The effects of this drug included great pain and a rise in body temperature up to 40 degrees. See: Harvey Fireside, Soviet Psychoprisons (New York and London: Norton, 1979), 148 – 149. On sulfazine treatment also see: Alexander Podrabin, Punitive Medicine (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1980), 93 – 94.
the treatment ceased, some of the patients again started displaying homosexual tendencies. \textsuperscript{31} Still, doctors noted that such treatment was useful especially in the places of confinement. \textsuperscript{32}

The emerging climate of freedom provided by Gorbachev’s \textit{glasnost’} and \textit{perestroika} allowed for the appearance of publications with alternative views on homosexuality. One such publication was a book \textit{Sexology and Sexopathology} (1986) by a prominent Polish sexopathologist Kazimir Imelinskii – it was translated into Russian and published in 1986. In this book, the author claimed that homosexuality was not a disease at all: “From a clinical point of view, one should pay attention to the fact that homosexuality does not constitute an illness that can be treated at all. There is a large group of homosexuals who not only accept their inclinations but are content with them…” \textsuperscript{33} Doctors could be of help only in those cases where homosexual persons suffered from anxiety and depression, a result of the double life they were forced to lead, rather than their sexuality. Describing such persons, Imelinskii wrote: “They fear condemnation and shame and therefore hide their homosexual proclivities even from their closest relatives, they are preoccupied with their fate and with the impossibility to create a family; they fear loneliness and that they are deceived by destiny, which does not allow them to live like other people and foredooms them to suffering and loneliness”. \textsuperscript{34}

Some Soviet sexopathologists, such as Abram Sviadoshch, disagreed with these views. In a third edition of his book \textit{Female Sexopathology} (1988), he argued that homosexuals should be medically treated, even if they did not deem their homosexuality to be a sexual disorder: “In English and American literature an opinion is being stated with increasing frequency that homosexuality is merely a variant of the norm and that is why it is not necessary to seek ways of conducting therapy. We cannot agree with this point of view. We cannot deem it natural when a person is experiencing a same sex desire towards the persons of the same sex and feel aversions to the individuals of the opposite sex. If everyone became homosexuals, the humankind would cease to exist.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31} Podrabinek, \textit{Punitive Medicine}, 81. These drugs were extensively used by Soviet psychiatrists against dissidents.

\textsuperscript{32} Kachaev and Ponomarev, “Vozrastnaia dinamika i uslovia formirovaniia muzhskogo gomoseksualizma,” 81.


\textsuperscript{34} Imelinskii, \textit{Seksologiia i seksopatologiia}, 331.

\textsuperscript{35} Abram Sviadoshch, \textit{Zhenskaia seksopatologiia} (Moscow: Meditsina, 1988), 82.
As Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost were relaxing censorship, the discussion of sex and related topics became possible in the pages of the Soviet press. The subject of homosexuality attracted the attention of Gorbachev-era newspaper correspondents, who approached doctors and even police officers with requests to comment on the problem of homosexuality in the Soviet Union. F. Podkolodnyi, a correspondent for Meditsinskaia gazeta, approached L. G. Gertsik, the head of the Moscow Psycho-Endocrinological Center. Rather unexpectedly, Gertsik suggested that homosexuality was not a disease at all; in fact he stated that consensual homosexuality was a private matter and that doctors could help homosexuals by helping them overcome their anxiety:

It goes without saying that in a democratic state we cannot oppress people because of their sexual orientation… […] Two adult men shut themselves in a room [zakryvaiutsia v komnate] and the society is peeking into the keyhole? I believe that our Criminal Code sufficiently protects a person from violence, minors from corruption and depraved acts. Why have a separate article on homosexuality? For the time being, it is not even clear whether it’s a disease or not. For our center, homosexuality itself is not a diagnosis, it’s not even a patient’s complaint. You see they can be well-adapted both psychologically and socially. They even live in families. It’s a different matter if there is some intrapsychic [intrapsikhicheskii] conflict, when homosexual orientation hinders adaptation, if there is a fear of contracting AIDS or venereal diseases. Only then is there a reason for the patient’s examination and medical treatment. But what to treat such a patient for? For homosexuality? And what if he doesn’t want to be treated? Therapy for homosexuals has to be voluntary. Otherwise, it is simply impossible. This I can tell you as a specialist as opposed to those who assert that homosexuals should be treated forcibly. Let them tell us how!  

Surprisingly, the diversity of opinions as to whether homosexuals should be criminals or not existed among the law enforcement agencies themselves. The author of the article went to seek clarification on the issue from the police officers working in the Investigative


Department of the Chief Directorate of Internal Affairs of Moscow to ask them what they thought about homosexuals. As the conversation revealed, only a very small number of homosexuals was prosecuted for consensual sodomy, which as the author noted was because “there was no affected party [poterpevshaia storona] and thus no need to resort to the police”\(^\text{38}\). In fact, the officers of the Department, in the author’s words, considered the problem of homosexuality not as their job, but “a medical and social one”, except for the cases involving homosexual prostitution, rape or homosexual acts against minors.\(^\text{39}\)

Other MVD officials were also willing to express their opinion about the problem during perestroika. For instance, in 1990 the newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* published an opinion of V. Kachanov, an official from the Moscow Criminal Investigations Department, who argued that the sodomy law was a “restraining factor” for homosexuals “responsible for the dissemination of AIDS”.\(^\text{40}\)

The hitherto discreet discussion between legal academics and MVD officials also started appearing widely on the pages of Soviet newspapers. Soviet jurists, whose attempts to decriminalize consensual homosexuality I examined in Chapter 4, gave interviews and continued to argue for decriminalization of consensual homosexual acts. In December 1989, a monthly periodical *Molodoi Kommunist* featured a lengthy article on the problem of homosexuality in the Soviet Union. In this article, A. N. Ignatov briefly summarized the current state of discussion on the law on sodomy between its proponents and opponents:

> The majority of authors who write on this topic come to the conclusion that criminal liability for homosexuality is not expedient. Why? First of all, if it is pathology, then it cannot be punished. Secondly, there is no danger for society here. In fact, all the main arguments of the proponents of criminal liability for homosexuality are refuted. Which ones exactly? Well, that homosexuality will lead to the decreased masculinity of the nation. Yet, the example of Sparta demonstrates the contrary. Another alleged consequence of homosexuality is that it will decrease birth rates. The statistics do not confirm this conclusion. Then, they say that it leads to the degradation of a person. However, we know many great homosexuals –

\(^{39}\) Ibid.
\(^{40}\) A. Petrov, letter to the editor, *Argumenty i Fakty* (9, 1990), 7.
Tchaikovsky, Leonardo da Vinci and so on, and their creative work refutes the previous statement.\textsuperscript{41}

According to Ignatov the opponents of decriminalization of sodomy were also convinced that if there was no law in place, then homosexuality would thrive.\textsuperscript{42} Such views had been expressed by the MVD scholars as early as 1972 and as Ignatov showed they persisted well into the 1980s: “There is a lay perception that if we abolish article 121 of the Criminal Code then everyone will start to engage in homosexuality! Nonsense! A person who has no propensity for it cannot be influenced by the absence or existence of criminal liability. Criminal liability also does not influence the person who has such propensity. Criminal liability plays little role here – it neither reduces nor eliminates homosexuality, because sexual needs, whatever you may say, are some of the strongest…”\textsuperscript{43}

Most importantly, Ignatov’s comment presented an illuminating account of the reasons underlying the reluctance of Soviet officials to listen to the arguments of legal scholars for the repeal of the sodomy law. Ignatov explained that the ultimate decision to abolish the sodomy law was often left to individual Soviet bureaucrats, who had the final word on everything and often had the power to dismiss the most well-conceived and substantiated draft law on the grounds of personal distaste, without any explanations or further comment: “In former times, a person, who was not a jurist, but who held a senior position, could say something like this at the last moment: ‘And what is this? Let’s cross this out! Or, conversely, let’s add something.’ As a result, a well-thought-out and well-substantiated proposed law changed abruptly.”\textsuperscript{44} A. N. Ignatov did not lose hope; instead, he publicly pledged to continue to advocate for the abolition of the law, believing that since Gorbachev was a jurist by education, he would be more inclined to listen to the jurists: “Along with other jurists I will continue to struggle for the abolition of this law. We are confronting the prejudice of the majority of the population and the opinion of influential officials… We count on Gorbachev. He is a jurist…” \textsuperscript{45}

Ultimately, however, it was Boris Yeltsin, not Gorbachev, who removed the notorious law from the statute books in April 1993. While Yeltsin’s personal desire to join the Council of Europe certainly underpinned his decision to repeal the sodomy law, it is also important to

\textsuperscript{42} Daniel’bek, \textit{Poloyye izyraashchenia}, 89.
\textsuperscript{43} Novikov, “Sindrom “Trekh obez’ianok”,” 71.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Valerii Rodikov, “Golubye eli…”, \textit{Literaturnaia Rossiia} (12,1990), 24.
recognize that this was not something entirely new: a bottom-up movement for decriminalization of sodomy among Soviet leading jurists and their scholarly arguments, discussed in this dissertation, also appeared to be crucial. We still have much to learn about the neglected history of these debates.
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A type-written feedback of a wife of Golland’s former patient (Nadezhda’s feedback), which she provided in September 1968 after her husband had completed psychotherapy course for homosexuality.

A videotaped, undated interview with Leonid, conducted by Yan Goland in the early 1990s, in the course of which both discussed how they first met each other through Nikolai Ivanov.

An undated type-written document, describing the first stage of psychotherapy for homosexuality – “sexual-psychological vacuum”. It also contains a questionnaire for patients, evaluating the progress of their treatment.

An untitled type-written document, describing the second stage of psychotherapy for homosexuality, aimed at re-channelling the patient’s sexual interest from men to women. This document contains questions for patients, evaluating their progress and their suitability for further treatment.

Anton’s diary, 1971. Written account of Golland’s former patient about the treatment for homosexuality that he was administered.


Yan Golland, letter to Zdorovie journal with a proposal to advertise his medical services of treatment of homosexuality, 24 August 1974.

Yan Golland, type-written letter to Pavel Posvianskii, 1969.

Yan Golland, untitled and unpublished paper on psychotherapy of homosexuality, 1968.

Zakaznaia nauchno – issledovatel’skaia tematika na 1979 god, 1979. A table with tasks assigned to Goland and Moscow sexologists to study homosexuality.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Igor’ S. Sumbaev. Source: https://arbat25.ru/o-czentre/o-professore-ai-belkine

Figure 2. “A Man Homosexual–Transvestite dressed and undressed”. Source: Mikhail O. Gurevich, Psikhiatria: Uchebnik dlia meditsinskikh institutov (Moscow: Medgiz, 1949), 472.
Figure 3. Il'ia Porudominskii's article "Who Treats Sexual Disorders?" Source: Meditsinskaia gazeta, no. 96 (29 November 1963).

Figure 4. Nikolai V. Ivanov. Source: GARF, f. P-9506, op. 16, delo 1272, l. 162.
Figure 5. Medical Seminar on Psychotherapy and Sexology in Gorkii (1964). Source: Yan Golland's collection.

Figure 6. Pavel B. Posvianskii. Source: GARF, f. P-9506, op. 16, delo 2576, l. 8.
Деятельность отдела сексопатологии Московского научно-исследовательского института психиатрии в период 1965-1973 гг.

I. Сотрудниками отдела выполнена одна контрольная (1970 г.) и одна экспериментальная диссертация (1971 г.).

Под руководством сотрудников отдела в аспирантуре и по ряду научных учреждений выполнены научные диссертации:

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II. Сотрудниками отдела опубликовано:

а) Новейший труд — I (1969 г., С. В. Воскресенский. О некоторых сексуальных нарушениях и их генитальных очертаниях. Москва).

б) Начальные работы:

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III. Проведено научно-практических конференций — I (1969 г., Москва)

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<th>Организаторов</th>
<th>Количество</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1965 г., Горький, 120 ч.
1967 г., Москва, 250 ч.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Организаторов</th>
<th>Количество</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1965 г., Горький, 120 ч.
1967 г., Москва, 250 ч.
1969 г., Рига, 200 ч.

Figure 7. Undated and unauthored report on the activities of the Department of Sexopathology, page one. Source: Collection of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry.
4. Подготовлено:
  а) ординаторов — 2:
    — Ю.С. Амков, Рига, с 1972 г., продолж. наст. время.
  б) Специалистов на рабочих местах за весь период — 140 ч.
    (подробную разбивку по годам и местностям см. в табл.1).
5. Консультативная работа на базе отделения (указано только косчичество первичных консультаций — повторные посещения больных
для дообследования, лечения или динамического и нейрофизиологического
наблюдения и т.п.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Год</th>
<th>Консультации</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965 г.</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966 г.</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 г.</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
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<td>1968 г.</td>
<td>350</td>
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<td>1969 г.</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 г.</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 г.</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972 г.</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973 г.</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Снижение количества консультированных больных за период 1972—73 гг. объясняется сокращением всего состава отделения и усвоением метода оболтации.

6. Создано специализированных сексологических кабинетов в городе;
1966-1973 гг. — 114 (подробную разбивку по годам и местностям см.
в табл. 2).

7. Разработан в отделении метод сексологического (структурного)
anализа сексуальных расстройств со всеми частными методиками (антип
ропометрия, шкала антропометрии, шкала антропометрии, функционального состояния и т.п.)
используются для оценки условий работы специалистов, проходящим обучением на рабочих местах (см. табл. 1).

8. Папиная работа не проводилась.
Figure 9. Seminar on Sexology in Moscow (1967). Source: Collection of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry.

Figure 10. Seminar on Sexology in Moscow (1967). Source: Collection of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry.
Figure 11. Seminar on Sexology in Moscow (1967). Source: Collection of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry.

Figure 12. Medical Seminar on Psychotherapy and Sexology in Gorkii (1966). Source: Yan Goland’s collection.
СИВ
(актуально-психологический эпизод)

Правила к таким изменениям:
1. Видение видимый на лице своего пола стыд

2. Видимое ощущение сознательно, если лицо своего пола стыд

3. Даже в состоянии ночного опьянения гомосексуальных тенденций не

4. Чувство освобождения, радость, победа над собой. (Не рассмотрели,

5. Раздумья, спокойствие? Новое состояние осознает Вас, дальнейше

6. Чувство неблагополучия с элементами растерянности в течении дня

7. Страх потери эротических переживаний, составляющий значительную

8. Рациональный практический подход, выход от интеллекта, эмоций

9. Какое переплетение этих реакций их динамика. Зависимость родных

10. Как долго продлится период депрессии СИВ?

Во всех условиях и эмоциональные реакции на возмущение сексуально-психологический эпизод

1. Чувство освобождения, радость, победа над собой. (Не рассмотрели,

2. Раздумья, спокойствие? Новое состояние осознает Вас, дальнейше

3. Чувство неблагополучия с элементами растерянности в течении дня

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6. Какое переплетение этих реакций их динамика. Зависимость родных
Figure 14. Yan Goland's notes on the second stage of psychotherapeutic treatment for homosexuality. Source: Yan Goland’s collection.
Figure 15. "Materials on the Sex Life of Male Workers of an Industrial City of Central Kazakhstan" (1968). Source: Collection of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry.
Figure 16. Aleksei Nikolaevich Ignatov. Source: GARF, f. P-9506, op. 75, delo 296, l. 137.

Figure 17. Boris Vasil'evich Daniel'bek. Source: GARF, f. P-9506, op. 75, delo 57, l. 9.
Павел Поспенскій, 1973 год, на основі праць Л. А. Берда и Е. В. Андреева.

В 1973 году была проведена работа по подготовке методического указания на тему "Основные принципы и методы комплексного лечения неврологических состояний" (организация - 1974 г.).

Было подготовлено лекции для врачей и медицинских работников по темам:
1) "Основные принципы лечебной патологии", 2) "Методы лечения нарушений (психотерапия, психотропные, АКП и пр.)", 3) "Специальные методы обучения на примере тренировки в системе психотерапии (функционально-деятельностных форм патологии)".

Выступления на конференциях, симпозиумах, научных конференциях

Поспенскій Павел Андреевич

1. "Определение и профилактика амнезии мозговых поражений" 1973 год. На собрании врачей г. Москве.
2. К учёбе о прогрессивном переочувствии. Сафари по терапии. Лекция аспиранту и ординатору институтов 1973 год.
3. Современные проблемы психологии. К учёбе о неорганических поражениях. Лекция на 3-й конференции неврологов НИИ - на протяжении года.
4. Анализ формы диагностики мозговой амнезии в случае поражения спинного мозга. Лекция на Всероссийской конференции по неврологии.
7. В пробле чрезвычайных интервент, преимущест
во оказания амбулаторных консультаций. Доклад на конференции врачей и администра
tивного персонала КПД и НПК, 5 мая 1975 г.

Собрание научных сотрудников РГСа.

а) Чрез обычной предприятия связанный с виолентными

б) Врачебной конференции психоло
gов и психиатров (декабрь 1972 г.)

в) "Стоит вопрос о психиатрии," Ленин (на той

По материалам научных сотрудник лаборатории.

а) Психотерапевтические сессии при лечении больных и психохидропе

ческого синдрома с обсуждением тематики. Выступление на пленарном заседании Объеден
"Стационарный метод"

нее образования психоло
gов и психиатров.

б) Письмо Ленинскому Кому.

Сдано в редакцию на тему "Система психотерапевтиче

го воздействия на больных с функционально-неясными формами интег

ция" на итоговом заседании Объединения психологов и психиатров

г) Письмо Ленинскому Комитету.

в) Научно-педагогическая работа, институциональный уровень

а) Письмо Ленинскому Комитету.

а) Письмо Ленинскому Комитету.

в) За 1975 год проведен специализированный курс по основам психо

Figure 20. Attachment to Posvianskii's report with tasks on homosexuality from the MVD (1973). Source: Collection of the Department of Sexopathology of the Moscow Research Institute of Psychiatry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№ п/п</th>
<th>Направление тематики</th>
<th>Управленние</th>
<th>Срок выполнения</th>
<th>Обозначение</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Разработать методы выявления лиц с различными видами гемососулимии.</td>
<td>Новосибирский НИИ пневмологий и патологии</td>
<td>1979-82 г.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Разработать методы лечения лиц с различными видами гемососулимии.</td>
<td>Героев Советского Союза и Героев социалистического труда</td>
<td>1979-82 г.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21. “Requested Research Topics for the Year 1979”. Source: Yan Goland’s collection.
УВАЖАЕМЫЕ РЕДАКЦИЯ!

На сексологическом кабинете занимается лечение половых нарушений; вероятно, мы единственные, кто проводит эту работу (лечении не эпизодически, а систематически. За восемь лет исследовано несколько десятков больных, около 30 человек вылечено. Нами разработана методика психотерапии половых нарушений, описание которых появлялось несколько статей, опубликованных в разных изданиях.

В обращении к Вам приводились следующие положения. В среде гомосексуалистов (его самого распространенного изъятия) широко бытует мнение о врожденности и неустранимости их сексуальных отклонений, что не соответствует действительности. Сначала, препятствует обращение за помощью, способствуя закреплению гомосексуального образа жизни и, возможно, распространению гомосексуализма. Позиция этого мнения, как и вообще ложных убеждений и предрассудков, способствует отсутствию доступной научной информации о природе заболевания и возможности его лечения. Способство этому нередко и неудачный опыт лечения. Кроме того, поиски медицинской помощи часто заканчиваются безрезультатно, так как большая часть врачей, в том числе и психиатров и сексопатологов не имеют опыта лечения таких заболеваний и даже не знают, куда направить на лечение подобных больных. Многие из них больным присвоено терпение на поиски одного ли на несколько лет пролежать до, пока они попадут к нам. Некоторые из них обращались и в редакцию "Здоровья" и тоже не всегда получали нужную информацию.


Ввиду вышепоказанного нам предоставляется полезным, чтобы журнал "Здоровье" - единственное популярное издание, освещающее проблемы сексопатологии, - напечатал статью о половых извращениях, задачей которой было бы правильно ориентировать указанных больных как в вопросах происхождения, так и относительно возможности лечения половых извращений.

Для справки: по зарубежным данным, количество только гомосексуалистов - около 4% от всего населения. Если даже допустить, хотя основания для такого допущения минимальны, что для наших условий эта цифра намного ниже, то и то за ней стоит множество трагических судеб, испытанных жизней и даже самоубийств.

Если Вы разделяете наше мнение о полезности и уместности такой статьи в нашем журнале и не откажетесь принять ее от нас, то просим сообщить нам, в каком объеме и тоне она должна быть написана.

Еще один важный аспект подобной публикации (если все аспекты можно вписать в одну статью) - указать родителям на возможные последствия их ошибок и промахов, часто выглядящих вполне неожиданными в воспитании детей.

С уважением Я.Г. Голанд, зав. отделением.